



THE COMMON SPACE

Studies in Theatre and Performance History

Katalin Ágnes Bartha | Emese Egyed | Gabriella-Nóra Tar (eds.)

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

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Introduction

Theatre always addresses the present moment, even when engaging with historical themes, and thus speaks to contemporary individuals, reaching society through the audience who partake in the theatrical experience. Its impact is most immediate during the performance itself, yet its influence extends over time through processes of memory and communication about the performance. The first purpose-built structure in Cluj (Hungarian: *Kolozsvár*, German: *Klausenburg*) dedicated to theatrical performance dates back to March 12, 1821. Referred to at the time as a ‘stone theatre,’ the designation served to distinguish it from earlier, temporary venues constructed from demountable wooden materials. Although the building’s structure and function changed over time, multiple theatrical spaces have since emerged and, at least until recently, have remained active, attesting to the enduring presence and vitality of theatre in Cluj.

The studies collected in this volume, focusing on theatre history and performance studies, were originally presented to mark the bicentenary of the inauguration of Cluj’s permanent theatre building.¹ The anniversary coincided with a period profoundly shaped by the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited physical mobility and in-person gatherings. Nevertheless, the topics addressed in this volume extend well beyond the study of a single institution, namely, the stone theatre inaugurated in the spring of 1821 on Farkas Street (now Kogălniceanu Street), intended to serve as a dedicated venue for Hungarian-language theatre in Cluj.

¹ The international conference was held on 19-20 March 2021 on the bicentenary of the opening of the Stone Theatre in Kolozsvár – Cluj-Napoca. *The Common Space of Theatre – The Theatre of the Common Space* conference was organized in cooperation between various faculties of Babeş-Bolyai University (The Faculty of Theatre and Film, the Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of Reformed Theology and Music). The scholarly meeting with international participation took place online and was intended as the focal point of a series of theatre-themed events taking place throughout a week (theatre-, musical, and film productions, students’ research presentations, roundtable discussions).

The contributors to this volume – researchers based in Romania, Hungary, Austria, and Poland – not only collaborated in the context of an academic conference, but also provided a notable example of productive professional exchange among institutions and research groups. This collection engages with both permanent theatre buildings that enabled stabile performance repertoires and the shifting venues of itinerant theatre troupes, incorporating case studies and broader contextual investigations, alongside the identification and critical analysis of newly uncovered sources in theatre history.

The spaces of theatrical production are the focus of three studies in the opening chapter (*"Theatrical Spaces"*). Paul Ulrich draws attention to the textual sources available for theatre history research and highlights how nineteenth-century theatre differed fundamentally from its modern counterpart. His contribution, which explores the characteristics of German-language theatre, centres on venues that were not originally designed for theatrical performance. Katalin Ágnes Bartha investigates the features of Hungarian theatre in the same century, mapping both urban and provincial theatre companies, and emphasizing the role of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj within the network of Hungarian theatre companies. Through the case study of the actress Kornélia Prielle (1826–1906), she demonstrates how performances held in various Central European towns significantly contributed to the actress's success. The most dynamic period of theatre construction in Europe was the "long nineteenth century." Katalin Demeter's research, grounded in archival documents related to the construction of the Cluj Summer Theatre, analyses the design and functionality of this building, one that has been rebuilt several times and currently houses both the Hungarian State Theatre of Cluj and the Hungarian Opera of Cluj.

Marek Podlasiak also investigates a permanent theatrical venue: his study reconstructs the history of the theatre in Toruń, designed by the Viennese architectural firm Fellner and Helmer, the same studio responsible for the theatre building in Cluj, which today hosts the Romanian National Theatre (Teatrul Național Lucian Blaga) and the Romanian National Opera (Opera Națională Română din Cluj-Napoca)

An indispensable component of any theatrical event – and of theatre's sustained operation over time – is its audience. Accordingly, the opening chapter of the volume also includes a study in audience history. In her

contribution, Elisabeth Grossegger offers a compelling explanation for the radical transformation of the Burgtheater's audience in Vienna following the political upheavals of 1918, after the end of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

The second thematic section of the volume, titled "*Creators and Texts*", comprises studies that likewise engage with the theatre and theatrical culture of Cluj. Emese Egyed examines the role interpretations of actor and stage director János Kótsi Patkó's (1736–1842). Kálmán Kovács explores the reception history of a performance in Cluj of a historical drama by Körner, originally staged in Pest-Buda. Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér analyses productions in Cluj of dramatic texts translated by the renowned actress Róza Széppataki, known as Déryné (Mrs. Déry). Tamás Gajdó examines how the Farkas Street Theatre, inaugurated in 1821, was remembered in actors' writings. Anca Hațiegan investigates the relationship between Romanian theatre companies and Cluj's first *stone theatre*, while Andrea Tompa discusses an early Hungarian-language stage adaptation of the Holocaust. Finally, Gabriella-Nóra Tar examines a manuscript drama from 1825 set in Timișoara.

The shifts from school theatre traditions to the director-centered theatre of the twentieth century are examined in two studies included in the third chapter of this volume. Norbert Medgyesy S. examines the paraliturgical theatrical tradition sustained within the Franciscan school theatre of Csíksomlyó, a three-hundred-year-old heritage, as an important antecedent to the emergence of professional theatre. Réka Szabó, drawing on the work of theatre director Vlad Mugur (1927–2001), interprets contemporary *prompt books* as practical handbooks for the methodology of professional directing.

Due to objective circumstances, not all papers presented at the academic conference are included in this volume; nevertheless, we hope that the studies published here illuminate essential interconnections and contribute meaningfully to ongoing scholarly discourse.

Emese Egyed

Theatrical Spaces

Illusions of Stable Stages

Performance Spaces in the 19th Century

in Germany, Not Necessarily

What We Have Been Conditioned to Expect

Abstract. The theatre in the 19th century was different than it is today, but our treatment of it does not always reflect an understanding of the conditions which existed. Performances were given where there was enough space to accommodate an audience in front of a stage; this could be a theatre, but was often the town hall, a restaurant, a hotel, a gymnasium, a church or even a barn. The theatre was not the sole source for entertainment, but competed with many other events – music, lectures, sports, circus, etc. – for the support of a population which was limited. For the populace the theatre was primarily a place for entertainment and social gatherings; the moral, cultural and educational aspects were secondary, if they were ever really present. For the actors and directors, the theatre was – regardless of how they justified it to the outside world – a business, with financial gains being the primary motivation for what they were doing.

Keywords: *theatre venues in the 19th century German-theatre, theatre as business, theatre as entertainment, theatre almanacs and journals*

The following text is the result of several parallel projects dealing with theatre almanacs and local journals¹

¹ In order to differentiate between the types of publications referred to in this article – regardless of the terms used in the titles – the following terminology will be used: an “almanac” is a publication which was at least initially intended as a periodic publication and which treated numerous companies, generally in numerous cities; a “journal” is a publication, generally published by the prompter of a company at the end of the season or intermittently at the end of a year, which lists the members of the company and generally has a chronological repertory as well as fill material (poems, anecdotes, etc.). The almanacs often have more than 100 pages, while the journals are much smaller – generally between one and 24 pages.

1) a biographical database begun with the material in a biographical index² and augmented with information on all company members of German-language theatres in various almanacs from 1836 to 1893.³

2) a collection of local theatre journals. The collection of over 6000 identified titles⁴ can be viewed in the OPAC of the Don Juan Archives in Vienna (<http://www.theaterjournale.at>). Various articles relating to this

There are also theatre pocketbooks (Theater-Taschenbücher), which are anthologies of plays, and as such are not included in the documentation. The theatre pocketbooks were popular publications in the first half of the 19th century, not necessarily intended for practicing theatre professionals, but rather for the general public.

² Paul S. Ulrich, *Biographisches Verzeichnis für Theater, Tanz und Musik. Fundstellennachweis aus deutschsprachigen Nachschlagewerken und Jahrbüchern* [= Biographical Index for Theatre, Dance and Music. Master Index of German-Language Biographical Directories and Yearbooks], 2 vol. (Berlin: Berlin-Verlag, 1997) was a successor to: Paul S. Ulrich, *Theater, Tanz und Musik im Deutschen Bühnenjahrbuch. Ein Fundstellennachweis von biographischen Eintragungen, Abbildungen und Aufsätzen aus dem Bereich Theater, Tanz und Musik, die von 1836 bis 1984 im Deutschen Bühnenjahrbuch, seinen Vorgängern oder einigen anderen deutschen Theaterjahrbüchern erschienen sind* [= Theatre, Dance and Music in the Deutsches Bühnenjahrbuch. A Master Index of Biographical Entries and Pictures in the Deutsches Bühnenjahrbuch], 2 vol. (Berlin: Berlin-Verlag, 1985).

³ Almanach für Freunde der Schauspielkunst was continued as Deutscher Bühnen-Almanach; Ferdinand Roeder's Theater-Kalender and Almanach der Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnen-Angehöriger.

⁴ Using the number of venues listed in the almanacs and multiplying this by the number of seasons from 1775 until 1918, a sum of more than 100,000 journals which probably were published, since it was in the interest of the prompters to use them as a supplemental income. Just how many of these publications still exist is difficult to determine; many of the journals are found in institutions which one would not expect to have them. Another problem is that the various titles used by the prompters and the small size makes it difficult to locate them when they are listed in catalogs; furthermore, many libraries treat them as periodicals – which they are not – and don't give exact information on the individual volumes. Many institutions having journals do not catalog them, but place them together with playbills as an index. Others have bound them together and given them a non-descriptive title, for example, the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin lists in its catalog with the call number Yp 1089 a work "Theater zu Gera: 1826-1878; Sammelbd" with 16 bound entities. On closer examination the bound entities are 16 journals, none of which have been found elsewhere. Conversely, the volume with the call number Yp 1098 and the title "Halberstädtische Thalia, d.i. Verzeichnis sämtlicher in Halberstadt aufgeführter theatralischen Stücke, theils von Herrn Butenop's Kindertruppe vom 12. bis 28. May, theils von Herrn Karl Döbbelin's Gesellschaft vom 6. Sept. bis 19. Dec. 1797" is not a journal but rather a bound volume of playbills. And the City Museum in Leipzig has two sheets from 1837 which are not cataloged as a journal, but rather as illustrations of the theatre and the stage curtain, but are journals, i.e. they list the company and the repertory. And the Stadtarchiv in Freiburg/Breisgau has catalogued the bound volumes of journals when they are for Freiburg, but ignores the journals from nearby towns in the catalog description of the bound volumes. The list of examples is considerable, but is too long to be include here.

collection can be found in the list of my publications on the website of the Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte (<https://www.theatergeschichte.org/mitgliedschaft/publikationslisten-der-mitglieder/paul-s-ulrich/>).

3) the material documenting theatre in German-language almanacs⁵ which is being prepared for publication in the multi-volumes series *Dokumentation zu Topographie und Repertoire anhand von universal Theateralmanachen und lokalen Theaterjournalen* which will be published in Hollitzer Verlag (Vienna).⁶

When an inquiry was made to a city archive for material on the local theatre in the 19th century, the reply was that since there was no theatre building in the city in the 19th century, there could be no material on it. This was surprising, since the *Deutsches Bühnen-Almanach*, Ferdinand Roeder's *Theater-Kalender* and the *Almanach der Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnen-*

⁵ The major almanacs included in this documentation are: *Theater-Kalender* [published by Heinrich August Ottokar Reichard (1751-1828) was also published as *Taschenbuch für die Schaubühne* for regions where the publication of a calendar was not permitted, it often referred to as the *Gotha Theater-Kalender*]; *Almanach für Freunde der Schauspielkunst* (begun by the prompter of the court theatre in Berlin who became a theatre agent, Ludwig Wolff) which later had the title *Deutscher Bühnen-Almanach*; Ferdinand Roeder's *Theater-Kalender*; *Universal-Almanach für Theater, Théâtre-Variétés, Sing- und Liederspielhallen, Café-chantants, Concert-Etablissements, Arenen etc. des In- und Auslandes*; *Almanach der Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnen-Angehöriger* and its successors *Neuer Theater-Almanach* and *Deutsches Bühnen-Jahrbuch*; *Artisten-Kalender* and *Deutsches Theater-Adressbuch*. Although most of these almanacs are readily accessible for researchers, very little extensive use has been made of them. There are numerous reasons for this: 1) the presentation of the material, while extensive, is not in a form which is easily usable for a researcher, 2) the material is intended for the practitioners. In a similar vein Julius Cahn's *Official Theatrical Guide* and its successors *Cahn-Leighton Official Theatrical Guide*, *Julius Cahn-Gus Hill Official Theatrical Guide* and *Moving Picture Directory* and *Gus Hill's National Theatrical Directory* or *The Stage Year Book* seldom find their way into theatre historical treatments of the theatre topography in the English-speaking theatre although they, like their German-language counterparts, contain extensive information, not only on the names of the theatres, but also information on the number of inhabitants, number of seats and repertory.

⁶ The first volume was: Paul S. Ulrich, *Wiener Theater (1752-1918). Dokumentation zu Topographie und Repertoire anhand von universalen Theateralmanachen und lokalen Theaterjournalen mit einem Überblick zu Zeitungen mit Theaterreferaten und deren Referenten*, *Topographie und Repertoire des Theaters*, 1: Österreich: Wien (Wien: Hollitzer, 2018). This volume is an extensive documentation of Viennese venues listed in ca. 250 almanacs, calendars, yearbooks as well as a documentation of the Viennese newspapers covering the theatre plus their editors and reviewers.

Angehöriger⁷ all had listings of professional theatre activity in the city at this time; not necessarily in a building constructed solely for theatre performances, but rather in locations with spaces which were acceptable venues for performers and audience.

This is just one of many examples of how we transport our current understanding of theatre – and where theatre is performed – to the theatre in the past or blindly accept what has been told us by authorities and we don't check whether what we have been told holds up on closer scrutiny and in doing so we greatly distort the historical situation.

A few of many possible illustrations:

1) The reproduction on the cover of *Maske und Kothurn* of a statue of a Roman actor is considered to be an example of what the cothurnus was, i. e. a boot between four and ten inches high.⁸ Any sculptor will quickly recognize, that using this statue as an example of how high the cothurnus was is erroneous: the protrusions are not the cothurnus, but rather the anchoring for the statue.

2) Just because a text which appears unique is found in one location, is no indication that it is in fact unique: We just haven't found the original text.

⁷ The author compiled a major documentation on the venues of German-language theatres as listed in theatre almanacs for the period from 1772 to 1918, covering venues in over 6000 towns and cities, a project he pursued until his death in 2023. As extensive as this appears, the period up to 1836 is under-represented and the many ambulant companies are only briefly listed at the end of the 19th century. Likewise, the publications hardly mention performers and their activity when they were not attached to a company, they are only mentioned when they appeared as guests during the previous season. Interestingly, for the period up to 1836, when the major almanacs begin to be published, there are many local journals, particularly for cities in East Europe, which are not present in the almanacs. The venues listed in the almanacs are inconsistent: for almanacs covering the same year, only 75% of the venues are identical.

Beginning in 2022 multiple auxiliary volumes relating to the documentation will be published: a bibliography of theatre almanacs, a bibliography of theatre journals, an index to illustrations in almanacs and journals, and an index of repertoires in almanacs and journals. When the scattered information of where companies gave guest performances – these are only found under the theatre where they guested – and the information from the *Artisten-Kalender* has been fully incorporated, final copies for the various regions will be printed. To brook this time, preprints have been prepared for certain regions: Southeast Europe, Czechia, Poland, America, Northeast Europe and Berlin and are currently available for use in the Don Juan Archives, Vienna. Volumes for West Europe, Austria (excluding Vienna), and the current states in Germany are being prepared. When all the preprints have been compiled, the final editions of the regional volumes will be published.

⁸ Kendall K. Smith, "The Use of the High-Soled Shoe or Buskin in Greek Tragedy of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B. C.," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, no. 16 (1905): 123.

In the *Jahrbuch des Reussischen Theaters (Gera)* from 1928⁹, the following poem from the 1842 journal¹⁰ was reproduced:

Theure Gönner! Für Euch blinket
Dieser freundlich heitere Pokal.
Nehmt ihn an; er faßt die Zahl
Aller Wonne, die Euch winket.
Durch der Jahre weiten Raum
Nicht nur wachend, auch im Traume
Werden Euch der Schöpfers Freuden
In dem reichsten Maaß zu Theil;
Ringt Ihr selbst in herben Leiden
Sprießet Euch daraus nur Heil!
Jede neue Sonne
Schaffe neue Wonne.
Unter Scherzen
Fern von Schmerzen
Fülle Lust
Eure Brust.
Weise
Würze die
Freuden,
Weise
Kürze die Leiden,
Darum scheucht d. Sorgen
Fern vom Lager jeden Morgen;
Nur der Freude sei stets offen
Aufgethan das heitre Thor des Lebens.
Dürft' ich, theure Gönner! nicht vergebens
"Meiner Wünsche Wirklichkeit verhoffen!
Wer wäre außer mir – wohl glücklicher allhier.

What appears to be an original poem, is anything but: up to the present, 88 identical copies of the poem¹¹ have been found in journals from

⁹ Heinrich XLV. Erbprinz Reuss, *Jahrbuch des reussischen Theaters. Zum Jubiläum des Theaters 1902-1927* (Leipzig: Max Beck Verlag, 1928), 23.

¹⁰ Friedrich Ziegeler, *Repertoire- und Personalbestand des Hof-Theaters zu Gera unter Direktion des Herrn Wilhelm Böttner vom 19. December 1841 bis zum 30. Januar 1842* (Gera, 1842), 3.

¹¹ There are slight variations in the text and in the punctuation, but these are minimal. Unclear is when the first example of this poem appeared and who the author was. Without a doubt, the poem will certainly be found in additional journals, when they have been found and analyzed.

1827¹² to 1902¹³. The poem was seldom published in the same town more than once, which reinforces the impression that we are dealing with an original poem when it is found. Numerous other poems were printed in almanacs and – like the “Theure Gönner” poem – were reproduced either in full or in part in other journals. This indicates that very early theatre professionals used effective communication networks – long before the telegraph was invented, but exactly how they functioned has not been extensively examined.

3) When the Canadian theatre historian, Christopher Innes, writes that “after 1815, Intendants were instituted in almost all public theatres”¹⁴, he creates the impression that this title – which was until at least the last quarter of the 19th century reserved for court officials in charge of the organization of court theatres – was a common designation for heads of public theatres. This was most definitely not the case, since almost all public theatres were private enterprises run by a director, who did not use this term to describe themselves. If a different term was used for organizers of performances of companies, it was impresario. The first intendant of a public theatre was Emil Claar (1842-1930), who was installed as the first intendant of a public theatre in Frankfurt/Main in 1879.

4) The important theatre towns were primarily Berlin, Munich, Hamburg and Vienna with for shorter periods of time Meiningen and Bayreuth.¹⁵ Little attention is paid to the numerous provincial towns where there was a very active theatre environment. As the theatre critic Herbert

¹² Franz Reiser, *Neujahrs-Pokal. Den Freunden dramatischer Kunst, allen verehrten Theater-Gönnern in Innsbruck ehrfurchtsvoll kredenzt* (Innsbruck: 1827), 3.

¹³ Julie Klein, *Souffleur-Journal des Stadt- und Aktien-Theaters in St. Gallen unter der Direktion des Hrn. Alfred Helm. Wintersaison 1901/02*. Allen Freunden und Gönnern des Theaters hochachtungsvoll gewidmet. Ertrag statt eines Benefizes für die Souffleuse (St. Gallen: 1902), 8.

¹⁴ Christopher Innes, “The rise of the director, 1850-1939,” in *A History of German theatre*, ed. Simon Williams, and Maik Hamburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 174.

¹⁵ These are the cities emphasized in Simon Williams and Maik Hamburg, *A History of German theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2011. This fails to take into account the many other major cities where theatre was performed, for example, Basel, Bremen, Budapest, Danzig, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt/Main, Freiburg/Breisgau, Graz, Hannover, Innsbruck, Königsberg, Leipzig, Mainz, Mannheim, New York, Nürnberg, Philadelphia, Prague, Reval, Riga, Salzburg, Sankt Petersburg, Straßburg, Stuttgart, Würzburg and Zürich, to name only a few of the major cities where theatre was found, not to mention the thousands of cities which are documented in the almanacs.

Ihering (1888-1977) rightly stated “What possibilities and contradictions lie dormant in the German provinces. [...] You can’t know Germany if you don’t know the provinces in their smallness and their rich possibilities, with their resignation and courage. No Berlin theatre director puts his position in jeopardy on a daily basis like a director in the provinces.”¹⁶

The majority of the theatres were in the provinces; this was where important innovations in theatre productions occurred and where many artists, who later became famous and influential, had their beginnings. Those lucky enough to attract attention from the theatres in the major cities were able to move up on the theatre ladder, otherwise, they had to be content to wander from town to town in the provinces. The following table shows the distribution of the towns which are documented with having performances. Interesting is the large number of towns in present-day Czech Republic and Poland, where there was a great degree of mobility is noticeable – not only of companies, but also of artists. In these multi-lingual regions, the number of German-speaking residents is similar to the population size of the towns in Germany and Austria, i. e. there were similar population bases, and the repertoires varied only slightly from region to region.

Geographical¹⁷ distribution of towns listed in almanacs¹⁸

Germany	2061
Czech Republic	427
Poland	427
Austria	320
France	158
USA	139
Switzerland	85

¹⁶ Quoted in Britta Mirzi, *Theater im Westen – die Krefelder Bühne in Stadt, Region und Reich (1884–1944). Rahmen, Akteure, Programm und Räume des Theaters in der Provinz*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur Nordwesteuropa 27 (Münster: Waxmann, 2017), 13. taken from Herbert Ihering, “Der Kampf um die kleinen Provinzbühnen. Uraufführung in Oldenburg,” in *Von Reinhardt bis Brecht. Vier Jahrzehnte Theater und Film*, ed. Herbert Ihering, vol. 3: 1930-1932 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1961), 113. English translation psu.

¹⁷ The geographical countries refer to the current borders.

¹⁸ Excluding those in the *Artisten-Kalender*, which has not been completely cataloged.

5) When discussing repertories, the tendency is to illustrate them with playbills showing that a play we today recognize as being a “classic” was performed. What is overlooked is that these productions were a miniscule part of the repertory. When complete seasons are examined, the results are that these productions (when they weren’t performed shortly after the play was written, i.e. when they were contemporary plays and had not reached the status of being a classical play) were generally given when a star gave a guest appearance¹⁹ or when they were offered at reduced entrance fees. For a director, the “classics” were box office poison and only performed when necessary.

The main staple of the repertories were light comedies – often based on French plays.²⁰ The population bases did not permit most plays and

¹⁹ In such instances the audience did not come to see the play, but to see the guest. For the director it was a way of charging increased entrance fees and furthermore, since most of the actors had already performed in these plays – the roles the actor had performed were found in a list every actor presented to a director when they signed a contract – and this meant that the actor could be expected to perform these roles without having a rehearsal.

²⁰ For analyses of the repertories in theatre journals see u. a. Paul S. Ulrich, “Die Spielplangestaltung und das Personal des deutschsprachigen Temeswarer Theaters im 19. Jahrhundert statistisch betrachtet, insbesondere für die Jahre 1822-1850,” in *Das Deutsche Staatstheater Temeswar nach 50 Jahren vor dem Hintergrund deutscher Theaterentwicklung in Europa und im Banat seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*. Beiträge der Internationalen Wissenschaftlichen Tagung in Temeswar vom 5.-7. Mai 2003, ed. Horst Fassel, Thalia Germanica 7 (Tübingen: Institut für Donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde, 2005), 51-74.; Paul S. Ulrich, “Die Spielplangestaltung des deutschsprachigen Theaters in Elbing im 19. Jahrhundert im Lichte der Statistik (vor allem von 1846 bis 1888),” in *Migrationen / Standortwechsel. Deutsches Theater in Polen*, ed. Artur Pelka, Karolina Prykowska-Michalak, Horst Fassel, and Paul S. Ulrich, Thalia Germanica 11 (Lodz, Tübingen: Machejek, Institut für Donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde, 2007a), 25-60.; Paul S. Ulrich, “Die Spielplangestaltung des deutschsprachigen Revaler Theaters statistisch betrachtet, insbesondere für die Jahre 1848-1914,” in *Alltag und Festtag im deutschen Theater im Ausland vom 17.-20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Horst Fassel, and Paul S. Ulrich, Thalia Germanica 9 (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2007b), 100-127.; Paul S. Ulrich, “Die Vormärz-Repertoires ausgewählter Theater in dem ungarisch-österreichischen Raum,” in *(Dráma)szövegek metamorfózisa. Kontaktustörténetek / Metamorphosis of the (Drama)Text. Stories of Relation*, ed. Emese Egyed, Katalin Ágnes Bartha, and Gabriella-Nóra Tar (Cluj-Napoca: Societatea Muzeului Ardelean, 2011), vol. 1: 306-343.; Paul S. Ulrich, “Wurde die Revolution auf der Bühne widerspiegelt? Eine Untersuchung der Spielpläne ausgewählter deutschsprachiger Theater im Jahre 1848,” in *Im Spiegel der Theatergeschichte. Deutschsprachiges Theater im Wechsel*

musical pieces from being presented more than once or twice in a season. There were often evenings with two or three shorter pieces, which by remixing were able to give the impression that there were more new plays in the repertory than was the actual case.²¹

6) The terminologies associated with the theatre are both confusing and at the same time revealing. The term “theatre” may refer to a building, an organization, a production and even to the location of military activities. Within the theatre there are terminologies which reveal hierarchies, not only within the theatre itself, but also in how the theatre is perceived. Prior to the 20th century, most actors had a designation for the type of roles they performed: hero, lover, femme fatale, father roles, mother roles, tragedian, comedian, extra; the same holds true for opera with role types based on the range, weight and colour of their voices. Simultaneously there are hierarchies for the types of plays: such

von *Raum und Zeit*, ed. Gunilla Dahlberg, Horst Fassel, and Paul S. Ulrich, *Thalia Germanica* 15 (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2015a), 113-143.; Paul S. Ulrich, “Eine statistische Untersuchung des Repertoires deutschsprachiger Theater im Vormärz in Agram, Arad, Fünfkirchen, Hermannstadt, Laibach, Ödenburg und Temesvár,” in *Deutsche Sprache und Kultur im Banat. Studien zur Geschichte, Presse, Literatur und Theater, sprachlichen Verhältnissen, Wissenschafts-, Kultur- und Buchgeschichte, Kulturkontakten und Identitäten*, ed. Wynfrid Kriegleder, Andrea Seidler, and Jozef Tancer, *Presse und Geschichte – Neue Beiträge* 87 (Bremen: edition lumière, 2015b), 105-133. and Lothar Schirmer and Paul S. Ulrich, *Das Jahr 1848. Kultur in Berlin im Spiegel der Vossischen Zeitung*, 2 vol., *Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte* 78 (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, 2008).

²¹ Other tactics used by a director to attract an audience were to modify the titles of plays (for example: Roderich Benedix’ “Das bemooste Haupt, oder: Der lange Israel” would be listed either as “Das bemooste Haupt” or “Der lange Israel”; Ferdinand Heine’s “Der erste Waffengang, oder: Der kleine Richelieu” as “Der erste Waffengang” or “Der kleine Richeleu”) and thereby creating the impression that the play being given had not already been on the program. A side effect was that actors did not have to learn new roles. Examples of this can be found in the title listings in Lothar Schirmer and Paul S. Ulrich, *Das Jahr 1848. Kultur in Berlin im Spiegel der Vossischen Zeitung*, 2 vol., *Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte* 78 (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, 2008).

designations include tragedy versus comedy²², serious versus entertaining, legitimate versus illegitimate²³.

Today many, if not most, theatres get some or all of their financing from municipal or state budgets. This is in stark contrast to the situation in the 19th century, when most theatres (including many so-called court theatres which were private enterprises with only partial financing from the court)²⁴ relied almost extensively on income from the box office. To a large extent this reflects a major change in how the theatre was viewed. Prior to the end of the First World War theatre was not viewed as a cultural necessity which needed to be financed by the cities. The abolishment of the court structure meant that many of the duties born by the courts became

²² The basis for our understanding of tragedy is Aristotle's *Poetics*, which only deals with tragedy. The second part of the *Poetics* which supposedly dealt with comedy has not been passed on to us. An interesting treatment of this is Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, in which a monk tries to destroy the only remaining copy of the *Poetics* – which dealt with comedy – in an attempt to prevent comedy being placed on the more serious level of tragedy. The underlying religious, puritanical connotations in this treatment unfortunately reoccur throughout both popular and academic discussions of the theatre. For a treatment of the theatre in the USA see Levine 1988. Although Levine's treatment deals with the situation in the USA, the underlying thesis applies very much to the situation in the German-speaking theatre, if not to the general situation in the German communities, where serious content is placed above that of the entertaining aspects. This is very much illustrated in Britta-Marie Schenk's description of the reform movement of the Bühnenvolksbund (a Christian-national visitor organization formed at the end of World War I), see Britta-Marie Schenk, *Das Theater der Zukunft? Theaterkritik und Reformvorstellungen des christlich-nationalen Bühnenvolksbundes in der Weimarer Republik*, Kleine Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte 45 (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, 2011). A parallel situation is found in the German public library scene at the end of World War I, when the purpose of public libraries was to be a place where the patrons would be able to elevate their reading tastes by being guided to improve their literary tastes and abilities by reading up a literary ladder (hochlesen).

²³ For an extensive treatment of this system in England see Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁴ For example, the court theatre in Meiningen was played by private companies (one of the first being the director Ferdinand Röder (1807-1880), who later became a theatre agent and published Ferdinand Roeder's Theater-Kalender until his death). The one-year contracts for the Meiningen court theatre only lasted for a season (October through Easter). This changed when Georg II (1826-1914) became regent in 1866 and was personally involved in the theatre – which now was primarily financed from the state budget, but once the world-famous tours of the Meininger began (1874-1890), the theatre was partially financed with income derived from the successful tours.

municipal duties, and consequently, many if not most of the local theatres were now financed and administered by the municipal authorities.²⁵

7) Another misconception is that primarily plays, operettas, ballet and operas were the stable fare of theatres. The theatre fare was quite varied and could consist not only of plays, ballets and operas, but also musical interludes, living pictures²⁶, acrobatic performances, appearances of ape impersonators, midgets, etc. Although the theatre in Germany did not have the large number of vaudeville and variety theatres which were common in England and America, when performers from Germany gave guest performances in America, they modified their acts to fit in with the performance structures found in the States. In the later part of the 19th century, when many of the guest tours were organized, most of the theatres visited were controlled by agencies which had actors under contract and put together production tours on circuits playing their own theatres. The agencies in Germany managed actors and had the rights to plays, but they did not extend their activities to running theatre circuits and organizing production tours.²⁷

²⁵ This organizational change also resulted in the ceasing of theatre journals being produced by prompters. When local publications are found, they were produced by the theatre, i. e. they like the theatres ceased being privately prepared.

²⁶ This form of presentation in the theatre was quite common in both the professional theatre as well as private entertainments. In the Berlin court theatre in 1826 they often formed the first part of the evening's entertainment (descriptions of these performances as recorded on playbills can be found in the OPAC of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin - <https://www.stabikat.de/>). For additional treatment of this type of performance in the theatre see Gisold Lambert, "Lebende Bilder - Tableaux vivants in Berlin des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Studien zur Berliner Kunstgeschichte*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Klingenburg (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann Verlag, 1986), 221-243.; Bettina Brandl-Risi, *BilderSzenen. Tableaux vivants zwischen Bildender Kunst, Theater und Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert*, Rombach Scenae 15 (Freiburg i. Breisgau: Rombach, 2013).

²⁷ There has been little written on theatre agents in Germany, which is regrettable, since the agents (many of whom began their theatre careers as prompters) had a profound influence on the theatre. They not only arranged contracts (for a season and also for guest appearances) but also had the rights to plays. This meant that they exerted a greater influence on not only the composition of the theatre companies, but also on the repertoire. The agent, former prompter of the Königliche Schauspiele in Berlin, Ludwig Wolff, also published the *Almanach für Freunde der Schauspielkunst* - which had its beginning in his *Repertorium und Personalbestand der Königlichen Schauspiele zu Berlin* - until 1846. Perhaps the most influential theatre agent was Ferdinand Röder (1807-1880), who - following a successful career as actor and director - became a theatre agent and also published *Ferdinand Röders Theater-Kalender*. A detailed description of Roeder's importance as a theatre agent is found in Catrin Möderler, *Ferdinand Röder. Ein Leben dem Theater* (Hamburg: tradition, 2020), 107-125. The few treatments of agents are: Petra S. Hildebrand, "Das Theateragenturwesen 1832-1931," (master's

To a certain extent, elements of this are reflected in our understanding of historical theatrical activity. It is a major misconception, that the theatre is a stabile institution. At best this might only be applicable to the building where the public gathers to view or participate in an event (not only theatre, also balls, conferences, etc.). In the 19th century, the location where performances were held may have been a building whose purpose was primarily for the production of theatre presentations, but theatre presentations were more frequently given in rooms in the town hall, restaurants, hotels and gymnasiums. Furthermore, despite what was often used as a reason for permitting theatre performances, i. e. that was a “cultural” environment, in reality the theatre was a place for social gathering and entertainment.²⁸

The documentation being prepared reveals many aspects of the German-language theatre which have been neglected. Why have so few of the locations where theatre was performed not been included in treatments of the German theatre? Why has the theatre historical interest been primarily

thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, 1993); Stefanie Watzka, *Verborgene Vermittler. Ansätze zu einer Historie der Theateragenten und -verleger*, Kleine Mainzer Schriften zur Theaterwissenschaft 10 (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2006) and Nic Leonhard, *Theater über Ozeane. Vermittler transatlantischen Austauschs (1890-1925)* (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2018). The book by Nic Leonhardt brooks the situation in Europe with that in America, where theatre agencies not only had actors under contract, they also put together productions which were then sent on tour to the circuits of theatres which they also controlled. The purpose for these productions was clear - they were economic-based, with little or no attempt to advertise them as being art. When European artists toured in America, they were invariably managed by the American agencies and their programs were adjusted to conform to what the American public expected: opera singers would also sing folk songs mixed with opera arias and ballet dancers would combine classical ballet dances with hornpipes and folk dances, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow, Lowbrow. The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 108.

²⁸ Recently there have been numerous publications dealing with the entertainment aspect of the theatre in the German-speaking cities, among them: Tobias Becker, Anna Littmann, and Johanna Niedbalski, eds., *Die tausend Freuden der Metropole. Vergnügungskultur um 1900* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011); Daniel Morat, Tobias Becker, Kerstin Lange, Johanna Niedbalski, Anna Gnausch, and Paul Nolte, eds., *Weltstadtvergnügen. Berlin 1880-1930*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016); Paul Nolte, ed., *Die Vergnügungskultur der Grossstadt. Orte - Inszenierungen - Netzwerke (1880-1930)* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2016); Tobias Becker, *Inszenierte Moderne. Populäres Theater in Berlin und London 1880-1930*, Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Historischen Instituts London 74 (Oldenbourg: de Gruyter, 2014). Unfortunately, this aspect - like the business side of the theatre - has failed to make its presence in the bulk of the treatments of the theatre. This is particularly true for those writers who place an emphasis on literature or music and not the actual practices of the theatre or who only rely on what academicians write about the theatre.

on the so-called theatre centres: Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg and not viewed as a pyramid with each location at the lower level feeding the needs at the next level? Why are those regions where the number of travelling companies was extremely large (particularly Poland, Czechia and the USA under-represented in the almanacs²⁹ and in the historical treatment of the theatre. Why doesn't the treatment of opera by musicologists and the treatment of theatre by theatre historians enrich one another?³⁰

The population of most cities was until the later part of the 19th century generally under 20,000, at the same time the number of seats in the venues was between 500 and 800. Such a constellation placed extreme demands on the theatre: in order to be financially viable, every evening had to have a different program; this meant that actors were required to perform a different role every evening.³¹



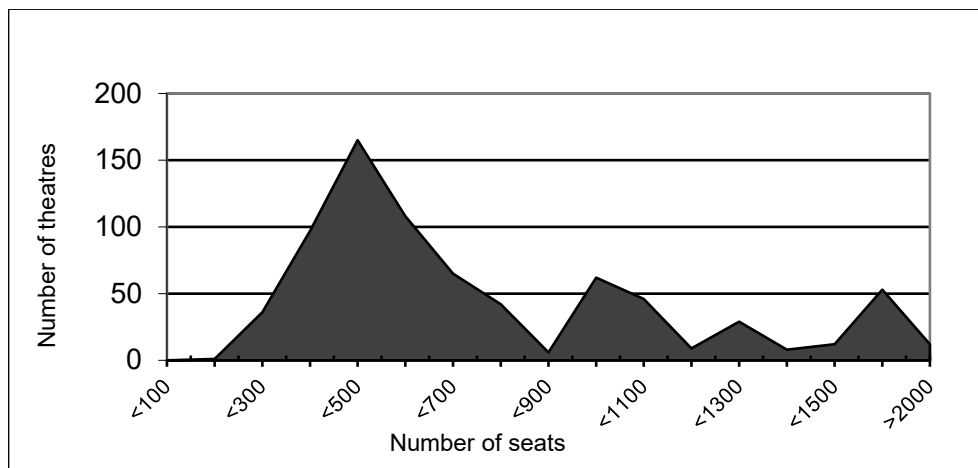
Number of inhabitants in cities where theatre was performed.³²

²⁹ As a rule, the further the theatre companies were from the editorial offices of the almanacs, the less they are represented in the almanacs. This is not only true for Poland and Czechia, but also for theatres in other East European countries and in North America.

³⁰ This is particularly disturbing, since most locations where opera was performed were the same locations where theatre performances were given and the internal structures and problems were similar.

³¹ This increased the need for a prompter, who – because of the restrictions imposed by the censor – had to make certain that the texts were delivered as prescribed by the authorities. Another result of this situation is that plays were chosen which could be prepared without numerous rehearsals and which could be presented without new scenery or extensive production demands.

³² Source: Adolf Oppenheim and Ernst Gettke, eds., *Deutsches Theater-Lexikon. Eine Encyklopädie alles Wissenswerthen der Schauspielkunst und Bühnentechnik* (Leipzig: Carl Reißner, 1889).



Number of seats in theatres.³³

Identifying the various types of venues is extremely difficult, since the terminology used, both contemporarily and historically, is inconsistent. The name “Stadttheater” did not necessarily refer to a physical building, but rather a location for which the city authorities granted performance rights. Even though the name “Stadttheater” was used in successive almanacs for the venue in a town, it need not always refer to the same structure. Because the orthography in 19th century had not been normalized, there are also extreme inconsistencies in the naming of the venues. There are other inconsistencies which have to be considered: in Berlin, for example, the administrative organization of the court theatre was the *Königliche Schauspiele*; for most of the 19th century there were at least four locations where the members of the *Königliche Schauspiele* performed³⁴: the *Königliches Schauspielhaus* on the Gendarmenmarkt, the *Königliches Opernhaus* on Unter den Linden, the *Schloßtheater* in the nearby town of Charlottenburg and the *Königliches Schauspielhaus* in nearby Potsdam.

³³ Source: Adolf Oppenheim and Ernst Gettke, eds., *Deutsches Theater-Lexikon. Eine Encyklopädie alles Wissenswerthen der Schauspielkunst und Bühnentechnik* (Leipzig: Carl Reißner, 1889).

³⁴ At the same time it needs be remembered that in towns with a court, members of the resident company would also be required to give performances in private residences of the court members. Examples of this are the evening entertainments given in the *Palais der Königlichen Prinzessinnen* in Berlin from 1826 to 1837 (see the playbills in the OPAC of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin – www.stabikat.de).

The theatre landscape in Berlin at the end of the 19th century is extremely complicated: new privately-run theatres were opened and frequently closed within a short time, but as a rule there were following the modification of the rules governing theatres in 1872³⁵ which resulted in an explosion in the number of theatres in Berlin, with as many as 60 or more theatres in operation.³⁶ The explosion as reflected in the almanacs is, however, tilted, since it does not take into account the many venues for performance which opened in the years following the loosening of restrictions on running a place of performance and which are partially listed in the *Artisten-Kalender* at the beginning of the 20th century.

For ambulant companies, performances were held wherever there was space for actors and audiences. This may have been in a town hall, a restaurant, a gymnasium, a hotel, a church, a train station, a private home of a wealthy citizen, or even a barn.³⁷

Construction of a permanent building exclusively for performances is dependent on a person or institution willing to finance not only the construction, but also the upkeep over an extended period of time (likewise adherence to the building codes and administrative regulations) must be guaranteed. Then there is the question of whether there is sufficient interest

³⁵ Gewerbeordnung für den Norddeutschen Bund vom 21. Juni 1869, or the Gewerbeordnung für das Deutsche Reich vom 1. Juli 1883.

³⁶ This number is misleading, since not all the theatres were located in the Berlin at the time: many of the surrounding cities, such as Charlottenburg, Schöneberg, Steglitz and Spandau, which were incorporated into Greater Berlin in 1920, had their own theatres and were listed as being in Berlin; furthermore, because of the large number of actors stationed in Berlin, many touring companies had their base in Berlin, but did not perform there. Then there are the venues used by amateur theatre clubs and those where individual artists performed. Many of the venues – particularly those in restaurants, cafés, and hotels – listed in the *Artisten-Kalender* were short-lived or changed hands and names frequently. A similar situation existed in Vienna and Hamburg, and the situation in New York was similar: "By 1840 there were twelve theatres, by 1860, thirty-two, and by 1880, sixty-two", see S. D. [Travis Stewart] Trav, *No Applause – Just Throw Money. The Book that made Vaudeville Famous* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005), 32. Following the Civil War there were approximately 300 concert saloons in New York, see S. D. [Travis Stewart] Trav, *No Applause – Just Throw Money. The Book that made Vaudeville Famous* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005), 40.

³⁷ The actor Glindmeier describes actors performing in a barn in Schleswig, where cows were among the spectators, see Fr[iedrich] Glindmeier, "Etwas vom Theater in Schleswig-Holstein vor fünfzig Jahren," *Die Heimat. Monatschrift für schleswig-holsteinische Heimatforschung und Volkstumspflege* 18, no. 7 (1908): 180-182. As unusual as this may seem today, in the 19th century it was probably a normal situation for many travelling companies.

in attracting a constant audience (the populations were generally well under 20,000 and seating capacities between 500 and 900³⁸) to provide a financial basis for performances. Since most theatres were concessioned to theatre directors, who were interested in not only financing their undertaking, but also in gaining profits, the repertories were geared to drawing enough spectators to finance the undertaking; this meant offerings strong on entertainment were what was offered. With such conditions, it was normal that a play would only be presented once in a season; this meant that the actors had to have an extremely large number of roles which they could be called upon to perform with little or no rehearsal.³⁹

Conflicting terminologies are continuously used in reference to the theatre: "theatre" may be the space where performances are held, what is performed, the organization giving performances, but also for military activity.

Since the 18th century there has been a continuous trend to create hierarchies in reference to the theatre. This implies that there are some theatres which are better than others, some performers which are better than others. Amateur performers are not viewed as having the same quality as professional performers, performers in "ambulant" companies are not on the same level as those in "stationary" companies;⁴⁰ performers in the provinces are not on the same level as those in the major cities or those who perform in

³⁸ Other factors decisive for the calculation of how economically feasible operating a theatre was were: what restrictions were placed on the concession, for example: on how many days in the week were performances allowed, what requirements did the city place on the director, such as costs for heating and lighting, technical staff, musicians, special requirements for what types of plays had to be offered, how many benefit performances for social institutions had to be given, did the director have exclusive rights for performances, or would he be granted compensation when a competing institution gave performances in the city.

³⁹ When actors joined a company, they had to provide a list of roles which they had performed; it was expected that they could perform these roles without extensive preparation or notice.

⁴⁰ The distinction between ambulant and stabile companies is used by Ferdinand Roeder in his *Theater-Kalender*. This designation is confusing, since many of the companies he classifies as "stabile" only have an appearance of being stabile, i. e. having a permanent structure. In fact, most of the companies were anything but "stabile"; they often alternated giving performances in several towns during a season. Furthermore, the composition of the company varied from season to season, with only a few members staying with a company for more than one season. In this regard, many of the "ambulant" companies exhibited a more "stabile" company structure than the "stabile" companies, since many ambulant companies were family enterprises and the family stayed together over a longer period of time than the members in the "stabile" companies.

a court theatre, artists not engaged in a company but performing as guests in theatres or other venues have a lesser position in the performer hierarchy. Implicit in this is that since those performing in companies at the apex of the hierarchy will be performing more artistically valuable plays, they are better than those in companies which have to rely on less artistically acceptable plays to draw an audience, furthermore the pay scale in the larger companies is higher than that of the “lesser” companies and hence the economic status of the performer accentuates his or her “quality”.

The situation becomes even more complex when one considers all the various levels where performances are given.⁴¹ This is illustrated by the title of a theatre almanac from 1870: *Universal-Almanach für Theater, Théâtre-Variétés, Sing- und Liederspielhallen, Café-chantants, Concert-Etablissements, Arenen etc. des In- und Auslandes*, which lists not only theatres, but numerous other venues (restaurants, cafés, circuses, etc.)⁴² not found in other almanacs.

Schiller’s argument that the theatre was a moral institution⁴³ has been placed in the forefront of arguments when it is necessary to justify the importance of theatre and why it should receive financial support. This is an argument which was widely discussed, but which was not supported by city government: there was minimal financial support for the theatre from communal budgets in the 19th century; the theatre was viewed as a source for money to finance social institutions for the needy. In reality, the theatre was a place where one went to be seen and to be entertained, not to be lectured. When the “classics” were presented, it was for one of several reasons: 1) it was specifically requested by the city government or other influential persons, 2) it was a vehicle for a guest and the audience was drawn to the theatre because

⁴¹ When one extends the focus to include the situation in America, the name of venues is even less homogeneous. This reflects the different status of theatre. Among the names for the permanent structures used as venues were: saloon, music hall, opera house, variety theatre, odeon, orpheon, vaudeville, museum, variety hall, concert hall, melodeon, box house, establishment, bar, honky-tonk, barrelhouse. The shows presented were a smorgasbord of short acts and the audience, which for the greater part of the 19th century was predominantly male, was not interested in highbrow content. This is illustrated in S. D. [Travis Stewart] Trav, *No Applause – Just Throw Money. The Book that made Vaudeville Famous* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005).

⁴² Just how little is included in the almanacs and yearbooks can be seen by visiting the database of INTHEGA (Interessengemeinschaft der Städte mit Theatergastspielen, <http://www.inthega.de/die-inthega-datenbank/>). Some of the cities/venues are found in the *Deutsches Bühnen-Jahrbuch*, but many are not.

⁴³ Friedrich Schillers talk „Die Schaubühne als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet“, was held on 26 June 1784 before the *Deutsche Gesellschaft*.

of the guest,⁴⁴ not because of the play, and 3) the play was offered with reduced prices and/or as a Saturday matinee. As a rule, these plays were box-office poison and not particularly interesting for a director.

Another popular view of the theatre is that it is a cultural institution. The elevation of the theatre from being part of what today would be classified as the entertainment industry to a cultural institution grew during the 19th century and is today a concept which is hard to contest. Once an institution is categorized as being part of the cultural heritage, it has achieved a hierarchical status which places it above that of entertainment⁴⁵ and which makes it more difficult to avoid providing financial support for it. However, in the 19th century the theatre was only superficially a cultural institution and seldom received much financial support from the city administration.

Regardless of whether the emphasis has been on the theatre as a moral or a cultural institution, or whether the actors and directors have reiterated that they are engaged in art, the practice relativates this. Actors and directors place the financial aspects in the foreground when it comes to signing a contract: if the money is not there, there will be no performance, and consequently, no art.⁴⁶

Then there is also the attempt to classify the quality of what is performed – there is “serious” and “entertaining” theatre [in England “legitimate” and “illegitimate” theatre⁴⁷], as if the one excludes the other.

⁴⁴ This constellation was interesting for a director for many reasons: 1) a guest was a welcome way to charge higher ticket prices, 2) having a guest was a welcome change in the make-up of the company and hence an additional attraction to the populace, and 3) since most members of a company had already performed roles in these plays, the necessary pre-production preparation could be kept to a minimum.

⁴⁵ For the treatment in the USA, which is equally applicable to understanding the situation in Germany, see: Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow, Lowbrow. The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988).

⁴⁶ Just how important the financial element is can be seen by reading the articles in *Deutsche Bühnen-Genossenschaft. Offizielles Organ der Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnen-Angehöriger* (Berlin 1872-1909), continued as: *Der neue Weg* (Berlin 1909-1935), other organs of professional theatre organizations or the constant references to needing money in the poems and mottos in theatre journals. The treatment of theatre being “show business” is much more open in England and America, where “the business of show business is business”, S. D. [Travis Stewart] Trav, *No Applause – Just Throw Money. The Book that made Vaudeville Famous* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005), 200.

⁴⁷ For an extensive treatment of this, see Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Tragedies are seen as being better than comedies.⁴⁸ This is, however, a carry-over from the attempts in the 18th century to elevate the status of actors, and inherently implies that a puritanical stigma is attached to performers at lower levels of the theatrical hierarchy. Religious and political reservations about the value of the theatre were rampant. Political attempts to control the theatre were generally relegated to censors, who not only decided if a play could be performed, but also made alterations in the text to conform to the “politically or religiously correct” beliefs of the time; this was controlled by the presence of the censor in the audience – with drastic consequences, if the approved version of the play was not given.

When directors applied for permission to give theatre performances in the 19th century, they often had to provide house rules which at least indicated that the theatre would be run seriously and non-offensively and that all company members would be held responsible for adhering to these rules. If all aspects of the rules were scrupulously followed, then most actors would have been without any salary at the end of the month – and this might be one reason for the mobility of actors – why so many left the company without terminating their contracts.

The repertories of theatres today tend to consist of full-length, 3 act plays. In the 19th century the composition of the theatre offerings was much more varied. Although 3-act plays were performed, there were frequently additional offerings (music, dances, artists with specialty numbers, etc.) by artists not directly attached to the theatre company in the intermissions; these numbers had equal billing on the playbills. Likewise, often several shorter plays (one and two act, which would be variously combined to create the illusion that something new was being offered) would be combined to fill the evening with intermission offerings.

It is easy to develop a cultural scenario where theatre is at the centre of the artistic world. It is easy to ignore all the other “distractions” available to those seeking diversion from daily life: concerts, readings, museal offerings such as anatomic museums, the circus, dining out and athletic events, to name a few. All these variant leisure offerings compete with each other for the

⁴⁸ Although this distinction is often made by those outside the theatre, tragedians tend to have a high opinion of the artistic qualities of comedians.

attention of the populace.⁴⁹ When the population structures are considered, it becomes obvious that the competition among the providers will be great. The larger the population base is in a town, the more offerings will be made available and the more conflicting the depiction of leisure life becomes.⁵⁰

Conclusion

The theatre in the 19th century was different than it is today, but our treatment of it does not always reflect an understanding of the conditions which existed. Performances were given where there was enough space to accommodate an audience in front of a stage; this could be a theatre, but was often the town hall, a restaurant, a hotel, a gymnasium, a church or even a barn. Furthermore, the theatre was not the sole source for entertainment, but competed with many other events – music, lectures, sports, circus, etc. – for the support of a population which was limited. Furthermore, there were more stringent restrictions placed on it than there were for the other events.⁵¹ For the populace the theatre was primarily a place for entertainment and social gatherings; the moral, cultural and educational aspects were secondary, if they were ever really present. For the actors and directors, the theatre was – regardless of how they justified it to the outside world – a business, with financial gains being the primary motivation for what they were doing.

⁴⁹ When possible, when a theatre director signed a contract with the city administration, he tried to have a paragraph included which permitted him to receive a percentage (generally 10%) of the proceeds of his competition. Conversely, he generally included in the contracts with the members of his company, that only on rare occasions would they be permitted to appear in other events in the same locality.

⁵⁰ An interesting presentation of the composite offerings of public entertainment in Berlin in 1848 is: Lothar Schirmer and Paul S. Ulrich, *Das Jahr 1848. Kultur in Berlin im Spiegel der Vossischen Zeitung*, 2 vol., Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte 78 (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, 2008), which presents a chronological listing of the daily attractions in Berlin in 1848 together with the accompanying articles in the *Vossische Zeitung*. The chronology is at: www.theatergeschichte.org/dokumentation/berlin/1848/index.html.

⁵¹ This is without a doubt a result of the attempts to elevate the status of the theatre to be a moral/cultural institution. If the theatre is placed on a higher status, it automatically risks being controlled much more to make sure that it conforms to these standards.

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Mapping Routes of Hungarian Theatre-Making in the Second Half of 19th Century¹

Abstract. The paper focuses on historical particularities in close connection with spaces described in terms of geospatial mapping, as enduring places (as recognizable dots on maps). At the same time, different dynamics are to be reckoned with; as such, the once existing stone theatre building in Cluj is considered as a stock of functions and forms tied to processes of the past and the present. Thus, as a way of perception for the theatre historian, it certainly presents challenges: what does she/he perceive from the former inhomogeneous construction?

On the one hand a geospatial mapping highlights the spatial spreading of Hungarian acting against the backdrop of the ethnically mixed population of the so-called “theatre” towns in the second half of the 19th century. On the other hand, given the network of theatre scenes established as a consequence of touring companies, the particularity of the theatre in Cluj as it appears, it may be best described by taking into account institutional and artistic perspectives. A parallel between quantitative and qualitative dimensions presents the necessary intertwining of the structural determination (i.e. the theatre as a network element) and artistic career.

Keywords: *map, provincial theatre companies, Hungarian language acting, 19th century, theatre cities/seasons*

Among the several (paradigmatic) turns which have marked social sciences, the “spatial turn” has had a stimulating effect on scholars in cultural studies and theatre studies. Specifically, we can speak of significant changes in both conceptual and methodological matters. In the following I will focus on historical particularities in close connection with spaces described in terms of geospatial mapping, as enduring places (as recognizable dots on maps) At

¹ An earlier version of this article was published as “The National Theatre of Kolozsvár [Cluj] in the Network of Hungarian Theatre Companies (Mapping Theatre Towns in the Second Half of the 19th Century)”, *Musicologica Olomucensia*, 35, no. 1 (2023): 73-96.

the same time, different dynamics are to be reckoned with; as such, the once existing stone theatre building in Cluj (Kolozsvár) is considered as a stock of functions and forms tied to processes of the past and the present. Thus, as way of perception for the theatre historian, it certainly presents challenges: what does she/he perceive from the former inhomogeneous construction?

On the one hand, a geospatial mapping highlights the spatial spreading of Hungarian acting against the backdrop of the ethnically mixed population of the so-called “theatre towns” in the second half of the 19th century. On the other hand, given the network of theatre scenes established as a consequence of touring companies, the particularity of the theatre in Cluj, as it appears, may be best described by taking into account institutional and artistic perspectives.

1. The Position of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj in the Network of Hungarian Theatre Companies

Hungarian professional acting in Cluj dates back to 1792; we can speak of an ongoing practice ever since: while acting performances in the first decades had been taking place in temporary buildings and improvised stage settings, the first building designed and constructed specifically for theatre performances was opened in March 1821, with a strong financial support of aristocrats, as well as political support provided by taxes collected by different Transylvanian counties and donations from the town Kolozsvár.² Seeing the economic failure of the various entrepreneurial formations of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj, the Transylvanian Diet of 1841-43 tried to bring the theatre of Cluj under national patronage, as it had done with the theatre of Pest. Although the financial basis for the organisation of the theatre was not established at that time, the theatre used the name National

² Lázár Káli Nagy, *Az „Erdélyi Nemzeti Játékszínnek”, „Magyar Játészótársaságnak” eredete, fennállásának, viszontagságainak a mai időkig leírása 1821* [The origins of the “Transylvanian National Acting Society” – “Hungarian Acting Society”, its existence and vicissitudes up to the present day, 1821], ed. Elemér Jancsó (Cluj: Minerva Rt. 1939). Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története* [The history of acting and theatre in Cluj] (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert Press, 1897), 264-278; Katalin Agnes Bartha “Theatre Inauguration Ceremony and Symbolic Representation,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai - Dramatica*, 62, no. 2: (2017): 23-50.

Theatre from 1841, but continued to operate under the entrepreneur-theatre director system.³

Later, in the period under study, the decades following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867⁴ were significant moments of the Hungarian theatre culture as well; the theatre as an institution was in line with big-scale political, economic, and societal changes enabled by the dualist state. E.g., the railway system built throughout the empire meant that Transylvania was now connected to the “centre” and also that larger settlements within Transylvania became interconnected; as such, Cluj had been one of the most important railway stations along the Oradea-Braşov railway line. We can briefly mention the population increase within the period: Cluj had a population of 26.638 in 1869; 37.957 in 1890; and 60.808 in 1910.⁵ Mobility as such may be put in correlation with an increase of artistic expectations (on the part of the public), as theatre companies and actors could travel more easily.

The year of the Compromise, 1867 was significant not only for political reasons⁶, since earlier the theatre building had welcomed different companies during each theatre season. A certain artistic consolidation may be traced back to the period between 1866 and 1872; during that time the company had been successfully managed by Antal Fehérváry (1824-1901), supported by the Kolozsvár National Theatre Committee.⁷

³ It is from this year onwards that the designation “National” is added on the playbills.

⁴ The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 (Ausgleich) established the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, granting Hungary equal status with Austria within the empire. It created a shared monarchy and joint institutions for foreign affairs, defense, and finance, while allowing both entities autonomy in internal matters. It was signed on February 8, 1867, and officially enacted on May 29, 1867, when it was approved by the Hungarian Diet and sanctioned by Emperor Franz Joseph.

⁵ According to Elek Csetri, the pace of development of the city after the 1867 Compromise was characterised by the sluggishness of Eastern Europe. The demographic development itself reflected the slow movement, as the population of the town was only 37 957 in 1890, compared to 26 651 in 1869. In fact, it was only between 1890 and 1920 that the population more than doubled. Elek Csetri, “Kolozsvár népessége a középkortól a jelenkorig [The population of Cluj from the Middle Ages to the present],” in *Kolozsvár 1000 éve [1000 Years of Cluj]*, ed. Tibor Kálmán Dáné et al. (Kolozsvár: Erélyi Múzeum Egyesület Press, 2001), 5-22.

⁶ On 28 July 1867, Franz Joseph I ratified Article XII of the 1867 Act, which contained the law on the Compromise.

⁷ For the grants he received from the Kolozsvár National Theatre Committee in 1867 see: Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, Fond 313: Hungarian Theatre, Act 55, f 116, f 117, f. 119.

As such, a newly renovated theatre building welcomed the opening of the winter season on 20 October 1866, as the building's interior spaces had been rebuilt as a consequence of intensive use.⁸

The western wing of the theatre building was built, with a separate staircase and 16 smaller and larger rooms for offices, workshops, and the library. Dangerous candle lighting was eliminated and replaced by oil lamps. The auditorium and the boxes were also renovated. The front "dry entrance", or small foyer, was completed. In designing the new auditorium, the Kolozsvár National Theatre Board, bearing in mind the building layout of different foreign theatres, aimed to maximise audience capacity, with more standing room, more seats, and four more boxes.⁹

The call for tenders of the Theatre Committee for the 1866/67 season shows the conditions under which the management of Cluj made the director's work conditional.¹⁰

The director was obliged to keep a company that met the needs of the city's audiences, to give drama, comedy, Volksstück (népszínmű), operetta and opera performances. (Maintaining an opera company consumed much more money, but the need to do so was due to the expectations of the committee and the public.) Only those company directors were considered who could organise a company that could perform opera as well.

The music during this period was provided by the local Civic Orchestra (summer 1867), 24 members of the Alleman Regiment stationed in the town (winter seasons 1867, 1868), 15 members and eight contracted members of the Imperial Royal Orchestra of (winter 1870), and from the winter season 1871, the German-born conductor and composer Jacob Jacobi (1827-1882)¹¹ was contracted and an orchestra of 24 members.¹²

⁸ For the architect Antal Kagerbauer's plans and related documents, see the Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, Fond 313: Hungarian Theatre Reg. 7.

⁹ Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története [The history of acting and theatre in Cluj]* (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert Press, 1897), 462-470.

¹⁰ Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, Fond 313: Hungarian Theatre, Act. 50. 192.

¹¹ Jacobi was a member of the National Theatre in Cluj from 1869 to 1881, and in 1873-74 he also worked in Kassa. In May 1871 he was director of the Music Hall in Cluj. His greatest successes were as an operetta conductor

¹² See the list of musicians in the following theatre almanacs: Jakab István, Nagy György ed., *Nemzeti Színházi Búcsúvételi Zsebkönyv 1867-dik évre*, (Kolozsvár: Ev. Ref. Főtanoda Press, 1867); Jakab István, Nagy György ed., *Új évi Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1868-dik évre*, (Kolozsvár: Ev. Ref. Főtanoda Press, 1868); Jakab István, Nagy György ed., *Nemzeti*

Thus, it appears that it wasn't until the 1870s that Cluj had all the conditions for a permanent theatre institution. From 1861 the Kolozsvár National Theatre Committee that ran the Theatre on a contractor basis, contracting theatre manager entrepreneurs, had the Permanent Theatrical Fund at its disposal to cover its operation, supplemented with an annual sum received from the royal treasury starting from 1870. The renewed building and the financially consolidated theatre company also saw the appearance of regular members amongst the company. Moreover, in order to cut the costs of summer touring, as well as to support the idea of a permanent company that would be able to perform throughout the year, we may also mention another venue intended for use in the warm, summer months; this wood construction was completed in 1874 under the supervision of intendant Bogdán Korbuly (1816-1911).

The theatre company had been continuously performing between 1874 and 1887 in two buildings/at two sites; however, we cannot speak of a fully self-supporting endeavour, as losses were covered by the intendant Korbuly privately.

To get an overview of the peculiar position of the Hungarian theatre of Kolozsvár/Cluj, we should take a look at the network of Hungarian professional theatre companies from the period.

I would like to point out that map visualisations play an important role in the study, thanks to sociologist researcher Ilka Veress, who created them using the data series I have produced. The only existing map regarding the theatre life of the period, with drawings of the theatre buildings, is the map of 1928 entitled *Mit vesztett a magyar színészet Trianon által?* [What did the Hungarian acting lose because of Trianon?], which was only partially usable, and is also the source of the map that is included on the inside cover of the *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon* [Hungarian Theatre Encyclopaedia]¹³

Színházi Zsebkönyv 1869-dik évre, (Kolozsvár: Stein J. Press, 1869).; Jakab István, Nagy György ed., *Bücsúvételi Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1869-dik évre*, (Kolozsvár: Stein J. Press, 1869).; Nagy György, Szabó Ferenc ed., *Új évi Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1871-dik évre*, (Kolozsvár: K. Papp Miklós Press, 1871); Nagy György ed., *Új évi Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1872-dik évre*, (Kolozsvár: K. Papp Miklós Press, 1872); *Nemzeti Színház igazgatósága ed. A kolozsvári Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1874. máj. 1-től-1878. május 1-ig* [The National Theatre Almanac of Cluj, from 1 May 1874 to 1 May 1878], (Kolozsvár: K. Papp Miklós Press, 1878).

¹³ Zoltán Abonyi (drawing), Jenő Erődi (compilation), Andor, Kovács B. (plan), *Mit vesztett a magyar színészet Trianon által?* [What did Hungarian acting lose because of Trianon?]

I considered it inevitable to create new maps, showing the spatial expansion of Hungarian-language theatre with the interethnic relations of theatre cities, so the special position of the Hungarian Theatre from Cluj in the established network of theatre companies could be better seen and understood from institutional and aesthetic-creative point of view.

By the turn of the 1870s and 1880s, the cities whose use shaped the provincial theatre companies' area of operation had developed at least four typical season lengths and two types of attendance. According to the length of the theatre season, we can differentiate between four types or levels of towns, which functioned as sites for Hungarian language provincial theatre companies,¹⁴ Budapest, the capital city being a notable exception due to the fact that the National Theatre from the Hungarian capital received full state funding.¹⁵ The population size of the cities and the receptivity of the population to the theatre were major factors in determining how long a season would be.

According to theatre historian Edit Rajnai, in the 1870s and 1880s the cities which were able to support a theatre company for 4-5-6 months represent the first level. These cities constitute the basic cornerstones of the network of the Hungarian professional theatre companies. We can list here the following towns: Arad, Debrecen, Győr, Pécs, Szatmár, Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca], Kassa [Košice], Miskolc, Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Szabadka [Subotica], Kecskemét. (I should mention here that in Pozsony [Bratislava] and Sopron, where Germans constituted the majority of the population at the end of the 19th century, the long season was shared between the Hungarian and German companies.)¹⁶

The towns where the theatre season lasted for 3 to 4 months represent the second level: Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureş], Baja (supporting Hungarian

(Budapest: Országos Színészegyesület és Nyugdíjintézet Propaganda Osztálya, 1928); György Székely ed. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon [Hungarian Theatre Encyclopaedia]* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994).

¹⁴ Edit Rajnai, *A színi kerületi rendszer kialakulása (1879-1905) [The emergence of the theatre district system (1879-1905)]* (PhD dissertation, Eötvös Loránt University, Faculty of Letters, National Széchényi Library, Theatre and Music Department, MS 711. 2010), 62-64.

¹⁵ The map lists not only towns where stone theatre buildings had been operating but also settlements where amateur acting performances had been regularly presented, or where stage halls had existed for staging theatre performances throughout the 1870s and 1880s. See the map annex for *Cities with theatre season lengths, levels 1, 2, 3, 4.*

¹⁶ See the map annex for the ethnic breakdown of cities.

speaking theatre companies), Nyitra [Nitra], Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica] (supporting German and Hungarian speaking companies), Zombor [Sombor] (supporting Serbian and Hungarian speaking companies), Újvidék [Novi Sad] (for Serbian speaking companies), Nagyszeben-Brassó [Sibiu-Braşov], Temesvár [Timișoara] (for German companies in the long winter season).¹⁷

The cities where the theatre season lasted for 4 to 8 weeks represent the third level: Eperjes [Prešov], Lőcse [Levoča], Nagyszombat [Trnava] (supporting German and Hungarian speaking companies), Nagybecskerek [Zrenjanin], Nagyikinda [Kikinda], Versec [Vršac], Óbecse [Bečej], Zenta [Senta] (supporting Hungarian and Serbian speaking companies). Towns hosting only Hungarian speaking professional companies in the period: Balassagyarmat, Balatonfüred, Békéscsaba, Békésgyula, Beregszász [Berehove], Cegléd, Csíkszereda [Miercurea Ciuc], Dés [Dej], Déva [Deva], Dicsőszentmárton [Târnăveni], Dunaföldvár, Eger, Érsekújvár, Erzsébetváros [Dumbrăveni], Esztergom, Fogaras [Făgăraş], Gyöngyös, Gyulafehérvár [Alba Iulia], Hódmezővásárhely, Kaposvár, Keszthely, Kézdivásárhely [Târgu Secuiesc], Kiskunfélegyháza, Kisvárd, Komárom [Komárno], Körmend, Lippa [Lipova], Losonc [Lučenec], Lugos [Lugoj], Makó, Máramarossziget [Sighetu-Marmației], Mezőtúr, Mohács, Munkács [Mukachevo], Nagybánya [Baia Mare], Nagykanizsa, Nagykovács, Nagyszalonta [Salonta], Nyíregyháza, Orosháza, Pápa, Rimaszombat [Rimavská Sobota], Rozsnyó [Rožňava], Sárospatak, Sátoraljaújhely, Sepsiszentgyörgy [Sfântu Gheorghe], Sümeg, Székelyudvarhely [Odorheiu Secuiesc], Szekszárd, Szentés, Szolnok, Szombathely, Torda [Turda], Ungvár [Uzhorod], Vác, Veszprém, Zalaegerszeg, Zilah [Zalău].

According to documents concerning the period between 1875-85, there were smaller settlements which occasionally gave home to theatre companies. The inhabitants of these Hungarian towns or villages saw theatre performances when the settlement happened to be on the way to a theatre company and hosted a theatre company for a shorter period, rather than on an annual basis. These towns constitute the fourth level.¹⁸

Beginning with the 1870s, Cluj was the only town where Hungarian theatre performances took place so often that we can speak of a twelve-month

¹⁷ See the map annex for the ethnic breakdown of cities.

¹⁸ See the map annex. The map shows 79 such localities.

theatre season. Therefore, it represented a unique node within the network of the twelve Hungarian provincial theatre towns with long seasons (Arad, Debrecen, Győr, Pécs, Szatmár [Satu-Mare], Kolozsvár [Cluj], Kassa [Košice], Miskolc, Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Szabadka [Subotica] and Kecskemét).¹⁹

The management of Bogdán Korbuly between 1874 and 1878 marked a certain well-being for members of the acting company, as it enabled actors and actresses to settle in Cluj for longer periods. Consequently, the members of the company spent more time together, which certainly enabled common work and a polishing of the overall ensemble play. While one-year contracts had been common throughout the period, Bogdán Korbuly made efforts to close contracts for three years.²⁰ Accordingly, mobility decreased, so that the company which consisted of sixty or even seventy members saw mostly the coming and going of singers and choir members (in other words, core members, or actors and actresses, didn't leave the company during this period).

A kolozsvári Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1874. máj. 1-től–1878. május 1-ig [The National Theatre Almanac of Cluj, from 1 May 1874 to 1 May 1878] provides a summary balance sheet of the Korbuly era. The composition of the company clearly shows that the theatre wanted to continue to operate by strengthening the opera, and therefore the number of the performing staff increased considerably. Including the choristers and dancers, the company had 73 members in the first season of 1874/75 and 74 in 1876/77.

In the theatre season from 2 May 1875 to 4 May 1875, the artistic directors were Béla Betegh Mátray and Antal Fehérváry. During this period, 354 performances were given. In the following season (from 4 May 1875 to 30 April 1876), Gyula E. Kovács became the artistic director, and 327 performances were given. The 1876-1877 season (1 May 1876 – 7 May 1877) saw 358 performances under the artistic direction of Gyula E. Kovács. The 1877-1878 season (9 May 1877 – 1 May 1878) had 335 performances. Guest artists included Kornélia Prielle, József Tamási, Mari Jászai, Lujza Blaha, Lilla von Bulyovszky, József Bokor and his children's theatre company, Mariska Komáromi, József Szigeti, Gyula Vízvári, musicians, and sometimes magicians and fog-hangers.

¹⁹ See the map annex.

²⁰ Katalin Ágnes Bartha, "Színházi professzió és presztízs Kolozsváron a 19. század utolsó harmadában [Theatrical profession and prestige in the last decades of the 19th century in Cluj]," *Erdélyi Múzeum*, 77, no. 3 (2015): 57-62.

The regulars are Vidor Kassai, Béla Földényi, István Szentgyörgyi, Imre Szacs vay, Béla Hetényi, Mihály Krasznay, Mór Ditrói, Károly Török; the actresses are Emma D. Boér, Etel Baloghné, Mari Eibenschütz, Mrs E. Kovács, E. Kovács, Rózsa Pataki, Géza Marcell, Elemér Zajonghy, Béni Dalnoki, Pietro Caravatti (from 1877), Ilka Csáthyné Medgyasszai, Sarolta Krecsányi, Mrs. Gerecs.

According to another leading theatre director, Mór Ditrói's recollection of his time as director in Cluj, the new company was founded and organised in 1887 together with intendant and landowner József Bölöny, and his charming wife, Ferike Nedeczky, who were excellent in theatrical matters and had a good sense of who was a good actor.²¹

The regular members were represented by Gyula E. Kovács, István Szentgyörgyi, Dezső Megyeri, Miklós Váradi, János Kápolnay, Károly Török, Miksa Krasznay, Margit Hunyady, Lina K. Gerő, Mrs. Krasznay, Sarolta Serédi, and Etel Láng. Among the newly contracted, Árpád Szathmári and Mátyás Nyilasi were considered established actors. The others were all promising actors. Emma Delli, Laura Réthi, Klára Küry, Gizella Szerémy, Margit Maróthy, Mari Eibenschütz (Mrs. Ditrói), Teréz Solti.

In the process of forming the company, new sets were ordered, the wardrobe was refreshed, and new plays were acquired. Ditrói used a new rehearsal style and dynamic management, resulting in a cohesive ensemble performance, good reviews, and satisfied audiences.

The period of Ditrói's leadership (1887-1897) was a period of valuable artistic impetus. In addition to the popular genres, he organised a Hungarian play series from 1 January to 19 February 1891. For 48 days the company performed 48 Hungarian plays by 42 authors. He also organised a Jókai series and a Gergely Csíky series from their dramatic works, and staged several Madách plays, culminating in the premiere of *The Tragedy of Man* (Cluj, 15 February 1887, Oradea 23 September 1890). As part of the first Hungarian Shakespeare performance series, a total of 17 Shakespeare plays were performed over 20 evenings during the 1894/95 theatre season. Operas were also performed each year during the main winter season. The opera programme included the *Traviata*, *Masquerade Ball*, *Ernani*, *La Juive*, *László*

²¹ Mór Ditrói, *Komédiások [Comedians]* (Budapest: Közlekedési Press, 1929), 90.

Hunyadi, and *Der Freischütz*, and after the premiere in Pest, the operas *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni and *Bajazzo* by Leoncavallo.

Among the guest artists, Mari Jászai, Kornélia Prielle, Emilia Márkus, Teréz Csillag, József Szigeti, Ferenc Náday, and Ede Újházi performed several times on the stage of Cluj. According to Zoltán Ferenczi, Ditrói was able to create a quality repertoire by increasing the financial turnover of the theatre year after year.²²

2. How Did Other Theatre Companies Compare?

As of 1873, we can list 32 Hungarian acting companies, with around 850 actors and actresses.²³ We can further differentiate according to company size: small companies with less than 20 members; mid-size companies, with between 20 to 40 members, and large companies, the latter having usually more than 50 members.²⁴ Two and a half decades later, we have 40 theatre companies, and a huge increase in actors' number, as we counted approximately 1419 actors and actresses as being active in 1897, toward the end of the 19th century.²⁵ Among the factors responsible, we can certainly list the enlargement of the network with new performance locations (a steady increase in theatre buildings: 31 stone theatres in 1885, and 54 in 1912), as well as the professionalisation of acting.²⁶ Accordingly, actors have become a group of professionals in a modern understanding, in the sense that group identity as such has intertwined with specific institutions and the role these played in forming and representing actors; we can list here the Acting School in Budapest, which had been functioning since 1865; the Theatre Agency, since 1869, and the Hungarian Association of Actors, safeguarding their interests since 1871.

²² Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet*, 502.

²³ According to the *Magyar Színészet Évkönyve. Névtár 1873-dik évre* [*The 1873 Yearbook of Hungarian Theatre*], there were 25 theatre companies (including the National Theatre in Pest and the National Theatre in Cluj). At that time there were 850 actors in the Hungarian theatre industry, 479 men and 371 women.

²⁴ Rajnai, *A színi kerületi rendszer*, 119.

²⁵ The number includes the company members from the four Budapest theatres (Nemzeti Színház, Népszínház, Vígszínház, Budapesti városligeti nyári színház) and the Hungarian Royal Opera as well. See also data from the National Association of Actors: Rajnai, *A színi kerületi rendszer*, 251; Bartha, *Színházi professzió*, 69.

²⁶ Rajnai, *A színi kerületi rendszer*, 165.

According to theatre historian Edit Rajnai, the Hungarian travelling acting companies had performed in 120 settlements during 1870; three decades later, they reached 237 settlements.²⁷ (Our map shows 167 settlements in total, as it focuses on the main theatre locations during the 70s, 80s, and 90s.)

Many significant theatre creators had activities connected to the Hungarian theatre of Cluj; in other words, few Hungarian speaking actors hadn't stepped onto the stage of this theatre. However, we shouldn't arrive to the simple conclusion that actors travelled from Pest to Cluj for guest performances; there were actors who had started their careers in Cluj, then moved to Pest, or even to Western Europe. E.g., the actress Lilla Bulyovszkyné Szilágyi (1833-1909), was born in Cluj and became famous on both Hungarian and German stages. Moreover, the company didn't attract only graduates from the Acting School, from Budapest but sought to contract actors from other provinces as well: Mari Jászai (between 1868 and 1872), Gyula E. Kovács (also from 1868 and until his retirement), Béla Mátray Betegh (between 1870 and 1884), Emma Boér (1865-1867 and 1871-1884), Mór Ditrói (1874-1880, 1887-1996), Imre Szacs vay (1874-1884), István Szentgyörgyi (1871-1931), Klára Küry (1890-1892), as well as Jenő Janovics, who started his acting career here in 1896 and later became theatre manager between 1905 and 1930, and silent film maker.

Some of these actors and actresses remained in Cluj, while others moved to theatre companies in the Hungarian capital.

To get a sense of the effort involved in organising a company from a fairly wide range of offerings, it is worth modelling the correspondence of Secretary József Sándor spatially.²⁸

Of course, priority was given to the actors who had already appeared on the stage of the National Theatre from Pest, or to members of the more distinguished provincial companies. In addition to correspondence, the essential channel for the exchange of information between the members of the theatre company travelling around the country was provided by the journal *A Színpad* [*The Stage*], the magazine of the First Hungarian Theatre

²⁷ Rajnai, *A színi kerületi rendszer*, 81.

²⁸ During the period of Korbuly's administration, it was mainly József Sándor, the secretary, who corresponded; occasionally, Antal Fehérváry also took care of the correspondence.

Agency, which was launched in the 1870s and from the end of 1871 was the official journal of the association.²⁹

According to the 1874 correspondence of the Theatre Secretary, letters to recruit actors were sent to 35 different towns³⁰; the company maintained continuous relations with the Theatre Agency, and also paid attention to actors in terms of the various role types; accordingly, they contacted not only actors, singers, and dancers who were working at other companies, but also artists unemployed at that time. E.g., in 1874 the company had welcomed a few actors from Kassa [Košice] and letters were sent to Nyitra [Nitra], Komárom [Komárno], Sopron, Győr, Nagykanizsa, Székesfehérvár, Pécs, Budapest, Miskolc, Abony, Nagykőrös, Debrecen, Máramarossziget [Sighetu Marmăției], Zilah [Zalău], Nagyvárad [Oradea], Arad, Hátszeg [Hațeg], Déva [Deva], Nagyenyed [Aiud], Torda [Turda], Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca], Dés [Dej], Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureș], Nagyszeben [Sibiu], Szabadka [Subotica], Zenta [Senta], Szombathely, Balatonfüred, Vác, Balassagyarmat, Szamosújvár [Gherla], and Székelyhíd [Săcueni]; it also corresponded with companies from the big, metropolitan cities of Vienna and Berlin in order to contract actors. The map shows the spatial coverage of the hiring policy of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj.³¹

3. The Acting Tours of Kornélia Prielle (1868-1902)

At this point, the inquiry brings up the relationship and relevance of the structural (the theatre-network condition of the Hungarian theatre company from Cluj) vis-a-vis acting careers. In what follows, I will only point to some aspects of a well-known career of an actress.

Kornélia Prielle (1823-1906) had become member of the acting company in Cluj first in 1846, then also throughout the 1848-49 season. Had been the prima donna of travelling theatre companies for almost two decades, until she was contracted by the National Theatre in Pest in 1859. In

²⁹ Edit Rajnai, "Kísérletek a vidéki színészet rendezésére" ["Attempts on managing the provincial acting. 1873-1890"], in: *Magyar színháztörténet. 1873-1920 [Hungarian Theatre History. 1873-1920]*, ed. Tamás Gajdó, (Budapest: Magyar Könyvklub-Országos Színháztörténeti Múzeum és Intézet. 2001), 229.

³⁰ Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, Fond 313: Reg 10.

³¹ See the map for the spatial coverage of the hiring policy in 1874.

1881 she was the first to receive an everlasting contract from the Budapest National Theatre (perennial membership) with an annual salary of 6,000 forints, later on, in 1891 she received the golden cross distinction from emperor Franz Joseph, her acting talents thus gained official recognition as well.³² Coming from a petit bourgeois background and having had half German, and half Hungarian origins, Kornélia Prielle (1823–1906) opted for a French-spelling of her family name, which was significant in terms of her image-building by connecting it to many roles she performed, for e.g. as la marquise de Menneville in *Les doigts de fée*, a popular comedy written by Scribe and Legouv  , premi  r  d in 1859; then, as Marguerite Gauthier in *La Dame aux camellias* by Alexandre Dumas fils, put on stage in 1857; or as Madame Fourchambeault in *Les Fourchambault* by   mile Augier, staged in 1878.

Her career overlaps with the widespread of the modern social drama as theatre genre. Throughout her long career encompassing six and a half decades she had played almost 300 different roles and she toured a lot in the country; she performed in almost each stage of historical Hungary, and she became well-known across the country. She kept record of her guest performances starting from 1868;³³ the register includes 784 performances in 65 settlements across the territories of historical Hungary; and, it may be viewed as a valuable source concerning the travelling companies and their ways of functioning. Especially, if we consider the fact that her guest performances were a good way of attracting attention to the local acting company's activity and were also a welcome way of charging increased fees for performances.³⁴

Her guest performances in Cluj are the most spectacular: she had a series of performances here in 14 different years between 1868 and 1902. Her frequent visits to Cluj may be explained by her various social relationships with local personalities related to the theatre, relationships which she maintained since her first contract in Cluj. Her performances together with

³² Study-trip to Paris (P  r  zs 1870. m  j. Zichy Antalhoz   rott levele)

³³ In 1870 she went on a study trip to Paris, where she attended performances at several theatres. The exact dates and totals of Prielle's guest performances in the provinces is known only from 1868. See: Korn  lia Prielle, *Only from 1868 onwards can I give an orderly account of my appearances in the provinces*. National Sz  ch  nyi Library, Manuscript Collection, An 4942/26, 6.

³⁴ See the map showing the towns where actresse Korn  lia Prielle performed.

her first husband, actor Kálmán Szerdahelyi, whom she later remarried and remained together until he passed in 1872 – enjoyed great success in almost each fashionable French play that was put on stage as well as in Hungarian plays that had been inspired by the former. It was noted that they built their dialogue scenes with such ease that even their actor colleagues were overwhelmed.

Her frequent guest performances in the provinces are telling also in terms of the spreading of a specific acting style embodied by her, while a spatial representation shows a significant overlap with the network of Hungarian acting as developed across the Hungarian-speaking regions.

At the same time, the manner and style of her performances may be connected to larger issues in the sense that, through the themes, characters of these plays, we can detect an/the organizing of the interests of the audience along the conscious and unconscious, as well the individual and collective becomings on both sides of the stage.

An important moment in her career relates to her role as Cora in the social drama *L'article 47* by Adolph Belot,³⁵ which she played 21 times on the stage of the National Theatre in Pest, and 54 times in various provincial towns between 1878–1892.³⁶

Acted by Prielle, the character of Cora was a passionate and attractive Creole from North America/the colonies, and thus the backdrop of the social norms as prescribed by masculine authorities was 'translated' so as to condense the erotic dimension inherent in the plot, the passion of love, as well as addiction to it, submissiveness and desire to power; therefore, including a great deal of suppression, the acting performance of the Hungarian actress was recorded as the best example of modern manifestation of passion on stage.³⁷ Her guest performances across the Hungarian provinces were important steps with regard to her career-building; the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj as well as its public and its mediating possibilities were crucial as provided a continuous validation of acting performances.

³⁵ The première was on 24 May, 1878.

³⁶ Prielle, *Only from 1868*.

³⁷ Several critics have highlighted this performance in his career. See: Katalin Ágnes Bartha, "Szenvedély által vezérelt kor- és kórkép a 19. századi színpadon" [Passion on the 19th Century Stage], *Certamen* 9. (2022): 109-132.

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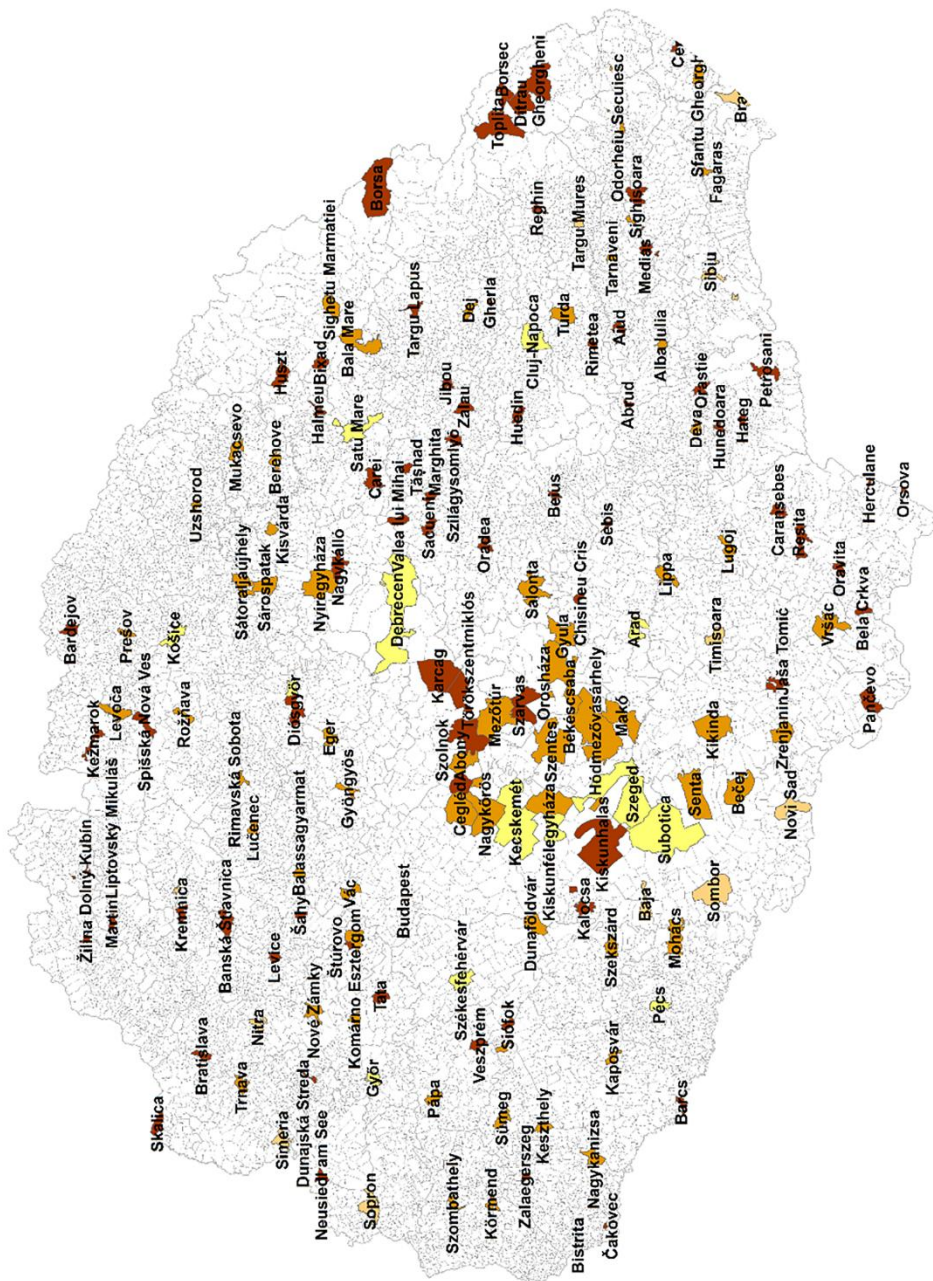
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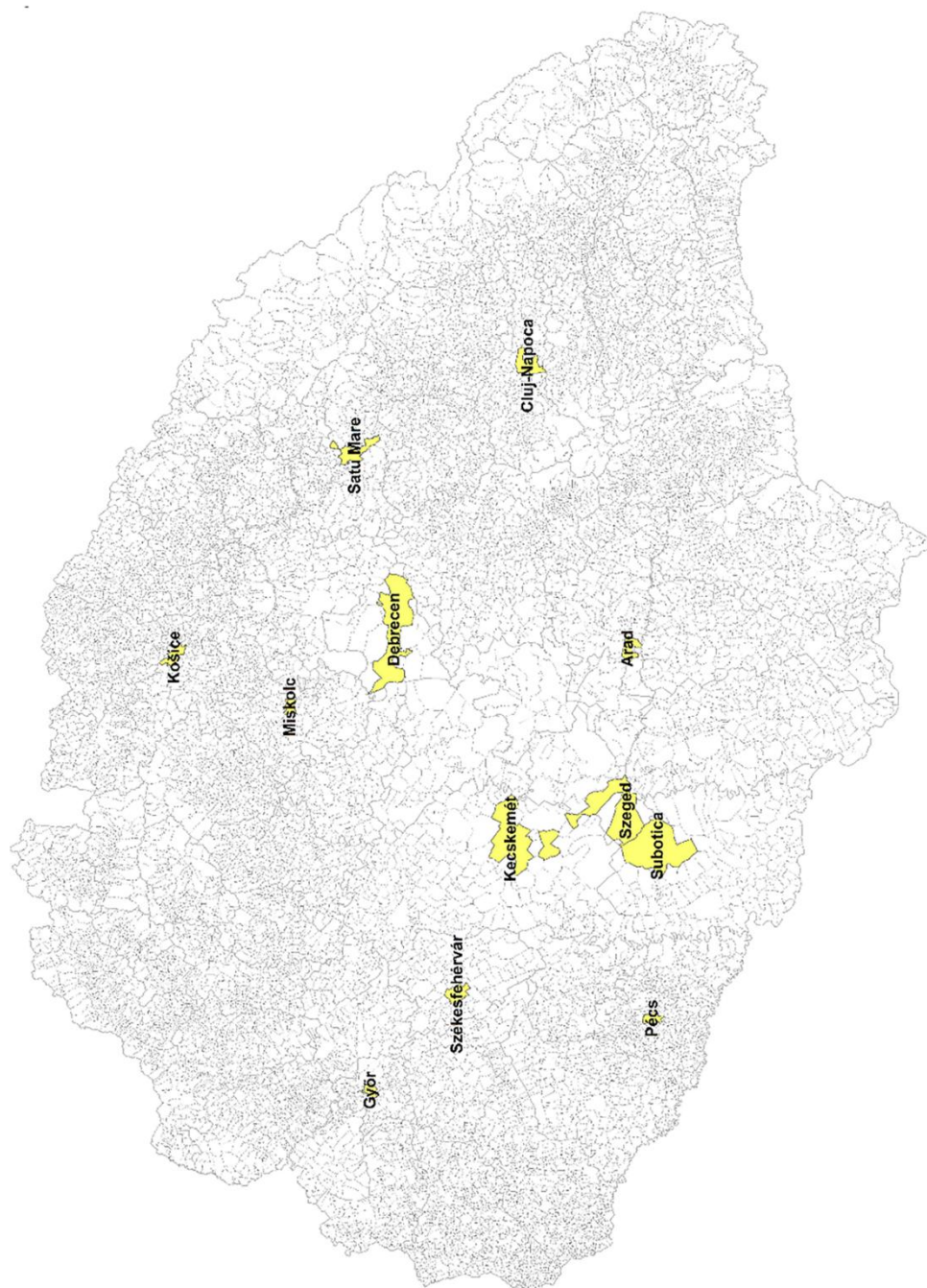
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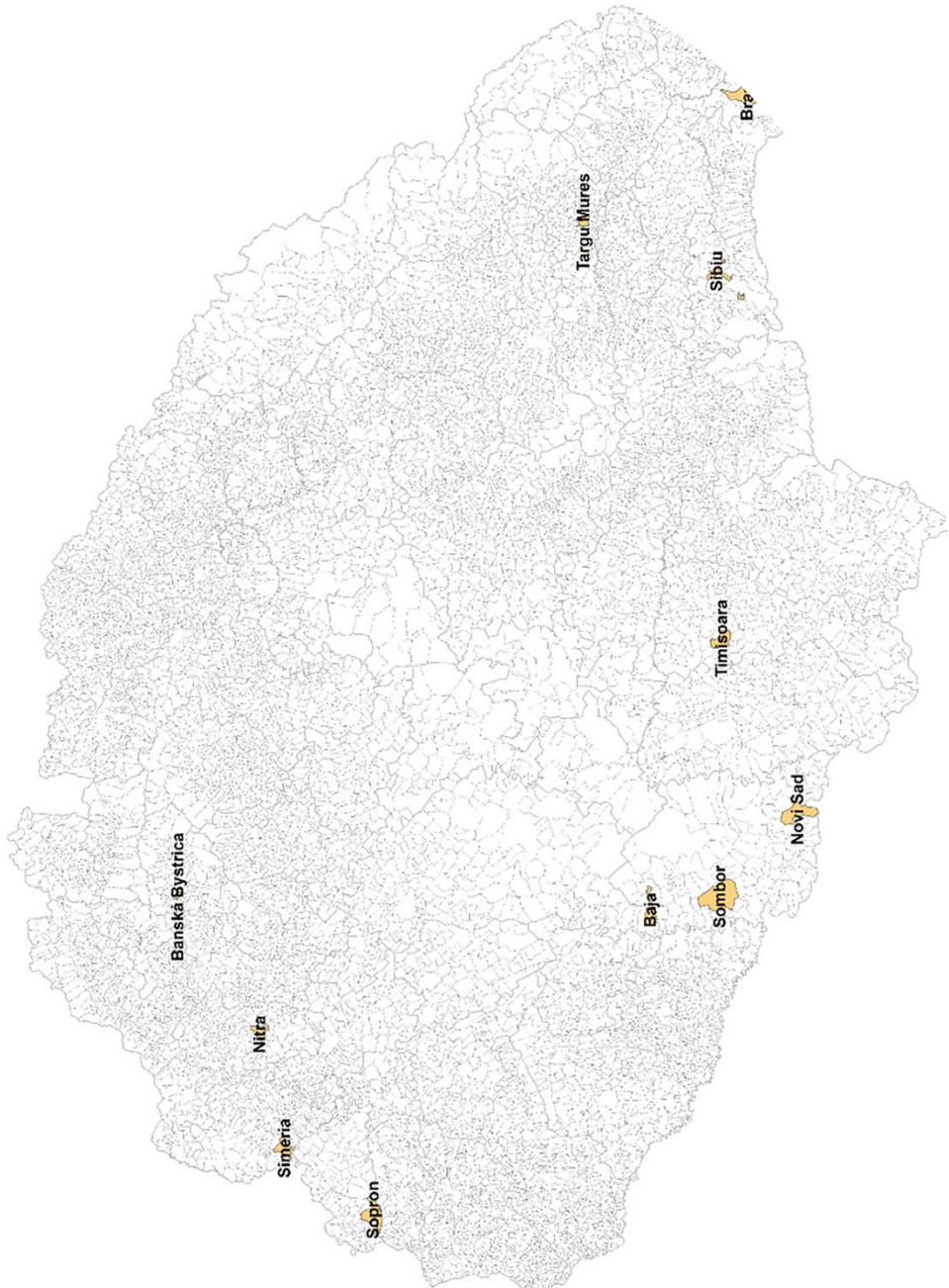
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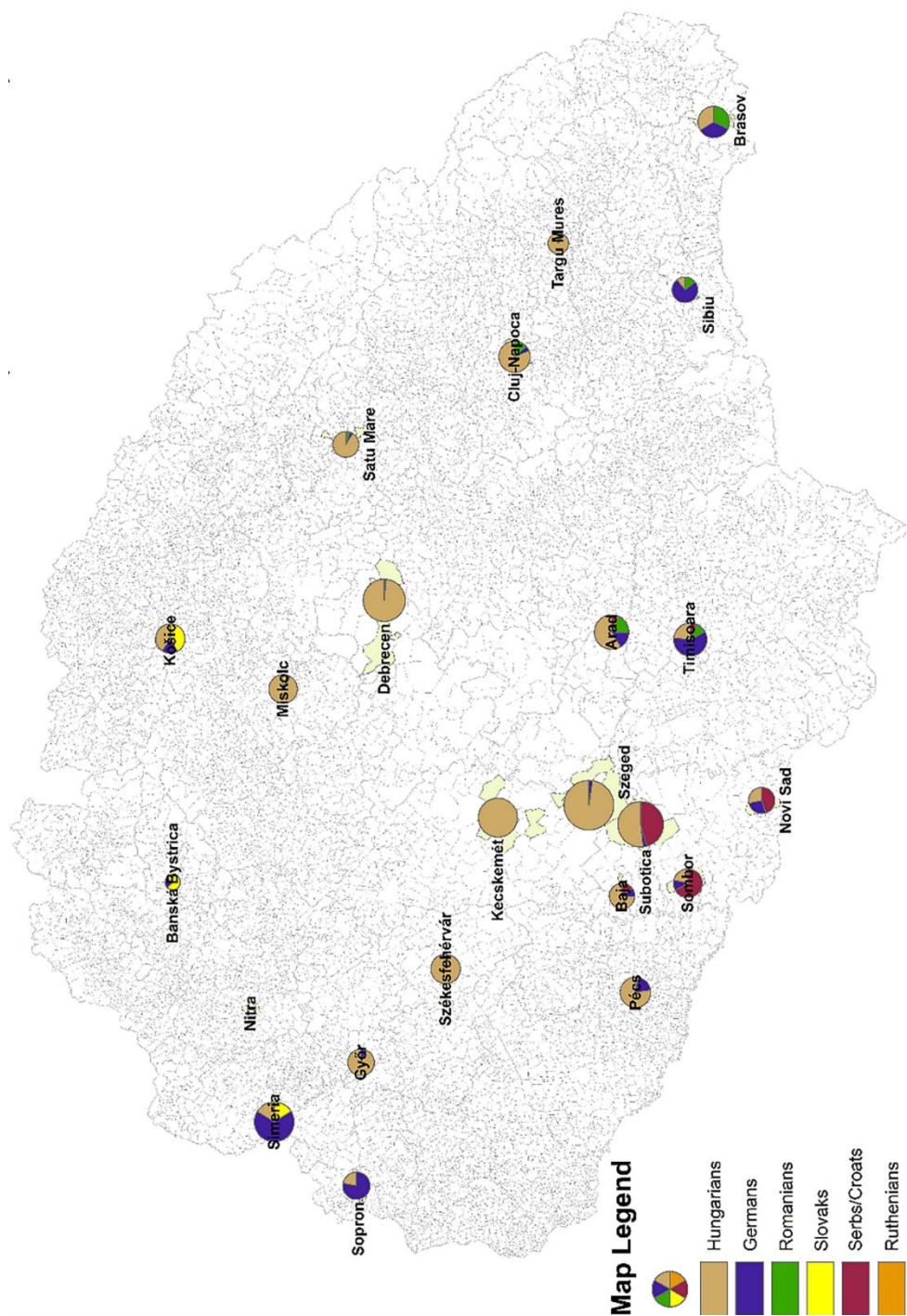
Cities with theatre season lengths, levels 1, 2, 3, 4



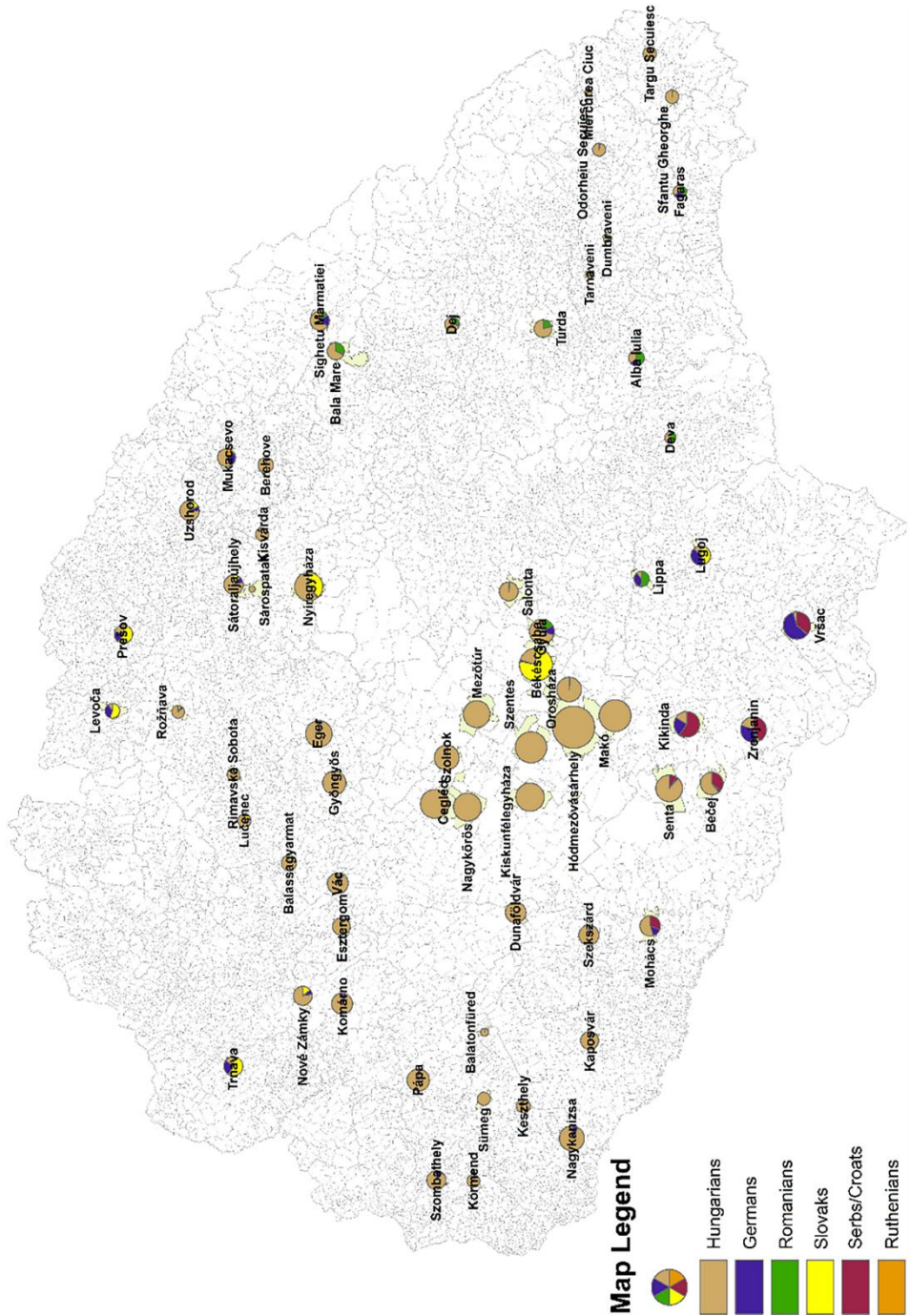
Theatre season length (1). Towns able to support a theatre company for 4-5-6 months.



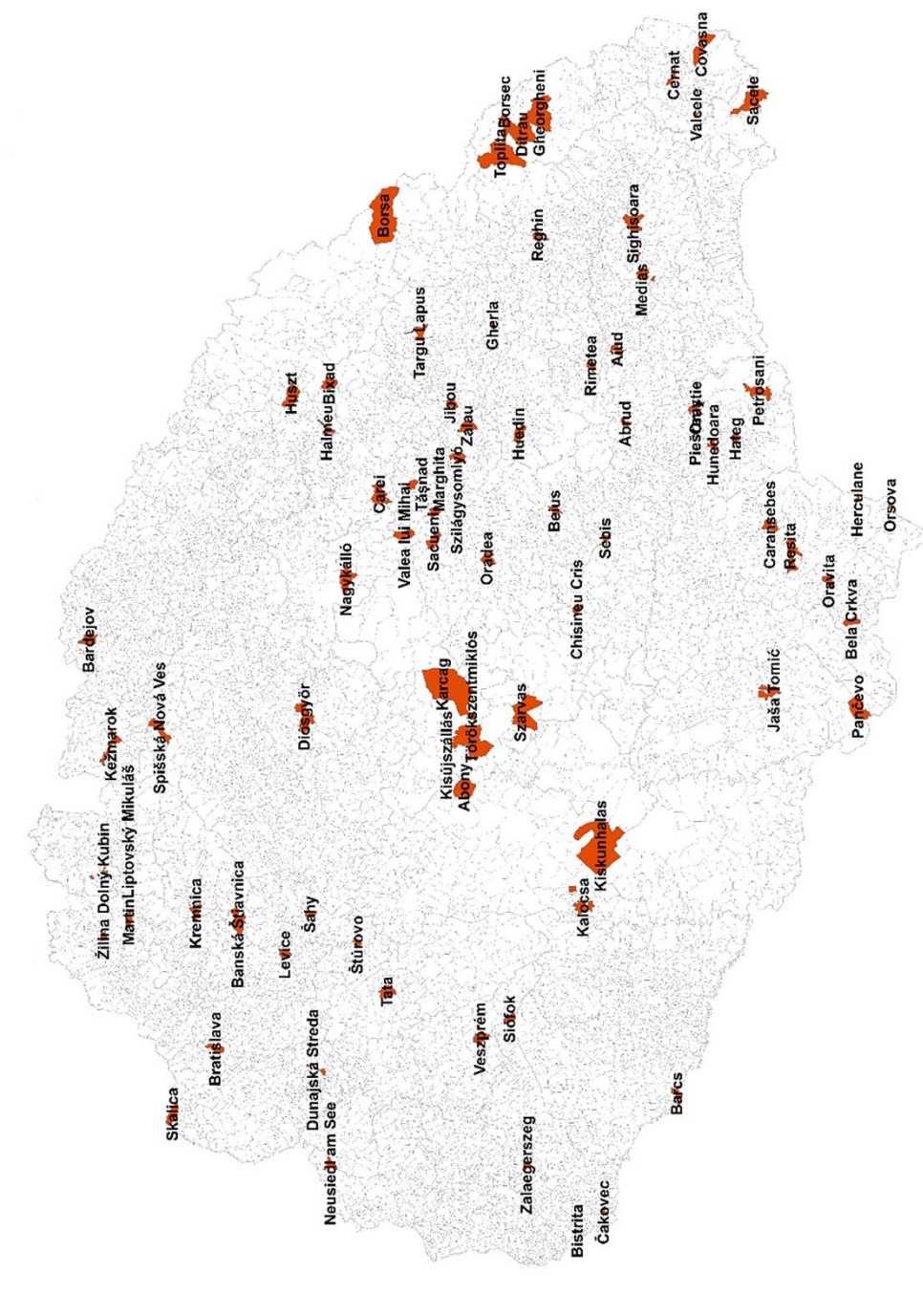
Theatre season length (2). Towns able to support a theatre company for 3-4 months.



Theatre season length (1, 2) and town population by ethnic breakdown (data from 1881 census).



Theatre season length (3) and town population by ethnic breakdown (data from 1881 census). Towns able to support a theatre company for 4 to 8 weeks.

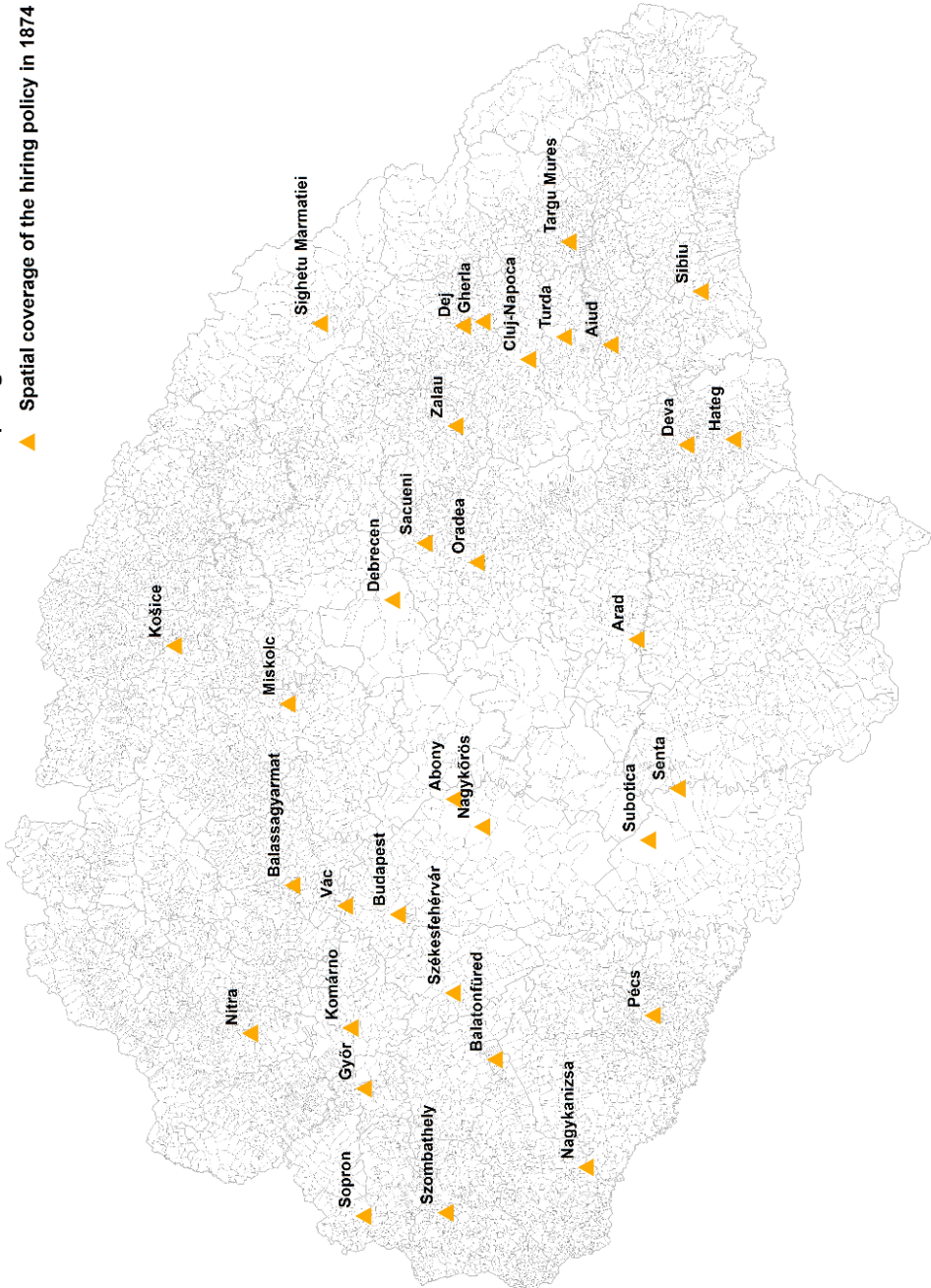


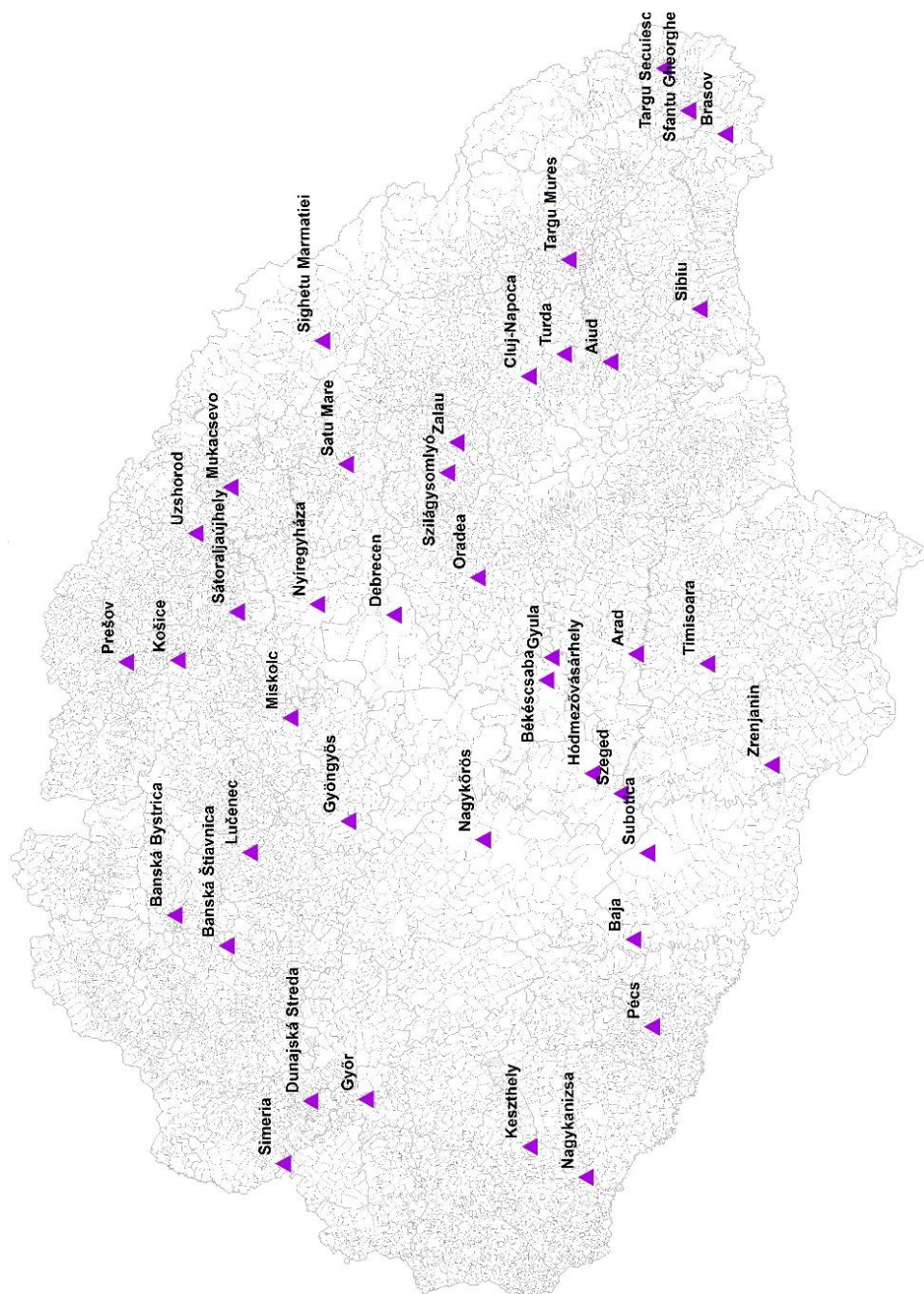
Theatre season length (4).

Towns and settlements able to support sporadic appearance of theatre companies.

Map Legend

- ▲ Spatial coverage of the hiring policy in 1874





Towns where Kornélia Prielle performed the role Cora in the Article by A. Belot.

From Temporary Venue to Permanent Home: The Construction History of the Summer Theatre in Kolozsvár (Cluj)

Abstract. The article investigates the architectural history of theatre buildings in Cluj (Kolozsvár), with a particular focus on the Summer Theatre (Nyári Színpark), a culturally significant yet understudied venue. Constructed between 1909 and 1910, the building has remained in continuous use by the Hungarian Theatre and Opera of Cluj, despite numerous political and structural transformations. The study situates the theatre within the broader trajectory of Cluj's theatrical infrastructure, examining its design, construction, and subsequent renovations. Utilizing original architectural plans and archival documentation, the analysis foregrounds the building's historical and architectural relevance. The article argues for the inclusion of the Summer Theatre in the canon of Hungarian and regional theatre architecture and calls for its preservation as an integral part of Cluj's cultural heritage.

Keywords: *theatre architecture, Cluj (Kolozsvár), Summer Theatre (Nyári színpark), construction history, built heritage*

“No matter how large the sums a city spends on building theatres, this expense is the most fruitful investment, one that pays off a hundredfold through the refinement of its citizens' taste, their more cultured way of thinking, the improvement of the people's morals, and the propagation of the purest language.”¹

István Keglevich, 1900.

From the 18th century onward, the city of Kolozsvár (Cluj) – alongside many economic, social, and cultural segments – was at the forefront of theatre in

¹ Hedvig Belitska-Scholtz, Edit Rajnai, and Olga Somorjai, eds., *Színháztörténeti képek könyv [An Illustrated Book of Theatre History]* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2005), 139.

Hungarian-speaking regions. The first Hungarian permanent theatre was built in Cluj, located at Farkas street (translated as Wolf Street; present-day Mihail Kogălniceanu Street), which served as a home for the theatre company for a hundred years. In addition to this theatre building, in the second half of the 19th century another building was constructed and made available for the company – the wooden summer theatre – thereby recognizing the importance of theatrical life in the city. When the building on Farkas Street became less suitable for artistic purposes and structurally problematic, the city authorities considered it necessary to erect a new venue. The impressive building, designed by the Austrian architectural duo Fellner and Helmer, however, served as the company's home only for a very short time due to political changes. A few years after the completion of the Hunyadi Square Theatre, a concrete-framed building was erected in place of the wooden summer theatre, and due to political changes, the Hungarian company was expelled from the Hunyadi Square Theatre and relocated to this new building. Although the move to the Summer Theatre initially appeared to be only a temporary solution, the Hungarian company of Cluj continues to perform there to this day. Now that history has deprived Cluj's Hungarian theatre of its two legendary buildings, it is time to focus on what currently accommodates the work of a city-worthy, European-standard company. It is time to take a closer look at the building before further modifications and the passage of time cause even greater damage.

In my view, the theatre building still in use today receives far too little scholarly and public attention, – though this is hardly surprising, given that it has undergone several reconstructions since its construction. Its façade lacks distinction, the exterior is visually uninspiring and easily overlooked, and the corridors and lobbies similarly fail to leave a lasting impression. Only the auditorium retains traces of the building's former elegance and the elaborate ornamentation that once characterized its interior. In the historical narratives of Cluj's theatrical institutions, the Summer Theatre building occupies only a marginal position, often treated as a subsidiary venue in relation to the primary sites on Farkas Street and Hunyadi Square. Consequently, no comprehensive study has been produced about it, and the archival sources remain largely untapped. The aim of my study is to explore the original plans and their realization, contextualize the circumstances surrounding the building's construction in 1909–1910, and outline its subsequent renovations up to its

current state. In this paper, I primarily focus on the façade and external architectural elements, examining how the building's outward appearance was conceived, altered, and preserved over time.

The First Permanent Theatre in Cluj (on Farkas Street)

The history of Hungarian professional theatre in Cluj dates back to 1792, with the establishment of the city's Hungarian language professional acting company, which initially performed in the former ballroom of the Rhédey Palace that had been converted into a theatre hall.² Prior to the inauguration of the purpose-built theatre on Farkas Street in 1821, the troupe staged its productions in other provisional venues in the city, but the growing public interest made the creation of a permanent theatre venue increasingly urgent.

In 1795 the decision was made to build a theatre-appropriate building, and fundraising began for its construction. On the 13rd of July, 1803, five noblemen of Cluj purchased a double lot on Farkas Street from the Reformed College and – likely as a donation – made it available to the “*theatralis commissio*”, that is, to the acting troupe for the purpose of building a permanent theatre.³ Construction of the building that would provide a permanent home for the company began in 1811, and by 1821 it was completed, making it one of the first theatre buildings in Hungary at that time (see Photo Appendix 1). According to several sources, the initial architectural design for the theatre was created by Ferenc Fekete⁴, however, the prolonged delays in securing funding and obtaining approval for the plans significantly impacted the project timeline. Due to this extended process, the original designs were ultimately set aside, and the theatre was constructed based on revised plans attributed to the master builder Antal Alföldi.⁵ Zoltán Vincze, in his volume on the history of Farkas Street in Cluj,

² Káli Nagy Lázár *Visszaemlékezései. Az erdélyi magyar színészet hőskora 1792-1821* [*Memoires of Lázár Káli Nagy. The Heroic Age of Hungarian Theatre in Transylvania, 1792-1821*], ed. János Lázok (Marosvásárhely: Mentor, 2009), 28.

³ György Gaal, *Kolozsvár kétezer esztendeje dátumokban* [*Two Thousand Years of Cluj in Dates*], in *Kolozsvár 1000 éve* [*1000 Years of Cluj*] (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2001), 327.

⁴ Káli Nagy Lázár *Visszaemlékezései*. [*Memoires of Lázár Káli Nagy.*], 22.

⁵ Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története* [*The History of Acting and Theatre in Cluj*] (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert Press, 1897), 159.

names architect Antal Schütz as the designer and mentions Alföldi only as construction supervisor,⁶ this way Gheorghe Vais, based on these data, views the creation of the building as the joint work of both men.⁷ Regardless of the exact authorship the stone theatre proudly opened its doors on the 12nd of March, 1821⁸ and housed Hungarian theatrical performances in Cluj until 1906, when the new theatre on Hunyadi Square was built. On the 17th of June, 1906, the last performance in the Farkas Street stone theatre – József Katona's *Bánk bán* – was staged. In 1935 the then-owner, the Romanian university, demolished the venerable theatre building on Farkas Street and built a modern student dormitory on the site, inaugurated on the 13rd of June, 1937.⁹

The Wooden Summer Theatre from 1874

The stone theatre on Farkas Street proved too hot during the summer months and was not ideal for performances of lighter genres. For these reasons, the idea arose to build a timber-framed summer theatre, which with its much airier spatial design and natural ventilation would provide a more pleasant venue for both actors and audience in the summer season. Bogdán Korbuly, the theatre's director at that time, entrusted master builder Henrik Zimmermann with the task, and Korbuly himself covered the costs,¹⁰ which

⁶ Zoltán Vincze, *A kolozsvári Farkas utca [Farkas Street in Cluj]* (Kolozsvár: Stúdium Könyvkiadó, 2003), 40.

⁷ Gheorghe Vais, *Clujul eclectic: Programe de arhitectură în perioada dualistă (1867-1918)* [*Eclectic Cluj: Architectural Programs during the Dualist Period (1867-1918)*] (Cluj-Napoca: UT Press, 2009), 288.

⁸ For the inauguration and the internal structure of the building, see: Katalin Ágnes Bartha, *Theatre Inauguration Ceremony and Symbolic Representation, Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai – Dramatica* 62, no. 2 (2022): 23-50, <https://dramatica.ro/index.php/j/article/view/201>.

⁹ The most recent reconstruction of the theatre's demolition history, based on archival sources, was undertaken by György Gaal. See: György Gaal, *A kolozsvári kőszínház utóélete [The Afterlife of the Cluj Stone Theatre]*, in *Színház, civil társadalom és politikum. Írások, tanulmányok Kötő József emlékére [Theatre, Civil Society, and Politics: Writings and Studies in Memory of József Kötő]*, ed. Katalin Ágnes Bartha (EMKE – EME Publishing House, 2021), 21-40.

¹⁰ Aladár Schöpflin, ed., *Magyar Színművészeti Lexikon – A magyar színház és drámairodalom enciklopédiája [Hungarian Lexicon of Dramatic Art – An Encyclopedia of Hungarian Theatre and Drama Literature]*, vol. 3 (1929), 12, accessed April 7, 2025, http://mek.oszk.hu/08700/08756/html/III/szin_III.0011.pdf.

were later reimbursed – albeit after a lengthy dispute and for a sum reportedly less than what he had actually spent – when the committee eventually took the theatre back from him.¹¹ The modest-looking summer theatre, built entirely of wood, opened on the 13rd of June, 1874 (see Photo Appendix 2). It was located in the immediate vicinity of the promenade (city park) and the banks of the Szamos River (Someş River), as the building's function and character demanded this location. The periodical *Erdélyi Lapok* reported on the demolition of the wooden summer theatre in issue 14 of 1909: "After thirty-five years of service, the summer theatre has now completely disappeared from the face of the earth." In place of the demolished structure, a new summer theatre was built – the building of today's Hungarian Theatre of Cluj and Hungarian Opera of Cluj – which is the central focus of this research.

The Hunyadi Square National Theatre and the Transition (1906–1945)

Around the turn of the 20th century, the theatre building on Farkas Street fell into an increasingly critical condition. In 1903 the city leadership decided to build a new theatre that would meet the needs of the era. The main reason given was the obsolescence of the Farkas Street building: from both artistic and structural standpoints it no longer met the troupe's and the audience's requirements. The selection of the site and the persons of the designers and builders was surrounded by lengthy debate, which Kálmán Tisza finally resolved. His choice fell on Hunyadi Square and on the Austrian architect duo Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer. Whether this choice was right or wrong for the building is not the main line of my research; what is certain is that he was often attacked in the contemporary press for this decision, primarily citing the disregard of domestic theatre architects. Despite the debates, the Hungarian National Theatre designed and built by the pair of architects was constructed between 1904 and 1906 (see Photo Appendix 3). The state did not contribute to the construction costs; the expenses were covered in part by the 70,000 forints from the sale of the Farkas Street

¹¹ Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története [The History of Acting and Theatre in Cluj]* (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert Press, 1897), 478–479.

building to the university, and in part by the Theatrical Fund and the proceeds from Sándor Újfalvi's lands. The remaining shortfall was bridged by a loan from the Hungarian Commercial Bank, the repayment of which became the responsibility of each successive director.¹² The new theatre opened its doors on the 8th of September, 1906 on Hunyadi (today Ștefan cel Mare) Square. The newly built theatre was a great leap forward in Cluj's theatrical life and is regarded as the beginning of a new era in theatre history. With its modern and imposing structure, functional spaces and up-to-date stage technology, the building proved a worthy venue for Cluj's theatrical performances.

In April 1905, Jenő Janovics was appointed director of the theatre, following a six-year tenure leading the municipal theatre in Szeged. Upon assuming this role, Janovics initiated a number of transformative developments in Cluj's theatrical life. Notably, he oversaw the demolition of the old wooden theatre in the city promenade and commissioned the construction of the Nyári Színpark (Summer Theatre), a venue intended to carry on the seasonal function of its predecessor. The new structure provided a dedicated space for popular theatrical productions that did not align with the artistic direction of the main theatre on Hunyadi Square. Designed with flexibility in mind, the Summer Theatre also accommodated social events such as balls. Significantly, under Janovics's leadership, the site became home to Transylvania's first film studio, marking a pioneering moment in the region's cinematic history.

The Hungarian company's presence in the Hunyadi Square theatre was relatively brief, as the political realignments following the First World War and the consolidation of Romanian state authority brought about significant institutional changes. "World history encroached on the chronicle of theatre in Cluj on the 30th of September, 1919. On that day the last Hungarian performance was held in the Hunyadi Square theatre, and from the 1st of October the building was nationalized and from then on became the home of Romanian theatre. Hamlet was on the program, from which the censors cut the great monologue, leaving only the first line: 'To be or not to be, that is the question.' Today, knowing the facts of theatre history, we can

¹² Elemér Jancsó, *A kolozsvári magyar színháztörténet (1792-1918)* [Hungarian Theatre in Cluj, 1792-1918], in *Kincses Kolozsvár [Treasured Cluj]* (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1987), 173.

say that the troupe that moved over to the Summer Theatre in the promenade resolved Hamlet's dilemma by choosing only one mode of existence: to be."¹³ In choosing to continue to be, despite the difficulties, the company carried on its activities, sheltering in the promenade theatre. Following the Second Vienna Award, the Hungarian theatre company was permitted to return to the National Theatre on Hunyadi Square, where it performed between 1941 and 1945. In November 1945, however, the company was again required to vacate the building.

The Conception and Construction of the Summer Theatre

Jenő Janovics in his monograph *The Hunyadi Square Theatre*, not only examines the institution's repertoire and artistic policy, but also provides valuable insights into the actors, the shifting political and social contexts of the period, and, importantly, the construction of the Summer Theatre. Notably, Chapter XX is dedicated in its entirety to the architectural and institutional history of the Summer Theatre's development.

After Janovics became director in 1905, the decaying wooden summer theatre continued to be used for a few more seasons. In the summer of 1907, the local police and fire department again declared the promenade theatre unsuitable for use. According to their report: "It is a veritable firetrap, and the performance permit is granted without assuming any responsibility, solely because despite having protested for two years, the Ministry of Interior granted permission at the third instance. The Summer Theatre is objectionable not only from a fire safety standpoint but is also structurally hazardous, as the entire building – despite numerous repairs – is rotten, constructed of weak material, and frankly, could collapse at any moment."¹⁴ Thus, the committee granted permission, albeit without accepting responsibility; meaning that if any accident were to occur due to the building's condition, the responsibility would fall on the theatre, primarily on director Jenő Janovics. In the summer of 1908 repairs were once again carried out on the rotting structure of the old summer theatre, but these fixes

¹³ József Kötő, *A Bánk bán és Kolozsvár* [Bánk Bán and Cluj], in *Kolozsvár 1000 éve* [1000 Years of Cluj] (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2001), 187.

¹⁴ Jenő Janovics, *A Hunyadi téri színház* [The Hunyadi Square Theatre], ed. József Kötő (Kolozsvár: Korunk Baráti Társaság, Komp-Press Kiadó, 2001), 73–74.

did not ensure the stability of the building in the long term. And since, despite the ominous safety situation, audiences still flocked to the performances¹⁵, the director once again pressed for a new solution¹⁶. By late 1908, Jenő Janovics had renewed his efforts to initiate the construction of a new summer theatre and succeeded in securing the support of the municipal authorities. At that time, the weekly journal *Vállalkozók Lapja* publicly reported the project, stating: "Regarding the construction of the Cluj summer theatre, the petition addressed by the city of Cluj to the Minister of Culture has recently received a favourable response in that the minister has approved an appropriate subsidy. Upon receipt of the minister's letter, the theatre construction committee, under the chairmanship of Count Ákos Béldy, convened immediately and decided to have the summer theatre built according to the designs of Géza Márkus, architect from the capital."¹⁷ Initially Márkus estimated the construction costs at 276,471 crowns and 50 fillér¹⁸, an amount that later grew to roughly three times that.

As Jenő Janovics recounts, "In the summer of 1909 the gates of the decrepit wooden theatre opened once more. The preparations for building the new summer theatre advanced so slowly and with so many setbacks that, compelled by necessity, I once again began renovating, sprucing up, rejuvenating the large wooden shed looming at the end of the promenade."¹⁹ At that point, the completion of the new theatre remained uncertain; nonetheless, Janovics persisted. Once the summer season concluded, he intensified his efforts to ensure that construction would finally begin.

By the end of that year, construction of the new summer theatre finally commenced in earnest. During the initial phase, the former structure was completely demolished, followed by the beginning of earthworks on the site. The builders immediately encountered a huge obstacle: they had not

¹⁵ "The audience was not deterred by the concerns of engineers, firefighters, and police officers. However, everyone shared the hope and desire that this dilapidated, dangerous firetrap would finally be demolished, and in its place a summer theatre would be built where audiences could attend performances happily." - Janovics, *A Hunyadi téri színház* [*The Hunyadi Square Theatre*], 79.

¹⁶ "I prepared plans, bombarded the Theatre Committee, the city, and the government with petitions. I could not rest." - Janovics, *A Hunyadi téri színház* [*The Hunyadi Square Theatre*], 110.

¹⁷ *Vállalkozók Lapja* [*Entrepreneurs' Gazette*], October 14, 1908.

¹⁸ Janovics, *A Hunyadi téri színház* [*The Hunyadi Square Theatre*], 113.

¹⁹ Janovics, *A Hunyadi téri színház* [*The Hunyadi Square Theatre*], 86-87.

accounted for the waterlogged soil conditions of the riverbank site. Overcoming this problem meant loss of time and money. The budget swelled to 700,000 crowns, which provoked heated debates in the city leadership. Since the walls were already standing, they did not want to halt the works, and the city took out another loan. From that point onward, construction proceeded at full steam.

Despite lengthy petitioning and the problems and cost overruns during construction, the new building opened its doors on the 18th of August, 1910. Years later Janovics appraised the building thus: "...it was a complement to the Hunyadi Square theatre; moreover, when in difficult times the occupying power's military force expelled the Hungarian actors from the Hunyadi Square theatre-palace, this airy house by the Szamos – which otherwise cannot be called an architectural masterpiece – became the refuge, home, and savior of Hungarian theatre in Cluj. [...] Essentially nobody wanted it to be built. I alone fought for it, stubbornly, persistently, not recoiling from obstacles."²⁰

Despite the constantly shifting political circumstances, which were not favourable to contemporary archival materials, the original set of plans for the Summer Theatre has survived in the Hungarian National Archives, providing further information on the building's construction. However, the stamps and signatures affixed to the plans complicate a straightforward attribution of authorship or responsibility, making the precise roles of the individuals involved somewhat difficult to determine. The plans dated on the 25th of July, 5th, 13th, 17th and 31st of August, 1909, mainly bear the signatures of Géza Márkus and Frigyes Spiegel, alongside the joint stamp of their shared office, which, according to the stamp, was located at 32 Veres Pálné Street, in the 4th District of Budapest. The Cluj-based architect Alajos Réhling – whose office operated at 16 Szentegyház (now Iuliu Maniu) Street – undoubtedly played a significant role in the construction, as his stamp and signature appear on virtually every plan. The signature and stamp of Sebestyén Aladár Kovács, a professor at the Technical University with an office at 8 Városház Street in Budapest's 4th District, also appear on several documents – though his signature was at times added by others. While Kovács is formally listed as a designer on multiple plans, this likely reflects

²⁰ Janovics, *A Hunyadi téri színház* [*The Hunyadi Square Theatre*], 110.

the standardized phrasing of one of his stamps rather than his primary authorship; he most probably contributed the building's structural engineering documentation.

Alongside the two architects, the constructor, and Professor Kovács, the stamps also mention Wayss G. A. & Co., a Hungarian Concrete and Reinforced Concrete Construction Company based at 10 Rákóczi Road in Budapest's 7th District, a certain Engineer B., elsewhere Engineer Baczó, and several illegible signatures. The architect signing frequently in place of Sebestyén Aladár Kovács appears to be named "Pókay" or "Pákey." If these signatures are indeed attributable to Lajos Pákei (or Pákey), who at the time served as the chief architect of Cluj, this would raise intriguing possibilities for further research, though currently, I do not have any additional sources to confirm this.

Andor Demény, the Unitarian master-builder originally from Torockó (Rimetea), who studied architecture in Budapest, played a significant role in supervising and executing the construction works: "...during the transformation of the promenade's summer theatre, built in 1874, into a permanent theatre in 1909–1910, the Art Nouveau designs of Géza Márkus and Frigyes Spiegel were realized by the construction firm of engineer Alajos Réhling. Demény was first a trainee and later a construction supervisor on this building site."²¹ The identities of the other masters and the full details of the construction process remain unclear at this point in my research.

Spaces, Layout, Functionality

Several typologies exist for categorizing theatre buildings and other performance halls.²² Primarily they are distinguished by the function of the building, and within that, classified by genre characteristics. Seating capacity and building size are closely related to a theatre's purpose. According to this system, the Summer Theatre building falls into the category of drama theatres, which typically accommodate 800–1200 people and have an

²¹ György Gaal, *Magyarok utcája* [*Street of the Hungarians*] (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1995), 151.

²² Miklós Hofer, Péter István Varga, Levente Szabó, György Nagy, and Ferenc Cságoly, *Kulturális épületek/1* [*Cultural Buildings / Part 1*], in *Középületek* [*Public Buildings*], edited by Ferenc Cságoly (Budapest: Terc Kiadó, 2004), 112–113.

auditorium of one or at most two levels. The Summer Theatre had a two-level auditorium with boxes, seating 862 people – 492 seats on the ground floor and 370 on the balcony – which, with a row spacing of 80 cm and seat width of 60 cm, provides 5–10 cm less space per spectator than ideal.²³ Drama theatres are often complemented by a studio stage for a few hundred spectators, in order to create flexible and much more intimate spaces necessary for various directorial experiments. This approach also characterizes the current use of space at the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj, as the studio hall inaugurated on the 10th of November, 2008 serves this artistic purpose. Before its construction – and even occasionally after – smaller performance spaces with limited seating were created on the main stage itself for experimental productions.

Based on the stage system, the Summer Theatre, like most European theatres, belongs to the category of proscenium theatres. This traditional format preserves the tripartite division of the stage: a main stage approximately 20–24 meters wide, one or two side stages, and a rear stage. The Summer Theatre's main stage is 20 m wide and 10 m deep, with a height of 18 m up to the fly loft, dimensions that fit perfectly within this category. Its rear stage is 10 m wide, 6 m deep, and 7 m high. In a proscenium theatre, the stage usually opens toward the auditorium with an arch about 12–14 m wide, and in front of it there is typically a sunken orchestra pit – even in drama theatres. The Summer Theatre's stage has a somewhat smaller proscenium opening – 9.9 m wide by 5.8 m high – but it likewise has an orchestra pit, as proscenium theatres generally do. The sunken orchestra pit covers roughly 36 m², with a maximum depth of 3.25 m at the centre; when covered, it can serve as an extended apron, sitting 16 cm below stage level. This traditional stage form has changed over time only in its dimensions – the proscenium opening can reach up to 18–20 m in width and the apron can span the full width of the auditorium – but its fundamental structure has not changed. In the Summer Theatre, this tripartite stage arrangement provides a usable playing area of about 270 m², which increases to 306 m² when including the apron.

The two main functional components of a theatre building are the auditorium and the stage, to which are attached a variety of supporting

²³ Hofer, Varga, Szabó, Nagy and Cságoly, *Kulturális épületek/1* [Cultural Buildings / Part 1], 138.

spaces differing in number and purpose. The auditorium is the core of a theatre building, both functionally and in terms of massing. Perfect sightlines and acoustics from every point in the auditorium must be taken into account when designing the space. The number and placement of exits are determined with an eye to rapid evacuation of the hall; whether ramps or stairs are used depends on the slope of the auditorium. In the Summer Theatre, only ramps were used on the ground floor, whereas the balcony level utilizes both stairs and ramps.

The public circulation zone consists of the areas for audience movement, gathering, and amenities. This zone includes the entrances, the vestibule (entrance hall), the ticket lobby, cloakroom, restrooms, the foyer (lounge), and the buffet, all connected by corridors and staircases.

The basement plan shows the configuration of the space beneath the stage. This is where the lowering mechanism area for the orchestra pit was located, along with the central heating plant, the musicians' room, and three separate dressing rooms. Access to the basement was provided by one staircase on each side. These staircases and basement spaces are still in use today, although most now serve different functions.

The ground floor plan reveals a symmetrical spatial arrangement that mirrors that of the basement level. Prior to entering the main body of the building, visitors passed through a foyer marked by two Corinthian columns, from which the ticket booth could be accessed. The small pavilions located on either side of the entrance could be reached from outside or via staircases from the building interior, though their intended function is not explicitly documented. Passing through the entrance doors, one enters the vestibule, or main lobby; behind us on both sides are the cloakrooms – arranged similarly to the current foyer layout. Extending beyond the cloakrooms were two small buffets and presumably the washroom facilities. The vestibule has a curved design following the line of the auditorium, and the balcony level is reached by staircases that start at both sides of the centre of the vestibule. The vestibule continues to the left and right into side corridors, which likewise follow the curved layout of the auditorium. These two side corridors each protrude in a small apse-like form on the side façades of the building, in perfect symmetry. Naturally, the central space of the ground floor plan is the auditorium, which, as mentioned, has a circular floor plan. From the line where the auditorium connects to the stage area onward,

the rear part of the building is composed of rectangular forms. On the right side wall of the stage there is a large door, which likely facilitated set placement and the movement of actors. The rear stage is narrower than the front stage, and the remaining space on either side is filled by dressing rooms. The rear stage continues into the scenery storage area, to which – in the extension of the dressing rooms on both sides – a symmetrically arranged office and a room with kitchen (the latter presumably used as a residence) are attached.

The first floor was accessed via the two staircases located on either side of the ground-floor vestibule, leading to the balcony level of the auditorium. From this upper lobby space one could step out onto the front façade's open balcony. The balcony's seating area is steeply raked; a small stair is present between the lower and higher sections. The rear part of the first floor contains four symmetrically arranged dressing rooms, reached by two side staircases.

The most prominent vertical elements of the Summer Theatre building are the dome and the stage house with its fly loft (see Photo Appendix 4). In her study²⁴, Ildikó Bucur Horváth quotes from a conference lecture in Istanbul regarding the Summer Theatre's dome: "The world's first large-span classical-form reinforced concrete dome with a peripheral ring."²⁵ She emphasizes the dome's pioneering character not only in terms of architectural innovation but also within the broader context of technological history – particularly in relation to the development of shell structures as both a theoretical and practical field.

The 28 m diameter reinforced concrete shell dome was constructed at the same time as the building in 1909–1910, and although the building underwent several alterations, fortunately no modifications were made to the dome's structure. It follows the formal and structural principles of ancient and Renaissance domes: it has a circular opening (oculus) at its crown, a peripheral ring girding the dome at the springline, and its structure rests on wall pillars. However, its external appearance was later changed:

²⁴ Ildikó Bucur Horváth, *A kolozsvári nyári színpör, a mai Magyar Színház és Opera régi épülete* (manuscript, 2000), Cluj Hungarian Theatre Documentation Department of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj.

²⁵ Ildikó Bucur Horváth, Attila Bacsó, Ioan Popa, and Ioan Tanasoiu, "An Early Reinforced Concrete Cupola in the Context of the Thin Shells Evolution," in *Proceedings of the IASS-MSU International Symposium*, May 29 – June 2, 2000, Istanbul, Turkey.

during renovation, a slate covering was added atop the concrete dome, laid on planking propped at intervals, which completely filled in the drum, and a pointed finial ornament was placed on the top of the dome. Horváth Bucur dates this alteration to the 1959–1960 renovations, but it likely occurred earlier, as a postcard postmarked 1940 already shows the dome in its altered state. This change damaged the dome's classical character: the exterior profile and curve of the dome no longer match the interior structural curve, so the external view suggests a false structure. Horváth Bucur also criticizes the alteration from a static (structural) point of view, since the roof and any snow load are distributed less favourably and place an disadvantageous stress on the dome shell.

The stage space is considerably taller than the rest of the building, primarily because a full fly loft was necessary. Its roof, which is slightly segmented (broken in profile), has a design with classical (antiquating) touches. The massing of the building is determined by the fixed forms of its functional spaces. The spatial sequence of the main parts typical of theatres – foyer, auditorium, stage, scenery storage – and the required height of the stage area greatly influence the volumetric composition. Thus, the spatial configuration and massing of the Summer Theatre are similar to those of most European theatres.

Façade, Decorative Elements, Details

The initial façade design for the Summer Theatre (see Photo Appendix 5) presents a substantially more monumental and robust character than the version ultimately realized, as evidenced by surviving period postcards. Archival records preserve two distinct façade designs: the second, more elaborately rendered version includes several minor modifications and was likely produced at a later stage in the design process.

The façade of the Summer Theatre – and indeed the entire building in its floor plan and spatial layout – follows a symmetrical scheme. Although vertically it is divided into several distinct units, fundamentally the composition is dominated by strong horizontal lines. Vertically, the building can be divided into the entrance section; on either side of it, a projecting curved risalit; the recessed connecting sections attaching to those; and finally

the two corner pavilions. The verticality of the façade is reinforced by the two Corinthian columns in front of the entrance (each as tall as the full height of the building), by the protruding wall sections, and by the large vertical openings of the pavilions.

The horizontal articulation of the façade is achieved through several compositional elements: the rusticated treatment of the ground-floor wall surface, a string course separating the two principal levels, the open balcony above the entrance – enclosed by a wrought-iron balustrade – and the prominently projecting crowning cornice. The building's overall horizontality is further reinforced by the shallow curvature of the vaulted dome and the similarly flattened gable roof of the stage house, both of which contribute to its low, elongated visual profile.

The lower level of the entrance bay is recessed from the main façade plane. Positioned above the central double-leaf entrance – framed by an antique-style portal – and the single-leaf side doors are multi-figure decorative elements, likely executed in fresco or stucco relief. These ornamental figures are absent from the surviving architectural plans and are only partially visible in period photographs. The imagery appears to depict dancing female figures, which may have been intended to represent the Nine Muses. Historical reproductions also suggest that the ground-floor wall surface of the entrance bay may have been articulated with one or more wall niches. The upper story of the entrance section included an open balcony, enclosed by a wrought-iron railing with geometric motifs. Above the balcony and the cornice, a pediment ornament with a foliage pattern was placed, depicting a lyre in the centre. A globe was set atop the lyre. In the first façade design, two masks symbolizing the theatre appeared here, whereas in the second design the simplified outlines of the executed ornament are visible.

The protruding wall segments flanking both sides of the entrance section are decorated only by the general wall treatment characteristic of the entire building. On the lower level, the rusticated wall surface is broken by a large arched window set in a broad rectangular frame sunk into the plaster; on the upper level, a much smaller rectangular window is set into the smooth wall surface.

The surfaces connecting the pavilions to the central entrance section are also recessed, like the ground-floor entrance area. The lower level of these connecting sections is rusticated, the upper level smooth. On the

ground floor of each connector, at the centre of the wall, there is a large rectangular sunken panel in the plaster containing a bas-relief with Baroque stylistic elements, identical on both sides of the building. It is not impossible that these were intended as fountain niches, but from the drawings this is not clear. The two façade designs show different versions of these reliefs, and contemporary images reveal a third variant that appears to be a mix of the two planned designs. Because the height of the two pavilions is equal to that of the first floor, the two connecting segments join the pavilions in a volute-like manner.

The circular plan of the pavilions allowed them to be roofed with domes similar to the main dome, which reinforces the stylistic unity of the building. These half-domes on the pavilions flank the central dome's similarly domical, prominently geometric central feature. The pavilions' walls are also rusticated, and each pavilion has one door in the centre (of the same size and style as the other doors) and, on each side of the door, a large window. Above the pavilions' large openings are small horizontal oval windows set in rectangular sunken frames in the plaster.

The dome, which is integrated into the overall façade composition, was originally constructed according to the architectural plans, featuring a lattice-like decorative pattern and a low drum – although, as previously noted, this element was subsequently modified. The stage gable carries a very slightly segmented gable roof; vertical wall sections decorating its surface follow the roofline. A pronounced cornice crowns the gable, beneath which runs a frieze adorned with an antique-style running wave motif interspersed with foliage. The gable's upper corners are accentuated by globe-shaped finials decorated with palm-leaf motifs.

Alterations and Modifications

At present, no sources have been identified that confirm whether modifications were made to the building's interior spaces over the past century. However, changes to the façade and the design of the entrance hall can be discerned from reproductions and postcards of the exterior. It is clear that the façade's historicist character was completely lost during the 1957–1961 renovations. Less obvious, however, is that alterations were made to

the façade even earlier – differences visible in various postcards provide evidence of these changes.

A postcard postmarked in 1914 (see Photo Appendix 6) almost certainly shows the building in its original form, without alterations – we might say in its full original splendor – as only about four years had passed since the building's inauguration, and the dated postal cancel implies the image was created by 1914 at the latest. The dome, like the two side pavilions, is seen with a smooth surface and the intended curvature, with the latticed drum at its top. The stage gable displays the vegetative ornamented frieze, and on the gable's top the two globe ornaments with palm leaves. Above the entrance one can presumably see the figures of the nine Muses, above which is the open balcony, and on the cornice at the centre the baroque ornament with the lyre and globe.

On a later postcard, mailed in 1928 (Photo Appendix 7), many changes can be observed. The most important is the alteration of the roofs: the smooth-surfaced, spherical dome presents a completely different form and surface, and even its finial ornament was replaced. The two side pavilions' roofs were also replaced, gaining a slightly pointed profile. Based on the new shapes of the dome and pavilion roofs, I believe the modification was necessitated by issues of precipitation. The newly configured roof likely channeled rain and snow much more effectively than the much flatter original, and the new roofing material also appears far more robust against climatic effects. Another striking aspect of the 1928 postcard is that signs of damage are already visible on the stage gable. The likely cause of the deterioration of the decorative elements lies in the quality of materials used. Since the construction costs had multiplied due to the soil conditions, it is not impossible that they tried to recoup the budget by reducing the expenditure on the final decorative works.

Another major change is shown in a postcard addressed in 1940 (Photo Appendix 8): by this time the two projecting side sections flanking the entrance had their lower rectangular windows bricked up, and the balcony and entrance were fitted with lattice-frame windows similar to the building's other openings. As a result, the previously free-standing columns became integrated into the plane of the façade. On the ground floor this infill was complete; the balcony, however, was glazed only in the bay between the two columns, while from the columns outward to the sides a balustrade railing

appears. Another conspicuous feature in this postcard is that the figurative decorations on the façade have completely vanished. The palm-leaf globe ornaments on the gable and the baroque lyre ornament with the globe above the entrance are entirely missing. We can also observe the progressively deteriorating state of the building: the crowning cornice is crumbling. Presumably the decorative elements had suffered similar damage, which is why they were removed at some point in the 1930s. It is unfortunately not possible to tell from this image whether the bas-reliefs between the pavilions and the main building were still present. Given the rapid deterioration of the other ornaments, in my opinion even if those reliefs were still in place by then, they would have been in a very badly damaged state.

The next renovation, the 1957–1961 reconstruction (see Photo Appendix 9), was perhaps the most formative in terms of the building's present appearance, since the lobby and façade underwent extensive transformation, and the building's characteristic, historicist and richly articulated design was completely obliterated. The new façade, flattened to a single plane, follows the curved line of the auditorium and dome. In addition to the exterior changes, the front-of-house interior spaces were also altered: a more spacious ground-floor vestibule was created, and above it, on the first floor, a large hall-like space was built.

The compositional balance of the façade was significantly disrupted by these alterations; the inversion of proportion between the smaller lower-level openings and the larger upper-level ones lends the building an incongruous overall appearance. Following the renovations undertaken between 1957 and 1961, however, no major changes were made to the building's spatial configuration or external form. Subsequent interventions in the decades that followed were limited in scope, primarily involving maintenance work on the roof as well as repairs to both the exterior and interior wall surfaces.

Conclusions and Outlook for the Building's Future

This study demonstrates that the history of the Summer Theatre's construction remains marked by numerous unresolved questions. As my research has progressed, I have uncovered even more avenues of inquiry – though I believe I have succeeded in resolving some of them. By examining

the original architectural plans, I was able to reconstruct the building's spatial structure, layout, and decorative scheme. The plans themselves raise as many questions as they answer, particularly with respect to authorship and implementation.

In the future, it will be essential to examine the written documentation preserved in the Hungarian National Archives, as it may shed light on the identities of the architects and contractors involved, as well as provide crucial details regarding the construction budget. Another promising direction would be to explore the Jenő Janovics papers held at the Transylvanian Museum Society's library and manuscript collection. Unfortunately, no materials pertaining to the theatre's construction are held by the Documentation Department of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj, and contemporary press coverage preserved there offers little additional insight. A thorough review of newspapers and periodicals from the era might reveal how the construction process unfolded and how the idea of the new theatre was received by the citizens of Cluj – especially considering that Janovics himself described the resistance he faced. Such sources could also clarify the timeline and challenges of the project, including issues of rising costs and delays.

Beyond my goal of producing a complete architectural history of the Summer Theatre – a contribution long overdue in both Hungarian theatre historiography and the architectural history of Cluj – I also hope to emphasize the remaining cultural and architectural value of the building. Any future renovation or reconstruction must take these into account. No matter how modern, efficient, or aesthetically pleasing a new structure may be, these historical values must not be sacrificed.

Over the past five decades, the building has seen no major transformations. Yet time has taken its toll: the structure is visibly aging, and intermittent repairs offer only short-term solutions. The façade is unremarkable and arguably unattractive – it does not harmonize with Cluj's contemporary cityscape, nor does it reflect the caliber and international acclaim of the institutions housed within.

In early 2010, the Romanian daily *Adevărul* published an article and several renderings depicting proposed renovations for the building of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj. These designs aimed to modernize the space and improve functionality, including the addition of a riverside promenade and

an underground parking garage. However, nothing has changed since. In the 2020s, information began to anew about a possible replacement building. Plans were drafted, ministry support was reportedly promised, and both the theatre and opera directors have spoken publicly about the initiative. However, the start of construction has been postponed year after year. To date, no detailed plans or timelines have been made publicly available, and the future of the original, historically significant building – designed by Géza Márkus and Frigyes Spiegel – remains entirely uncertain. While the proposed development could potentially benefit both cultural institutions, it is still unclear to what extent, if any, the original structure of the Summer Theatre would be preserved.

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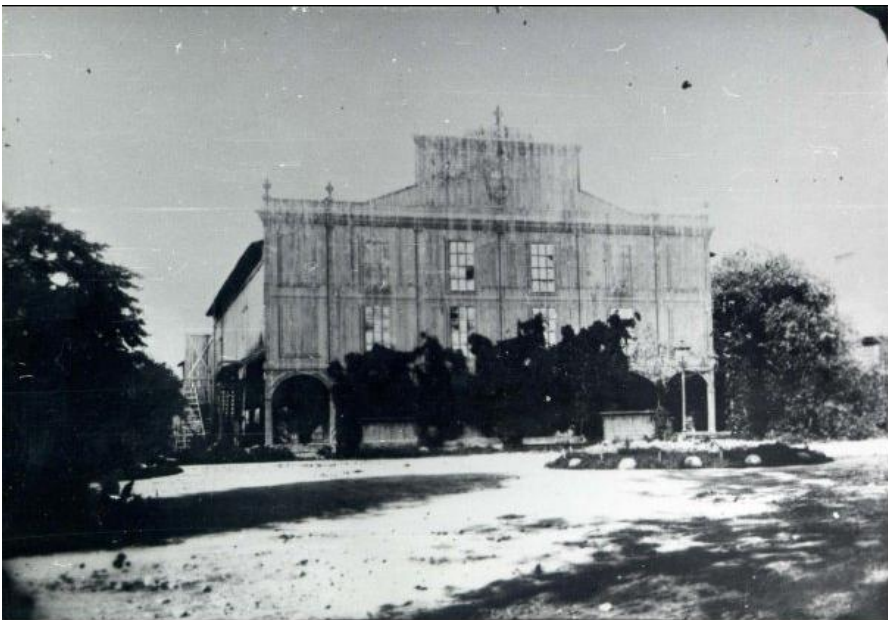
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Photo Appendix*



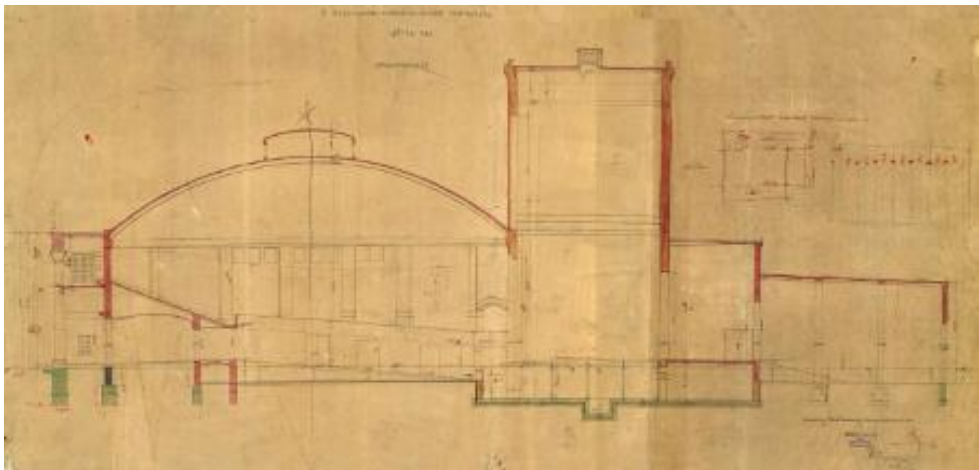
1. The Stone Theatre on Farkas Street, Source: transtelex.ro



2. The Wooden Summer Theatre. Source: clujulcultural.ro



3. The opening of the Hunyadi Square Theatre. Source: kepeslapok.wordpress.com



4. Section drawing of the Summer Theatre building
Source: T13 Plans from the records of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education,
No. 44 - T13-1-b - Hungarian National Archives



5. Façade design of the Summer Theatre

Source: T13 Plans from the records of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education,
No. 44 - T13-36-b - Hungarian National Archives



6. Postcard postmarked 1914. Source: fidelio.hu



7. Postcard postmarked 1928. Source: maszol.ro



8. Postcard postmarked 1940. Source: delcampe.net



9. The façade of the building after the 1957-1961 renovation.
Source: Dőri András, 1969. fortepan.hu

The Establishment of the Municipal Theatre in Toruń (1904)¹

Abstract. The article provides an overview of Toruń's theatrical traditions, dating back to the 15th century, and examines the socio-political context surrounding the 1904 construction of the Municipal Theatre, designed by the renowned Viennese architectural firm Fellner & Helmer.

Keywords: *Toruń's theatrical traditions, Fellner & Helmer, Municipal Theatre in Toruń, West Prussia*

Toruń's theatrical traditions date back to the 15th century. As noted by the chronicler Simon Grunau, around 1440, the pre-Lenten celebrations in Toruń featured *Fastnachtspiele*.² Among the key milestones in the early history of theatre in Toruń is the establishment of a school theatre group at the Protestant Gymnasium Academicum, founded in 1568. The heyday of this amateur theatre occurred from the early 17th century to the 1720s. Its repertoire included passion plays, *actus oratorii*, ancient dramas, and dramatic pieces written by members of the school's academic staff. The best-known lecturers of the Gymnasium, who incorporated historical and religious themes into their plays, included Georg Peter Schultz, Jakob Herden, Georg Wende, Martin Böhm, Paul Pater, and Christoph Hartknoch.³

¹ German theatrical life in Toruń is discussed in greater detail in Marek Podlasiak's monograph: Marek Podlasiak, *Deutsches Theater in Thorn. Vom Wander- zum ständigen Berufstheater (17.-20. Jahrhundert)* [German Theatre in Toruń: From Traveling to Permanent Professional Theatre (17th-20th Century)], Thalia Germanica 10 (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008).

² Johannes Bolte, *Das Danziger Theater im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* [The Gdansk Theatre in the 16th and 17th Centuries] (Hamburg und Leipzig: Verlag von Leopold Voss, 1895), XII.

³ Marek Podlasiak, "Zur Rolle der Professoren des Akademischen Gymnasiums bei der Entwicklung des Theaterlebens in Thorn im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert [The Role of the Professors of the Academic Gymnasium in the Development of Theatre Life in Toruń in the 17th and 18th Centuries]," *Documenta Pragensia: Město a intelektuálové. Od středověku do roku 1848*, no. 27, (2008): 801-812.

An important chapter in the history of theatre in Toruń includes visits from touring companies. One notable event was the guest performance by the troupe “Wiener Coemedianten,” who presented their adaptation of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, titled *König Lear*.⁴ According to Bärbel Rudin, the name “Wiener Coemedianten” refers to the company of Victoria Clara Benecke, which performed in Riga and Königsberg between 1717 and 1720. Their repertoire included *King Lear*, which, as Rudin established, Benecke performed in Toruń around 1717.⁵

In the 17th century, performances most often took place in the “theatre room” in the first Artus House in Toruń. In the second half of the 18th century, the role of the city’s theatre was taken over by the wedding house “Weisser Adler,” located in the Old Town Square. In 1786, performances by Director Toscani’s Stage Company were held here, and in the 1790s, a troupe led by Marianne Köppi and Christian Friedrich Runge performed at the venue.

After the demolition of the Artus House in 1802, a new building was erected on its site, intended, among other purposes, as the municipal theatre. Its construction was not completed until 1829. In the so-called second Artus House, the theatre was located on the ground floor. As described by Reinhold Heuer, the venue’s facilities, including the stage and dressing rooms, were modest, and the auditorium could seat 500.⁶

The Toruń theatre (from 1844 called the *Stadt-Theater*) hosted itinerant theatre companies, whose managers rented the premises primarily for the autumn and winter seasons. At that time, there was no permanent theatre company based in the city. The best-known stage company directors who visited Toruń included Ernst Vogt from Poznań, Heinrich Wilhelm Gehrmann, and Friedrich Genée from Gdańsk. The plays performed were

⁴ A program from this performance is held at the Nicolaus Copernicus Public Provincial Library in Toruń.

⁵ Bärbel Rudin, “Karl Stuart und König Lear. Transfer und Transformation auf dem Theater Thorn (Toruń) als Wegmarke frühneuzeitlichen Schauspielkarrieren [Karl Stuart and King Lear: Transfer and Transformation on the Theatre in Toruń as a Milestone in Early Modern Acting Careers],” in *Migrationen/Standortwechsel. Deutsches Theater in Polen* [Migrations/Relocations: German Theatre in Poland], Thalia Germanica 11, ed. Artur Pełka, Karolina Prykowska-Michalak, Horst Fassel, and Paul S. Ulrich (Łódź/Tübingen: Wydawnictwo Hamal Andrzej Machejek, 2007), 95–97.

⁶ Reinhold Heuer, *Die drei Artushöfe und der Junkerhof in Thorn* [The Three Artus Houses and the Junker House in Toruń] (Thorn: Buchdruckerei Thorner Ostdeutsche Zeitung, 1917), 58.

mainly comedies, as such repertoire guaranteed financial success. The rare performances of classical plays were not well received by the local audience.

Among the managing directors who rented the Toruń theatre premises and facilities in the 19th century, the one who gained the most recognition was Rudolph Schöneck. He ran this institution from 1881 to 1886, while also serving as director of the municipal theatre in Elbląg. As a renowned *Kapellmeister* (having studied opera music with Richard Wagner and being part of Wagner's close circle of disciples), Schöneck chiefly focused on musical performances, presenting operas by Mozart, Lortzing, Verdi, Flotow, and Gounod to Toruń audiences. These works, along with popular operettas, were immensely popular among the public and appreciated by theatre critics, who described Schöneck's era as a "compensation" for the poor quality of the theatre companies that had previously performed in Toruń.⁷

The second Artus House served as the main stage in Toruń until 1887, when the Town Council decided to close the theatre due to the building's poor condition. During this period, touring theatre companies had to give their guest performances at other venues, such as the Volksgarten or the Victoria Park/Victoria Theatre hall. The latter was built in 1887 and, until 1904 – when the municipal theatre was established – served as the main theatre stage in the town. At the turn of the 20th century, it became a regular stop for the great stars of German theatre while touring Europe. In 1892, the audience had the opportunity to admire Josef Kainz, then considered the greatest German theatre actor of the time. Other renowned thespians who visited Toruń in the 1890s included Max Grube (1896), Adalbert Matkowsky (1899), Max Pohl (1896), Walter Schmidt-Häßler (1895), and August Junkermann (1896).

As the new Artus House, built between 1889 and 1891, was not designed to function as a theatre, the need arose to construct a dedicated theatre building. By the end of the century, several designs had been prepared, including one by the town architect Reinhard Uebrick, who planned a Neo-Renaissance theatre with a seating capacity of 600, at a cost of 260,000 gold marks. An alternative design was submitted by the Viennese

⁷ Marek Podlasiak, *Deutsches Theater in Thorn. Vom Wander- zum ständigen Berufstheater (17.-20. Jahrhundert)*, Thalia Germanica 10 (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008), 26.

architectural firm Fellner & Helmer. The offer from this renowned company, which had designed dozens of theatre buildings across Europe, was accepted by the Town Council in March 1902. The estimated cost of construction was 450,000 gold marks. A subsidy of 150,000 gold marks was granted by the Prussian government on the condition that the Toruń theatre would stage plays exclusively in German: “to ensure that the theatre continuously serves Germanhood [...], the Town Council must undertake to use the theatre building solely for performances in German.”⁸

The Polish population of Toruń reacted warily to the plan to finance the construction of the theatre building from the city budget. The new institution was seen primarily as a tool for Germanization, part of the broader Prussian policy aimed at the Polish population. As early as January 1901, *Gazeta Toruńska* wrote: “We wish to make it clear ahead of time that we oppose the construction of a theatre building financed from the city budget, for there will surely be no Polish performances in this theatre, although the Poles here pay the same municipal taxes as the Germans. If the Germans want to have a theatre, let them build it from voluntary contributions, as the Poles did in Poznań.”⁹ The day after the opening of the new theatre building, *Gazeta Toruńska* described this new Prussian cultural institution as a theatre serving the Germanization policy (literally, a “Germanizing theatre”).¹⁰

The building was completed in September 1904, combining elements of Baroque and Art Nouveau. The auditorium could seat 809 people, and the stage machinery was very modern for its time. In July 1909, the statues of Melpomene and Terpsichore, sculpted by Ernst Herter, were mounted in front of the theatre.

Stylistically, the theatre building in Toruń resembles the one in Kolozsvár, built two years later (1906). The similarities between these two buildings include details of the front elevations, such as the nearly identical shapes of the windows, the placement of a pair of double columns, a similar arch and awning over the entrance, and the sculptures of animal figures: eagles on pylons in Toruń and lions on towers in Kolozsvár.

⁸ See *ibid.*, 38.

⁹ Anonymous, “Rada Miejska,” *Gazeta Toruńska*, January 30, 1901.

¹⁰ Anonymous, “Teatr germanizatorski w Toruniu,” *Gazeta Toruńska*, October 1, 1904.



A postcard depicting the Fellner & Helmer theatre building in Toruń, c. 1910
(Tadeusz Zakrzewski's postcard collection)



The theatre in Cluj, built by the Viennese architectural studio Fellner & Helmer
(Photo: Marek Podlasiak)

The official opening of the Municipal Theatre in Toruń took place on September 30, 1904. Among the guests of honour were representatives of the Prussian administration, local notables, and Hermann Helmer, who symbolically handed over the building to the Mayor of Toruń, Georg Kersten. In his speech, Helmer described the new building as a “massive bastion against all foreign influences.”¹¹ The ceremony began with Beethoven’s overture *Die Weihe des Hauses* (*The Consecration of the House*), followed by *Als die Preußen kamen* [When the Prussians Came], an anti-Polish play written by the Toruń-based physician Otto Lindau. The play was based on the events of 1793, the year of the second partition of Poland, which resulted in Toruń’s incorporation into Prussia. After an interval, the guests attended a performance of Schiller’s *Wallenstein’s Camp*. The city authorities received an annual subsidy from Emperor Wilhelm II on the condition that the theatre director would reconfirm in writing his obligation to uphold the language requirement, meaning that performances in the new building could only be staged in German.

The first director of the new theatre was Carl Schröder, who held the position until 1910. After initial attempts to present a more sophisticated repertoire, he had to accept that the patrons of provincial theatres primarily expected new content and entertainment. This, in practice, made it impossible to pursue more ambitious artistic projects. This situation was a constitutive element of all provincial theatres in Europe.

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¹¹ See Podlasiak, *Deutsches Theater in Thorn*, 40.

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The Audience of the Burgtheater: Changes in 1918

Abstract. The end of the Austrian monarchy in November 1918 also marked the dissolution of the court theatres. The newly formed republic faced the challenge of determining how to manage these institutions and ultimately decided to adopt them as state theatres. This decision entailed assuming the financial responsibilities previously covered by the imperial civil list. Additionally, the two theatres, along with the court's assets, presented a future-oriented opportunity for the country, both as a source of tourist revenue and as a powerful cultural medium. Above all, the theatres remained nightly gathering places for their audiences. However, the war – and especially the postwar inflation – brought about a profound transformation in the composition of the audience. New spectators arrived, lacking tradition, memory for comparison, or the practiced habits of attentive listening. During this period of upheaval, the interaction between stage and auditorium – between actors and their audience – often broke down. This paper examines three theatrical performances and the scandals they provoked, using them to trace shifts in audience reception and the emergence of new public interests.

Keywords: 1918, Burgtheater, state theatres, audience structure, scandals and disruptions

The end of the monarchy in November 1918 also marked the closure of the court theatres. The newly formed republic faced the question of how to handle this legacy. With strong support from the feuilletons in the daily newspapers, the new government ultimately decided to assume control of the theatres, transforming them into state institutions. On the one hand, this decision entailed assuming the costs that had previously been covered by the imperial civil list. On the other hand, the two theatres presented a potential financial resource for the country's future. Unlike industrial Czechoslovakia

and agriculturally rich Hungary, the Republic of German-Austria, as it was called following the putsch, had tourism as its primary source of income.

The columnists also emphasized this perspective from the start. However, even though the former court theatres, legitimized by tradition, appeared to be suitable objects of representation for the still young tourism, a theatre is primarily a place where people meet every evening.

The specialty of the Burgtheater was primarily its audience structure. Due to its proximity to the court and the socially diverse composition of the audience, there was

a unique atmosphere and an educated taste, a sense of quality, particularly in relation to the acting performance. This continued across four generations.¹

This audience of the old court theatres had tradition and taste, but above all, they were experienced in the art of listening, distinguishing, and had a keen sense of quality. As Felix Salten was convinced, this audience was able to “control the director, the actors, and the plays.”²

With the collapse of the monarchy, the composition of the Burgtheater audience also changed. For years, newspapers reported that the “new public, unfamiliar with art, [must first] be educated to appreciate artistic enjoyment and encouraged to engage in critical collaboration.”³

New people came with no tradition, no memories for comparison, no practice in attentive listening, and a sense of taste still far from being discerning.⁴

Because what applies to every theatre applies even more to the Burgtheater: it needs an audience that feels a shared sense of responsibility.

The actors must be attuned not only to one another, but also to their audience – and the audience, in turn, to them.⁵

¹ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “Direktionswechsel im Burgtheater [Change in Leadership at the Burgtheater],” *Neue Freie Presse* 19345, July 5, 1918, 1-2.

² Felix Salten, “Staats-Theater [State Theatre],” *Fremden-Blatt* 352, December 25, 1918, 1-3.

³ *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 275, October 16, 1922, 5.

⁴ Salten, *ibid.*

⁵ Hermann Bahr, “Tagebuch [Diary],” *Neues Wiener Journal* 10.763, November 4, 1923, 10.

In the representative Burgtheater on the Ringstrasse, a hierarchical structure of Central European society was reflected in the seating arrangement. The nobility held subscriptions to the boxes, while students and visitors unable to afford higher ticket prices sat – or stood – in the gallery. The seats in the stalls and on the ground floor were allocated through subscriptions known as *Stammsitz-Abonnements*, which were available by application. This system was intended to prevent tickets from being resold on the black market or at inflated prices. Public interest in the *Stammsitze* was very high from the outset, so that “hardly two rows of seats remained [...] that could be made available to the non-subscribing public.”⁶

If you had been allocated a *Stammsitz* ticket, you were required to pay an annual contribution (a kind of reservation fee) based on the seat category, due in December – since the theatrical year coincided with the calendar year at the time. This annual contribution allowed the seat holder to redeem their seat at the box office for performances two days in advance, against payment of the box office price including the advance booking fee.

The unclaimed seats were sold the day before the performance. Theatregoers could then secure seats for their chosen performance “by paying the seat price and an advance booking fee of 50 kr.” The remaining tickets were available on the day of the performance “at the normal daily price” with no additional surcharge.

Although complaints about unavailable tickets were often heard – especially for successful new productions – an investigation in 1890 revealed that, on average, only around 20% of the seats reserved for *Stammsitz-Abonnement* holders were occupied by the subscribers themselves, while 80% were sold to the public.⁷

From the purchases of the subscribers, it was also possible to infer the inclinations of the visitors, their taste habits, and preferences for attending performances. The differences between the audience in the gallery and those in the stalls were noticeable. The interest of the gallery visitors, particularly those in the fourth gallery, was focused on classical pieces as well as melodramas in which popular actors had prominent roles. In contrast, the

⁶ *Die Presse* 308, November 7, 1886, 15.

⁷ *Die Presse* 262, March 23, 1890, 11.

parquet audience showed more interest in comedies, premieres, guest performances, and new casts. As a result, more parquet seats than gallery seats were allocated for the classic pieces at the Burgtheater, while the opposite was true for comedies.

The fee for the popular *Stammsitze* was increased almost every year. To meet the demand, a division into even and odd days was introduced, so that a “half seat” had to be acquired, which could only be used every other day.

The division into even and odd subscription days required careful planning when creating the schedule, which was not always executed properly, leading to complaints from subscribers. For example, coveted performances were scheduled exclusively on even days and never on odd days.

In 1900, Vienna had a population of 1,680,000, of which approximately 200,000 were theatregoers. These figures were calculated based on the success of the production *Im Weissen Rössl* [The White Horse Inn], which was seen by “all of Vienna.” According to the Volkstheater, this meant 140,000 tickets were sold.

The ongoing complaints from visitors about the difficulties in obtaining tickets for the court theatres, especially the Burgtheater, led the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* to ask at the beginning of 1900: “Who hasn’t been to the Burgtheater?”⁸

Respondents from nearly all sections of the audience replied to the newspaper’s survey, citing the same reasons: insufficient income, too little free time to queue for long periods at the theatre box office, or even waiting in vain without securing tickets in an affordable price category. “The large audience” had to work for a living and lacked the time to wait in line.

State officials, writers, doctors, workers, milkmen, chimney sweeps, fire fighters, etc. all share the same longing to attend the Burgtheater. And many of them do not speak merely out of curiosity, but from a genuine need for education⁹

⁸ *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 5, January 6, 1900, 4.

⁹ *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 12, January 14, 1900, 15-16.

– this was the conclusion of the survey by the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*. Even “a claqueur from the Deutsches Volkstheater” complained that he had never set foot in the Burgtheater.

To meet this educational need, nearly all politicians – and the arts sections of the newspapers – advocated for the democratization of the theatre after 1918.

In 1918, Vienna had two other major theatres in addition to the two court theatres (the Burgtheater and the State Opera), which had established themselves as bourgeois alternatives: the Deutsches Volkstheater (opened in 1889) offered 2,000 places, with more than a quarter available as inexpensive standing room. The Kaiserjubiläumstheater (founded in 1898, later known as the Volksoper) also aimed to make theatre accessible to the broader, poorer population. In addition, there were numerous other venues in Vienna that functioned primarily as entertainment stages, operated for profit, and had no educational mission.

The Burgtheater’s own Sunday afternoon performances helped attract a broader audience, with gallery seats available for just 10 kreuzers. The press aimed to enforce the necessity of affordable evening performances at the Burgtheater through a public vote. Similarly, under public pressure, the start time for performances at the Deutsches Volkstheater was set for 7:30 p.m.

Indeed, during the less well-attended summer months, from April 15 to October 15, the evening performances on Saturdays and Sundays in the Burgtheater’s galleries were excluded from the *Stammsitz* subscription to allow schoolchildren and workers to attend.

In the post-war years, inflation played a significant role in making theatre attendance extremely popular. New segments of the population, who had recently come into money, flocked to the theatres. Meanwhile, some old privileges remained in place for a long time: members and employees of the former court administration, as well as newspaper editors, could reserve tickets with ease.

Due to repeated complaints about the unavailability of tickets at the box office, a police investigation was initiated at the end of January 1919. It was discovered that theatre ticket offices, bypassing the theatre administration – which deliberately withheld tickets from the offices – had

managed to acquire large quantities of tickets.¹⁰ These tickets were primarily bought by unemployed individuals, who were paid a small bonus by the ticket offices for each ticket they purchased. However, since no evidence of profiteering could be found among the officials at the sales outlets, the matter was not pursued further. The result of the investigation was forwarded by the state notary's office to the administration of the Hofärar, "with a request to propose suitable measures to address the misconduct [...] in the ticket sales process for the two former court theatres." This request, however, was shelved just a few days later.

It was believed that the deficit could be counteracted by continuously increasing seat prices, but this strategy ultimately cost the Burgtheater its best audience. As a result, it ceased to be a meeting place for intellectuals and became a theatre for the wealthy. No senior civil servant, university professor, visual artist, writer, or member of parliament could afford regular visits to this theatre. As a result, the artists performed in front of an audience predominantly consisting of *Banausen* (philistines). Despite this, the maximum daily revenue generated by this approach remained insufficient.

You would have to nearly double that amount if you wanted to keep this theatre operating at its current level. The Hofärar was always required to provide around three million crowns in subsidies for the operating costs of his two court theatres, but this amount was never enough. The Burgtheater alone likely devoured two million in annual subsidies. The details were never fully revealed, as the general management always kept them under wraps. In the last few years, the general management functioned merely as a directorship for distributing free tickets and accounting for deficits. No one had insight into the free ticket system, not even the director of the Burgtheater. Indeed, the director himself had to apply in writing to the management for every ticket he needed.¹¹

To avoid completely alienating its traditional bourgeois intellectual audience, it was recommended to reverse the most recent price increase and instead reduce expenditures.

¹⁰ HHStA (Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv) Wien, OHMeA Box 2251 (1919) No. r19/23.

¹¹ *Wiener Mittag* 80, November 21, 1918, 3.



"Die neue Gesellschaft. In der Hoftheaterloge
[The New Society. In the Court Theatre Box]" (*Wiener Mittag* 17, September 6, 1918, 3)

However, if the theatre were to be accessible to the largest possible audience, the theatre administration had to make efforts to increase the number of seats available for sale. This was another reason why the traditional privileges for attending the theatre had to be abolished in the republic. The generous allocation of free seats – such as those for former court servants on the third floor and for officers on the ground floor – had a long tradition at the Burgtheater.¹² In 1850, Heinrich Laube had already complained about the resulting loss of theatre box office income when he assumed the role of director, but this was met with no consequences whatsoever.¹³

¹² In 1888, the ground floor of the new Burgtheater was divided into separate sections for military officers and civilian gentlemen. This spatial arrangement made clear the transition from the intimate, family-oriented Burgtheater on Michaelerplatz to the new building on the Ringstrasse, which served as a site of official representation. Elke Calaitzis, "Das Burgtheaterpublikum von Wilbrandt bis zum Dreierkollegium," in *Das Burgtheater und sein Publikum I* [The Burgtheater and Its Audience I], ed. Margret Dietrich (Wien: Verlag der ÖAW, 1976), 409.

¹³ The former director of the Burgtheater, Heinrich Laube, calculated in 1850 that free tickets resulted in an average annual loss of 25,000 florins. Maria Preyer, "Zur Regenerationsperiode des Burgtheaters unter Heinrich Laube. Edition ausgewählter Akten [On the Regeneration Period of the Burgtheater under Heinrich Laube: Edition of Selected Documents]" (master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2012).

With the end of the imperial army, the privileges of court servants and officers were also set to come to an end. However, the officers refused to accept their exclusion from the ground floor and protested by submitting a petition to the state notary's office. They requested the State Office for Army Affairs to "retain the officer's ground floor in the court theatres." In return, they offered their services for the "reintroduction of officer supervision" to ensure the "strictest maintenance of order."¹⁴

Three days after the officers submitted their complaint, a scandal erupted during the Burgtheater premiere of *Die Fahrt ins Blaue* (*La Belle Aventure*) by Gaston Arman de Caillavet, Robert de Flers, and Etienne Rey, triggered by a young officer on the ground floor.

When dinner was served on stage and the actress Frau Senders uttered the words, "Here is the cold chicken and the wine," a young officer called from the ground floor, "They're eating up there, and we have to starve." Some hissed, while others applauded. Two factions quickly formed, the noise escalated, and the performance had to be paused for several minutes.¹⁵

Nationalist-minded visitors joined in and blamed the Burgtheater's dramaturge, Hermann Bahr, for ensuring that harmless French plays were performed instead of "Ibsen, Schönherr, and Schnitzler." The uproar caused by these visitors was ultimately responsible for the interruption of the performance.¹⁶

The floor and box audience turned against the troublemakers, demonstratively applauding one of the actresses, Mrs. Wilbrandt. When the curtain fell after the second act, a disturbance broke out on the ground floor, and loud shouts were heard: "Bahr, withdraw! Schönherr is not on the program, but French rubbish!" The opponents of the troublemakers responded with cries of "Phew!" and demanded the removal of the instigators. Only gradually did the audience calm down, allowing the third act to be played to its conclusion in relative peace.¹⁷

¹⁴ HHStA, Wien, Gl Box 427, Archive No. 480 ex 1919, January 17, 1919.

¹⁵ *Innsbrucker Nachrichten* 45, February 22, 1919, 7.

¹⁶ *Illustrierte Kronen Zeitung* 6874, February 21, 1919, 4.

¹⁷ *Illustrierte Kronen Zeitung* 6874, February 21, 1919, 4.

Within the theatre, “national considerations” were not the determining factor in staging the comedy, which had already been accepted prior to World War I. Instead, as is often the case in the theatre world, it was a matter of a well-suited role and an actress predestined for it: the 75-year-old Auguste Wilbrandt-Baudius (1843–1937), who had learned the role assigned to her in 1914 with “joy, zeal, and hard work,” despite her age. Thanks to her outstanding performance, which had already been appreciated by both the box and parquet audiences at the premiere, *Die Fahrt ins Blaue* became a highlight of the Burgtheater repertoire until the actress retired from active acting in 1930. During this time, she performed the role 94 times, from February 20, 1919, to March 3, 1930.

Whatever opinion the critic may have on the other matters of politics, art, and taste, he must first and foremost establish that anyone interested in the Burgtheater and the art of acting must have seen Frau Wilbrandt in this role. She embodies such wonderfully cultured humanity, such refreshingly warm refinement, such captivating and ravishing discretion; she is such a beautiful old woman, radiates such a mild spirit, and sparkles with such golden humor that one feels an overwhelming desire to kiss her at every moment.¹⁸

The scandal described had several triggers: in addition to the officers, there were also supporters of Schönherr. Since the Burgtheater had rejected his new play *Das Königreich* [The Kingdom], which was set to premiere on February 22, 1919, at the Volkstheater, the author withdrew all of his plays from the Burgtheater’s repertoire.

Schönherr’s supporters, angry about the withdrawal of his plays from the repertoire, sought to defend him against his supposed opponent, the dramaturge Hermann Bahr.¹⁹ Meanwhile, those who, in light of the sluggish peace negotiations, labeled harmless authors of conversational plays as “enemy authors”, also raised concerns. Arthur Schnitzler made the following notes in his diary after attending the dress rehearsal:

I found it undignified, given the previous of the French toward us – before the peace was made, while they still held our prisoners – to stage a weak play by a few tabloid playwrights at our premier theatre.

¹⁸ *Der Morgen*. Wiener Montagblatt 8, February 24, 1919, 6.

¹⁹ *Neues Wiener Journal* 9089, February 21, 1919, 4.

It will be seen there only as servility, not as refinement. What has the Burgtheater come to! And now this. Bahr!²⁰

If the protest by the officers and the scandal triggered by one of them at the Burgtheater were intended to strengthen the argument for the “reintroduction of officers’ supervision” to “maintain strict order,” the attempt was unsuccessful. As of March 15, 1919, entry to the ground floor and the fourth gallery was opened to the general public for a price of 3 crowns, and at the same time, the privileges for officers and staff were abolished.²¹

In June 1920, the final premiere under Heine’s directorship, a satire on capitalism, *Die Kassette* [The Cartridge] by Carl Sternheim, also caused a theatrical scandal – one that theatre aficionados had anticipated, but which went unprevented. The unrest was triggered by the new audience structure:

From the third act on, the performance was interrupted by hissing and heckling. Unfortunately, one cannot expect today’s Burgtheater audience to recognize the real thing in a failed work, or even to miss the pretense of a theatrical scandal. The racketeers also seem to have sensed the anti-capitalist devil.²²

After the performances moved to the Schönbrunner Schlosstheater, a small dependency of the Burgtheater, they were able to take place without disturbance in front of a reduced audience (nine performances from June 2, 1920, to October 19, 1930).

Bernard Shaw’s *Helden* (*Arms and the Man*) – taking into account the experience of the premiere of *Die Kassette* – was immediately scheduled for the Schönbrunner Schlosstheater. However, protests from Romanian students in June 1921, over alleged vilification of the Romanian people and the overly understanding response of the State Theatre President, nearly triggered a management crisis. As a result, only three performances were held, from June 11 to 13, 1921.

An uproar in the auditorium is always a sign of changing viewing habits and/or evidence of a new audience. The restructuring of the audience,

²⁰ Arthur Schnitzler, *Tagebuch 1917-1919* [Diary 1917-1919], (Wien: Verlag der ÖAW, 1985), 232f.

²¹ *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* 12270, March 13, 1919, 7.

²² *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 151, June 3, 1920, 7.

along with efforts by the administration to regulate it, prompted reactions from the public, statements from newspaper editors, letters to the editor, and, ultimately, protests in the auditorium. The focus was always on the ambivalence of tradition and modernity.

In the years of upheaval during the early 20th century, the founding of the republic, the interwar period, and even after 1945, there was a strong commitment to a tradition shaped by discursive lore. Supported by the historicizing architecture of the Burgtheater building, the representative element became a guarantor of identity for several generations of theatregoers. As a result, the return to the ideals of the Enlightenment (which can also be understood as modernity in the program) took little space until the 1970s.

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Creators and Texts

The Golden Age: János Kótsi Patkó's Interpretation of Roles

Abstract. This study examines the professional challenges faced during the first years of Hungarian-language professional theatre in Cluj (now Cluj-Napoca, Romania), focusing on the work of theatre director János Kótsi Patkó. A former actor with extensive theoretical and practical knowledge of the theatre, Kótsi Patkó also worked as a playwright and translator. In addition to navigating the inescapable theatre censorship of the time, he had to contend with the conflicting interests of the noble patronage that financed the institution and the hostile or uncomprehending attitudes of the actors. The author sheds light on this situation through contemporary program texts, letters, and official complaints.

Keywords: János Kótsi Patkó, early Hungarian-language professional theatre in Cluj, Inkle and Yarico, translations for theatre, noble patronage

János Kótsi Patkó (1763–1842), actor and drama translator, served multiple times as director of the Transylvanian theatre company.¹ His theatrical work – undertaken during a period when Hungarian-language public theatre suffered from financial hardship, legal uncertainty, and limited public support – bears notable parallels with that of his contemporary, László Kelemen. This paper examines Kótsi's vision of theatre in Cluj (Kolozsvár), with particular attention to his interpretation of the director's role and his Hungarian adaptation of the musical play *Inkle és*

¹ According to Miklós Bényei's research, Kótsi Patkó performed with the Kolozsvár company between 1792 and 1824. He served as the company's director from April 1793 to April 1794, and as artistic director from April 1795 to 1797, then again from June 1812 to April 1813, and from October 13, 1822 to May 27, 1823. *Az erdélyi országgyűlések színházpolitikai vitái és iratai, 1791–1847* [The Theatrical Policy Debates and Documents of the Transylvanian Diets, 1791–1847], edited and annotated by Miklós Bényei (Budapest: Színházi Intézet, 1990), 300.

Járikó vagy Az arany idő [Inkle and Yarico, or The Golden Age] which he translated around 1798 or 1800.

In the following, I approach the theatre concept of the Kolozsvár company's director primarily through his interpretation of the director's role and the issues surrounding the musical play *Inkle és Járikó vagy Az arany idő* [Inkle and Yarico, or The Golden Age] (1798?, 1800, etc.), which he translated. I use the expression *golden age* in two distinct senses. On the one hand, it refers to a specific stage work which was translated by Kótsi. On the other hand, it denotes the early period of professional Hungarian-language theatre, closely associated with the name of János Kótsi Patkó, often referred to as a heroic age, considered here within the broader context of European theatre and mentality.

The issue of Transylvanian theatre – intended to promote the Hungarian language and moral refinement – raised by György Aranka of Zágón, could only be addressed by the 1790–91 Transylvanian Diet once the Royal Supreme Directorate had joined the assembly. Thus, the matter was not discussed in the thirty-fourth session on March 18, but in the forty-fourth session on April 15. According to the decision made at that time, in addition to the members to be appointed by the Royal Supreme Directorate, delegates from the estates were also required; the Diet established this body, which included representatives of the estates as well as “schoolteachers” – that is, representatives of the four religious denominations in Kolozsvár. In early October 1792, the issue was revisited by the estates and the Royal Supreme Directorate, resulting in a favourable decision for the petitioners: “In this country, they may stage plays... but only on the condition that the plays presented are always examined, so that they may not corrupt but rather promote the morals.”²

The granting of the performance license did not mark the end of theatrical affairs. The next Transylvanian Diet deemed the theatre-related *planum* prepared by Ferenc Fekete of Frics to be financially overambitious and therefore unfeasible; a new committee was appointed, tasking Miklós Wesselényi Jr., Count Farkas Bethlen Jr., and Ferenc Fekete with securing the

² *Az erdélyi országgyűlések...*, 29. (Az 1792. évi országgyűlés jegyzőkönyve [Proceedings of the 1792 Diet], 339–340).

necessary funds.³ Then, in 1810, the instructions given to the delegates of Inner Szolnok County also included the matter of discussing the Hungarian theatre. It was to be investigated “to what extent it fulfilled its intended purpose, and what obstacles caused it to undergo so many changes.”⁴ Kótsi was still alive – though already retired from active theatre work – when the National Theatre Committee issued another call to the Hungarian counties and Székely seats, seeking to raise capital for an institution that had started off well but had “weakened due to lack of experience.”⁵ Today, we can see that the sheer volume and diversity of expectations, the complex institutionalization of oversight, and even its bureaucratization did not favour the proper functioning of the theatre. Returning to the heroic age: the issue of *Magyar Kurir* published on January 15, 1800, mentions Kótsi as one of the founding figures of Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár: “There are about thirteen performers, among whom Mr. Kótsi, the director, distinguished himself above all others through his unparalleled acting, exceptional musical performance, and the appropriate and elegant decoration of the sets.”⁶

However, in the everyday practice of the profession, such versatility became increasingly difficult to maintain responsibly. In 1803, when Kótsi Patkó was once again invited to serve as director, he submitted a petition to the main theatre contractor, Miklós Wesselényi, listing the conditions of his appointment. In it, he named three virtual roles that he could no longer fulfill simultaneously. 1. His previously held role as a *landowning farmer*. He agreed to give this up for as long as the theatre required his services (we know he owned an estate in Magyarfráta). In return, however, he requested financial compensation. 2. His *role as theatre director*. He considered this his primary responsibility; while engaged in this capacity, he did not wish to perform as an actor out of obligation, but only occasionally and at his own discretion:

³ *Az erdélyi országgyűlések...*, 36. (Az 1794-95. évi erdélyi országgyűlés jegyzőkönyve [Proceedings of the 1794-95 Transylvanian Diet], 358-361).

⁴ *Az erdélyi országgyűlések...*, 42. (Torma József országgyűlési irományai 1809-1811 [József Torma, Parliamentary Papers, 1809-1811]. Manuscript Collection, National Széchényi Library, *Fol. Hung.* 1234. 14/2-15/1).

⁵ Elek Jakab, “Bölöni Farkas és kora. Politikai és irodalomtörténeti tanulmány [Bölöni Farkas and His Era: A Political and Literary-Historical Study],” *Keresztény Magvető*, vol. 5 (Kolozsvár, 1870), 254-258. Cf. *Az erdélyi országgyűlések...*, 50 (Az országos Színházi bizottság felhívása 1841. aug. 17. [Call of the National Theatre Committee, August 17, 1841]).

⁶ Cf. Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története* [The History of Acting and Theatre in Kolozsvár] (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert, 1897), 111.

“My frail health does not in any way allow me to be both actor and director at the same time; therefore, under no condition will I take upon myself these two burdens simultaneously. I shall do so only when my circumstances permit or when I deem my presence necessary – but this must depend solely on my own will.”⁷ His *acting work* – his social role. He thus requests this as a sort of privilege from the entrepreneur, to be exercised occasionally and at his own discretion.

The final text of the contract is currently missing. What we do know is that Kótsi worked extensively as an actor: in addition to his much-discussed performance as the first Hungarian Hamlet, it is worth highlighting that he also played the role of Kerekes in the play translated by László Kelemen, titled *Az esméretlen atyafi, avagy Egy háznépnek lerajzolása* [The Unknown Kinsman, or Portrait of a Household] (January 6, 1804), as well as the slave trader Sztelay in his own translation of *Inkle és Járíkó vagy az Aranyidő* (April 8, 1804, and other dates).⁸

His work as a translator is not mentioned, although it naturally fits into both his acting and directorial roles, in accordance with the practices of the time. Lajos Jordáky estimates the number of his translations at eight. He translated Molière's *Le médecin malgré lui* (*The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, a comedy in two acts) in 1799, and Lessing's *Emilia Galotti, a Tragedy in Five Acts* in 1804. However, he mainly selected works from the genre of sentimental drama, aiming to appeal to audiences, for translation.

1. The Actor (His Independence and Dependency)

János Kótsi Patkó began his career as an actor with the Transylvanian noble theatre troupe, as evidenced by a fragment of a contract that survives from the time of the institution's founding. This contract was signed by János Haralyi Fejér as the director, and among the actors, János Gyulai Sáska, János Kótsi Patkó, and István Haralyi Fejér (November 24, 1792). In exchange for a monthly salary, the actors promise to “always offer their abilities and

⁷ Petition, as recorded in the minutes of April 5, 1803. János Kótsi Patkó, *A régi és új theátrum históriája és egyéb írások* [The History of the Old and New Theatre and Other Writings], ed. Lajos Jordáky (Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1973), 153.

⁸ According to Jordáky, *Inkle és Járíkó* was translated in 1799. Cf. János Kótsi Patkó, *ibid.*, 197.

services” and commit to a full year of employment.⁹ Kótsi Patkó is a deliberate actor who reflects on his own role interpretations when discussing the influence of the actor’s craft. He refers to an actor who performs in a careless manner as merely a comedian (*komédiás*).¹⁰ As the years go by, Kótsi Patkó’s view of theatre evolves, with a decrease in the actor’s autonomy and an increase in the independence allotted to the director’s role. “Let the actor fulfill his part...” – Kótsi, now with the experience of his directorial years, says about the actor’s duties – “it’s pointless to engage the noisy ones, the applauders, for the director doesn’t care for such tactics and, in fact, despises them.”¹¹

2. The Theatre Director

2.1. *Inkle and Yarico, or The Golden Age*

The musical play *Inkle and Yarico, or The Golden Age*, in three acts, is identified by István Lakatos based on a poster from February 16, 1823, which reads: “The Golden Age will be performed today with the music that once earned it such popularity.”¹² (This was the first regular operetta; it was performed in Debrecen on May 2, 1799, and several times thereafter; in Kolozsvár on January 1, 1803, and repeatedly; and in Pest on July 26, 1808, and later as well.) It is likely that the first performance in Pest is connected to the publication of the *Inkle and Yarico* libretto, which was released by Trattner in Pest in 1808.

Inkle and Yarico was János Kótsi Patkó’s production: he translated the work, adapted it for the Hungarian musical stage, and also performed in it – playing Fernando, the cowardly hero, as well as Sztelay, the slave trader. His decision regarding the choice of play is noteworthy in the context of the theatrical translation movement; the work was performed across Europe in

⁹ Agreement Concluded Between János Fejér, István Fejér, János Kótsi, and János Sáska. János Kótsi Patkó, *ibid.*, 143.

¹⁰ János Kótsi Patkó, *Béköszöntő beszéd* [Opening Speech], *ibid.*, 135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹² István Lakatos, *A kolozsvári magyar zenés színpad (1792-1973). Adatok az erdélyi magyar nyelvű színház történetéhez* [The Hungarian Musical Stage of Kolozsvár (1792-1973): Data on the History of Hungarian-Language Theatre in Transylvania] (Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1977), 124.

the 18th century under various titles and with different music. The drama fits into a series of theatrical experiments that present the nature of civilization in the context of the problematic history of colonialism. A realistic depiction of communal and individual concerns alternates with stage versions of light entertainment.

The stage direction strives for a total artistic experience – the audience cannot remain “outside” the event.

Azor rushes in with a band of savages, and they storm the ship with great shouting. In that very instant, the soldiers standing on the deck open fire on the savages, many of whom fall; some flee, others jump into the sea and cling to the ship. The ship sets off, and the soldiers push the savages down into the water. The music begins at once as the ship departs. The scattered savages gather again on the shore, watching the ship, while Melva, who has come to her senses, leads the Old Man.¹³

The title sarcastically and provocatively reinterprets the temporal metaphor from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. While in Ovid the expression signified harmony between gods and humans, here (as becomes clear toward the end of the play) it denotes the soul-corrupting power of gold and money – the fulfillment of the ominous prophecy of *auri sacra fames*.¹⁴ A poem of a hundred lines bearing the same title was written by Gellert (between 1746 and 1748), concluding with Járíkó being sold into slavery by the father of her child. The poet underscores this injustice, Járíkó's noble spirit, Inkle's barbarity, and, more broadly, the ruthlessness of Europe as contrasted with the good faith of the so-called “barbaric” peoples. Gellert's poem was published in English in a prose translation. Later, the story reappears in the form of a verse epistle in the work of Gessner.¹⁵

Returning to Kótsi's translation: the comparison of textual and visual sources significantly contributes to understanding the dynamics of the theatre. According to theatre bills and the stage manuscript of the translation, the piece titled *Inkle és Járíkó vagy az Arany idő. Érzékeny játék 3 felvonásokban Eckartshausen után Magyar Játék színre alkalmaztatta Kótsi János, Musikáját készítette Pacha Gáspár* [Inkle and Járíkó, or The Golden Age.

¹³ *Inkle és Járíkó...* (1800), 54.

¹⁴ Vergilius, *Aeneis*, 3.57.

¹⁵ *Continuation of the story of Inkle und Yariko*. Cf. English trader, *Indian Maid*, 1999.

Sentimental Play in Three Acts, Adapted from Eckartshausen for the Hungarian Stage by János Kótsi, Music Composed by Gáspár Pacha]¹⁶ refers – through various 18th- and 19th-century Hungarian title variants – to the same work, as evidenced by the textual similarities of the surviving manuscript. The title of Eckartshausen's work is different: *Fernando und Yariko*. It was first published in 1784, with music composed by Christoph Neubauer (1750–1794), and was premiered in Munich. (The fact that Eckartshausen's name appears in the title description of Kótsi's translation does not exclude the possibility of adaptations for the theatre troupe, including potential role mergers, the introduction of new characters, or certain modifications in the relationships between the characters.)

The indigenous and the conqueror, the self-sufficient and the treasure-seeking, the innocent and the one engaged in human trafficking, the family-oriented and the one who thinks within the system of ownership, emotionally and then rationally places the audience and its individual members in a decision-making position. This provocation also searches for definitions regarding the nature of love and the role of women; Járíkó, the "wild girl," establishes the theatrical type of innate goodness and female vulnerability.¹⁷ The play also offers a model for the nature of political violence. The communication of human rights (which, in the final third of the 18th century, was most notably represented on European stages by the dramatic works of Voltaire and Marmontel, as a threatened and constantly attacked core value group) through the language of theatre takes place within the drama; a plastic interpretation of the Enlightenment's worldview, using history as a moral repository of examples. This is a historico-critical reading of the story, specifically through the idealistic pursuit of classicism and philanthropy, as well as the principles (or, we might say, the utopia) of educational theatre.

Azor: Let us leave this place, which only increases our pain; come, let us arm the inhabitants, build ships, and destroy their naval forces.

¹⁶ Gáspár Pacha, composer at the Pest theatre, composed new music for the play in 1809.

¹⁷ A characteristic afterlife of the figure can be traced in the character of Pocahontas – later, for example, in manga.

After that, let us cleanse this island of everything that might attract Europeans here.¹⁸

The group characters – the “Wild Men” and the “Sailors” – emphasize the dynamics of conquest; the individual roles are typified: a Spanish ship captain and his son, an English merchant and his servant, and a slave trader of indeterminate origin on one side, contrasted with a “Wild American” and a “Wild Girl” on the other.

The designation of the setting also implies a temporal regression for contemporary theatregoers, who imagined the history of civilization as an organic process. The Hungarian audience may have already been familiar with the play through its German versions. In a letter dated November 7, 1776, Baron Lőrinc Orczy writes to Count Antal Károlyi: “At the same time, my thoughts flew to Vienna. I see Jarikó with Inkle in the theatre – how does Zákó please Your Excellency?”¹⁹ In Orczy’s case, the experience even demanded poetic expression:

A thousand candles light the playing space,
Their flames put out by fans with swishing grace.
They wait in silence for the curtain’s rise,
While Zákó’s sobbing dims their weary eyes.
The chorus swells with music’s trembling sound,
And swooning hearts in breathless hush are found.
A secret tenderness their souls must bear,
Unsure which path to follow in despair.²⁰

The musical play *Inkle und Yariko* had already been in repertory in Vienna for five years by that time.

Let us note that “Et périsse à jamais...”²¹ – the French motto of the German text of *Inkle und Yariko* condemns the politics that leads to tyranny:

¹⁸ *Inkle és Járíkó...* (1800), 56.

¹⁹ Budapest OL (National Archives of Hungary) P. 398. Károlyi missives 53825. 27.

²⁰ *A bétsi sziget kertbenn való sétálás. Két nagyságos elmények költeményes szüleményei* [A Walk in the Garden of the Viennese Island: The Poetic Offspring of Two Noble Minds], (Pozsony, 1789), 202. The dating of the poems in this volume could not always be determined with certainty; it is a fact, however, that all of them predate 1789.

²¹ “Et périsse à jamais l’affreuse politique / Qui prétend sur les cœurs un pouvoir despotique, / Qui veut, le fer en main, convertir les mortels, / Qui du sang hérétique arrose les autels, / Et, suivant un faux zèle, ou l’intérêt, pour guides, / Ne sert un Dieu de paix que par des homicides!” Voltaire, *La Henriade*, Chant 2. (The French-language motto of the German libretto).

a quote from Voltaire's *La Henriade*. The performance of the play is also a success story for Hungarian theatre. According to Ferenc Kerényi, the operetta in Transylvania – in proportion to the repertoire – was not based on comedic librettos, but rather on more sentimental ones. The three-act operetta *Inkle és Járíkó vagy Az arany idő* was performed for the thirty-first time on March 5, 1797, according to the playbill, “at the request of many,” and the German-language theatre also kept it in its repertoire. As a repertory piece of the Hungarian-German theatre, it was mostly performed as a one-act tragedy in the 1780s, but there was also a ballet version.²² In Kolozsvár, a sentimental version of the play first appeared on the program (*Záir és Angulto, vagy hát azért az aranyért adál el?* [Zaire and Angulto, or Did You Sell Me for Gold?!], May 7, 1793).²³

Kótsi had a deep understanding of the mechanisms of the stage: the rapid alternation of the presentation of danger and its overcoming, secrets, love, infidelity, cowardice, virtues, and sins, complemented by musical language, could not fail to impact the contemporary audience. The story is moving: Járíkó, the Incan native girl (like Briseis in the *Iliad*), feels equal in love with Fernando – but she must experience the disappointment of the noble-hearted white man's betrayal. The captured Incan girl, sold as a pregnant slave, and her blind father represent the sentimental element. The moral superiority of the natives over the colonizers (Don Gonzalvo, the Spanish admiral; Inkle, the English merchant; Sztelay, the slave trader) is so clear that the admiral's son (Fernando) and Inkle's servant ultimately choose the natural life, although they are unable to change Járíkó's fate. The musical solutions, together with the acting performances and the tear-jerking story, created the overall experience. “Five actors had solo singing roles, and all cast members participated in the ensemble pieces. The orchestra also played an independent, atmospheric role in the storm scene and the finale.” According to Ferenc Kerényi, the spectacle was further enhanced by the ship set moving in the background, the onstage depiction of the storm, and the

²² Its source is identified by Elemér Császár in a Gellert novella – in Christian Fürchtegott Gellert's *Fabeln und Erzählungen* [Fables and Stories], a collection from 1746–1748. This collection was also available to Hungarian readers in a translation by János Kónyi (Pécs, 1776).

²³ Kerényi Ferenc ed., *Magyar Színháztörténet 1790–1873*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 95.

shipwreck presented with added pyrotechnics – features meant to compensate for the absence of *opera seria*.²⁴

2.2. Leadership Under Fire: The Kótsi Conflict and Early Challenges of the Kolozsvár Theatre Company

Kótsi was the director of the Hungarian theatre company in Kolozsvár when, on June 23, 1794, following a performance, the members of the troupe “stormed in together and collectively gave him notice.”²⁵

To resolve the tension – and later conflict – between the troupe and its director, the Gubernial Commission, appointed by the Royal Chief Directorate, made several attempts at mediation.

The Gubernial Commission dealing with the affairs of the Hungarian National Theatrical Company was appointed based on Decrees No. 4290 and 4378. Its members were: Count Lajos Teleki, Gubernial Councilor; Count Domonkos Teleki (!); and Farkas Cserei. The professional conflict between the troupe and the director dragged on for months, revolving around the assessment of professional resources, payment issues, the right to choose

²⁴ “On August 15 in Szeged, *The Golden Age* musical play was performed. – Its composition is such that the actor could only truly showcase himself if he were a perfect singer; the songs are quite difficult and, being of an old-fashioned sound, the theatrical perfection in them can hardly be sufficiently demonstrated. – Farkas (Pedrillo) did not play his comic roles badly, and Széppataki played Járikó well; but Kilényi played the merchant with much less success. I warn him, as the director of the company, to pay more attention to the audience from whom he expects patronage, and not to think that he satisfies public expectations even if he plays miserably; it is better to do nothing than to do it poorly, and he should also make sure that neither he nor his subordinates are always watching the lines from the prompter’s mouth (Feketeváry).” Kerényi Ferenc ed., *A magyar színikritika kezdetei, 1790-1837* [The Beginnings of Hungarian Theatre Criticism, 1790-1837], vols. I-III (Budapest: Mundus Kiadó, 2000).

The manuscript of the popular play, which has been preserved in the collection of the Kolozsvár National Theatre, bears the ownership inscription of Mihály Pósa. Between 1844 and 1850, he worked as an actor, director, and even as a company manager. The cast list is also provided: Báts, Almási, (Emmánuel) Hubai, Bartha, and Benkő were assigned roles in the performance, with Járikó portrayed by Victoria (G.). This list brings us closer to dating the performance (towards the end of the 1830-1831 theatre season). The question remains whether the performance took place in Kolozsvár or Marosvásárhely (since the troupe performed in Marosvásárhely at the beginning of 1831). The manuscript is complete, also referring to the stage setting, contains instructions, and specifies the props used.

²⁵ *Jegyző könyve...* [Minutes], Csíkszeredai Állami Levéltár [State Archives of Csíkszereda], A keresztúri unitárius gimnázium iratai [Records of the Keresztúr Unitarian High School], 2. 119.

plays, the obligation to submit texts for censorship, and the prohibition of improvisation.

Barely a year and a half after the regular operation of the Transylvanian Hungarian noble theatre company began, internal tensions were already hindering the director's work. These were further inflamed by external forces. Sándor Enyedi publishes the text of a denunciation that called for an external supervisory body to resolve the company's financial and administrative troubles. The document was submitted to the "Honourable Noble Society for the Cultivation of the Hungarian Language," requesting that its contents be forwarded to the governor (György Bánffy), along with the urgent drafting and dispatch of instructions to the company's director.

The document, dated May 27, 1794, attributes the company's financial troubles to the tenure of its first director, János Fejér, but also expresses dissatisfaction with Kótsi's leadership. In his case, the anonymous "petitioners" mention a lack of firmness and easy influence. Kótsi is portrayed as old and endlessly biased in favour of his frivolous son (understood to be József Kótsi).²⁶

"We have already been assured that some members of the company – particularly those deserving greater respect – are doubtful about continuing to serve under the arbitrary whims of such a disorderly director."²⁷ Kótsi's directorship is summarized as one marked by the accumulation of further company debts, a lack of innovation, and uninspired performance.²⁸ The grievances of István Őri Filep are detailed in both texts – though not in identical wording. According to the petition, the director's anger was triggered by Őri initially refusing a role assigned to him (the specific role is unknown). In retaliation, Kótsi reassigned a role originally meant for Őri in

²⁶ According to the *Magyar színházi lexikon* [Hungarian Theatrical Lexicon], József Kótsi was not the son but the brother of János Kótsi Patkó: "(?-?) actor. Younger brother of János K. P. In 1791, he was still a student at the Reformed College of Kolozsvár, later became a clerk. Between 1793 and 1798, he was a member of the Hungarian theatre company in Kolozsvár. He played minor character roles. From 1793 to 1795, he was involved in the family-run theatre management."

²⁷ Sándor Enyedi, "'A hazának való szolgálat nemes ösztönéből...' Egy ismeretlen dokumentum a kolozsvári magyar színháztörténetéből [From the Noble Impulse to Serve the Homeland: An Unknown Document in the History of Hungarian Theatre in Kolozsvár]," *Színháztudományi Szemle*, no. 17 (1985): 198.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 193

the play *Valtron*²⁹ to another actor, who, according to the complainants, was unfit for it. As a result, a guest present at the performance may have been left with a false impression of the troupe's quality.³⁰

In the long-desired play *Valtron*, the audience was deceived by having the role – extremely burdensome to Őri and highly sensitive in nature – performed by someone utterly unfit for it. This performance, which could have served not only the troupe's but also our nation's glory, especially in the presence of numerous outsiders, was thus ruined due to the unsuitability of the actor replacing Őri. Consequently, our acting company was diminished in the eyes of these foreigners.³¹

The suggestion for the inclusion of the Hungarian actor Őri Filep in the acting troupe, as well as for the Kolozsvár company to rent a room from Mrs. Mihály Rhédey for the first season, was made by Soós Márton, who was studying medicine in Pest at the time: "The Hungarian Theatre Company has been ordered by the Consilium not to move anywhere, and therefore, certainly, it could not enter Transylvania even if it wanted to. However, it would be possible to ask for four or five people, as I wrote earlier, and if we ask, it would be good to specifically request István Filep, along with Sehy and Rózsa, because they are indeed good actors..." – he writes to György Aranka, who supported the Hungarian troupe's cause in connection with the program of the Society for the Cultivation of the Hungarian Language. Later, Márton Soós reported that he had learned about the successes of the Kolozsvár troupe from his friend, Filep Őri, who first performed in Kolozsvár on January 30, 1793. The other main complainant (against Kótsi) was Mihály Verestói. When demanding payment, Kótsi refers to a document bearing the city's seal, issued by the merchant; since the money has been seized due to the (previously accumulated) debts of the director János Fejér, he cannot access the funds and is unable to fulfill the payment demands of the troupe members.

²⁹ [Möller] *Gróf Valtron, avagy A' szubordinátzio: szomorújáték* [Count Valtron, or Subordination: A Tragedy]. The play was published in 1782 by the Royer Press in Pest. Its first Hungarian-language performance took place on October 15, 1784, at the Reischl House in Buda. It was performed in Hungarian, under the direction of the theatre's German manager, Johann Meyer.

³⁰ Sándor Enyedi, *ibid.*, 194.

³¹ *Ibid.*

We quote extensively from the minutes to illustrate Kótsi's situation: "On December 11, the Committee was notified that the National Theatre Company, under the Committee's supervision, had performed a play on the 9th of the month that could have been dangerous given the current circumstances and might have quickly spread among the audience, especially since it could have been easily misunderstood. When the Committee was established on July 3, it was decided that the theatre director, János Kótsi, could not allow the presentation of any play that had not been approved by the Transylvanian censors, under the threat of severe punishment. However, the Committee did not recall ever reviewing such a play, so to clarify whether the play had passed censorship, the Committee called both János Kótsi and the Theatre Company in for questioning. He replied that the play had not passed the censors. They further inquired whether he remembered the Committee's order of July 3, which forbade the performance of any play that had not been approved by the censors. He confirmed that he remembered, but stated that he saw nothing in this play that would make it unworthy of being performed. The play seemed beautiful to him, and he believed it would bring him great benefit. They also asked whether he had performed the play of his own accord or had been urged by someone else to do so. He answered that no one had urged him; it was solely the anticipated profit from the performance that had motivated him. Once János Kótsi had stated all this, the Committee sternly reprimanded him, warning that if he ever dared to stage a play again that bypassed the censorship, not only would he face punishment, but the theatre itself would be closed as well. Additionally, they ordered him to submit a list of the upcoming plays to the Committee every week from then on. Since the Committee had also heard in common conversation that the Hungarian translation deviated significantly from the original German work, and that the harsher, now undesirable parts were likely introduced by the translator, they also questioned Kótsi about this. When asked who the translator was, János Kótsi replied that the translation had been done earlier that summer by Sándor Boér, the Gubernatorial Clerk. Kótsi was also ordered to submit the play, both in Hungarian and in German, to the Committee, so that the translation could be compared with the original work. To this, Kótsi responded that he could submit the translation, but the original German text remained with János Esterházi [...]. After a play titled *You Vouch, You Pay*,

filled with dangerous and offensive expressions under the current circumstances, and circumventing the censorship, was presented at the local Hungarian theatre, the Royal Chief Directorate Council entrusted the Committee with the task of summoning János Kótsi and the entire company to ascertain the motive that led the company to perform this play. Kótsi was duly summoned and underwent a thorough questioning. His responses, along with an excerpt from the Committee's protocol, are provided here. According to Kótsi's statement, the aforementioned play was translated into Hungarian by the Gubernatorial Clerk, Sándor Boér. However, the Committee also determined that the translated version differed from the original work, as changes had been made both in the dialogues and in the scenes, as well as in certain strong statements. Consequently, the Committee found it necessary to summon Sándor Boér as well and questioned him point by point, to which his answers are included in the attached statement. As the process reaches its conclusion, the Committee presents the case to the Royal Chief Directorate Council for further action to be taken."³²

"Kótsi does nothing but cause trouble, and thus the theatre cannot exist unless we give birth to the public anew," writes Lajos Teleki to Wesselényi from Kolozsvár on November 13, 1797.³³ In the summer of 1798, Wesselényi, along with Ferenc Fekete (and they even wrote about it to the chief judge of Debrecen, István Szombathy), dreams of creating a high-quality theatre troupe – made up of both Transylvanian and Hungarian members.³⁴ Yet, as director, Kótsi, when speaking about the acting troupe, sought to formulate fundamental principles: "I consider it improper to govern such a fine and distinguished company by categorical imperative. Therefore, to avoid the need for such measures, I deem it appropriate to lay down certain principles which shall serve as the cornerstones and foundations of our future conduct; and if these principles stand firmly, then the acting company shall no longer stumble in darkness, but each member shall worthily fulfill the role they have chosen for themselves within the troupe."³⁵

³² *Jegyzőkönyv...* [Minutes], 127v-129v.

³³ *Id. Wesselényi Miklós színházi levelezése* [Theatrical Correspondence of Miklós Wesselényi Sr.], edited and introduced by Sándor Enyedi (Budapest: Magyar Színházi Intézet, 1983), 48.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

³⁵ János Kótsi Patkó, *Békőszöntő beszéd*, 133.

Zoltán Ferenczi identifies János Kótsi's bold, resolute, and soldierly character in the declaration he composed for the rebellious troupe – one which he also requested be made public.³⁶

"I, János Kótsi Patkó, leader of the theatrical company, do hereby humbly declare before the Honourable Magistrates, that whereas the theatrical subscription did expire at the close of the past month (St. John's tide), and seeing that a monthly subscription may bring harm unto none, I have thus arranged with the most noble subscribers, that so long as I myself do not take to the stage, they shall not require the performances to be held. Nay rather, they have expressly declared that until I resume the customary entertainments, they have no desire to appear within the playhouse. And since the monthly subscription naturally ceaseth at the end of each month, no loss shall thereby befall the subscribers. Therefore, should the performances be deferred until such time as I do return to the stage, the public shall in no wise suffer detriment or lack. The garments requisite for the play, together with all other preparations appertaining to the theatre, having been brought to completion through my own laborious efforts and at great personal expense, are thus mine alone in right and title. No member of the theatrical company, nor any other person whatsoever, may lay claim thereto. Wherefore, I do solemnly protest against any action whereby any person, without my will or assent, should presume by force to enter the theatre and take possession of said costumes or stage properties. I hereby declare openly that I shall oppose such usurpations, and if, by reason of such violent acts, any grievous occurrence should arise, let the blame lie solely upon the heads of those who thus offend. I humbly entreat that this my formal protestation and remonstrance be publicly read aloud, duly entered into the record, and issued unto me with the accustomed authenticity."³⁷

In 1803, the supervisory committee had a constitution signed by the director and the members of the company for the Transylvanian Hungarian theatre. (According to Zoltán Ferenczi, this was based on the 1797 regulations of Wesselényi.)³⁸ That year, a section of the acting company sent to Hungary performed in Szeged. According to János Sándor's chronicle, Kótsi Patkó János's Kolozsvári Nemzeti Jádzó

³⁶ Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története [The history of acting and theatre in Cluj]* (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert Press, 1897), 91.

³⁷ Ibid., citing council minutes no. 618, 619/1794. (Emphasis mine – E.E.)

³⁸ Ibid., 117.

Társaság³⁹ (National Acting Company of Kolozsvár) stayed in Szeged from September 6 to October 3, 1803.⁴⁰ A more thorough examination of this period requires further research.

It can be undeniably established that János Kótsi Patkó's work was meticulous; he closely followed the programming of European theatres operating at the time, made efforts to translate new and promising plays into Hungarian, and even worked towards introducing musical performances. He was familiar with the audience, the financial aspects of theatre operations, but the operating costs exceeded the revenue, and he did not account for the growing dissatisfaction among the members of his company. The trust of key figures among the audience, the performance space secured through lease from the owner, the collection of stage costumes, and the repertoire of plays all held tangible value – and enumerating them individually signified a claim to authority, even amid what we would now call workplace conflict. The foundation lay in the actor's theatrical education (sustained through continuous self-instruction), stage performance, and the positive social impact of public recognition. From this foundation, one could also define the ideal stage and the exemplary drama. Kótsi Patkó strove to create a form of theatre that moved the heart and served to morally improve the audience under the guise of entertainment. His vision of an ethical theatre aligned with Lessing's ideal of the *theatre as a moral institution* ("Theater als moralische Anstalt betrachtet"), while also drawing upon accessible, popularizing works such as Jean Baudrais's *Essais historiques sur l'origine et le progrès de l'art dramatique en France* (1758).

Farkas Bolyai briefly performed with the company. In his short autobiography, there is a revealing entry that offers insight into the impact of *Inkle és Járíró* as a musical performance: "upon hearing *Arany idő* – the first

³⁹ János Sándor, *A szegedi színjátszás krónikája. A kőszínház és társulatainak története (1883-)* [The Chronicle of Theatre in Szeged: The History of the Stone Theatre and Its Troupes, 1883-], http://www.sk-szeged.hu/statikus_html/digitalis/szinhaz1800/tarsulati_nevsorok.html.

⁴⁰ Actors: János Kótsi Patkó, Pál Jantsó, János Kemény, József Székely, György Magyar (prompter), Sándor Horváth, György Simonfy (stage manager), Borsos, József Székelyfi, János Sáska, Ádám János Láng; Actresses: Rozália Kótsiné Fejér, Anna Lángné Járdos, Borbála Simény, Sáskáné, Katica Kótsi, Teréz Lefevre, and two children. Conductor: János Lavotta, as well as János Seltzer and Leopold Irch (musicians).

Hungarian opera – I began to play the violin the very next day.”⁴¹ János Kótsi Patkó’s professional competence here can be linked to his artistic leadership concept; this was not merely an effective performance in the Hungarian language, but a demonstration of his broader vision. As a musically literate actor, director, and manager – fully aware of his responsibilities – Kótsi assumed the role of “overseer of the whole” and pledged that “there shall be harmony throughout.”⁴²

Translation by Lóránd Rigán

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⁴² János Kótsi Patkó, *Békőszöntő beszéd*, 139.

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Theodor Körner's *Zriny* (1812/14) in Kolozsvár (Cluj) (1821)

Abstract. The opening of the first Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár in 1821 with the historical tragedy *Zriny* (1812) by Theodor Körner (1791-1813) marked a significant milestone in Hungarian nation-building. However, both the event and its program reflected a trans- and multicultural complexity. This plurality was already embedded in the play's subject matter and in the figure of its protagonist, Miklós (Nikolaus) Zrínyi (1508-1566). Furthermore, by 1821, the author himself – Körner – had become a national hero in Prussia and the German-speaking world. A multiplicity of interpretations of the play was therefore almost inevitable. The ideological character of the drama and its performances was also marked by contradictions. Through his portrayal of the fighters, Körner constructed an egalitarian national community of combatants – a vision rooted in bourgeois ideals. In Hungary, however, the play was received within an aristocratic cultural framework, and its egalitarian bourgeois elements were reframed in a feudal-aristocratic spirit. The evaluation of the play's aesthetic merits was likewise ambivalent: both in German-speaking countries and in Hungary, Körner was seen as a talented yet still immature newcomer to the dramatic arts. Despite these contradictions, the 1821 event retained considerable significance for decades, and Körner's *Zriny* maintained a certain symbolic and ceremonial resonance well into the late 19th century. By adopting a multi-perspective approach, this study seeks to reveal the cultural plurality underlying this significant national moment.

Keywords: *nation-building, Theodor Körner, theatre history, ideological reception, transnational dynamics*

The true beginning of modern Hungarian-language theatre can be traced to the founding of theatre troupes in Buda/Pest (1790) and in Kolozsvár, Transylvania (1792).¹ Buda served as the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary,

¹ In the 16th–18th centuries, theatre was limited to schools of various religious orders, and in the 18th century, to the residences of the aristocracy, such as the Esterházy, Pálffy,

while Kolozsvár was the capital of the Principality of Transylvania.² Both the establishment of the troupe in Buda/Pest and the opening of the theatre in Kolozsvár marked significant milestones in the process of Hungarian nation-building. In the multi-ethnic state of Hungary, however, the development of Hungarian culture was closely intertwined with other cultures, even if this “connection” often manifested as a desire for emancipation and the rejection of foreign influence. In other words, the agents of cultural life were aware of the products of other cultures, though they did not necessarily wish to engage with or reflect on them.

The first permanent Hungarian theatre was opened in Kolozsvár on March 13, 1821 with the historical tragedy *Zriny* (1812) by Theodor Körner (1791–1813) in Hungarian translation. A permanent Hungarian theatre in Pest was not established until sixteen years later, in 1837. The opening in Kolozsvár was a multi-day celebration and marked the “symbolic occupation of both the building space and the local theatre culture.”³ On the other hand, these theatre-historical events were still part of the aristocratic cultural scene. In Kolozsvár, plays were also performed in the palace of Governor Count György Bánffy (1747–1822)⁴ before the opening of the theatre. Körner's *Zriny* had already been performed twice in the gubernatorial palace (salon) prior to the inauguration of the new theatre.⁵

From today's perspective, however, Körner's tragedy contradicts both the national spirit and the representative public sphere of the aristocracy. The national idea aimed for homogeneity, yet Körner and his material lacked

Ráday, and Festetics families. See Ferenc Kerényi, ed., *Magyar Színháztörténet 1790–1873* [Hungarian Theatre History 1790–1873] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 21–34. In the late 18th century, German theatre troupes also appeared in the cities, and in 1787, a German theatre was finally opened in Buda, followed by a large German theatre house in Pest in 1812.

² The Principality of Transylvania, which existed as an Ottoman vassal state after the collapse of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1526, was not reunited with the Kingdom of Hungary following the liberation of the country from the Ottomans in 1697/99. Instead, it was governed by the Transylvanian Court Chancellery in Vienna. Reunification only occurred after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867.

³ Katalin Ágnes Bartha, “Theatre Inauguration Ceremony and Symbolic Representation,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai – Dramatica* LXII, no. 2 (2017): 28.

⁴ Bánffy served as Gubernator from 1787 to 1822. Kolozsvár became the capital of Transylvania.

⁵ *Preface* by Petricevich to the Körner translation: Theodor Körner, *Zrinyi. Vitézi szomorú játék öt felvonásban*, trans. Dániel Petricevich Horváth (Kolozsvár: Török István, 1819), II.

the desired unity on a Hungarian stage. In addition to being a German author, by 1821 he had already become a German-Prussian national hero and one of the founders of Prussian-German nationalist culture. Secondly, Miklós Zrínyi, the hero of the tragedy, was a Croatian and a supporter of the Habsburgs. As a Croat, he was also claimed as a national hero by Croats, Serbs, and other Slavic nations, especially in the South Slavic area.⁶ Golo Mann was probably right when he wrote that the nationalism of the 19th and 20th centuries was a distinctly international phenomenon.⁷ The national perspective overlooked this international dimension. In 1821, Zrínyi was already widely regarded as a Hungarian national hero, and the subject matter thus legitimized the “foreign” author. The translation of foreign-language literary works was also considered an important tool in language cultivation programs, as Hungary’s own (Hungarian) literary output was still limited.

Additionally, the festive premiere was an amateur performance; the actors were mostly members of prominent aristocratic families, such as the daughter of the “Gubernator” (governor) and her husband, Count József Csáky.⁸ In line with the aristocratic-feudal spirit, the nation was represented by the king and his representative, Count Bánffy:

Mivel pedig ezen szép Ház
A' Nemzetnek Tulajdona
Nyissuk-meg mint Hív Magyarok,
Ilyen öröm kiáltással!
Éljen a' mi FEJEDELMÜNK!
KI' Uralkodása alatt;
Teatrumunk így fel-épült,
Éljenek KÉPVISELŐI,
A' Felséges Fő Kormányzók!

Because this beautiful house
Is the property of the nation,
Shall we, faithful Hungarians,
Inaugurate it with cheers!
Long live our Prince!
Under his rule,
Our theatre was born!
Long live his representatives,
The Gubernium!¹

This was a self-representation of the aristocracy, a “public representation of rule,” which Jürgen Habermas referred to as a “representative public

⁶ See the highly interesting and important study by Marijan Bobinac, “Theodor Körner im kroatischen Theater,” *Zagreber Germanistische Beiträge* 11 (2002): 59–96.

⁷ „eine höchst internationale Sache”, Golo Mann, *Deutsche Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 1992), 20.

⁸ For the actors, see Bartha, “Theatre Inauguration Ceremony and Symbolic Representation,” 31.

¹ Máté Könyves, *Játékszíni koszorú* [Theatrical Wreath] (Pest: Landerer, 1834), 113.

sphere.”¹ In the following, I aim to demonstrate that Körner's tragedy did not conform to this aristocratic spirit.

Theodor Körner's *Zriny* (1812)²

The action alternates between the Turkish camp and Szigetvár Castle. In the Turkish camp, Sultan Süleyman I (reigned 1520–1566) and his commanders are present. In the castle, we see Count Zrínyi, his wife Eva, his daughter Helene, and the Count's officers, including the young Captain Juranitsch. He and Zrínyi's daughter are in love. Through heroic deeds, Juranitsch wins Helene's hand. When the defenders can no longer hold the castle, they open the gates and die in battle. At her own request, Juranitsch kills Helene before the gates are opened, as she did not want to fall into the hands of the Turks. Countess Eva blows up the powder magazine at the last moment and dies shortly after her husband.

As previously noted, Körner's drama did not align with the feudal spirit of the aristocratic world in Hungary. The discordant element was the bourgeois-liberal, egalitarian stance of the German author. The nationalism

¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft. Mit einem Vorwort zur Neuauflage 1990* [The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society...] (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1990) (Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 891), 60.

² The material history of Körner's tragedy and the plural Zrínyi and Körner memories have been described elsewhere; the theatrical dimension of the theatre opening has been described in detail and with great insight by Bartha. Kálmán Kovács, "Zrínyi: National Recycling(s) of a Hybrid Material (1566–2000)," in *History as a Foreign Country: Historical Imagery in the South-Eastern Europe. Geschichte als ein fremdes Land. Historische Bilder in Süd-Ost Europa*, ed. Zrinka Blažević, Ivana Brković, and Davor Dukić (Bonn: Bouvier-Verlag, 2015), 83–100. (=Aachener Beiträge zur Komparatistik. Hrsg. v. Hugo Dyserinck, Band 11); Kálmán Kovács, "Die Rezeption von Theodor Körner mit und ohne *Zriny* [The Reception of Theodor Körner with and without *Zriny*]," in *Dialogische Erinnerung* [Dialogical Memory], ed. Andrea Horváth, Kálmán Kovács, and Eszter Pabis (Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2017), 39–78. (=Arbeiten zur Deutschen Philologie XXX); Katalin Ágnes Bartha, "Szimbolikus reprezentáció és színház-avató ünnep [Symbolic Representation and Theatre Inauguration Ceremony]," in *Drámák határhelyzetben I.* [Dramas in Borderline Situations], ed. Gabriella Brutovszky et al. (Nyitra: Constantine the Philosopher University, 2014), 369–384; Bartha, "Theatre Inauguration Ceremony and Symbolic Representation," 23–50.

represented by Körner had certain early democratic qualities and signified an expansion of rights.³

The Prussian reforms in 1806, which the government hoped would increase society's ability to fight, were based on a simple principle: if the government demands sacrifices from the population, the people should receive civil rights in return. As August Neidhardt von Gneisenau (1760–1831) put it succinctly in 1808: "It is both fair and prudent that the people should be given a fatherland if they are to defend it vigorously."⁴ Conservative critics, however, rejected the reforms. The historian Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831) remarked that the whole initiative was nothing more than Jacobin egalitarianism.⁵

The experience of the fight against Napoleon differed in the Kingdom of Hungary compared to the German states (Austria, Prussia). In Hungary, the defining military event of the Napoleonic Wars was the last aristocratic uprising (insurrection) of 1808. As a result, the experience primarily belonged to the privileged group of the nobility. In contrast, in Prussia and Austria, the experience of war was "democratized." The Prussian army reforms, the introduction of universal conscription, and the newly established Landwehr fostered the equality of combatants. Ute Frevert emphasizes that compulsory military service was closely linked to revolution and bourgeois emancipation.⁶ Equality in death, therefore, became a precursor to political equality.⁷

³ Ute Planert speaks of the promise of participation („Teilhabeverheißung“) of nationalism. Ute Planert, "Wann beginnt der deutsche Nationalismus? Plädoyer für eine nationale Sattelzeit [When Does German Nationalism Begin? A Plea for a National 'Saddle Period']," in *Die Politik der Nation. Deutscher Nationalismus in Krieg und Krisen 1760–1960* [The Politics of the Nation. German Nationalism in War and Crises 1760–1960], ed. Jörg Echternkamp and Sven Oliver Müller (München: Oldenbourg, 2002), 33.

⁴ Quoted by Karen Hagemann, „Männlicher Muth und deutsche Ehre“. *Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens* [“Manly Courage and German Honour”: Nation, Military, and Gender During the Time of the Anti-Napoleonic Wars in Prussia] (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002), 88. (Krieg in der Geschichte 8); also Ute Frevert, *Die kasernierte Nation. Militärdienst und Zivilgesellschaft in Deutschland* [The Barracked Nation. Military Service and Civil Society in Germany] (München: Beck, 2001), 36.

⁵ "jakobinische Gleichmacherei." Quoted in Hagemann, „Männlicher Muth und deutsche Ehre“, 86.

⁶ "eng mit Revolution und bürgerlicher Emanzipation verbunden schien" and therefore found little favor with the royal legislature ("auch beim königlichen Gesetzgeber wenig Gegenliebe"). Frevert, *Die kasernierte Nation*, 19.

⁷ Planert, "Wann beginnt der deutsche Nationalismus?," 47; Michael Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde. Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1792–1918* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 154.

George L. Mosse posed the question: "Why did young men in large numbers rush to the colors, eager to face death and prove themselves in battle when they had not done so before the French Revolution?"⁸ The answer lies in the democratization of the war experience. The social status of the soldiers rose; whereas, before the Revolution, they had been recruited from the "margins of society," during the Napoleonic Wars they were "sons, brothers, or neighbors."⁹ The Prussian Freikorps of volunteers played a special role in this war myth. Theodor Körner served and died in perhaps the most famous Freikorps, under the leadership of Major Adolf Freiherr von Lützow (1782–1834).

The revolutionary egalitarian idea is visualized in the play primarily through the young Captain Juranitsch. The common officer wins the hand of the powerful count's daughter through personal achievement and excellence. After a successful expedition, he is praised by the leader (Alapi) of the small expeditionary force:

ALAPI

Vor allen aber, edler Graf, muß ich
Dem Juranitsch das große Zeugniß geben,
Daß er *des schwerdtes Adel* kühn bewährt [...].
Das ist *die Meinung aller seiner Brüder* [...].

ZRINY.

Komm an mein Herz, Du wackrer junger Degen!
Solch Adelsbrief, wie Du Dir heut erfochten,
Schreibt Dir kein Kaiser in der ganzen Welt,
[...]
Was ich dem Liebling Juranitsch verweigert,
Dem Helden biet' ich selber diesen Preiß. –
Du freyst um meine Tochter, nimm sie, Jüngling,
Und meinen reichsten Segen über Euch!¹⁰

This brief scene exemplifies the play's – and its author's – egalitarian ethos. Juranitsch is recognized here as possessing the "nobility of the sword."¹¹ It is not noble birth but personal merit that constitutes true nobility.

⁸ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰ Theodor Körner, "Zriny," in *Theodor Körners Poetischer Nachlaß I-II*. I: 1–135 (Leipzig: Joh. Fr. Hartknoch, 1814), 42, emphases added.

¹¹ Incidentally, it is worth noting that Körner portrays his character Juranitsch as his own alter ego. Letter from Körner to his father dated June 18, 1813, Theodor Körner, *Theodor*

For Zrínyi, this nobility earned through valor and service is even more valuable than that inherited by birth. It is also emphasized that this view is shared by all comrades. It is not the leader, nor the ruler, but the egalitarian community of fighters that determines who is deemed noble. Zrínyi accepts the will of the people (*Volk*) and blesses the love between Juranitsch and Helene. The egalitarian ethos is further reflected in the friendly relations among the comrades-in-arms. The familiar tone between Zrínyi and Juranitsch underscores the spirit of fraternity that exists between the commander and his soldiers.

Around 1810, a heated theoretical debate emerged in the German-speaking world concerning “noble birth” and “noble merit.” In his essay *Deutsches Volksthum* (1810), Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778–1852) distinguished between a nobility of birth (*Geschlechtsadel*) and forms of nobility that could be acquired through personal merit (*Verdienstadel*).¹² Achim von Arnim (1781–1831) wrote in a similar spirit in his poem *Adel* [Nobility]:

Die neuen Zeiten,
Sie nennen Adel,
Was ohne Tadel
Die Geister leiten.¹³

The bourgeois-democratic orientation of Körner’s tragedy is also reflected in the fact that the characters die for the people and the fatherland. The Volk, as a new historical subject and representative of the nation, constituted a genuinely revolutionary idea. As Gerhard Schulz notes in his literary history, the struggle on behalf of the people represents “a political idea that separates the 19th century from the 18th.”¹⁴

Körners Briefwechsel mit den Seinen [Theodor Körner’s Correspondence with His Family], ed. Dr. A. Welder-Steinberg (Leipzig: Quelle u. Meyer, 1910), 247; see also Emil Peschel and Eugen Wildenow, *Theodor Körner und die Seinigen* [Theodor Körner and His Family], I-II (Leipzig: Seemann, 1898), II, 74.

¹² Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, *Deutsches Volksthum* (Leipzig: W. Rein, 1810), 222–228.

¹³ Roughly: “In modern times, nobility is defined as that which leads people on the right path” (Arnim, 438–442, here 442). For Arnim’s vision, see Stefan Nienhaus, “Ein ganzes adeliges Volk: Die deutsche Tischgesellschaft als aristokratisches Demokratiemodell [A Whole Noble People: The German Dining Society as an Aristocratic Model of Democracy],” *Kleist-Jahrbuch* (2012): 230–231.

¹⁴ Gerhard Schulz, *Die deutsche Literatur zwischen französischer Revolution und Restauration 1789–1830* [German Literature Between the French Revolution and the

As a translator, Petrichevich faithfully adhered to the German original, preserving the aforementioned bourgeois-liberal, and even plebeian, characteristics of the text. However, Petrichevich was not a poet, and his prose translation represents a modest achievement from a purely linguistic perspective. Körner's text was ultimately canonized in Hungarian through the 1826 translation by Pál Szemere (1785–1861).¹⁵ Szemere, who, as a poet, was not accepted into the higher canon either, but possessed more linguistic talent, modified the play in ideologically sensitive areas and eliminated most of the egalitarian, bourgeois elements. He deleted the word "people" (*Volk*) throughout the text. The Hungarian language of the time lacked a modern (political) concept of "the people." Although there was a corresponding word, *nép*, it referred to the nobility, the representative of the political nation. The term *Volk* (*nép*) only came to encompass all of society after Szemere's translation. In Körner's drama, when the characters die for the people (*Volk*), Szemere's Hungarian characters always die for something else – such as the nation, which in the political discourse of the time referred to the nobility, or for the common good.

All of this highlights the fundamental difference between Körner's spirit and the ideological discourse of the Kingdom of Hungary around 1800. While we cannot delve into the historical narratives of the play here, it is important to note that they do not align with the demands of Hungarian ideas either. Although the fighters and their leader, Zrínyi, are Hungarian, the battle in the play is framed as a struggle between the Ottomans (Süleyman) and Christian Europe, represented by Emperor Charles V and, occasionally, the House of Habsburg. The narrative is suspended between a pan-German and a Habsburg-Austrian perspective. Interestingly, Körner's tragedy was utilized as a medium for the representative public sphere (Habermas) of the Hungarian aristocracy. The foundation of this appropriation was the figure of Miklós (Nikolaus) Zrínyi, who emerged as the new national hero.

Restoration, 1789-1830], I-II (München: Beck, 1989, II, 73). Schulz expresses his statement somewhat metaphorically here, as the boundary between the political paradigms was not the year 1800.

¹⁵ Theodor Körner, "Zrínyi. Tragoedia öt felvonásban [Zrínyi: A Tragedy in Five Acts]," trans. Pál Szemere. *Élet és Irodalom* (1826): 60-166.

Reception in Hungary

Finally, I would like to briefly discuss the Hungarian reception of the play and the memory of the theatre opening. While the play quickly became a favourite of the general public, professional critics were more distant and skeptical from the outset.

The translation of *Szemere*, written in iambic verse and later canonized, was published in 1826 alongside a detailed study of the drama by the poet Ferenc Kölcsey (1790–1838), entitled *Körner Zrínyijéről* [On Körner's Zrínyi, 1826]. Kölcsey argued that Körner's entire work was fundamentally flawed. Here, I will highlight just two key points from this thorough and extensive study. Firstly, Kölcsey claimed that Körner's Zrínyi was not a Hungarian Zrínyi. By this, he meant that Körner had failed to bring the spirit and mentality of the 16th century to the stage, a criticism that Kölcsey was correct to make. Körner updated the material to reflect his own time, the Napoleonic Wars. Some characters speak and think like the national-liberal citizens of around 1800. The influence of sensitive drama is also significant in this regard. Körner, therefore, bridges the "floating gap," the great divide between past and present.¹⁶ In other words, the play lacks historical fidelity. Secondly, Kölcsey argued that the play lacked dramatic conflict, a point in which he was again correct.

Körner was never regarded as a great playwright by professional critics, either in German-speaking countries or in Hungary. In his obituary for Theodor Körner, Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) assessed that while the poet possessed great talent, he had not yet attained the necessary maturity. In Hungary, the name Kölcsey carried great weight and was widely respected in the 19th century, yet the play remained popular. Mihály Vörösmarty (1800–1855) expressed his discontent in 1837, commenting after a performance of Körner's *Zrínyi* at the newly established Hungarian National Theatre in Pest that Hungarian poets should at last write a *worthy* Zrínyi play.¹⁷

¹⁶ See "the floating gap" by Assman, which he adopts from Jan Vansina. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* [Cultural Memory: Script, Recollection, and Political Identity in Early Civilizations] (München: Beck, 2002), 48.

¹⁷ Mihály Vörösmarty, "Dramaturgiai lapok [Dramaturgical Writings]," in *Vörösmarty Mihály munkái VI*. [The Works of Mihály Vörösmarty VI], ed. Pál Gyulai (Budapest: Franklin, 1904), 85. (Nr. V, August 26, 1837).

Vörösmarty's wish seemed to be fulfilled in 1859/60 when Mór Jókai (1825–1904) wrote his own Zrínyi drama, *Szigetvári vértanúk* (1859/60). The play was immensely popular and widely performed, taking on the same representational role that Körner's text once held. As Katalin Ágnes Bartha has detailed, Jókai's play was even staged during the 50th anniversary of the theatre in Kolozsvár (1871). It was also performed to mark Zrínyi's tercentenary (1866) and again for Hungary's millennium celebrations (1896).¹⁸

Körner's *Zrínyi* did not fade into obscurity, however. It was included in the program for the Centenary of Transylvanian Drama (1892). Moreover, the spirit of Körner's work lived on in Jókai's drama. A contemporary critic even likened the two plays to twins. In fact, Jókai borrowed extensively from Körner, with several scenes and dialogues clearly drawn from Körner's original. What is indisputably new in Jókai's work, however, is the anti-Habsburg sentiment. The drama was written ten years after the 1848 Revolution, during the neo-absolutist period of the Habsburg monarchy. Hungary's constitution had been suspended, and the country was governed dictatorially by Austrian officials. Loyalty to the dynasty had waned. By the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century, Körner's fame in Hungary diminished, and his play was eventually forgotten.

Conclusion

The opening of the first Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár in 1821 was one of the most significant events in the cultural nation-building of the Hungarians. However, both the event and the program demonstrated a trans- and multicultural plurality. This plurality was already inherent in the subject matter and in the figure of Zrínyi himself. Moreover, the author (Körner) was already a Prussian-German national hero by 1821. Thus, a multiple decoding of the play was almost inevitable. The ideological character of the drama and its performances was also contradictory. Körner portrayed an egalitarian

¹⁸ Bartha, "Theatre Inauguration Ceremony and Symbolic Representation," 25. See also the notes in the historical-critical text edition. Mór Jókai, "A szigetvári vértanúk. Eredeti Szomorújáték négy felvonásban [The Martyrs of Szigetvár. An Original Tragedy in Four Acts]," in *Jókai Mór összes művei. Drámák I.* [The Complete Works of Mór Jókai. Dramas I], ed. Dénes Lengyel and Miklós Nagy (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1971), 926.

national fighting community through his characters, which reflected a bourgeois vision. In Hungary, however, the play was received as part of the aristocratic cultural scene, and the egalitarian bourgeois elements were transformed into a feudal-aristocratic spirit. The assessment of the play's aesthetic qualities was also contradictory: both in German-speaking countries and in Hungary, Körner was regarded as a talented but immature beginner in the dramatic arts. Despite all this, the event in 1821 was – and continues to be – rightly accorded great significance.

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Theatre about Theatre: The Actor and His Craft in Johann Baptist Hirschfeld's *Jugendfleiss* (1825), a Manuscript Comedy from Temesvár (Timișoara)¹

Abstract. This study examines *Jugendfleiss* (1825), a manuscript comedy by Johann Baptist Hirschfeld (1782-1833), a little-known 19th-century German-language playwright active in the Bánság region. Centred on a one-act play with three characters, *Jugendfleiss* unfolds as a "theatre about theatre," combining elements of Enlightenment-era comedy of types with the reflective structure of *theatre within the theatre*. The play's dramatic conflict arises when Fritz refuses to allow his sister Lottchen to join his amateur troupe. With the help of their father, Lottchen auditions incognito in a series of male roles, thereby revealing her theatrical talent and challenging her brother's gendered assumptions about stage performance. Drawing on manuscript evidence from the Theatre History Collection of the National Széchényi Library, the study explores both textual features and staging practices, situating the play within traditions of domestic children's theatre and professional child troupes in early 19th-century Central Europe. Hirschfeld's comedy doubles as a practical theatrical guide, thematizing key aspects of acting technique, role fidelity, language use, and the institutional realities of traveling theatre companies. Through a close reading of the play and its historical context, the analysis positions *Jugendfleiss* as a rare document of regional theatre history and an insightful reflection on performance, identity, and the evolving craft of the actor.

Keywords: Johann Baptist Hirschfeld, 19th-century German theatre in Temesvár, theatre within theatre, children on stage, actor's transformation

¹ First published: Gabriella-Nóra Tar, "Színház a színházról: A színész és mestersége Johann Baptist Hirschfeld *Jugendfleiss* (1825) című temesvári kéziratos vígjátékában," *Korunk* XXXIV, no. 2 (February 2023): 3-9, <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=1095019> (accessed October 6, 2024).

Gib acht auf deines Bruders Reden, daß du passend darauf antwortest und stets dem Charakter treu bleibst, den du annimmst. Verliere die Gegenwart des Geistes nicht und weißt du dir gar nicht zu helfen, so bring die Schlußrede und gehe,²

advises the theatre director Johann Baptist Hirschfeld (1782–1833) in the opening of his manuscript comedy *Jugendfleiss* [Youthful Diligence]. This counsel is directed at his daughter, Lottchen, just before she applies for an audition with her brother, Fritz, who, with his father's support, is currently laboring to establish his own summer troupe.

The conflict of this one-act play, which has only three characters and consists of 15 scenes, essentially arises from Fritz's refusal to allow his sister to join his small private troupe. As a result, father and daughter resort to a trick: Lottchen, by portraying various male characters, will demonstrate her talent in such a way – unknown to her brother – that he will eventually come to a better understanding. Throughout the play, Lottchen auditions in various roles – as a peasant boy, a young actor, a tailor's apprentice, a French painter, a councilor, and finally a traveling student – but her brother does not recognize her at all. In fact, he continues to believe she is a man and, moreover, a talented candidate. Thus, the drama's resolution naturally brings about the hoped-for outcome: in the final scene, Fritz ultimately realizes that he has made a mistake regarding his sister, and, acknowledging her competence, he apologizes to both his father and Lottchen.

The plot of Hirschfeld's comedy is straightforward: the playwright, originally from Sopron and later active in the Bánság, presents a one-act play that fits into the tradition of dramatic works which, following the "theatre within a theatre" structure, aim to reflect on the art of theatre itself. At the beginning of this literary tradition stands *Shakuntala*, a seven-act play from the 4th century by the Sanskrit author Kalidasa, while its most well-known German-language example can be found in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, under the title *Vorspiel auf dem Theater* (*Prelude on the Stage*). Within this tradition, Hirschfeld's comedy can also be interpreted as a kind of practical

² "Pay close attention to your brother's words, that you answer appropriately and always remain true to the character you assume. Do not lose the presence of mind, and if you find yourself at a loss, deliver the closing remarks and leave." Johann Baptist Hirschfeld, *Jugendfleiss*. Ein Original Lustspiel in einem Akt. Kopiert von (Louis) Alois Stolz. Temesvár 1825, OSZK Színháztörténeti Tár, Budapest, Promptbook, IM 628 (hereafter Hirschfeld, *Jugendfleiss*), 4–5.

theatrical guide, as throughout the dramatic action, Director Frankenberg – occasionally joined by one of the actor’s two children – uses the characters portrayed by Lottchen as occasions to articulate his views on the foundations of the performing arts and certain issues of contemporary theatre.

On the Manuscript and the Playwright

The manuscript of Johann Baptist Hirschfeld’s comedy is housed in the Theatre History Collection of the National Széchényi Library; it consists of 30 folios.³ In fact, the document in question is a prompter’s copy transcribed by Louis (Alois) Stolz, dated “Temeswar den 2ten August 1825.”⁴ On the manuscript’s cover page, the name of the possessor, “Nicolaus Alois Hölzel,” is inscribed. There are three pencil annotations in the drama manuscript: in Scene 7, a longer passage has been deleted (from the line “ach, da ist ja ein Klavier” to “adressieren können”) from the response of the character “Schauspieler” (“Actor”). According to the stage directions in the deleted section, the two characters play the piano and the violin, then perform a minuet together.⁵ In the same scene, following the text cut, the conjunction *aber* was inserted, which then continues with the sentence “Jetzt erlauben Sie, dass ich...”.⁶ Additionally, on the last page of the manuscript, in Scene 15, the following note appears: “1/2 St 10 Minuten.” This note likely refers to the duration of the performance of Hirschfeld’s play. The play was performed in 1825 and 1826 in Buda, and in 1828 in Temesvár. However, only theatre pocket books are available on this, and unfortunately, no playbills related to the specific productions have been found so far.⁷

³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 12.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷ Cf. Hedvig Belitska-Scholz and Olga Somorjai, eds., *Deutsche Theater in Pest und Ofen 1770-1850. Normativer Titeltatalog und Dokumentation* [German Theatre in Pest and Buda 1770-1850. *Normative Title Catalogue and Documentation*] (Budapest: Argumentum, [1992]), vol. 1: 476, regarding Buda, December 1 and 13, 1825, and February 9, 1826; cf. *Abschieds-Blatt den hohen und verehrten Theater-Gönnern bei seiner Abreise am Schlusse des Winter-Curses 1828* [Farewell Leaflet to the Noble and Honoured Patrons of the Theatre upon His Departure at the End of the Winter Season 1828], ed. August Mücke (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, [1828]) (hereafter *Abschieds-Blatt am Schlusse des Winter-Curses 1828*), 7, regarding Temesvár, February 4, 1828.

The transcript of Hirschfeld's surviving comedy manuscript was published by Horst Fassel in 2011 in Kolozsvár and later in 2014 in Stuttgart.⁸ Fassel also published the only longer study on Hirschfeld in 2011, in which he refers to him as a forgotten 19th-century German-language playwright in the title of his essay.⁹ In his work, he attempts to reconstruct the journey of Johann Baptist Hirschfeld, actor, theatre director, and playwright, which leads from Sopron to Buda, then to Temesvár and Arad.¹⁰ The theatre historian also seeks to process Hirschfeld's written legacy by making two of the playwright's one-act comedies preserved in manuscript – *Die Kirschen* [The Cherries] and *Jugendfleiss*, the latter described as an "original comedy" – available to the public in his own transcript.

Even if the note in Wilhelm Kosch's *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon* [German Literature Lexicon] stating "Lebensdaten unbekannt" ("Biographical data unknown")¹¹ is not accurate, Johann Baptist Hirschfeld's biography undoubtedly contains several gaps and raises a number of questions that are difficult to resolve due to the lack of sources. The actor, playwright, and later theatre director, Hirschfeld, was born in Sopron in 1782, according to Anton Peter Petri's *Biographisches Lexikon des Banater Deutschtums* [Biographical Dictionary of the German Community of the Bánság].¹² In 1805 and 1806, he was a member of the local theatre company under the direction of Franz Brandaeis; in 1806, as an actor and opera prompter, he also published a theatre pocketbook that records the company's chronological repertoire

⁸ Cf. Horst Fassel, "Über einen Vergessenen und seine Theaterstücke: Johann Baptist Hirschfeld [On a Forgotten Playwright and His Plays: Johann Baptist Hirschfeld]," in *(Dráma)szövegek metamorfózisa. Kontaktustörténetek – Metamorphosis of the (Drama)texts. Stories of Relation*, ed. Emese Egyed, Katalin Ágnes Bartha, and Gabriella-Nóra Tar, vol. 1: *Hagyománykezelés, imitációváltozatok – Traditions, Imitations* (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2011), 208–238; Horst Fassel, *9 mal vergessenes (Bühnen)leben. Deutsche Theatertexte auf dem Gebiet Rumäniens vom 18.-20. Jahrhundert* [9 Times Forgotten (Stage) Life. German Theatre Texts in the Territory of Romania from the 18th to the 20th Century], (Stuttgart: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung des Landes Baden-Württemberg, 2014), CD-Rom, 123–135.

⁹ Cf. Horst Fassel, *ibid.* 2011, 208–238.

¹⁰ Horst Fassel's data on Hirschfeld's biography are inaccurate in several places.

¹¹ Ingrid Bigler-Marschall, "Johann Baptist Hirschfeld," in *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon Online* (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2017) <https://www-1degruyter-1com-1008f4ctl02ce.erf.sbb.spk-berlin.de/database/DLLO/entry/dllo.dll.007.2857/html> (accessed October 6, 2024).

¹² Anton Peter Petri, *Biographisches Lexikon des Banater Deutschtums* (Marquartstein: Breit, 1992), 721.

from October 3, 1805, to March 26, 1806.¹³ According to the almanac, on November 17, 1805, two of Hirschfeld's plays were performed: *Das Windspiel, oder Zufriedenheit im Alter* [The Wind Game, or Contentment in Old Age] and *Der Fürst und sein Page* [The Prince and His Page], both of which were successful, as the author was called to the stage.¹⁴

The normative catalog of titles by Hedvig Belitska-Scholz and Olga Somorjai lists a person named Hirschfeld among the members of the German troupe in Pest and Buda – without a first name – who worked as a prompter from 1811 to 1812 and as a member of the theatre company in 1812.¹⁵ Maria Pechtol, referring to magistrate records, writes in the history of the German theatre in Temesvár in the 18th and 19th centuries that theatre director and manager Franz Herzog, along with Josef Hirschfeld, applied again in 1825 for the lease of the Temesvár theatre and were granted the contract for six years, until 1831.¹⁶ Contemporary theatre almanacs clearly prove that “J.B. Hirschfeld und Franz Herzog, Unternehmer und Directeur” (“J.B. Hirschfeld and Franz Herzog, entrepreneur and director”) actually performed with their troupe in Temesvár from October 6, 1825, to March 6, 1831.¹⁷

¹³ Cf. *Das Andenken oder Lesen Sie und es wird Sie nicht reuen. Ein Abschieds-Geschenk, den edlen Bewohnern Oedenburgs* [The Keepsake, or Read It and You Will Not Regret It: A Farewell Gift to the Noble Residents of Sopron], ed. Johann Baptist Joseph Hirschfeld (Sopron: Siesstische Erben, 1806) (hereafter *Das Andenken*).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵ Cf. Hedvig Belitska-Scholz and Olga Somorjai, eds., *Deutsche Theater in Pest und Ofen*, vol. 2: 1172.

¹⁶ Maria Pechtol, *Thalia in Temeswar: Die Geschichte des Temeswarer deutschen Theaters im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* [Thalia in Temesvár: The History of the German Theatre in Temesvár in the 18th and 19th Centuries] (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1972), 87. Pechtol cites a municipal record in this context, reference: 1825. Nr. 3467.

¹⁷ Cf. *Theater-Journal den hohen, gnädigen und verehrten Theater-Gönnern in der königl[ichen] Freystadt Temeswar, zum Antritte des Jahres 1826* [Theatre Journal for the Noble, Gracious, and Honoured Patrons of the Theatre in the Royal Free City of Temesvár, for the Beginning of the Year 1826], ed. Alois Stolz (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, [1825]); *Abschieds-Blatt, den hohen, gnädigen Theater-Gönnern zum Schlusse des hiesigen Theater-Winter-Curses in tiefster Ehrfurcht gewidmet* [Farewell Leaflet, Most Humbly Dedicated to the Noble, Gracious Patrons of the Theatre at the Close of the Local Winter Theatre Season], ed. Alois Stolz (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, 1826) (hereafter *Abschieds-Blatt zum Schlusse des hiesigen Theater-Winter-Curses*); *Theater-Almanach, den hohen und verehrten Schauspiel-Gönnern in der königl[ichen] Freystadt Temeswar zum Neujahrsfeste 1827* [Theatre Almanac, for the Noble and Honoured Patrons of the Theatre in the Royal Free City of Temesvár for the New Year Festival 1827], ed. Alois Stolz (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, [1826]); *Abschieds-Blatt, den hohen und verehrten Theater-Gönnern bey seiner Abreise am Schlusse des Winter-Curses 1827 ehrfurchtsvoll gewidmet* [Farewell Leaflet, Humbly Dedicated to the Noble and Honoured Patrons of

Based on contemporary theatre pocket books and with the help of Belitska-Scholtz and Somorjai's catalog, it is relatively easy to compile a list of Hirschfeld's plays: *Der Fürst und sein Page*,¹⁸ performed on November 17, 1805, in Sopron, and under the title *Die Kirschen*,¹⁹ on December 12, 1830, in Temesvár; *Das Windspiel oder Zufriedenheit im Alter*,²⁰ November 17, 1805, Sopron; *Das Zauberschloß in Ungarn*²¹ [The Magic Castle in Hungary], February 15, 1826, and December 1830, Temesvár; *Jugendfleiss*,²² December 1 and 13, 1825, February 9, 1826, Buda, and February 4, 1828, Temesvár.

the Theatre upon His Departure at the End of the Winter Season 1827], ed. Alois Stolz (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, [1827]); *Abschieds-Blatt am Schlusse des Winter-Curses 1828; Theater-Almanach, den hohen und verehrten Gönnern in der königlichen Freystadt Temeswar zum Neujahrsfeste 1829 ehrfurchtsvoll gewidmet* [Theatre Almanac, Humbly Dedicated to the Noble and Honoured Patrons in the Royal Free City of Temesvár for the New Year's Celebration 1829], ed. August Mücke (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, [1828]) (hereafter *Theater-Almanach zum Neujahrsfeste 1829*); *Abschieds-Blatt, den hohen und verehrten Gönnern in der königlichen Freystadt Temeswar bei seiner Abreise ehrfurchtsvoll gewidmet* [Farewell Leaflet, Humbly Dedicated to the Noble and Honoured Patrons in the Royal Free City of Temesvár upon His Departure], ed. August Mücke (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, [1829]); *Theater-Almanach den hohen und verehrten Gönnern in der königlichen Freystadt Temeswar zum Neujahrsfeste 1830 ehrfurchtsvoll gewidmet* [Theatre Almanac, Humbly Dedicated to the Noble and Honoured Patrons in the Royal Free City of Temesvár for the New Year's Celebration of 1830], ed. August Mücke (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, [1829]); *Abschieds-Blatt den hohen und verehrten Theater-Gönnern in der königl[ichen] Freystadt Temeswar, bey seiner Abreise am Schlusse des Winter-Curses 1830, ehrfurchtsvoll gewidmet* [Farewell Leaflet to the Noble and Honoured Theatre Patrons in the Royal Free City of Temesvár, Humbly Dedicated Upon His Departure at the End of the Winter Season 1830], ed. August Mücke (Temesvár: Joseph Klapka, [1830]); *Theater-Almanach den hohen und verehrten Gönnern in der königlichen Freystadt Temeswar, zum Neujahrsfeste 1831, ehrfurchtsvoll gewidmet* [Theatre Almanac to the Noble and Honoured Patrons in the Royal Free City of Temesvár, Humbly Dedicated for the New Year's Festival 1831], ed. August Mücke (Temesvár: Joseph Beichel, [1830]) (hereafter *Theater-Almanach zum Neujahrsfeste 1831*); *Theater-Almanach den hohen und verehrten Gönnern in der königlichen Freystadt Temeswar bey seiner Abreise am Schlusse des Winterkurses 1831, ehrfurchtsvoll gewidmet* [Theatre Almanac to the Noble and Honoured Patrons in the Royal Free City of Temesvár, Humbly Dedicated upon His Departure at the End of the Winter Season 1831], ed. August Mücke (Temesvár: Joseph Beichel, [1831]).

¹⁸ *Das Andenken*, 25.

¹⁹ *Theater-Almanach zum Neujahrsfeste 1831*, 8.

²⁰ *Das Andenken*, 25.

²¹ *Abschieds-Blatt zum Schlusse des hiesigen Theater-Winter-Curses*, 7; *Theater-Almanach zum Neujahrsfeste 1831*, 7.

²² Cf. Hedvig Belitska-Scholz and Olga Somorjai, eds., *Deutsche Theater in Pest und Ofen*, vol. 1: 476; *Abschieds-Blatt am Schlusse des Winter-Curses 1828*, 7.

Attempts at Interpretation

The comedy *Jugendfleiss* offers interesting opportunities for analysis in terms of its plot, character relationships, and, not least, its staging. When examining the plot's development, it is clear that the work of this early 19th-century playwright is structured as a standard comedy of types (*Typenkomödie*) of the Enlightenment era. In keeping with the conventions of the genre, the protagonist of a comedy of types embodies a flawed characteristic that stands in stark contrast to the rational environment of the other characters.²³ The latter attempts to steer the "flawed" hero back onto the path of reason, usually through the means of a clever scheme or intrigue.²⁴ It is clear that, in line with the conventions described above, the "irrational" hero of Hirschfeld's play is Fritz, whom his environment – namely, his family – must bring to his senses: "[...] mein Sohn soll beschämt werden, er soll sich überzeugen, dass er unrecht hat, wenn er seiner Schwester alle Anlagen für die Bühne abspricht,"²⁵ says Von Frankenberg in the very first scene of the play. Fritz is not only jealous of his sister's talent but also harbors prejudices against female performers in general.

In terms of character constellation, it is striking that in the play under examination, two of the three characters are children – and siblings at that. This detail recalls the tradition of domestic children's theatre, especially popular in the second half of the 18th century, in which children performed for other children or for adult family members.²⁶ The plays performed in this context – structurally also reminiscent of Enlightenment-era comedies of types – typically feature clumsy but educable child protagonists, most often

²³ Cf. Horst Steinmetz, "Nachwort" [Afterword], in Christian Fürchtegott Gellert: *Die zärtlichen Schwestern* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995), 144.

²⁴ Ibid.; Jürgen Jacobs, "Das klassizistische Drama der Frühaufklärung [The Classical Drama of the Early Enlightenment]", in *Handbuch des deutschen Dramas* [Handbook of German Drama], ed. Walter Hinck (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1980), 69.

²⁵ "[...] my son must be put to shame and must be convinced that he is wrong when he denies all inclination to the stage from his sister." Hirschfeld, *Jugendfleiss*, Scene 1, 3.

²⁶ See Gunda Maibäurl, *Die Familie als Werkstatt der Erziehung. Rollenbilder des Kindertheaters und soziale Realität im späten 18. Jahrhundert* [The Family as a Workshop of Education: Role Models of Children's Theatre and Social Reality in the Late 18th Century] (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1983).

siblings. Alongside them, adult characters appear on stage as moral exemplars or role models to be followed.²⁷

There is no evidence to suggest that Johann Baptist Hirschfeld worked as a tutor or educator, nor that he wrote children's plays intended for private domestic use. However, the text of the comedy itself clearly indicates his awareness of this specific theatrical tradition of his time. In the very first scene of the play, the character Von Frankenberg, a theatre director, references *Der Kinderfreund*, the children's periodical by Christian Felix Weiße (1726–1804), who – motivated by practical concerns – made plays suitable for home performance available to his contemporaries:

Ich habe meinem Sohn versprochen, ihm in seinen jetzigen Ferien junge Leute von seinem Alter zuzuführen, mit denen er kleine Theaterstücke geben kann, und bei dieser Art Unterhaltung vereinige ich das Angenehme mit dem Nützlichen. Der Kinderfreund gibt ihnen kleine moralische Stücke, das Memorieren und eine richtige Deklamation ist der Jugend sehr nützlich.²⁸

It is particularly striking that the children's theatre tradition of the Enlightenment era – evoked here through the reference to *Der Kinderfreund* – influences Hirschfeld's play primarily on a thematic level. Ultimately, the author creates a "little moral play" whose protagonists, Fritz and Lottchen, are siblings and likely older children. Over the course of this one-act comedy, the young characters must overcome their faults and demonstrate their bourgeois virtues – especially Fritz, who, by the play's end, affirms his fraternal affection for Lottchen.

Unfortunately, no playbills have survived from the *Jugendfleiss* performances in Buda (1825 and 1826) or in Temesvár (1828) that might shed

²⁷ Cf. Otto Brunken, "Kinder- und Jugendliteratur von den Anfängen bis 1945 [Children's and Youth Literature from Its Beginnings to 1945]", in *Taschenbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, ed. Günter Lange, vol. 1: *Grundlagen – Gattungen* (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider, 42005), 26–27. On the family as an especially rewarding stage subject in 18th-century sentimental drama, see Szabolcs János-Szatmári, *Az érzékeny színház: A magyar színjátszás a 18–19. század fordulóján* [The Sentimental Theatre: Hungarian Playacting at the Turn of the 18th and 19th Centuries] (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2007), 81–91.

²⁸ "I promised my son that during his current vacation I would bring him young people of his own age, with whom he could perform short plays, and in this kind of amusement I would combine the pleasant with the useful. *The Children's Friend* provides them with short moral plays; memorization and proper declamation are very beneficial for the youth." Hirschfeld, *Jugendfleiss*, Scene 1, 2.

light on the original cast. However, it can reasonably be assumed that in both Buda and Temesvár, the two child roles were performed by child actors – most likely children of actors, or possibly by young professional performers.²⁹ It is also reasonable to assume that Hirschfeld – who was likely active in 1812 as a member of the German theatre company in Pest and Buda – was familiar with the Viennese tradition of professional children's troupes. This tradition was established in Pest and Buda by the actor Friedrich Zöllner, who, beginning in 1794, sought to popularize it primarily through performances featuring his seven children. Productions by Zöllner's children's troupe remained a visible part of the local German stages up until the late 1820s.³⁰ The fact that Johann Baptist Hirschfeld likely intended for the roles of the sibling pair in his play to be performed by child actors is supported not only by the nature of the characters but also by the play's conclusion. In the final scene (Scene 15), the actor playing Lottchen asks their stage partner to jointly assure the audience of their future diligence:

Lottchen (*zu ihrem Bruder, der sie an der Hand faßt und vorführt*):
Komm Bruder Fritz! (*zum Parterre*). Lass uns denen nach unten das
Versprechen leisten, stets fleißig zu sein und sie bitten, uns auch ihre
Zufriedenheit zu schenken.³¹

²⁹ In Buda, for example, during the 1824/1825 theatre season, nine child actors belonged to the German troupe: Eduard Hölzel, Therese Hölzel, Mina Hysel, Leonora Hysel, Elise Zöllner, Marie Zöllner, Josephine Zöllner, Christine Zöllner, and Pepi Zöllner. Cf. *Ofner-Theater Taschenbuch auf 1826*, 11; Gabriella-Nóra Tar, *Deutschsprachiges Kindertheater in Ungarn im 18. Jahrhundert* [German-Language Children's Theatre in Hungary in the 18th Century], *Thalia Germanica* 13 (Berlin: LIT Verlag: 2012), 83.

In Temesvár, between January 1 and March 27, 1828, several child actors performed: Gusti Miller, Fanni Nowak, Therese Nowak, and Betti Nowak; between November 2 and December 30 of the same year, Carl Hirschfeld, Kathi Hirschfeld, Resi Nowak, Fanny Nowak, and Betti Nowak also appeared in children's roles at the same venue. Cf. *Abschieds-Blatt am Schlusse des Winter-Curses 1828*, 4; *Theater-Almanach zum Neujahrsfeste 1829*, 4.

³⁰ See Gabriella-Nóra Tar, *Deutschsprachiges Kindertheater in Ungarn im 18. Jahrhundert* [German-Language Children's Theatre in Hungary in the 18th Century], *Thalia Germanica* 13 (Berlin: LIT Verlag: 2012), 67-87, for the two phases of the Zöllner children's troupe in Pest and Buda.

³¹ "Lottchen (*to her brother, holding his hand and leading him forward*): Come, Brother Fritz! (*towards the ground floor*). Let us promise those downstairs that we will always be diligent, and let us ask them to reward us with their satisfaction." Hirschfeld, *Jugendfleiss*, Scene 15, 30.

Hirschfeld's play, beyond its specific plot, essentially reflects on contemporary theatre life, its actors, execution, characteristics, and challenges. It serves as a kind of theatrical guide and practical reference, touching on important aspects of theatrical art such as character development, the actor's stage presence, and the consistent use of language in the theatre, which are addressed in several of its scenes.

In Scene 14 of the play, the drama touches upon the "official" procedure of theatre organization and troupe formation. Specifically, it discusses how the theatre director, Frankenberg, must submit a petition for the school-aged Fritz to establish his own private theatre company.³² In Scene 5, Lottchen, who plays a peasant boy, remarks on 19th-century rural theatre, which still operates by traveling troupes. She references the poverty and financial struggles faced by actors of the time, noting that in lieu of payment, they often leave behind their theatrical costumes: "der Komödianten Herr hat zu mein Vater gsagt: [...] Geld hab ich nicht; aber ich laß ihm Kleidung da."³³ In the play's manuscript, the figure of the prompter and the darker side of their profession also appear. In Scene 9, Lottchen, playing a tailor's apprentice, critiques the superficial approach to learning lines that was typical of the era: „Hab scho oft geschwitzt als wie unser Souffleur bei eine neue Stück, wenn die Herre ihre Rolle nit könne."³⁴

In the opening quote of this study, Von Frankenberg advises his daughter, who is dedicated to theatre, to always remain true to the character she portrays.³⁵ In this passage, the director emphasizes the importance of the individual character, from which the actor must not only begin but continue to "operate" throughout the performance. The actor must always

³² Frankenberg reports the following to his son: "[...] eine Bittschrift, die ich für dich zur Suspension einreichte, ist mir hier zurückgeschickt worden, und meine Bitte ist gänzlich verworfen." "[...] the petition I submitted on your behalf for your exemption has been returned to me here, and my request has been completely rejected." Ibid., Scene 14, 23.

³³ "the comedian said to my father: [...] I have no money; but I will leave some clothes." Ibid., Scene 5, 8.

³⁴ "I've sweated buckets, just like our prompter when the gents can't remember their lines in a new play." Ibid., Scene 9, 14. For the role of the prompter, see Katalin Ágnes Bartha, "Zsebkönyv és színlap [Pocketbook and Playbill]," in *Theátrumi könyvecske. Színházi zsebkönyvek és szerepük a régió színházi kultúrájában* [Theatrical Booklet: Theatre Pocketbooks and Their Role in the Theatre Culture of the Region], ed. Emese Egyed (Kolozsvar: Scientia, 2002), 129-157.

³⁵ Hirschfeld, *Jugendfleiss*, Scene 2, 4.

subordinate themselves to the role they are playing. This principle was already articulated by Johann Jakob Engel in his theoretical work *Ideen zu einer Mimik* [Ideas for Facial Expression] in 1785–1786.³⁶ In Scene 2, cited earlier, the father also highlights the significance of the actor's stage presence, which ensures the "advantage of good acting."³⁷

Hirschfeld's play also evokes the postulate, first articulated by Lessing and later by Goethe, that theatrical language should be unified and free of regional dialects. This idea is introduced in Scene 9 by Fritz, the actor's son, who raises the point during the dialogue: "Mein Papa sagt: beim Theater muss man rein Deutsch sprechen."³⁸

While Lottchen adopts various roles, continually changing her language, , and thus the stage character, the playwright not only explores the artistic metamorphosis of the actor but also tests the knowledge and skills involved in staging the play. As Horst Fassel rightly notes, the modernity of Hirschfeld's comedy lies in demonstrating the transformative ability of stage artists.³⁹ A distinctive aspect of this intention is that Hirschfeld's depiction of stage metamorphosis is realized through the successful demonstration of a female performer's talent.

Translation by Lóránd Rigán

³⁶ Cf. Johann Jakob Engel, *Ideen zu einer Mimik*, 2 vols. (Berlin: August Mylius, 1785–1786).

³⁷ "den Vorteil eines guten Spiels". Hirschfeld, *Jugendfleiss*, Scene 2, 5.

³⁸ "My father says: In the theatre, one must speak pure German." Ibid., Scene 9, 15.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing attached particular importance to the linguistic criterion in the process of creating a competitive German-language national theatre. In a conversation in 1776 with Johann Heinrich Friedrich Müller, a court actor from Vienna, which Müller later recorded in his memoirs, Lessing pointed out as a specific issue the inconsistent, dialect-influenced stage language of the Viennese and, thus, the entire contemporary German-language theatre. Cf. Johann Heinrich Friedrich Müller, *ibid.*, 132–133, 140. In 1803, Johann Wolfgang Goethe also advocated for a dialect-free stage language in the first part of *Regeln für Schauspieler* [Rules for Actors], the collection of acting rules that crystallized during Goethe's regular lessons with the newly contracted young actors in Weimar. Cf. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Regeln für Schauspieler," in *Berliner Ausgabe. Kunsttheoretische Schriften und Übersetzungen* [Berlin Edition: Art Theoretical Writings and Translations], ed. Siegfried Seidel, vol. 17 (Berlin: Aufbau, 1970), 82–105; Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des Theaters* [A Brief History of Theatre] (Tübingen-Basel: Francke, 2019), 149–150.

³⁹ Horst Fassel, *ibid.*, 217.

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“And I Have Been Standing about for Hours Outside the Theatre of Farkas Street”

The Hungarian Theatre of Kolozsvár (Cluj) in Memoirs

Abstract. Memoirs and diaries are vital sources in theatre historiography, offering unique insights into the experiences and relationships of theatre practitioners. This essay examines how the Farkas Street Theatre in Kolozsvár, inaugurated in 1821, was remembered in actors' writings. Déryné (Mrs. Déry), one of the first to perform there, celebrated the new venue but noted its flaws, while György Molnár focused on post-1848 repertory, censorship, and professional tensions. The author argues that two major commemorative events – the fiftieth anniversary of the theatre in 1871 and the 1890 centenary of Hungarian-language theatre – played a key role in shaping how actors perceived and wrote about theatre history in Kolozsvár. These milestones fostered a sense of historical legacy, turning the theatre into a lasting symbol of cultural continuity, even after its closure in 1906.

Keywords: *Theatre historiography, Memoirs and diaries, Hungarian theatre, Farkas Street Theatre from Kolozsvár/Cluj, Cultural memory*

Memoirs and diaries are considered essential sources in theatre historiography, as they offer unparalleled insight into the lives, mentalities, and thought processes of those involved in theatrical life. These texts provide valuable information about the personal and professional relationships among theatre practitioners, and – despite their often courteous tone – they also reveal key rivalries. Rich in personal recollections, such writings also shed light on how the artists perceived their own status and career. Toward the end of their professional lives, many reflected on where they achieved their greatest successes and identified the most significant milestones of their trajectories. In this essay, I examine how the theatre inaugurated in 1821 in

Kolozsvár – commonly referred to as the Farkas Street Theatre – was represented in actors' memoirs. A number of performers wrote about it, not only describing the building itself, but also reflecting on its spirit and its cultural role within the life of the city.

The first to write about the theatre was Róza Széppataki Mrs. Déry, who was among the earliest performers to appear in the new building in 1823. Her enthusiasm is understandable: after years of performing on cold, drafty, temporary stages, she and her colleagues were finally able to act in an enclosed, purpose-built space. She likely felt that the permanent building conferred a new sense of dignity upon Hungarian actors. Nevertheless, she was disappointed that the architect had placed the dressing rooms beneath the stage. In contrast, György Molnár's voluminous and meticulously detailed memoirs contain little discussion of the Farkas Street Theatre's physical structure. Instead, he focuses on the repertory in the years following the defeat of the 1848–1849 War of Independence, the impact of censorship, patriotic demonstrations, and conflicts among actors.

I argue that two major commemorative events played a key role in shaping how actors perceived and wrote about the history of Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár: the fiftieth anniversary of the theatre's inauguration in 1871, and the centenary of professional Hungarian-language theatre in 1890. These occasions fostered a growing sense of pride in the historical legacy of theatre in the region. Alongside their own achievements, actors increasingly recalled the figures of distinguished predecessors and began to perceive the theatre's venerable walls as imbued with the spirit of past performances.

Although the building erected in 1821 was closed in 1906, it continued – until its demolition – to symbolize the continuity of Hungarian-language theatre in Kolozsvár.

The title and concept of my writing are inspired by Jenő Janovics, who reflected on the year 1896 in his memoir *Farkas utcai színház* (*The Theatre of Farkas Street*), published in 1941. This was the year he arrived in Kolozsvár (Cluj) to begin his career as an actor, and nearly half a century later, he recalled his first encounter with Hungary's oldest permanent theatre building.

He wrote that he had stepped across its threshold with the same reverence he would have felt upon entering a church: "I walked over every inch of it from the bottom of the trap up to the attic, through the narrow

corridors and low dressing rooms. I made my way into that little recess where the actor Gyula Ecsedi Kovács used to get dressed alone (being the only one with a separate dressing cabin), and images from the history of the oldest Hungarian theatre took shape and became lively in my imagination [...]”¹. It was on entering the one-time box of the gubernátor (the imperial governor of Transylvania) and the chief justice of Kolozsvár that Janovics sensed most vividly the aura of history in the building.

Recalling the first meeting gave him the opportunity to relate his attitude to the theatre of Kolozsvár: “I felt like I was spontaneously making an *oath of allegiance* in a consecrated church. The memory of this hour has never ever faded in me. In decisive moments it knocked in my heart again and again, loudly, warningly.”²

In the insertion of reminiscence hidden in his theatre history résumé, Janovics called the reader’s attention to the fact that although, due to the anti-Jewish laws, he could not participate in the theatre life of Kolozsvár, or act as a director, he had remained loyal to the mentality of the theatre, inaugurated in 1821. In the period, Jewish actors who had lost their jobs regarded the exclusion as an undeserved personal assault. Yet Janovics very subtly indicates that by his being neglected – despite his having been director of the National Theatre of Kolozsvár from 1905 to 1919, then that of the minority Hungarian company from 1919 to 1930 –, a theatrical continuity of one hundred and twenty years had been broken. In response to this, Edit Mályuszné Császár wrote in her review of the book, that although “the theatre of Farkas Street was closed in 1906 and only destroyed in 1934, it had been dead for much longer. It had died when Hungarians gave up their place in the leadership of the theatre culture to leave it in the hands of strangers.”³

We could try to find an excuse for the learned author of the essay by mentioning the atmosphere of the period that demanded this kind of thinking if we didn’t hear her opinion echoed even these days.

In the wake of the description given by Janovics, the question arose as to how the theatre of Farkas Street was captured by artists having spent some time in Kolozsvár and writing confessions about their lives.

¹ Jenő Janovics, *A Farkas-utcai színház* [“Theatre of Farkas Street”] (Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1941), 230.

² Ibid. 231.

³ Edit M. Császár, “Janovics Jenő: A Farkas-utcai színház” [“Janovics, Jenő, Theatre of Farkas Street”], *Századok* 75 (1941): 461.

It is interesting that it did not occur to Janovics to examine the diary of Mrs. Déry from this point of view. He cited only phrases reinforcing the fact that the actress had always been keen to play in Kolozsvár. However, the memoirs offer more than personal recollections. Although Mrs. Déry began her career in Pest-Buda, performing in venues such as the Hacker Hall and the Rondella – neither of which had originally been built for theatrical purposes but were later converted into performance spaces – she spent the subsequent years performing exclusively on temporary and improvised stages, often in provincial towns lacking permanent theatrical infrastructure.

The actress strolling from city to city and village to village, described her meeting with the theatre of Kolozsvár as a decisive experience. "I was indeed surprised by seeing this great beautiful building in front of me, and gladly hurried up to the stage, to my new world [...]. I was delighted with the stage: 'So here the voice may really be bravely let fly to the audience' – I said. As I lifted my eyes, I caught sight of a beautiful, wide, decorated box opposite the stage. It was furnished with red velvet draping, curtains, and tall mirrors like a salon. 'And whose is this beautiful box?' – I asked making sheep eyes at it. 'This is the box of Her Excellency, the Lady Gubernator.' 'Well, what an audience Kolozvár has, isn't that something! However, I am rather surprised that it still has no opera house.'"⁴

It is revealing that it is mainly the stage and the "beautiful" box of the Lady Gubernator that captivated Mrs. Déry from the "beautiful, great building". She may have described the latter in such detail in order to make a sharper contrast between the place reserved for the noble audience and the dressing rooms meant for the actors. "'So where is the dressing room?' – I asked. 'This is a bit awkward situation. They are always about to help it but... but up until now some difficulties have always arisen. But the problem will certainly be remedied and there will be a dressing room.' Meanwhile I was guided behind and shown two dark hollows on the two sides of the stage with two harshly carved, rough stairways leading down. 'Good heavens!' I called out. 'How is it possible to grope one's way up and down here in those little atlas shoes? Each and every play requires different shoes.'"⁵

⁴ Déryné *Emlékezései* ["Memoirs by Mrs. Déry"] I., ed Pál Réz, Magyar századok (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1955), I., 435.

⁵ Ibid. 435–436.

Mrs. Déry also recorded and Janovics ignored it as well that a strange court etiquette reigned in Kolozsvár in 1823. If Baroness Mrs János Jósika, née Rozália Csáky, was present at the performance, members of the noble audience were not supposed to express their approval before she gave a sign. "If she did not clap her hands, there was no piety, no appreciation any more. The audience would have felt it indelicate to cut ahead" – thus Mrs. Déry⁶.

Actor and director György Molnár (1830-1891) also turned up on the stage of Kolozsvár at the beginning of his career in 1851. But, as Zoltán Ferenczi put it, "his fast declamation had not yet revealed the artist that, mainly by the depth of his studies, he proved to be later."⁷ However, we would seek in vain any description of the theatre of Farkas Street in the memoirs of Molnár. Though what we do find there is genuinely Molnarian. To make it comprehensible it has to be said that writing about himself he uses the third person singular: "The director had been informed of his fate in a secret letter in advance so he went directly to the theatre. The bells of Kolozsvár had already been tolled at 4 pm but neither director nor actor appeared at the theatre. At that time, in the theatre of Kolozsvár there were no such omnipotent, good-for-nothing inspectors fattened on the rich crumbs of the tickets and subvention to lord it over the others, as later. Just a poor, honest caretaker also finding shelter in the playhouse as a veteran of the Hungarian War of Independence."⁸

The birth of his memoirs coincided with György Molnár's storming out of Kolozsvár in 1880. This moment left its mark on the recollection of his youthful reminiscences as well, which may be the reason behind his lack of enthusiasm.

The actor Vidor Kassai (1840-1928) wrote fondly of Kolozsvár, an important stage in his early career, where he had played for almost a decade from 1869. Though he was touched by the historical atmosphere of the city, he did not list the theatre of Farkas Street among the city's remarkable buildings, nor did the famous actors who had gone before him come into his

⁶ Ibid. 439.

⁷ Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története* ["History of Theatre and Acting in Kolozsvár"] (Kolozsvár: A kolozsvári színészet száz éves jubileumát rendező bizottság [Committee for the Direction of the Centenary Celebration of Acting in Kolozsvár, 1897]), 408.

⁸ György Molnár, *Világostól Világosig, II. könyv: A budai népszínház második ciklusáig, 1849-1867* ["From Világos to Világos, II. Book: People's Theatre of Buda to its Second Cycle, 1849-1867"], (Arad, 1881), 50.

mind while wandering about in the theatre. Yet he discovered the tomb of actor Pál Jancsó (1761-1845) and noted his epitaph as well as that of Kálmán Kőrösi. He also mentions that "the audience of Kolozsvár was possibly the best back then, but one of the best theatre audiences in Hungary for sure, which is probably the best to this day (1901). – As known, its acting tradition is among the most ancient ones in Hungary if not *the* most ancient altogether."⁹

Imre Szacs vay (1854-1939) happened to arrive in Kolozsvár in these years as well. He brought up the significant moment in his memoirs as follows: "from the 1st of May 1874 I became part of the company in the theatre of Kolozsvár. Kolozsvár had only just begun to awaken from its century-long sleep. Its railway and its university opened two years earlier. It had no water mains yet. The drinking water was carried everywhere to the city from one place. Its pavement was primitive. Beside its various deficiencies it had a remarkable permanent theatre with its more than fifty-year long past. It had always been the practicing school of our prestigious theatrical predecessors. The company was also composed of good forces with the ambitious and poetically minded Gyula E. Kovács at its head."¹⁰

Soon Szacs vay himself experienced how the audience of Kolozsvár honoured the traditions of the theatre of Farkas Street. "One day I got several roles at the same time with the instruction to learn them all urgently because a prestigious guest would arrive at the theatre: Jókainé, born Róza Laborfalvi. The people of Kolozsvár had long been familiar with this name. She was loved, held in great esteem, and never ever forgotten by them. That she was never forgotten should be emphasised as this kind of memory was one of the virtues of the audience of Kolozsvár"¹¹. The company showed deference to the actress who, before her final retirement, came to Kolozsvár as well. As Szacs vay puts it: "For one last time."¹²

Actor Gyula Zilay (1859-1938), "Zsül", reported on this period of his career from 1880 to 1884 in few words but with all the more passion: "I spent

⁹ Vidor Kassai, *Emlékezései* [Memoirs], ed. Sándor Kozocsa (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda [Hungarian Royal Academic Press], 1940), 263.

¹⁰ Imre Szacs vay, *Életem és emlékeim* [My Life and Memoirs], ed. Imre Balassa (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda [Hungarian Royal Academic Press], 1940), 172.

¹¹ Ibid. 180.

¹² Ibid. 180.

unforgettable, cheerful years in Kolozsvár. Even the sun and the moon shined in a different way.”¹³

He also recorded that he had been given his nickname by Count Sándor Teleki, who frequently invited him to stay on his estate in Nagybánya and Koltó. And Zilahy had not forgotten the parting words of his colleague, István Szentgyörgyi (1842-1931) either: “Learn, learn, and learn, my son, this is the key of success. Bravely forward!”¹⁴

As the name of István Szentgyörgyi has already come up, let us see how he referred to his arrival in Kolozsvár in his book published in 1923. “One has to be a provincial actor getting an invitation and a contract from the theatre director of Kolozsvár to feel what we felt – by ‘we’ I mean Miska Krasznay, Krasznayné, my wife, and me – when we got an invitation and a contract from Antal Fehérváry, the then theatre director of Kolozsvár! To serve Thalia at the place where the Hungarian acting tradition was born! Having the opportunity to work on the second stage of the country! To play in works of high quality and with great inner value in front of a refined audience known all over the country! Besides, having the chance to be under a director who may and will give fixed wages! And not touring all around the country throughout the summer. What could possibly make a provincial actor happier? In short, we were happy being so fortunate to get to Kolozsvár.”¹⁵

Mór Ditrói’s *Komédiások* (“Comedians”) is the only memoir with childhood memories in it. Since he was born in Kolozsvár and at the age of six he cried until his mother finally took him with herself to the theatre of Farkas Street. “But it is true that going to theatre meant a great deal of sacrifice in the raw winter time. Two iron cylinder stoves were supposed to give warmth but all that little warmth escaped through the stage-loft as the high rising stage-loft was covered by bare boarding with gaps letting the snow fall right on the stage. The audience enjoyed the performance to the end in winter coats, travelling furs, with felt boots on their feet. Menservants were carrying warmed bricks under the feet of the ladies from the Count Nemes Palace opposite the theatre.”¹⁶

¹³ Gyula Zilahy, *Ifjúságom és életem* [My Youth and Life] (Budapest: Author, 1931), 32.

¹⁴ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵ István Szentgyörgyi, „Emlékeim” [“Memoirs”], (Kolozsvár: Author, 1923), 24.

¹⁶ Mór Ditrói, *Komédiások* [Comedians], (Budapest: Author, 1929), 8.

But not only this makes the memoirs special. Ditrói recorded several times how much pain the robbing of his motherland caused to him. He also confesses that he would gladly have remained theatre director in Kolozsvár but the intrigues made him choose Vígszínház (Comedy Theatre) in Budapest, where he also took the most outstanding members of his company with him.

Among these was Zoltán Szerémy (1861-1934) who did not easily find his place at the beginning of his career. He had found himself in the company of Ditrói due to his sister Gizella Szerémy being the dramatic ingénue in the company of Kolozsvár. Their mother lived in the theatre with his sister as a "theatre mum". And the mother interceded with the director to gain a place for his son, who was left without a job. In his book written decades later, Zoltán Szerémy made a moving confession about his engagement in Kolozsvár: "A believer could not step across the threshold of a church with greater devotion than the one I felt when stepping through the stage-door of the National Theatre in Kolozsvár! The feeling of being in the place where once Lendvay, Egressy, Mrs. Déry, Róza Laborfalvy (sic) and the other actor-saints had kept the flame alive made my heart beat faster."¹⁷

Szerémy called soul-transforming the effect that Kolozsvár's ancient air and splendid theatre had on him. We also find in his memoirs the reason why: in 1892 the preparations for the celebration of the centenary of acting in Kolozsvár were under way. We should not pass over the fact either that in 1890 the National Actors' Association commemorated with a monumental festival the first professional Hungarian theatre company, and especially László Kelemen (1762-1814), saluting him as the first Hungarian theatre director, who he had never actually been. We suppose, and beside Szerémy, the other memoirs' authors also reinforce the impression that after the jubilees the actors avowed their profession with greater self-respect. The recognition of the glorious past of acting in Hungary reinforced not only their prestige in society but their self-esteem as well.

In May 1942, almost at the same time as Jenő Janovics's above-mentioned book, Károly Kós's essay was published in the review *Erdélyi Helikon* under the title "A kolozsvári színjátszás hajlékai" ("The Abodes of Acting in Kolozsvár"). The architect-polymath recorded in his personal recollections that the first play he had ever seen was one of the theatre of Farkas

¹⁷ Zoltán Szerémy, *Emlékeim a régi jó időkből*, [My Memoirs of the Good Old Times], (Budapest: Budapesti Színészek Szövetsége [Hungarian Actors' Association], 1929), 125.

Street's performances and that none of his later visits in any other theatre building could have outshined his experience gained in the theatre built in 1821. He described in detail the imperfections of the building: "I know for instance that our beloved theatre had many defects: its halls, stairs, corridors were narrow and uncomfortable, there were few dressing rooms and they were tight, it barely even had any rooms for administration, rehearsal or workshops. I should add that the audience of the enormous gallery was only able to reach the street after the performance through an iron staircase outside the theatre, built later and then only in response to orders issued by the authorities. So, in this sense, our old theatre was primitive."¹⁸

But we wouldn't find this opinion in any writings of the artists, although they faced the problems of the outdated building day by day. The air of the theatre of Kolozsvár, the significance of its opening, its glorious past made them forget the difficulties. Yet, after the change of the central authorities in 1919 it did not become the cultic place of the splendid Hungarian past, as the Romanian authorities decreed on its demolition.

When, in 1921, the centenary of its establishment was commemorated, the journalist of the weekly *Színház és Társaság* ("Theatre and Society") managed to get in to the building, which now served as a warehouse of the university: "There are still old relics placed on the stage, old altars once belonging to Matthias Church. And in the auditorium, there are boxes full of old relics and documents... Only the three rows of theatre boxes seem to be intact, and the primitive stage-loft above... Destruction everywhere, everything is decayed and old, and to see this breaks one's heart."¹⁹

Maybe this was the last memory of the playhouse opened in 1821. And referring to the inauguration of the House of Academics on the grounds of the theatre, Jenő Janovics concluded his book *Farkas utcai színház* ("Theatre of Farkas Street") with the following phrase: "And in the place of the ancient house unadorned walls rise up towards the clouds."²⁰

And who knows why, works of theatre history written with clear heads and in a spirit of scholarly dedication are somehow still defined by these painful phrases in our time.

¹⁸ Károly Kós, „A kolozsvári színjátszás hajlékai” [“Shelters of Acting in Kolozsvár”], *Erdélyi Helikon* 15 (1942): 341.

¹⁹ N, „Száz esztendő” [One Hundred Year], *Színház és Társaság* 5, no. 12 (1921): 1.

²⁰ Jenő Janovics, *A Farkas-utcai színház* [Theatre of Farkas Street], (Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1941.), 316.

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The First Performances of Mrs. Déry's Drama Translations in Kolozsvár (Cluj)

Abstract. This study investigates the dramatic translations of Mrs. Déry and their performances in Kolozsvár during the early decades of Hungarian professional theatre. It highlights how, in addition to her acclaimed acting career, Mrs. Déry also contributed to the theatrical repertoire as a translator and adaptor, particularly addressing the shortage of stage plays and supporting her own benefit performances. Between the late 1820s and 1840s, she translated at least thirteen plays – most from German sources – prioritizing performative suitability over strict linguistic fidelity. Her adaptations range from one-act comedies to five-act dramas, drawn from popular authors like Kotzebue, Blum, and Schink. Notably, several of her translations premiered in Kolozsvár, including “Yelva, the Russian Orphan” (1834) and “Nina, Náncsi, Netti” (1840). These works reveal Mrs. Déry’s dramaturgical strategies, such as modifying texts and inserting songs to enhance stage appeal. Though she did not preserve most of her manuscripts, several have survived in the Hungarian National Library’s Theatre History Collection. Uniquely among her generation, Mrs. Déry later emerged as a literary figure through her memoirs, bridging the roles of performer, translator, and author in 19th-century Hungarian theatre.

Keywords: *Mrs. Déry (in Hungarian Déryné), 19th-century Hungarian theatre, drama translation, Kolozsvár theatre, female cultural agency*

The significance of the actress as a social figure in 19th-century Hungarian culture has become the focus of increasing academic attention in recent years. Conference proceedings dedicated to the topic have brought to light a range of new perspectives, spanning from the sociological conditions that shaped women’s entry into the acting profession, to recurring patterns in actresses’ life trajectories, as well as diverse strategies of self-representation and self-management. Most of these studies concentrate on prominent representatives of the third and fourth generations of actresses – such as Ida

Komlóssy and Lilla Bulyovszky, Mrs. Szilágyi,¹ considerably less attention has been devoted to the pioneering figures of the earliest period. These early actresses also sought to harness the performative potential of their roles and to assert themselves as independent intellectual women.² One of their initial means of doing so was through their work as translators of dramatic texts, an activity that contributed to expanding the companies' repertoires.

The work of Róza Széppataky, Mrs. Déry³ (1793–1872) as a translator of dramatic texts played a crucial role in the formative decades of theatre in Kolozsvár (actual Cluj-Napoca, also known as Cluj). Having first arrived in Kolozsvár in 1823, Mrs. Déry became an integral figure in the region's theatrical life and significantly contributed to its development. In his book *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on Transylvanian stages], Sándor Enyedi writes of her: "Mrs. Déry is such a frequent guest in Transylvania that she can indeed be considered a Transylvanian actress."⁴ This very thorough summary does not, however, take into account the fact that Mrs. Déry did her share not only as an actress but also as a drama translator in the composition and shaping of the repertoire, and she did so not only

¹ Katalin Ágnes Bartha, "Újraképzelt színház. A színész író és író színésznő énekei" [Reimagined Theatre. The Selves of An Acting Female Writer and A Writing Actress], in *Nőszerezők a 19. században: lehetőségek és korlátok*, [Women Writers in the 19th century: opportunities and constraints], ed. Zsuzsa Török, (Budapest: reciti, 2019), (Reciti Conference Proceedings 4), 135–151. https://www.reciti.hu/wp-content/uploads/Rekonf4_vn.pdf (Retrieved on 19.01.2022.)

² Katalin Czibula, "Drámaíró nők a hivatásos színházi élet hajnalán" [Women Playwrights at the Dawn of Professional Theatre], in *Nőszerezők a 19. században: lehetőségek és korlátok* [Women Writers in the 19th century: opportunities and constraints], ed. Zsuzsa Török, (Budapest: reciti, 2019), (Reciti Conference Proceedings 4) 123–134., Katalin Czibula, "Lakatlan szigetek magyar fordításban" [Inhabited Islands in Hungarian Translation], in *Nunquam autores, semper interpretes – A magyarországi fordításirodalom a 18. században* [Nunquam autores, semper interpretes – Translated Literature in Hungary in the 18th Century], ed. Réka Lengyel, (Budapest: MTA BTK ITI, 2016), 110–127. CZIBULA Katalin, "Művészlét? Értelmiségi lét? – egzisztenciateremtési lehetőségek a nőknek a 18–19. század fordulóján" [Artistic Vocation? Intellectual Identity? – Livelihood Opportunities for Women at the Turn of the 18th and 19th Centuries – Livelihood Opportunities for Women at the Turn of the 18th and 19th Centuries], in *Mesél(het)ő női történetek?! Női narratívák irodalomban, tudományokban és művészetekben* [Narratable Women's Stories?! Women's Narratives in Literature, Sciences and the Arts], ed. Katalin Czibula and Noémi Kordics, (Nagyvárad-Budapest: Partium Kiadó 2011), 27–49.

³ Déryné (literally Mrs. Déry) was the stage name of Róza Schekenbach, later Róza Széppataki.

⁴ "Déryné olyan gyakori vendég Erdélyben, hogy tulajdonképpen erdélyi színésznőnek tekinthetjük." ENYEDI Sándor Enyedi. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 7.

during her years in Kassa (Košice) but also in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca). Mrs. Déry performed on stage all of her drama translations (with one exception) of the late 1820s in Kolozsvár, furthermore her last two translations were made in Kolozsvár, and their first performances took place here. Mrs. Déry translated thirteen plays from German during her career.

A fair few actresses of the first and second acting generations helped the first professional companies (the theatre companies of Pest and Kolozsvár) as drama translators. As a study by Katalin Czibula summarises, these actresses had much in common: they did not aspire to become playwrights, but they translated to help the companies overcome their constant shortage of plays, and they tried to make their own benefit performance more successful.⁵ These were also the goals that drove Róza Széppataky, Mrs. Déry. So these aspirations are not identical with those we see in the 1850s, when publicity, self-assignment of roles and networking were also among the aims of the actresses who translated dramas. Another important difference is that, while Mrs. Déry contributed to the expansion of the dramatic repertoire in the decades of travelling theatre, her younger colleagues were in a much more favourable position. Ida Komlóssy and Lilla Bulyovszky, née Szilágyi produced 7 and 20 drama translations respectively, with a permanent theatrical structure behind them, and instead of years of travelling, uncertainty and the obligation to play an extremely large number of roles, they were able to secure relatively relaxed creative periods for themselves alongside their stage work.

Róza Széppataki (born Schenbach), the orphaned daughter of a prematurely deceased German apothecary, was admitted to the First Hungarian Theatre Company in Pest in 1810, against her mother's wishes, and within a few months she had completed her first translation: *A negyven esztendőös férfi* [The Man of Forty]. The one-act comedy was written by August Kotzebue (1761–1819), the most fashionable and widely performed playwright of the period. Her Hungarian version premiered with the company in Pest on 28 October 1811.⁶ Kotzebue was the best-known

⁵ Katalin Czibula, "Színésznők a hivatásos színháztársulat hajnalán" [Actresses at the Dawn of Professional Theatre] In *Színházvilág- Világszínház* [Theatre World - World Theatre], ed. Katalin Czibula, (Budapest: Ráció Kiadó, 2008), 243–254.

⁶ *Játékszíni Koszorú* [Wreath of Játékszín], ed. Máté Könyves (Pest: Landerer, 1834), 167. http://real-eod.mtak.hu/2929/1/J%C3%A1t%C3%A9ksz%C3%A9n%C3%A9k_koszor%C3%A9.pdf (Retrieved on 01. 19. 2022.)

playwright of his time, and his nearly 150 he addressed key concerns of the Enlightenment with equally excellent dramaturgy in comedies, sentimental plays and chivalric plays.

This was followed by the one-act *Ó-rajzolat* [Old Sketch], a play by the popular Viennese playwright Karl Meisl (1775–1853) on 7 March 1812. Soon afterwards, in 1813, Róza Széppataky married István Déry, an excellent character actor in the company, and although they soon separated, as her husband was also an excellent translator, it was probably his example that encouraged the young actress to continue her work as a translator. She then undertook to translate longer Kotzebue plays in four or five acts: *Kis cigány leány* [The Little Gypsy Maiden] was first performed on 14 February 1813, but its success led the company to revive it in 1814, with *Májusi nap* [May Day] being performed on 26 June 1814.⁷ Unfortunately, the copies of these first translations have not survived, neither Mrs. Déry did write about them in her diary. In Kolozsvár, these texts were not included in the repertoire, but she translated another play during her first stay, and some more others later.

Mrs. Déry's relocation to Kolozsvár was set in motion during her time in Eger, where she spent the winter months with György Éder's theatre company, formerly based in Miskolc. While there she was secretly approached by József Székely and Miklós Udvarhelyi on behalf of the company of Kolozsvár (now Cluj-Napoca). At that time, the Kolozsvát (Cluj) aristocracy had resolved to elevate the artistic standards of their newly established permanent stone theatre – officially inaugurated on 12 March 1821 – by staging operas and ballad operas (*singspiel*), whose reputation made her an essential addition to the company. It was only after a lengthy discussion that Mrs. Déry was able to leave her company for a six-week tour. She arrived in Kolozsvár (Cluj) in December 1823, and on 27 December she made her debut on the stage in a play called *Svájci család* [A Swiss Family], which had just been translated by István Déry. She soon felt at home: "I had grown very fond of Kolozsvár. The longer I was there, the more the whole audience, and even more the ladies, showed me a great deal of grace." And not only they, "but also the middle class, the bourgeoisie, all wanted to prove wholeheartedly that they understood and felt as well that it was possible to achieve improvement through the patronage and cultivation of acting, that

⁷ *Játékszíni Koszorú* [Wreath of Játékszín], ed. Máté Könyves (Pest: Landerer, 1834), 161.

culture could only be re-transmitted from the theatre to the audience if (the higher educated part of) the audience first nurtured and raised to culture the seedlings of Hungarian acting that had hitherto been growing in barren soil.”⁸ Mrs. Déry spent almost four more years in the city after the originally planned six weeks ended. In the summer they travelled all around Transylvania, performing as a guest company in Nagyszeben (Sibiu), Brassó (Braşov), Abrudbánya (Abrud) and Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş).

During her time in Transylvania she translated the play *Paulina, a titok gyermeke* [Paulina, Child of Mystery], set to music by Cherubini. This is her earliest translation of which we have the text. The play was first performed in Brassó (Braşov) on 19 October 1826,⁹ but copies survived only from the year of 1838.¹⁰ Dryné later reflected on this translation in her *Memoirs*, in the context of critiquing a colleague’s translation. “I myself have translated several plays from German into Hungarian, and Fánccsy [Lajos Fánccsy (1809–1854), famous actor and director of the National Theatre] himself praised them, found them worthy, and asked for *Paulina, a titok gyermeke* [Paulina, the Child of Mystery] as a benefit performance for him, and after reading it through, not a word needed to be corrected, it was such a fluent and easy translation to memorise.”¹¹

The author of *Paulina* was the German actress and playwright Johanna Franul Weissenthurm (1773–1845), who had a great influence on the

⁸ „én Kolozsvárt nagyon megszerettem. Mentől tovább voltam, az egész közönség, de még inkább a dámák annál nagyobb kegyelettel viseltettek irányomban.”; „hanem a középrend, a polgárság, mind szívvel-lélekkel kívánták bebizonyítani, miszerint ők is értik s érzik, hogy a színészet pártolása s ápolása által lehet elérni, hogy a műveltség csak akkor sugározhatik vissza a színházról a publikumra, ha először a publikum (magasabb műveltségű része) neveli s emeli műveltségre a magyar színészet eddig kopár földben termett palántáját.” Déryné *Emlékezései* I-II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry] ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955. volt. I.), 450–451.

⁹ Sándor Enyedi. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 128.

¹⁰ *Paulina*. Repository: OSzK Színháztörténeti Tár [The Theatre History Collection of the Széchenyi National Library], pressmark: P. 29. The censored copy was licensed on 12 October 1838, inscription on the first page: „Szerzette Veiszenhurm Anna, magyarra tette Déryné.” [“Authored by Anna Veiszenhurm, translated into Hungarian by Mrs. Déry.”] On the first page, the cast written in pencil indicates that Paulina was played by Mrs. Déry herself. *Paulina*. Location: OSzK Színháztörténeti Tár [The Theatre History Collection of the Széchenyi National Library, pressmark: MM7332]. Kassa, 1838, Pál Tóth Chiabai’s copy.

¹¹ Déryné *Emlékezései* II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry vol. 2], ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955), *emlékezései* II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry, vol. II.], 171.

Hungarian theatre of the period. Johanna von Weissenthurn came to playwriting from acting. She was born in a family of actors and from the age of fourteen she was on stage in Munich, Baden bei Wien and from 1789 at the Burgtheater, where she enjoyed an unrivalled career as an actress. She tried her hand at playwriting early in her career, and her sentimental plays, written in the genre of family sentimental drama that best suited her creative method, were a great success with various audiences. More than sixty of her plays have been performed in Vienna, of which fifty-one have been included in the repertoire of the German theatre in Pest-Buda.

Weissenthurn's comedies written after 1813 (such as *Welche ist die Braut* and *Das letzte Mittel*) became widely circulated. According to Katalin Czibula, the popularity of his plays lies in his ability to transmit the style, themes, and dramaturgy of stage romanticism even to the more remote regions of the empire.¹² This explains why she became popular among Hungarian drama translator actresses. Amongst the very few successful female playwrights, she stood out for her stage knowledge, theatrical point of view and the excellent (female) role possibilities in her works, so translating her plays was a guarantee for success.

Although the operas that they performed were excellent, the income, however, did not cover the company's expenses, so in May 1827 Mrs. Déry left Kolozsvár with the company and went to Kassa (present-day Košice).¹³ Reflecting on this departure in her Memoirs she wrote: "So I left my dear little second home to return to my dear country after some time had passed."¹⁴

The years she spent in Kassa (1828–1833) revived her interest in translation. She kept record of the plays she produced there in her diary, so

¹² Katalin Czibula, "Szmolenszk ostromlása. Katona József fordítása egy osztrák színésznő nyomán" [The Siege of Smolensk. Translation by József Katona, based on an Austrian actress' work], in *Amicitia: Tanulmányok Tüskés Gábor 60. születésnapjára/Beitrag zum 60. Geburtstag von Gábor Tüskés* [Studies on the Occasion of Gábor Tüskés' 60th Anniversary], ed.-in-chief Réka Lengyel, eds. István Csörsz Rumen, Béla Hegedüs, Margit Kiss, Orsolya Lénárt (Budapest: reciti, 2015), 467–478. http://reciti.hu/wp-content/uploads/AMICITIA_vn.pdf (Retrieved on 19. 01. 2022).

¹³ Sándor Enyedi. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 36.

¹⁴ „Elhagytam tehát kedves kis második hazámat, hogy kedves honomba több idő lefolyta után ismét visszatérjek”. Déryné *Emlékezései* I. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry vol. 1], ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955), 481.

we know that she translated some of them out of boredom, other time a good play was recommended to her, or she undertook translation in hope of a role.

During this period, the company also went on tour. The first season of the company's return to Kolozsvár was in 1830, with twenty-four performances in five weeks. The audience in Transylvania welcomed Mrs. Déry again with great enthusiasm, the theatre was full and the considerable financial success made up for the earlier losses.¹⁵ However, their contract sent them back to Kassa, and they were not allowed to return to Kolozsvár until May 1833. The summer season spent here marked the heyday of Mrs. Déry's career. Hailed as the queen of Hungarian theatre companies, the company (called the Transylvanian Singing Company) was made up of highly trained, well-voiced and talented actors. The company was run by the seven founding members together, and the audience was treated to well-coordinated, well worked-out performances.¹⁶ During these two short periods, however, she did not reach out for any of her earlier translations and did not have time to make any new ones.

In Kassa, however, following the end of her tumultuous romantic relationship with fellow actor Zsigmond Szentpétery, Mrs. Déry turned to translation as a form of emotional distraction. She translated two plays she had previously read¹⁷ and identified as promising vehicles for her own performance, using the work both to cope with her heartbreak and to create new professional opportunities.

One was a drama titled *Yelva, az orosz árva* [Yelva, the Russian Orphan], with a prelude called *A szmolenszki nagy égés* [The Great Fire of Smolensk]. The play appealed to her because Yelva is mute, so for the first time in her life she had to play the "silent role of an ingénue". The script of *Yelva, az orosz árva* [Yelva, the Russian Orphan] – also known as *Jelva (Yelva) az orosz árva*

¹⁵ Sándor Enyedi. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 42.

¹⁶ Sándor Enyedi. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 40.

¹⁷ "Mindent elkövettek, de én sok ideig nem lettem víg, hanem fordítottam ezen a télen németből magyarra darabokat szórakozásom kedvéért. Olvastam németbe egy színdarabot ezen címmel: *Yelva, egy orosz árva, egy előjátékkal, melynek címe: A szmolenszki nagy égés.*" [They did their best, but I did not become merry for a long time, but this winter I translated plays from German into Hungarian for my amusement. I read a play in German, *Yelva, the Russian Orphan*, with a prelude titled *The Great Fire of Smolensk.*] Déryné Emlékezései II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry vol. 2], ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955), 13.

vagy a szmolenszki nagy égés [Yelva, the Russian Orphan, or The Great Fire of Smolensk) – has been preserved in a copy by Gábor Egressy.¹⁸ The title page says: “Melodrama in two parts, with a military prelude. Translated by Her Honour Lady Déry. In Kassa in 1830. Copied by Egressy.”¹⁹ There are many crossings-out in the text, and even more cuts: half pages or paragraphs were omitted in the stage performance. Gábor Egressy, Mrs. Déry's godson and a distinguished actor at the National Theatre, may have reworked the text when he staged the translation. The original melodrama was written by the French playwright Eugène Scribe (1791–1861), and the German translation by Prix Adalbert was first performed at the Josephstadter Theater on 29 February 1829,²⁰ so Mrs. Déry acquired and translated the text almost immediately. There is no record of when the play was first performed in Kassa, but a review of the performance in Kassa on 21 January 1837 has survived. According to it, the scenery was very poor, the great fire of Smolensk was not shown on stage, but the smoke was all the greater, and the constant shooting disturbed the audience. Nonetheless, Mrs. Déry was an “inimitable” Yelva, she played with excellent mimicry, and in her fight with the robbers she managed to portray the great presence of mind faithfully.²¹ Mrs. Déry then translated another minor play titled *A szultán horoszkópja* [The Sultan's Horoscope]. She wrote of the play: “It is a small trifle, but there

¹⁸ Repository: OSzK Színháztörténeti Tár [The Theatre History Collection of the Széchenyi National Library], pressmark: I. 30.

¹⁹ “Melodráma két szakaszban, egy katonai előjátékkal. Fordította T. Dérynő asszony. Kassán 1830. Le írta Egressy.” Repository: OSzK Színháztörténeti Tár [The Theatre History Collection of the Széchenyi National Library], pressmark: I. 30.

²⁰ “Yelva, die russische Waise”, Drama mit gesang in zwey Abtheilungen, nebst einem militarischen Vorspiele: ‘Der Brand von Moskau’, frey nach den Französischen des Scribe von Adalbert Prix bearbeitet, Musik von Herrn Roser. [Yelva, the Russian Orphan. Drama with songs in two parts, with a military prelude: The Fire of Moscow, freely adapted from the French of Scribe by Adalbert Prix, music by Herrn Roser.] Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung, No. 5 (4 February 1829), 76.

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=KelqAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA75&lpg=PA75&dq=Yelva,+die+russische+Waise,+Drama+mit+gesang+in+zwey+Abtheilungen,+nebst+einem+militarischen+Vorspiele&source=bl&ots=V3AiddTg6O&sig=ACfU3U26NFW4hcSQYCW6i7g3tfcXbJ4aPw&hl=hu&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjYjMqe6L31AhXRDOwKHeYWA8kQ6AF6BAGQEAM#v=onepage&q=Yelva%2C%20die%20russische%20Waise%2C%20Drama%20mit%20gesang%20in%20zwey%20Abtheilungen%2C%20nebst%20einem%20militarischen%20Vorspiele&f=false> (Retrieved: on 19. 01. 2022.)

²¹ See: A kassai játékszínnek napkönyve [The Daily Diary of the Theatre of Kassa]. Ferenc Kerényi ed. *A magyar színikritika kezdetei (1790-1837)*, III, (Budapest: Mundus Magyar Egyetemi Kiadó, 2000), 1228.

are some very amusing scenes in it, if one acts the sultan well." She concludes her brief digression on translations with saying: "At least I was busy, and had less time to mope."²²

Count Tivadar Csáky's wife brought another play to Mrs. Déry's attention: "One day the Countess sends me a magazine depicting the sixteen-year-old Swedish Queen Christina in a very tasteful Swedish riding costume, and the Count tells from his wife's part that the newspapers also praise the text of the play highly, and that it has already been performed in Vienna. The Countess suggests I should acquire the script and translate it into Hungarian, and perform it as my second benefit performance. The Count had the German play sent to me, and I immediately started translating it."²³ The two-act play *A tizenhat éves királyné* [The Sixteen-Year-Old Queen] was a great success, and Mrs. Déry's costume was exactly the same as the picture in the newspaper. As a cunny rival actress, Biri Sáska Újfalussyné had the same riding costume secretly made for her, and she wore it on stage in *Heilbronni Katica* [Katica of Heilbronn] the day before the premiere, in the end, Mrs. Déry wore a red-and-white version of the costume instead of the blue-and-white dress, and played Christina's role with great success.²⁴ Fortunately, at that time theatre reviews could already been read regularly in newly launched fashion magazines and periodicals. Most of the theatre information and reviews were published in *Honművész* [National Artist], whose editor, Gábor Mátray, was Mrs. Déry's childhood acquaintance. The correspondent of the *Honművész* wrote from Kassa: on 11 February 1836 "we saw *Tizenhat éves királyné* [The Sixteen-Year-Old Queen] as translated by Mrs. Déry. We can only praise the translator (who also played the role of Christina)."²⁵ The play

²² "Ez egy kis semmiség, de nagyon mulatságos jelenések vannak benne, hogy ha valaki jól adja a szultánt."; „Legalább el voltam foglalva, s kevesebb időm maradt búsulni.” *Déryné Emlékezései*, II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry, vol. 2] 14.

²³ "A grófné egy napon elküld nekem egy zsurnált, mely a tizenhat éves svéd királynét, Krisztinát ábrázolja igen ízléses svéd lovagló öltözetben, s azt üzeni a gróftól, hogy a hírlapok igen dicsérik a darab szövegét is, s már adták Bécsben. Én is szerezzem meg s fordítsam magyarra, s adjam a második jutalomjátékomul. A gróf meghozatta a német darabot, és én azonnal hozzáfogtam lefordításához." *Déryné Emlékezései* II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry vol. 2], ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955), 104.

²⁴ *Déryné Emlékezései* II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry vol. 2], ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955), 104–111.

²⁵ „a' 'Tizenhat éves királyné' Déryné fordítása szerint láttuk. A' fordítónénak (aki Krisztina szerepét is játszotta) dicséretnél egyebet nem mondhatunk.” *Honművész* [National Artist], 1836. No. 23, 183.

was written by the French playwright Jean-François Alfred Bayard (1796–1863), translated into German by Theodor Hell (1775–1856), which was used by Mrs. Déry as a source text.

Her next translation, *Aranyműves leánykája, erkölcsi rajzolat a régi időkben* [The Goldsmith's Little Daughter, a moral sketch from the old days] in two acts,²⁶ was also made in Kassa. The original title of the play written by Carl Ludwig Blum (1786–1844) was *Des Goldsmieds Töchterlein*. It was premiered in Kassa on 6 February 1836, and the review on the occasion emphasises that the translation was very successful.²⁷ (As we shall see, she took the translation with her to Kolozsvár, where it was also performed.)

The next play *Éjféli* [Midnight], a drama in five acts was translated in Kassa as well, and it was translated from the German version of the original French theatre script, but its author is unknown.²⁸ There are many crossings-out and corrections in the surviving text, which allows us to think that it has been used for several performances. The title page displays only: "Translated into Hungarian by Mrs. Déry." It was first performed in Kassa on 5 February 1835, then in Debrecen, Nagyvárad (Oradea), Buda and at the National Theatre as well, on 16 December 1837. Mihály Vörösmarty, the renowned poet wrote a review of the latter performance, but he did not comment on the quality of the translation.²⁹

A translation of the four-act play *Jó barátok* [Good Friends] was also made at this time, although we cannot clearly attribute it to Mrs. Déry. The original work was written by German playwright Friedrich Wilhelm Ziegler (1761–1827), and the first Hungarian translation – along with nine other plays by Ziegler – was produced by actor Mihály Ernyi. The play premiered in Kolozsvár on 5 August 1805. According to the journal *Honművész*, it was later performed in Buda on 2 April 1835, though the unknown reviewer did

²⁶ Repository: OSZK Színháztörténeti Tár [The Theatre History Collection of Széchenyi National Library], pressmark: NSz A 38/1.

²⁷ *Honművész* [National Artist], 1836. No. 23, 183. https://adtpplus.arcanum.hu/hu/view/Honmuvesz_1836_1/?pg=209&layout=l&query=d%C3%A9ryn%C3%A9 (Retrieved on 19. 01. 2022.)

²⁸ Mihály Vörösmarty writes only: "Lambert után németből fordította Déryné" ["Based on Lambert, translated from German by Mrs. Déry], *Vörösmarty' Minden Munkái, Beszélyek és Regék* [The Complete Works of Vörösmarty, Shorts Stories and Tales], vol. 10. Pest: Published by József Bajza and Ferenc Schedel, 1848), 491. <https://books.google.hu/books?id=r1NKAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=hu#v=onepage&q&f=false> (Retrieved on 19. 01. 2022.)

²⁹ Vörösmarty' *Minden Munkái* [The Complete Works of Vörösmarty], 491.

not specify the translator or the cast. Nonetheless, other sources suggest that Mrs. Déry also produced a translation of the play.³⁰

Mrs. Déry first returned to Kolozsvár for an extended stay in 1834, when she performed there from 19 May to 4 October, appearing in over fifty roles. Then, she had the time and opportunity to perform her own drama translations: she performed the main role of *Yelva* in Kolozsvár on 13 September 1834.³¹

Another long period in the town of Kolozsvár followed in 1836, when her translation of *Az aranyműves leánykája* [The Goldsmith's Little Daughter] was performed in the town on 25 May.³²

The play *Jó barátok* [Good Friends] was staged on 9 July 1836, and Mrs. Déry played the leading role with great success, so that the performance was repeated on 2 August "at the request of the audience". Although the review of the performance – unlike that of the subsequent play *Attila* – does not mention Mrs. Déry as the translator, her authorship cannot be definitively excluded. It is also plausible that the version performed in 1836 was a revised or adapted version of the 1805 translation, with Mrs. Déry reworking it for the stage, or alternatively, that she produced an entirely new translation tailored to the role she wished to play, independently of Ernyi's earlier version..

Her first translation made in Kolozsvár is a one-act 'heroic sketch' *Attila v. a szegény lantos* [Attila or the Poor Lute Player]. The play, also written by Ziegler, was premiered on 3 July 1836, with Mrs. Déry playing the role of Gozvin (Gorvin, according to the playbill), and although it was not a ballad opera (*singspiel*), in order to make it more appealing she sang an aria from the ballad opera *Ördög Róbert* [Robert the Devil] with good dramatic sense.

Éjjél [Midnight] is Mrs. Déry's only drama translation made in Kassa that she did not perform in Kolozsvár. In 1838, however, the company of her brother-in-law, Dávid Kilényi staged this play as well in the stone theatre of Kolozsvár. The leading role was performed by Mrs. Déry's younger sister

³⁰ József Szinnyei, *Magyar írók élete és munkái* [Lives and Works of Hungarian Authors], Déry Istvánné (Széppataki-Schenbach Rozália). <https://mek.oszk.hu/03600/03630/html/> (Retrieved on 19. 01. 2022.)

³¹ Sándor Enyedi. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 135.

³² 25 May 1836, Sándor Enyedi. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 136.

Johanna Széppataki, but it was not a success since the acting was not to the critics' and the audience's liking.

In 1839 Mrs. Déry returned again to Kolozsvár for a longer stay with Dávid Kilényi's well-organised and successful company, taking with her Bellini's opera *Beatrice di Tenda*, in which she achieved her greatest success. One form of remunerating actors was to provide them a benefit performance the proceeds of which went to the leading actor or actress. This play was Mrs. Déry's benefit performance in 1839–40. According to her diary, the audience greeted her with bouquets of flowers and festive poems, and gifts from her admirers, a silver fruit basket, a sugar bowl and a ring were handed over to her by two little girls dressed in white and garlanded with flowers.³³ Then, her translation of *Paulina, a titok gyermeke* [Paulina, Child of Mystery] was performed again.³⁴

In 1840–41, she continued to perform mainly in Kolozsvár, with guest appearances in Nagyvárad (Oradea), Torda (Turda) and Máramarossziget (Maramureş). She noted in her diary: "we spent the whole summer and winter in Kolozsvár, but suddenly the travel bug rose in Kilényi and he took the company over hedge and ditch".³⁵ It was in this period that she made her last drama translation, the play *Nina, Náncsi, Netti vagy Férj után vándorló nő* [Nina, Náncsi, Netti or Woman Wandering After A Husband], which was staged on 1 September 1840.³⁶ The author of the play was Johann Friedrich Schink (1755–1835), in several of whose plays Mrs. Déry had been the lead, and the music was composed by Wenczel Müller, whose ballad opera *Újholdvasárnap gyermek* [The New Moon Sunday Child] was one of Mrs. Déry's favourite roles. Mrs. Déry chose this play as her benefit performance, but no record has survived of the performance itself.

The existence of two copies of *Paulina* in the archives of the National Theatre – one of which is a beautifully prepared fair copy that Mrs. Déry

³³ Déryné *Emlékezései* II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry vol. 2], ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955), 324–326.

³⁴ Sándor Enyedí. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 139. The performance took place on 6 July.

³⁵ „az egész nyarat és telet Kolozsváron töltöttük, de egyszeriben Kilényiben feltámadt az utazási düh, s vitte a társaságot árkon-bokron keresztül” Déryné *Emlékezései* II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry vol. 2], ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955), 327.

³⁶ Sándor Enyedí. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 142.

herself donated as a gift³⁷ – suggests that she was consciously invested in preserving her legacy as a literary translator.

Nevertheless, several plays that were staged at the National Theatre were adapted by other typically male translators. For example, *A 16 éves királyné* [The Sixteen-Year-Old Queen], was also staged at the National Theatre, but the translation used for that production was by Lajos Fánecsy, not Mrs. Déry. This substitution was not necessarily due to the inadequacy of Mrs. Déry's version for the National Theatre stage, but rather because her translation was likely unavailable. Mrs. Déry was known to be rather careless in handling her translated works, often failing to preserve or make copies of the texts. As she travelled a lot, she lost a lot of her documents in the process of moving from one place to another. When Ödön Potemkin asked her to write her memoirs, she wrote to him: "[Imre Vachot] also wanted more of my writings, which I had noted down in my life, or *my translations*, because I had translated several plays from German into Hungarian, but I had nothing left. As a result of my many journeys, they became a burden to me, I had no place to put them, I either scattered them or left them at my lodgings, and I confess that I never considered the events of my life or my inclination for the theatre interesting enough to have them printed and present them to a readership."³⁸ In an interview she gave in Kolozsvár on 12 August 1842 that has been preserved in manuscript, she answered the question 'What plays did you write or translate?' by naming only some of the works, and even with those she was quite imprecise: "I translated Paulina, Yelva, Midnight, Nina, Netti, Dora, [the correct title is: *Nina, Náncsi, Netti vagy Férj után vándorló nő*, that is Nina, Náncsi, Netti or Woman

³⁷ *Paulina* Repository: OSzK Színháztörténeti Tár [The Theatre History Collection of Széchenyi National Library], pressmark P. 29. The censored copy was licensed on 12 October 1838, inscription on the first page. „Szerzette Veiszenthurm Anna, magyarra tette Déryné.” [“Authored by Anna Veiszenthurm, translated into Hungarian by Mrs. Déry”]. The cast on the first page is written in pencil, with Fánecsy in the male lead and Mrs. Déry in the female lead.

³⁸ “[Vachot Imre] még több irományokat is kívánt, miket életemben föl jegyezgettem, vagy fordításaimat, mert több darabokat fordítottam le németből magyarra, de bizony már birtokomban nem volt semmi. A sok utazások következtében terhemre voltak, nem tudván hova pakkolni, kit elszórtam, kit elhagytam szállásaimon, s megvallom sohasem tartottam életem eseményeit vagy színészethez való hajlamaimot elég érdekesnek arra, hogy kinyomassam, s közönség elé bocsássam.” A letter written by Mrs. Déry to Ödön P. Egervári in Miskolc, 28 July 1869. Déryné *Emlékezései* II. [Memoirs by Mrs. Déry vol. 2], ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1955), 407.

Wandering After a Husband], *Aranyműves leánykája* [The Goldensmith's Little Daughter]."³⁹

Nevertheless, we know of a total of thirteen of her drama translations (although four of these are only short one-act plays), and fortunately the scripts of four of her drama translations have survived, one of them even in two copies, and these are now in the Theatre History Collection of Széchenyi National Library.

The same can be said of Mrs. Déry that characterises the first two generations of actress-translators: she chooses plays by the most popular French and German playwrights, who are also the most frequently translated by men, and her translations include a variety of genres, from one-act comedies to five-act plays. Her translation method is based on practical stage requirements, not translating literally or in a strictly literary way, but adapting the text to stage speech. Her activity as a drama translator serves practical purposes: in addition to expanding the repertoire, she adds to her own catalogue of roles plays that have already been successful elsewhere, that she chooses for benefit performances, thus achieving considerable financial success with them. Mrs. Déry has contributed a great deal to Hungarian theatre not only as an actress but also as a translator. *Éjfél* [Midnight], for example, was performed in eight different towns, and her play *Jelva* was chosen as a benefit performance by several actresses. From 1836 onward, Mrs. Déry's translations made a significant contribution to the repertoire of the theatre in Kolozsvár (Cluj), facilitating the dissemination of fashionable contemporary plays not only in the town but also in other towns across Transylvania.

Translation by Krisztina Kalo

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³⁹ „Fordítottam: Paulina, Jelva, Éjfél, Nina, Netti, Dora, *Aranyműves leánykája*.” Sándor Enyedi. *Déryné erdélyi színpadokon* [Mrs. Déry on the Transylvanian Stages], (Bukarest: Kriterion 1975), 152.

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épülése' módja; könyvtárának mennyisége, Szerzők, és Fordítók Nevei foglaltatnak [Wreath of Játékszín, in which the origins, conditions and the existence until now of the two Hungarian national theatre companies, as well as the location and the number of Játékszín, the method of its construction, the volumes of its library, the names of the playwrights and translators are recorded]. Pest: Landerer, 1834.

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“The Stone Theatre” and Cluj’s First Romanian Theatre Troupe

Abstract. This article explores the establishment of the first Romanian amateur theatre troupe in Cluj in the early 1870s, formed by high-school students under the coordination of Greek-Catholic priest and Romanian language teacher Gavrilă Pop. The initiative was sparked by the visit of well-known actor Matei Millo and his company, whose performances in Cluj in July 1871 were enthusiastically received and attended by a wide audience. The presence of professional Romanian theatre artists from the Kingdom of Romania in Transylvania, such as Millo and Mihail Pascaly, played a significant role in shaping local cultural initiatives. The student troupe developed within the framework of the Romanian Student Reading Society, founded after the model of similar associations in other Transylvanian cities. The group remained active until 1875, staging performances and contributing to the local cultural life. Their work reflects early forms of theatrical expression and organization in Romanian communities in Cluj before the institutionalization of Romanian-language theatre. Drawing on press accounts and archival references, this study highlights a lesser-known episode in the history of Romanian theatre, situating it at the intersection of education, youth initiative, and artistic practice in a multiethnic urban environment.

Keywords: 19th century, Romanian language theatre, Transylvania, amateur performance, Matei Millo

Introduction

This article explores the emergence and activity of the first Romanian amateur theatre troupe in Cluj during the early 1870s – a group of Greek-Catholic secondary school students whose performances, though modest in scale, reflect the complex interplay between artistic practice and national

consciousness within the political and cultural context of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In an urban environment where Hungarian language and culture were institutionally privileged, the public staging of Romanian-language plays was not merely a cultural activity but a gesture of identity assertion and quiet defiance. Such performances, enacted in the mother tongue and shaped by shared cultural memory, exemplify what Benedict Anderson has termed the formation of an "imagined community," in which national belonging is cultivated through collective symbolic acts.¹

Drawing on archival sources, contemporaneous press reports, memoirs, and scholarly reconstructions, the study situates the Cluj troupe within the broader context of Romanian theatrical and cultural efforts in Transylvania prior to the post-World War I territorial rearrangements. Particular attention is given to their relationship with professional touring companies from the Romanian Kingdom, their repertory and performance strategies, the restrictions they encountered, and the legacy they left behind.

More than a footnote in the history of regional theatre, the story of these students illuminates the role of amateur artistic initiatives in the national movement of Romanians in Transylvania. It also invites reflection on how marginalized cultural communities preserved and projected their identity through theater – often in improvised venues and under the threat of censorship, but sustained by enthusiasm, solidarity, and a shared vision of cultural legitimacy.

The Political and Ethnic Landscape of Transylvania

The earliest mention of a theatrical performance said to have taken place in Cluj (Kolozsvár in Hungarian and Klausenburg in German) dates back to the year 1572, when Unitarian students from the Unitarian College staged *Debreceeni disputa* [The Debrecen Disputation], a religious drama by György Válaszúti.² At the time, the city on the Someş River was part of the

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 6–7.

² Imre Varga, *A magyarországi protestáns iskolai színpéjszász forrásai és irodalma* [Sources and Literature of Protestant School Drama in Hungary] (Fontes Ludorum Scenicorum in Scholis Protestantium in Hungaria) (Budapest: Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1988), 361.

autonomous Principality of Transylvania and was enjoying a period of prosperity. Cluj was, much like today, the most important economic and cultural centre of Transylvania – a multi-ethnic region in north-western Romania, contested over time by several empires and states.

Transylvania had been a vassal of the Ottoman Empire since 1541. Prior to that, from the end of the 9th century until around the mid-16th century, it had been part of the Kingdom of Hungary, enjoying a special status that granted it a certain degree of autonomy. After Hungary's defeat by the Turks at the Battle of Mohács (1526) and its transformation into an Ottoman pashalik, Transylvania strengthened its autonomy, having avoided the same fate. By the end of the 17th century, the Habsburgs emerged as the dominant power in this part of Europe, occupying Cluj in 1686. Following several military confrontations, the Principality of Transylvania became part of the Habsburg Empire in 1711 and later the Austrian Empire (from 1804). After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, which transformed the Habsburg monarchy into a dualist alliance of sovereign states, Transylvania was incorporated into Hungary, despite opposition from the Romanian and Saxon populations in the region.³

At the end of the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dissolved, and Transylvania was incorporated into the Kingdom of Romania. In 1940, as a result of the Second Vienna Award, the northern part of the region, including the city of Cluj, was temporarily transferred to Hungary. The 1947 Paris Peace Treaty subsequently reaffirmed Transylvania's status as part of Romania.

The earliest systematic statistical data on the ethnic composition of Transylvania were collected during the period of Habsburg administration. Based on available figures for the period 1690-1847, it has been estimated that the population was composed of 52.7% Romanians, 27.3% Hungarians, and 16.7% Saxons, with the remaining nearly 6% consisting of a mix of other

³ See Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 203; Harald Heppner and Rudolf Gräf, "Romania," in *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, October 8, 2014), <https://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10375>; Jonathan Kwan, "Transylvanian Saxon Politics and Imperial Germany, 1871-1876," *The Historical Journal* 61, no. 4 (2018): 991-1015, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X17000486>.

ethnic groups (Jews, Roma, Armenians, Serbs, etc.).⁴ In 1910, during the last census conducted in Austria-Hungary before the Empire's collapse, it was recorded that Romanians made up 53.8% of the population of historical Transylvania (the former Principality), Hungarians 31.6%, and Germans 10.7%.⁵

However, the population was highly segregated along ethnic, political, economic, and religious lines. While the Hungarians and Saxons (mainly Catholic or Protestant) were concentrated in the cities – generally without intermingling – and formed the region's political and economic elite, the Romanians (mostly Orthodox or, from around 1700, Greek-Catholic) lived in rural areas and lacked the same political rights. The only time Romanians were recognized as a constituent nation of Transylvania was during the brief period of constitutional experimentation in the Habsburg monarchy, between 1860 and 1867.⁶

After 1867, during the period of Austro-Hungarian dualism, the situation of non-Hungarian populations in the Hungarian half of the Empire (known officially as the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen) gradually worsened due to government-led Magyarization policies.⁷

From the 1870s, the compulsory use of the Hungarian language was extended to all areas of public life, while the use of non-Hungarian languages declined accordingly. National minorities were almost entirely excluded from the upper echelons of political life, as well as from executive and legislative power.⁸

⁴ See Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Nägler, and Magyari András, eds., *Istoria Transilvaniei. De la 1711 până la 1918* [The History of Transylvania: From 1711 to 1918] (Cluj: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2008), 53.

⁵ See Árpád E. Varga, *Hungarians in Transylvania between 1870 and 1995*, trans. Tamás Sályi, ed. Rachel Orbell (Budapest: Teleki László Foundation, 1999), 11. (Original title: "Erdély magyar népessége 1870-1995 között," first published in *Magyar Kisebbség*, no. 3-4, 1998, 331-407.) The same percentage (53.8%) appears in *Magyarország a XX. században* [Hungary in the 20th Century], ed. István Tarsoly, vol. II (Szekszárd: Babits Kiadó, 1996-2000), 156 (table 11), <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02185/html/171.html> (accessed April 4, 2025).

⁶ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866-1947*, 203.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 202-230.

⁸ László Katus, *Maghiarii* [The Hungarians], vol. 2 of *Monarhia Habsburgică (1848-1918). Popoarele Imperiului* [The Habsburg Monarchy (1848-1918). The Peoples of the Empire], ed. Rudolf Gräf, trans. Nicolae Teșculă (Iași: Polirom, 2021), 199.

These policies undermined earlier efforts to bring Romanians and Hungarians closer together, which had been based on their shared fear of Slavic expansion and Pan-Slavism (embraced by some Slavic groups in Central and South-Eastern Europe and encouraged by Russia). At the same time, Magyarization policies led many Romanians in Transylvania to abandon the idea of federalizing the Empire and increasingly to aspire to national autonomy – eventually fostering the idea of unification with the Romanian Kingdom to the east. (Romania emerged as an independent state in the 19th century through the union of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in 1859, and following the Russo-Romanian-Turkish War of 1877–1878, which brought an end to Ottoman sovereignty over the region. It was proclaimed a kingdom in 1881.)

Early Romanian-Language Theatre in Transylvania

In the early stages, the differing historical circumstances placed Transylvanian Romanians at an advantage compared to those from beyond the Carpathian arc, particularly in terms of the development of theatrical art (among other areas). The region's proximity to Central Europe, along with its multi-ethnic and multi-religious character, fostered the emergence of early forms of Romanian-language theatre from around the mid-18th century, during the Enlightenment period (within the milieu of the Greek-Catholic schools). Thus, Transylvanian Romanians discovered theatre earlier than their counterparts in Moldavia and Wallachia, where the Byzantine cultural legacy and the strong Ottoman presence hindered the development of theatre until the first half of the 19th century. Later, as the theatrical movement in Moldavia and Wallachia gained momentum, these same unique historical conditions caused Romanian theatre in Transylvania to lag significantly behind – a disparity that remained painfully evident immediately after Transylvania's union with the Old Kingdom in 1918.

Until the end of the First World War, Transylvanian Romanians had to make do with performances by local amateur troupes, which served as occasions to assert Romanian identity. From the 1860s onward, these amateur activities took place primarily under the patronage of the Association for the Culture and Literature of the Romanian People

(Asociațiunea pentru Cultura și Literatura Poporului Român, or ASTRA), whose gatherings typically included artistic programs combining musical and theatrical elements. These programs promoted a vision of cultural uplift rooted in the invention and ritualization of tradition.⁹ Plays that foregrounded folklore, rural life, and national heroes served as vehicles through which Romanian identity could be performed and reaffirmed. During the same period, professional Romanian artists from beyond the Carpathians began touring Transylvania. The initial steps were tentative: actress Fanny Tardini, during her two tours in 1864 and 1865, ventured no further than Brașov (Brassó in Hungarian, Kronstadt in German). In 1868, following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, actor Mihail Pascaly (accompanied by his wife Matilda, who had Transylvanian roots) planned to travel across the region and reach Pest and Vienna with his troupe. However, he was forced to abandon his initial plan and ultimately performed, between May and September, in Brașov/Kronstadt/Brassó, Sibiu/Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt, Lugoj/Lugos/Lugosch, Timișoara/Temesvár/Temeswar, Arad, and Oravița/Oravicabánya/Oravitza. Despite this, the tour was extensive and, importantly, left a strong impression.

Spurred by Pascaly's success, actor Matei Millo (1814–1896), a highly acclaimed comic performer, undertook his own Transylvanian tour two years later.¹⁰ His itinerary included Brașov, Sibiu, Orăștie/Szászváros/Broos, Cluj, Arad, Lugoj, and Oravița. In Cluj, Millo and his troupe (comprising about seven actors) stayed from July 16 to 25, 1870, performing on the stage of the local theatre, thanks to the favour of its director, Fehérváry Antal. Fehérváry (1825–1901) made an unprecedented exception to the theatre's

⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14.

¹⁰ Matei Millo (1814–1896), a prominent figure in the history of Romanian theatre, was born into an impoverished boyar family in Stolniceni-Prahănești, near Iași. Educated at home and later at the Mihăileană Academy, Millo left for Paris in 1840 to pursue engineering but ultimately devoted himself to dramatic art. He became the first Romanian actor to perform in drag and was instrumental in developing a realist acting style that reacted against the declamatory manner of the time. As a playwright, actor, stage director, and theatre manager in both Iași and Bucharest, he championed a national repertoire, staging satirical comedies and vaudevilles, and introduced generations of actors to a more nuanced and life-inspired form of performance.

operating rules by providing the stage free of charge.¹¹ “For allowing Romanian actors to perform at the theatre, the director of the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj, József (*sic!*) Fejérváry was accused by chauvinistic Hungarian newspapers of betraying the ‘dogma’ that ‘forbade any language other than Hungarian from resounding on the theatre’s stage.’ Fehérváry, however, declared that he made this unique exception purely out of friendship for the actors,” writes Romanian theatre historian Ioan Massoff.¹² Rumors also spread that the director of the theatre had agreed to share the profits with Millo, a claim that was denied by the theatre’s management.¹³

The “Stone Theatre” and the Main Public Stage of Cluj

The first purpose-built theatre in Cluj – commonly referred to as the “stone theatre” – was inaugurated in 1821. Intended to house the city’s first permanent company, the Transylvanian Hungarian Noble Acting Company (Erdélyi Magyar Nemes Jádzó Társaság), founded in 1792, the building was designed by Viennese architects as a replica of the Theater an der Wien and could accommodate between 1,200 and 1,500 spectators. The theatre playbill announcing its inaugural performance explicitly referred to the occasion as “the celebration of the first national theatre to be opened in our country” (“a hazánkban legelőbbször ki nyitandó nemzeti játékszín ünnepére”),¹⁴ thus anticipating a symbolic designation that would only become official decades

¹¹ For the period of Antal Fehérváry’s directorship at the National Theatre of Cluj on Farkas Street (1866–1872), see Katalin Ágnes Bartha, “Színházi professzió és presztízs Kolozsváron a 19. század utolsó harmadában [Theatrical Profession and Prestige in the Last Decades of the 19th Century in Cluj],” *Erdélyi Múzeum* 77, no. 3 (2015): 46–78, especially 51–57.

¹² Ioan Massoff, *Teatrul românesc. Privire istorică (1860–1880)* [Romanian Theatre: A Historical Overview (1860–1880)], vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1966), 529.

¹³ “A kolozsvári nemzeti színház alapításakor [When the National Theatre in Cluj Was Founded],” *Magyar Polgár*, no. 85 (July 22, 1870): 405. See also József Kováts, “Amikor a Farkas utcai magyar színházban román társulat vendégszerepelt [When a Romanian Troupe Gave Guest Performances at the Hungarian Theatre on Farkas Street],” *Ellenzék*, August 12, 1934; reprinted in *Régi és Új Thália. A Hét évkönyve* [Old and New Thalia. A Hét Yearbook], 1981, 58.

¹⁴ *Zrínyi*, by Teodor Körner, trans. Dániel Petrichievich Horváth, theatre playbill for the premiere performance by the amateur company of aristocracy at the National Theatre in Kolozsvár [Cluj], March 12, 1821.

later.¹⁵ As Katalin Ágnes Bartha notes, the term "national theatre" (*nemzeti színház*) only began to appear consistently on Cluj playbills from 1841 onwards.¹⁶

Following the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, the newly established authorities granted permission to a German troupe led by Karl Frieze to perform on the Cluj stage between April and November 1850. From 1850 until the end of the First World War, Hungarian remained the dominant and officially supported language on Cluj's main public stage, which began receiving partial state subsidies in 1870. While prominent foreign actors and opera singers occasionally performed in their native languages, Romanian-language productions were staged only by Matei Millo's troupe in 1870. Although theatres in other multiethnic cities of Transylvania, such as Timișoara or Arad, occasionally welcomed performances in Romanian, Cluj's institutional claim to national character appears to have reinforced a monolingual, culturally exclusivist ethos throughout the dualist period.

¹⁵ Editorial note: The term "Kolozsvári Nemzeti Játékszín" refers to the first permanent Hungarian stone theatre, located on Farkas Street in Kolozsvár (present-day Cluj-Napoca, Romania). This theatre opened its doors on March 12, 1821, and is considered a milestone in the history of Hungarian-language theatre. Although the official opening of the theatre took place in 1821, its façade bore the inscription: "Az Erdélyi Nemzeti Magyar Játékszín - 1813" (Transylvanian National Hungarian Theatre - 1813). This date refers to the year by which the external masonry and interior woodwork had already been completed. However, due to financial difficulties, the interior construction was delayed and completed only by 1821, enabling the theatre to open. The use of the term "national" emphasized the significance of the institution and its pivotal role in the development of Hungarian-language theatre. The designation also reflected the theatre's cultural mission to support the Hungarian language and national identity, especially in an era when national consciousness was gaining importance. For more on the context of the theatre's inauguration and its symbolic meaning, see Katalin Ágnes Bartha, "Theatre Inauguration Ceremony and Symbolic Representation," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai - Dramatica* 62, no. 2 (2022): 23-50. Retrieved from <https://dramatica.ro/index.php/j/article/view/201>.

¹⁶ Katalin Ágnes Bartha, "The National Theatre of Kolozsvár [Cluj] in the Network of Hungarian Theatre Companies (Mapping Theatre Towns in the Second Half of 19th Century)," *Musicologica Olomucensia* 35, no. 1 (July 2023): 74, <https://doi.org/10.5507/mo.2023.006>. Editorial note: During the Hungarian language reform period (1790-1830), *játékszín* was the preferred Hungarian term for a theatre. From the second half of the 19th century (approximately 1850-1870), the term *színház* became dominant, primarily due to its adoption in journalism, legislative texts, and public discourse.

Matei Millo in Cluj and the Birth of the Amateur Society

The 1870 tour of Matei Millo's troupe in Cluj featured a diverse and dynamic repertoire, presented at the city's "stone theatre" over a ten-day period in July. The program opened on July 16 with *Lipitorile satelor* [The Leeches of the Villages], a play by Vasile Alecsandri adapted from *Un usurier de village* [A Village Usurer] by Charles Bataille and Amédée Rolland. On July 17, the company performed three shorter works by Alecsandri: the comic song-play *Kera Nastasia sau mania pensiilor* [Kera Nastasia, or The Pension Mania], *Cimpoierul* [The Piper], and the satire *Millo director sau mania posturilor* [Millo the Director, or The Obsession with Appointments].

On July 20, the bill included *Kir Zuliaridi* [Mr. Zuliaridi], a one-act comedy adapted from *Un tigre du Bengale* [A Tiger of Bengal] by Édouard Brisebarre and Marc Michel, localized into Romanian by Vasile Alecsandri; *Paracliserul, or Florin and Florica* [The Sacristan, or Florin and Florica], a one-act operetta based on *Les Marionnettes* [The Puppets] by L.-B. Picard, also adapted by Alecsandri; and the one-act canzonetta *Ciobanul român* [The Romanian Shepherd], of uncertain authorship. On July 23, the troupe performed *Prăpăștiile Bucureștilor* [The Ravines of Bucharest], a five-act musical comedy adapted by Millo himself from *Les Enfers de Paris* [The Underworld of Paris] by Lambert Thiboust.

The next evening, July 24, featured *Paraponisitul* [The Disgruntled One], a comic piece by Alecsandri; *Pricopsiții* [The Newly Rich], a one-act vaudeville by Simeon Mihăilescu; and *Muza de la Burdujeni* [The Muse from Burdujeni], a quasi-faithful adaptation of Théodore Leclercq's *La Sapho de Quimpercorentin* [The Sappho of Quimpercorentin] by Constantin Negruzzi. The final evening, July 25, concluded with *Jianu, căpitan de haiduci* [Jianu, the Outlaw Captain], a national drama in four acts and six tableaux by Matei Millo and Ion Anestin. This eclectic repertoire – alternating between satire, folklore, melodrama, and patriotic drama – reveals Millo's artistic range and his intent to promote Romanian-language theatre to a wide and socially diverse audience.¹⁷

¹⁷ For a detailed description and analysis of Millo's tour in Cluj, in Romanian, see Ion Breazu, "Matei Millo în Transilvania și Banat (1870) [Matei Millo in Transylvania and the Banat (1870)]," in *Fraților Alexandru și Ion Lapedatu, la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani* [To the Brothers Alexandru and Ion Lapedatu, on the Occasion of Their 60th Anniversary] (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1936), 193–207; reprinted in *Literatura Transilvaniei*.

Alongside Millo himself, who directed and frequently starred in the performances, the troupe included the actors Eliescu, Nicolau, Alexandrescu I, Alexandrescu II, Mincu, and Moțățianu, as well as the actresses Mrs. Alexandrescu, Miss Senti, Miss Ionescu, Miss Constantinescu, and Mrs. Nicolau. Press reports from the time indicate that Alexandrescu I impressed audiences with his composed performance and warm baritone, while Nicolau was noted for his originality.¹⁸ Among the actresses, Margareta Alexandrescu and Miss Senti were praised for their charm and talent, while others, such as Mrs. Nicolau and Mrs. Alexandrescu, were regarded as less compelling. In terms of casting, known roles included Millo as Moise in *Lipitorile satelor*, Eliescu as Papă-Lapte in *Kir Zuliaridi*, Margareta Alexandrescu as Afrodita, Miss Ionescu as Mândica, Alexandrescu II as Florin in *Paracliserul*, and Constantinescu among the cast of *Jianu, căpitan de haiduci*.

While the Hungarian public in Cluj expressed interest in seeing Millo perform –particularly in observing the traditional Romanian costumes featured in the touring production – this moment of interethnic theatre was, to a significant extent, shaped by a shared antisemitism. According to reports at the time by the Romanian newspaper *Federațiunea*, Hungarian curiosity was sparked by the protest of the city's Jewish community against the performance of the zealously antisemitic and racist play *Lipitorile satelor în Moldova*, in which Millo portrayed a Jewish innkeeper complicit in a murder.¹⁹ The enthusiastic attendance of Hungarian spectators at Millo's early performances prompted the Romanian actor to thank them for their warm reception, especially given that the theatre building had been offered

Studii, articole, conferințe [Transylvanian Literature. Studies, Articles, Lectures] (Bucharest: Casa Școalelor, 1944), 58–77; and especially Josif Pervain, "Trupa lui Matei Millo la Cluj în 1870" [Matei Millo's Troupe in Cluj in 1870], *Studii și Cercetări în Istoria Artei* [Studies and Research in Art History], no. 3–4 (1956): 227–232; republished in *Studii de literatură română* [Studies in Romanian Literature] (Cluj: Editura Dacia, 1971), 320–321. For details on the French sources of several plays adapted by Vasile Alecsandri and included in Millo's 1870 tour repertoire, see Charles Drouhet, *Vasile Alecsandri și scriitorii francezi* [Vasile Alecsandri and the French Writers] (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice „Eminescu”, 1924), esp. 45–48, 62–63.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*

¹⁹ "Teatru român în Cluj [Romanian Theatre in Cluj], *Federațiunea*, no. 67–399 (July 24/12, 1870): 264.

to him free of charge. Local Hungarian newspapers published favourable reviews of the Romanian performances.²⁰

The performances by Matei Millo and his troupe also attracted a few students from the Roman Catholic (Piarist) secondary school in Cluj (today “Báthory István”), located on Farkas utca (translated as Wolf Street; present-day Mihail Kogălniceanu Street), near the “stone theatre.” At the time, the school was still an important centre of education not only for Hungarians but also for young Romanians in Transylvania. The number of Romanian pupils had grown steadily until the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, reaching 278 in 1867 (out of a total of 574), up from 82 (out of 164) in 1851.²¹ Yet this promising trajectory reversed shortly thereafter: by 1870, Romanians still made up 43.8% of the student body, but their share dropped significantly in the following years, falling to 26.9% by 1880 and only 14.3% by 1910. This decline was exacerbated by the increasingly assimilationist policies of the Hungarian state following the 1867 Ausgleich, especially after 1875 under Kálmán Tisza’s government. The suspension of Romanian-language instruction in 1881 further deepened the marginalization of Romanian students.²² High dropout rates – between 60 and 70% – further reduced their presence in the senior grades, compared to much lower rates among Hungarian or other ethnic students.²³ Factors such as instruction conducted predominantly in Hungarian, the lack of textbooks and financial support, poor living conditions, and limited access to boarding contributed to this educational attrition.²⁴ The once-growing Romanian student community at the Piarist school thus began a long and steady demographic and cultural decline during precisely the years when Millo’s performances reached Cluj.²⁵

²⁰ “Irodalom és művészet [Literature and Art],” *Magyar Polgár*, no. 84 (July 20, 1870): 398; See also *Kolozsvári Közlöny*, July 17 and 21, 1870; József Kováts, “Amikor a Farkas utcai magyar színházban román társulat vendégszerepelt,” 58; Josif Pervain, “Trupa lui Matei Millo la Cluj în 1870,” 227–232.

²¹ Simion Retegan, “Școlarizare și dezvoltare: elevii români ai Liceului Piarist din Cluj între 1850–1910 [Schooling and Development: Romanian Students at the Cluj Piarist Gymnasium between 1850 and 1910],” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Cluj-Napoca* 32 (1993): 136–37.

²² *Ibid.*, 126.

²³ *Ibid.* 128–29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

The Romanian students who attended Millo's performances were members of the "Reading Society of Romanian Students," likely founded in 1861 and formally active from the late 1860s, modeled on a similar group in Oradea. This initiative was part of a broader phenomenon of student cultural associations that emerged across the Habsburg Monarchy in the second half of the 19th century, aimed at preserving Romanian linguistic and national identity.²⁶ The Cluj society was coordinated by their religion and Romanian-language teacher, the Greek-Catholic archpriest Gavrilă Pop.²⁷ Inspired by Millo's performances – at which they eagerly volunteered as extras and backstage assistants to gain free access to the theatre – they established a theatrical society during the winter of 1870.

It is also worth recalling that, during this period, the amateur theatrical movement among Transylvanian Romanians was invigorated by Iosif Vulcan's campaign in the pages of *Familia* magazine. Vulcan advocated for the establishment of a Romanian national theatre, a cause that led, later that same year, to the founding of the "Society for the Creation of a Romanian Theatre Fund." This effort followed the failure of Romanian deputies to secure a parliamentary subsidy from the Hungarian government for the purpose. Romanian deputies made repeated demands in 1868 and 1870, arguing that Hungarian theatres and other cultural institutions were generously funded by the state – using, among other sources, taxes paid by Romanians – while the Romanians themselves received no support for the development of their own culture.²⁸ Their voices, however, were ignored. Attempting to take matters into their own hands, the Romanians of Transylvania raised 550,000 crowns by the eve of the First World War, a sum insufficient to cover the construction of a theatre.

²⁶ See Eugenia Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale ale tineretului studios român din Monarhia Habsburgică (1860-1918)* [The Cultural Associations of Romanian Students in the Habsburg Monarchy (1860-1918)] (Cluj-Napoca: Muzeul Național de Istorie a Transilvaniei, 1998), 133-134.

²⁷ Gavrilă Pop (b. November 20, 1830, Bărai, Cluj County – d. May 16, 1918, Blaj) was a Greek-Catholic priest and professor. Between 1870 and 1889, he served as parish priest and archpriest in Cluj. He authored numerous theological works, sermons, textbooks, translations, and other writings.

²⁸ Teodor V. Păcățian, *Cartea de aur sau Luptele politice ale românilor de sub Coroana Ungară* [The Golden Book, or the Political Struggles of the Romanians under the Hungarian Crown], vol. 4 of 8 (Sibiu: Tipografia Henric Meltzer, 1906), 416, and vol. 5 of 8 (Sibiu: Tipografia Arhidiecezană, 1909), 286-312.

The First Romanian Amateur Performances in Cluj

The “Amateur Society of Romanian Students in Cluj” operated alongside the Reading Society (as a section of it) until 1875, when the government banned foreign non-Hungarian actors and singers, as well as itinerant theatrical troupes, from giving performances without prior “concession” from the Ministry of the Interior.²⁹ The Cluj Reading Society was itself dissolved five years later, in 1880, as a result of Magyarization policies.

During its relatively brief existence, the Cluj amateur society was notably active and made a strong impression on audiences. This impact is even more significant given that its members did not limit their performances to Cluj but actively sought to perform in as many Transylvanian localities as possible, taking advantage of the long summer holidays. For this reason, in a memoir written for the fourth yearbook of the Society for the Creation of a Romanian Theatre Fund, published in 1901, one of the group’s leaders, Vasilie Podoabă, referred to it as “the first Romanian travelling theatrical society in Transylvania”³⁰ – a somewhat inflated title, like much of his account, especially considering that the Blaj Greek-Catholic seminarians had established such a travelling troupe more than a century earlier.

The Cluj amateurs’ first performance took place on the evening of December 27, 1870, in the hall of the Casina of the city (a sort of gentlemen’s club, now the home of the Ethnographic Museum), where the newly formed society was based. The audience consisted of the local Romanian intelligentsia. The pupils performed *Cuiul în părete* (*Arvinte și Pepelea*) [The Nail in the Wall (*Arvinte and Pepelea*)] and *Nunta țărănească* [The Peasant Wedding] by Vasile Alecsandri. The proceeds (20 florins) were donated to

²⁹ Iosif Pervain, “Societatea diletanților «teatrali» din Cluj (1870-1875) [The ‘Theatrical’ Dilettante Society of Cluj (1870-1875)],” in *Studii de literatură română* [Studies in Romanian Literature] (Cluj: Editura Dacia, 1971), 328-348.

³⁰ Vasilie Podoabă, “Prima societate teatrală română ambulantă din Transilvania [The First Romanian Travelling Theatre Company in Transylvania],” in *Anuarul IV al Societății pentru crearea unui fond de teatru român pe anul 1900-1901* [Fourth Yearbook of the Society for the Creation of a Romanian Theatre Fund for the Year 1900-1901] (Brașov: Tipografia A. Mureșianu, 1901), 28-48. The text was later reproduced in *Revista ilustrată* [The Illustrated Magazine], published across three consecutive issues: year IV, no. 15, August 1, 1901, 118-120; no. 16, August 15, 1901, 131-133; no. 17, September 1, 1901, 141-143. The citations in the present work refer to the original version published in the *Anuarul IV*.

the magazine *Familia* to be added to the fund for the construction of a Romanian theatre.³¹

The performers of the two plays were: Tuliu Roşescu, an eighth-year pupil and "leader of the young amateurs" (as Iosif Pervain emphasizes, quoting issue no. 4 of *Familia* from 1871); Andrei (or Andreiu) Centea from the sixth year; Vasiliu Filip from the fifth; Ioan Găvrus from the fourth; and Ioan Baci from the third (to whom Podoabă attributes the initiative of founding the amateur troupe and the role of its main animator). Before the summer holidays (which began on June 29), the pupils prepared another twelve plays, which were also performed on the Casina stage in Cluj.

A president of the society was elected – lawyer Dănilă Il. Monasterian – and Podoabă claims he was appointed "director."³² Probably around this time, the pupils brought Miss Maria Centea into their undertaking, making her the troupe's first female member and, by all accounts, its most important "acquisition" of that nature. According to Vasilie Podoabă, Maria was "related to Andrei Centea"³³ (Pervain claims she was his sister),³⁴ and hailed from the village of Căpâlna (Csicsókápolna in Hungarian), now part of Sălaj County (in the commune of Gâlgău).

By 1900–1901, when Podoabă was writing his memoirs, Andrei Centea was still alive and serving as a Greek-Catholic priest in Asuaju de Sus, in Sălaj. A more recent source reveals that "Andrei Centea was born in 1851 in Căpâlna, graduated from high school in Beiuş in 1874, and studied theology in Gherla, completing his studies in 1878. Between 1879 and 1887, he served as interim priest in Biuşa, after which he moved to Asuajul de Jos."³⁵ In 1892, Andrei Centea was among the Greek-Catholic priests who formed part of the delegation of *memorandişti* to Vienna, tasked with presenting Emperor

³¹ Iosif Pervain, "Societatea diletanţilor «teatrali» din Cluj (1870-1875)," 332.

³² Vasilie Podoabă, "Prima societate teatrală română ambulantă din Transilvania," 32.

³³ Ibid., 33.

³⁴ Iosif Pervain, "Societatea diletanţilor «teatrali» din Cluj (1870-1875)," 340.

³⁵ Gheorghe Bancea, "Monografia localităţii Biuşa (V) [The Monograph of the Village of Biuşa (V)]," *Caiete Silvane*, no. 59 (December 2009): 37. See also Dr. Const. Pavel, *Şcoalele din Beiuş, 1828-1928. Cu o privire asupra trecutului românilor din Bihor* [The Schools of Beiuş, 1828-1928: With a Glimpse into the Past of the Romanians of Bihor] (Beiuş: Tiparul Tipografiei „Doina”, 1928), 185 (Andrei Centea appears among those who completed the eighth grade in Beiuş during the 1873-1874 academic year).

Franz Joseph with the famous petition demanding equal rights for ethnic Romanians in Transylvania..³⁶

According to Podoabă, most of the boys who participated in the extended Cluj amateur troupe later entered the priesthood. Among the others, a few became notaries, one became a teacher in Romania, another “a county official,” one “an estate manager for the Vaida family,” another “a landowner,” and one – Podoabă himself – became a bank director.³⁷ Podoabă also notes that Maria Centea married “Professor Cristea from Năsăud,” and by the time of his account, both were deceased.³⁸

The First Touring Season: Summer 1871

At the end of July 1871, the Cluj amateurs embarked on their first tour, which lasted until September and included stops in Turda/Torda/Thorenburg, Abrud/ Abrudbánya/Großschlatten, Brad/Brád/Tannenhof, Deva/Déva/Diemrich, and Hațeg/Hátszeg/Hatzeg. However, the young performers did not travel alone; they were accompanied by two adults, the married couple George and Margareta Alexandrescu. These professional actors had previously been part of Mihail Pascaly’s troupe and had returned to Transylvania in 1871 for a second tour. Both had been familiar to local audiences since Millo’s tour, during which they had also performed, earning particular recognition for their rendition of national songs.

The Alesandrescus “had acquaintances in Cluj,”³⁹ Podoabă recalls, and theatre historian Ioan Massoff notes that George Alesandrescu may have even been a native of Cluj,⁴⁰ or at least of Transylvanian origin.⁴¹ The touring

³⁶ Daniel Mureșan, “Biserica Greco-Catolică din Sălaj între 1700-1918 (II) [The Greek-Catholic Church in Sălaj between 1700 and 1918 (Part II)],” *Magazin Sălăjean*, October 20, 2009, <https://www.magazinsalajejan.ro/cultura/biserica-greco-catolica-din-salaj-intre-1700-1918-ii>.

³⁷ For the complete list of male members of the Cluj dilettante society as recorded by Podoabă, see Vasilie Podoabă, “Prima societate teatrală română ambulantă din Transilvania,” 33.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁰ Ioan Massoff, *Teatrul românesc. Privire istorică (1860-1880)*, 560.

⁴¹ Ibid., 532.

troupe consisted of ten members in total – eight men and two women: George and Margareta Alesandrescu, Maria and Andrei Centea, Ioan Baci, Vasile Filip, Ioan Găvrus, Vasile Gheție, Vasile Podoabă, and Vasile Micle (prompter). Given the limited number of actresses, female roles were sometimes performed by Ioan Găvrus and Vasile Gheție, who took on these parts in drag so convincingly that, according to Podoabă, "no one doubted they were ladies."⁴²

In Turda, the amateurs gave four performances attended by both Romanians and Hungarians. On their way to Abrud, in Sălciua, they stopped at "a roadside inn," where, according to Podoabă, they learned "some exceptionally beautiful Romanian *doine*" (traditional ballads) from a shepherd named Vasile Vesa, which they later incorporated into their performances.⁴³

In Abrud – the main destination of the tour – the troupe stayed for three or four weeks, performing to audiences composed not only of locals but also of visitors from the surrounding areas: Câmpeni, Roșia, Bucium, and even "Ofenbaia."⁴⁴ As in Turda, the audience was mixed, consisting of both Romanians and Hungarians, transforming these ephemeral gatherings into potent arenas of cultural negotiation. Erika Fischer-Lichte's theory of the performative event as a "self-transformative process" helps illuminate how these shared moments of theatricality not only shaped national sentiment but also reconfigured the identities of both performers and spectators.⁴⁵ In Brad, the amateurs gave four performances in the hall of the Romanian gymnasium, and in Deva, they performed in the County Hall. In Hațeg, a tearful farewell took place: the Alesandrescus, with the arrival of September, passed through Caransebeș on their way back to Romania, leaving the young troupe "with tears in their eyes," as they prepared to return home as well.⁴⁶

⁴² Vasile Podoabă, "Prima societate teatrală română ambulantă din Transilvania," 42.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), 38–41.

⁴⁶ Vasile Podoabă, "Prima societate teatrală română ambulantă din Transilvania," 42.

Growth, Improvised Spaces, and the Summer Tour of 1872

In the following school year, the Cluj pupils' troupe expanded, gaining several young women: Cornelia Isac, Maria (Mariți) Turc, Sofia Cservedi, and Rozalia Duca from Gherla/Szamosújvár/Neuschloss.⁴⁷ Later, toward the end of the society's existence, another young lady, Miss Elena Rădeanu, joined.⁴⁸

From November 1871 until late May 1872, the amateur troupe staged performances on a makeshift stage in a shed within the courtyard of the Greek-Catholic parish house and school in Cluj (today, the school is named after Bishop Ioan Bob). This modest, improvised performance space, also used for their rehearsals, became what Baz Kershaw describes as a "site of resistance," where theatre provided the community with a means to contest dominant cultural narratives and rehearse alternative identities.⁴⁹ In the summer of 1872, the members of the Cluj theatrical society embarked on a second, shorter tour. According to Vasilie Podoabă, they performed in Gherla, Dej/Dés/Deesch, Șomcuta Mare/Nagysomkút/Großhorn, Lăpușul Unguresc/Magyarlăpos/Ungarlaposch, Beclean/Bethlen/Betlen, and Năsăud/Naszód/Nussdorf.⁵⁰ They returned to Gherla once more during the 1872–1873 school year, although their activity during this period was, in general, "much more anemic."⁵¹

A significant loss for the troupe was the departure of the restless Ioan Baciú in June or July 1872. Expelled from school, he continued performing independently, publishing poems and literary articles under the name Ioan Baciú-Muntenescu. At one point, he crossed into Romania with aspirations of becoming a professional actor. Eventually, his parents persuaded him to return and become a Greek-Catholic priest in Șoimuș, where he later became the promoter of a new amateur theatrical group.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁸ Ioșif Pervain, "Societatea diletanților «teatrali» din Cluj (1870–1875)," 347.

⁴⁹ Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London: Routledge, 1992), 16–18.

⁵⁰ Vasilie Podoabă, "Prima societate teatrală română ambulantă din Transilvania," 48.

⁵¹ Ioșif Pervain, "Societatea diletanților «teatrali» din Cluj (1870–1875)," 338.

Decline and Legacy (1873-1875)

The Cluj amateur society entered its final years amid growing political pressure and increasing restrictions on Romanian cultural expression. The Romanian language magazines *Familia* and *Federațiunea* reported on several performances by the Cluj theatrical society in 1873, held in Cluj and Gherla during the months of April, May, June, and August. In 1874 and 1875, it seems the troupe performed only in Cluj. According to a letter published in another Romanian language magazine, *Albina*, the "Amateur Society of Romanian Students in Cluj" commemorated the National Assembly of Blaj on May 3/15, 1874, by staging, on the evening before, the drama *Tribunul* [The Tribune] by Ioan Al. Lapedatu, inspired by the revolutionary movements of 1848. The proceeds from the performance were donated to the Romanian "people's school" in Cluj.

In the preamble to his review, *Albina's* correspondent praised the accomplishments of the amateurs, particularly their three tours through Romanian-inhabited areas of Transylvania, their "dexterity in executing roles and in selecting the most national plays, written in the finest Romanian language," and the fact that the money raised from performances was often donated to charitable causes.⁵² Maria Centea was commended for her role in *Tribunul*, which she played "very well," alongside Vasile Filip, who excelled in the lead role, and Gheție, who portrayed a "lady," demonstrating "great skill in playing female roles." Also mentioned among the cast were Tanțiu, Găvrus, Basiliu Pop, Harogoș, and others.

A few days later, on 16 May, as noted by the same chronicler, the amateurs performed *Muza de la Burdujeni* [The Muse of Burdujeni] by Negruzzi and *Fântâna de piatră* [The Stone Fountain] by Ioan Al. Lapedatu. The *Albina* correspondent also lamented the lack of interest shown by part of the Romanian public in Cluj towards the amateur troupe's performances (estimating they had staged "30 to 40" productions), attributing this, in part, to the limitations of the performance space. In this context, mention is made of the efforts of Archpriest Gavrilă Pop, "under whose spiritual guidance the society progressed," to secure a more suitable venue for their theatrical activities.

⁵² Un clujean [A Cluj citizen], "Cluj, în 24 mai 1874 [Cluj, May 24, 1874]," *Albina*, no. 41 (Thursday, May 30 / June 11, 1874): 4.

The Cluj troupe's repertoire was, for the most part, similar to that of Matei Millo and included the following plays: *Lipitorile satelor* [The Leeches of the Villages], *Millo director or Mania posturilor* [Millo the Director, or The Obsession with Appointments], *Arvinte și Pepelea* [Arvinte and Pepelea] (performed under the title *Cuiul lui Pepelea* [Pepelea's Nail]), *Paraclisierul or Florin și Florica* [The Sexton, or Florin and Florica], *Nunta țărănească* [The Peasant Wedding], *Rusaliile în satul lui Cremene* [Whitsuntide in Cremene's Village] – all written by Vasile Alecsandri –, *Muza de la Burdujeni* [The Muse of Burdujeni] by Costache Negruzzi, and the operetta *Baba Hârca* [Old Hag], authored by Millo himself. In addition to these, the Cluj amateurs also staged: *Răscoala lui Horea* [Horea's Uprising] by Iosif Vulcan, *Judecata lui Brânduș* [Brânduș's Trial], *Vlăduțul mamei* [Mother's Vlăduț] by I. Lupescu, *Meșterul Manole* [Master Manole], *Balul mortului or Mortul și danțul* [The Dead Man's Ball, or The Corpse and the Dance], an Italian farce adapted by V. A. Urechia, *Fântâna de piatră* [The Stone Fountain], a one-act play by the Transylvanian Ioan Al. Lapedatu, and the one-act comedy *Soldatul român* [The Romanian Soldier]. Their repertoire also included numerous patriotic poems and songs.

One of the troupe's staples was the poem *Copila română* [The Romanian Girl] from the comedy *Nu vătămați fetele bătrâne* [Do Not Harm the Old Maids] (1868) by Iosif Vulcan, which had become famous through Matilda Pascaly's performance during the first Transylvanian tour of her husband's company, and which remained a staple of the region's cultural repertoire until the Great Union. Margareta Alesandrescu also recited it during her tour with the Cluj amateurs. It was then "inherited" from her by Maria Centea.

In August of the same year (1875), the Hungarian government published the decree prohibiting Romanian theatrical performances without prior concession from the Minister of the Interior. *Familia* reported the news succinctly: "Our theatrical actors, singers, and travelling theatrical troupes will henceforth be unable to give performances unless they have obtained a concession for this purpose from the Minister of the Interior."⁵³ The activity of the Cluj amateur society also came to an end.

Nonetheless, the legacy of this amateur troupe endured. During its brief existence, the student performers staged dozens of productions, toured

⁵³ "Teatru [Theatre]," *Familia*, no. 31 (Sunday, August 3/15, 1875): 368.

Romanian communities across Transylvania, mentored future cultural activists, and offered an early model of grassroots theatrical organization. Their work served not only artistic but also national goals, creating space for Romanian voices in a city where they were seldom heard.

Conclusion

The history of Cluj's first Romanian amateur theatre troupe is more than just a local instance of student initiative; it illuminates the intersection of cultural practice and national affirmation within the broader political and cultural context of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. These young performers and their mentors created a space for the Romanian language and identity in a city where both were systematically marginalized. Although their activities were limited in duration and scale, they nonetheless anticipated later institutional developments and responded to the pressures of their time with creativity, commitment, and a clear sense of purpose.

Though operating with modest means, the troupe was part of a broader movement of cultural resilience. Their model spread – through the students themselves, their performances, and the press that documented their efforts. In retrospect, their contribution can be seen as both a rehearsal and a signal: a rehearsal for future national theatre initiatives, and a signal that Romanian voices, even in peripheral or improvised spaces, could assert visibility and legitimacy on the public stage.

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“From Country X”: An Early Play and Performance on the Holocaust in Hungarian¹

Abstract. Opening the space for the holocaust experience in theatre happened very early on the Hungarian stage in Kolozsvár/Cluj. This is going on in a city which was hit by the Anti-Jewish laws in September 1940, Jewish artists forced out from the theatre, some of whom continuing to work in the Concordia Jewish Theatre. In July 1945 the premier of Ignác Weinréb’s drama *Cowards and heroes* took place in the City Theatre. The play in five acts tells the story of a Jewish family taken to Auschwitz and then liberated by the Soviets in a very direct language, telling the realms of the holocaust experience in a historically faithful, almost documentary manner. It was a unique event on the Hungarian stage; the play was never performed in other theatres in Hungary, neither any other holocaust play talking in a direct manner of the events of the recent past. The paper will examine the context of this premier and the play itself, looking at its strength and weaknesses, and also on how it was received by the public. One of the major questions is why such a play did not attract any interest of the theatre historians, the author completely disappeared from the canon (i.e. was never part of it). In my paper I will argue – according to the holocaust memory studies – that such an early work telling the story of the holocaust experience in an artistic manner will very soon disappear in the coming era of the big silence.

Keywords: *Hungarian Theatre, Holocaust play, Cluj/Kolozsvár, Ignác Weinréb*

¹ This article could not have been written without the generous help of Tamás Gajdó, János Schönveitz, and Zoltán Tibori Szabó, who were always ready to answer my questions. A version of this present article was published in *Holocaust – Studii și cercetări*, 15, no 1(16)(2023): 237-251.

The premier of Ignác Weinréb's drama *Gyávák és hősök* ("Cowards and Heroes") took place in the City Theatre of Kolozsvár/Cluj, Romania, on 7 July 1945; the play was performed at least five times. The drama in five acts tells the story of a Jewish family taken to Auschwitz and then liberated by the Soviets, using a remarkably direct language, representing the reality of the Holocaust experience in a historically faithful, almost documentary manner. I consider it one of the earliest – if not *the* first – drama in Hungarian about the Holocaust.² To the best of my knowledge, it was never performed again in other theatres in Hungary or Romania, never published, and its author was completely forgotten. In my paper I will give a context of the play, have a close reading of it, and reconstruct as much as possible about its author's literary career.

This play and its premier did never attract any interest from theatre historians; the author completely disappeared from the canon (or more precisely, was never part of it), neither his play nor his Holocaust memorial book is part of the canonic Holocaust literature.

To reconstruct Ignác Weinréb's biography is not an easy task, although he is the author of at least three plays and a Holocaust testimony. According to his wedding certificate, Ignác Weinreb, a trader of Israelite religion, was born in Marghita/Margitta (today Romania) on 1 April 1897 and married in 1920 in Paks (Hungary). According to his grave inscription, he died in 1955. His wife, Róza Rosenfeld died in Auschwitz in 1944. Their two children, son Sándor Vándor and daughter Edith Deutsch (Weinreb), both survived the Holocaust, and both gave testimonies of their survival.³ Both children live in the United States. Edith wrote: "When Jews were being oppressed, we moved to be with family to a small town, Paks, located on the bank of the

² I will use the term "Holocaust literature", according to which "one can regard as holocaust literature everything what depicts one of the elements of a group of events referred to by the colligative term 'Holocaust'".

Tamás Kisantal, *Az emlékezés és a felejtés helyei. A vészidőszak ábrázolása a magyar irodalomban a háború utáni években* (Pécs: Kronosz Kiadó, 2020), 17.

³ Testimonies of the son Sándor Vándor:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPwYr41i3g&ab_channel=AuschwitzStudyGroup

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQDL0HxB3lc&ab_channel=WolfgangFranz

https://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=9871&fbclid=IwAR1sJZe_WpYid_W3Q-wxxV7frwBTzdBM8_PYfoEum9AZ_gV8u84zCYIML-U

Testimony of Edith Deutsch (Weinreb):

https://www.preserveauschwitz.org/survivor/edith-deutsch-weinreb/?fbclid=IwAR01zl4cEgb-ihT2Y-qYvhCvtBVXC-vSb6eDi7s13xNMEScD_Z0rRZS6YAs

Danube, where my father sold dairy products and my brother and I helped with deliveries.”⁴ We know that they moved to Rákospalota, a suburb of Budapest, in 1934, and Weinréb worked under the name Imre Vándor.⁵ This source also claims that he wrote the play *Dajka* (“The Nanny”) under the same pseudonym.⁶ According to his daughter’s and his own testimony, he was deported from the Budapest ghetto together with his family.

Although Ignác Weinréb co-authored several plays, the first ever to be presented on stage under his own name was also the last one: the “Cowards and Heroes”. All his earlier works are either under a pseudonym, false authorship (the difference will be cleared later), or were banned before the premier. As I will demonstrate, with such an obviously Jewish name, it was difficult for an author to have his plays performed even in Budapest.

Weinréb’s theatre work is little known, and none of his work is part of any canon. His first and most successful play is entitled “Timosa, the Soldier of the Tzar”.

Timosa

His big success, performed no less than 375 times according to a poster, which is a unique achievement, is the *Timosa*. The play was premiered at the Bethlen Square Theatre on 10 December 1932, under the authorship of Avigdor An-Schell, an invented Russian-Yiddish writer. This theatre often had in its repertory shows about Jewish life and characters; it was sometimes called a theatre “against anti-Semitism”.⁷ The co-authors invented a Russian Jew and faked a biography of him: according to an article⁸, the play of An-Schell, who lives in Odessa, was brought to Budapest by a Hungarian prisoner of war, Ignác Weinréb. On the very peak of its success, at the 300th performance, the real authors, the actor Lajos Gellért and Ignác Weinréb, “a bank clerk”, revealed their identity as authors of the play.⁹ The director of

⁴ See Edith Deutsch’s testimony.

⁵ Ráchel Áhároni, Budapest Memorial Book. *A Rákospalotai Zsidó Hitközség története*. (New York: New York Public Library; Amherst: National Yiddish Book Centre, 2003): 188.

⁶ I did not research this play written with Miklós Dömjén, which premiered in 1936.

⁷ <https://holocaust.archivportal.hu/hu/temak/szinhazi-kiserlet-az-antiszemizmus-elleneben>

⁸ *Színházi élet*, 7-13 May 1933, Issue 20. pg. 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*

the play, Gellért and Weinréb tell the press that after *The Dybbuk*'s success, the two of them invented a new author. Gellért (who also evokes this in his autobiography¹⁰) remembers how he met Weinréb: as a friend's friend, the unknown Weinréb came to him with a badly written play, which had some good ideas and images. The play was rewritten by the actor; thus, they became co-authors. Gellért told the journalist that he himself comes from a well-known rabbi family and thus was able to add a lot to the play. But there are two reasons why they invented a new author instead of using their own names. Gellért says: "the name Weinréb did not promise to be a good letter of recommendation", hinting at its Jewish origins; and because playwriting actors are suspect. Another article¹¹ claims that Weinréb, when visiting Gellért with his play, also left some money on the table, for the actor was in need for his rent. This article also claims that it was Weinréb's ambition to become famous after the 300th performance. After the original authors have come out, the same issue of *Színházi élet*,¹² the important theatre weekly, published the play under the names of the real authors.

At the height of success, Gellért also promises that "An-Schell" will have a new premier next season, and the plot story is again an idea by Weinréb. Weinréb acknowledges Gellért's part in the play in a short statement, saying that the success is due to him. The article also announces the promising international career of the play.¹³

In the Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség* the advertisement¹⁴ of the performance is strikingly revealing: "Every Hungarian Jew is obliged to watch the *Timosa*." The huge success of *Timosa* can be attributed to its rich array of theatrical devices, among which Russian-Jewish musical elements play a particularly significant role. The portrayal of Jewish characters and the depiction of Jewish life likely held strong appeal in a city with a substantial Hungarian Jewish population. Notably, this success unfolded at a critical historical juncture: the rise of anti-Semitism in Hungary and the emergence of Gyula Gömbös, one of the country's most openly anti-Semitic prime ministers. Such a success with a Jewish story couldn't have been achieved a year later, at the end of the year 1933.

¹⁰ Lajos Gellért, *Nyitott szemmel* (Budapest: Bibliotheca, 1958).

¹¹ György Rác, "Ki emlékszik még a Timosára?," *Új élet*, August 1, 15 (1982): 2.

¹² Lajos Gellért and Ignác Weinréb: "Timosa", *Színházi élet*, 7-13 May, 20 (1933): 107-133.

¹³ I could not trace any international premier of this play.

¹⁴ *Egyenlőség*, 10 December, 1932.

According to a review¹⁵, the music (composed by Eugen Stepat, poems by Ernő Innocent) has Yiddish, Hebrew, and Chassidic motifs. The story unfolds in a town called Pinsk, in a family of traditional, faithful Jews. The Jewish trader loves the Talmud, he is a model of the faithful Jew, but unable to make a living from his trade. Women are portrayed as loving, faithful characters. Timosa is an adopted Jewish child, with Russian Christian parents. He falls in love with the family's daughter, Ruchele, who proves to be his sister. When he finds out about his origins, he decides to enroll in the Russian army. According to a review¹⁶ – unlike the serious play by An-sky, *The Dybbuk* –, this is just an entertaining comedic piece of Jewish folk theatre¹⁷, “with singing and dancing, the romance of the ghetto, and the sentimentality and humor of the ‘lost and found child’ from the previous century, but without all the Rembrandtian shadowplay of Russian Jewish life”. Lajos Gellért was the director of the performance and also played the main character, the father; Gellért's fine acting is highly appreciated by reviewers.

The authors' subsequent collaboration, a play titled *Bengirjon*, planned to premiere in November 1933, was banned by the police.

Bengirjon

The play was advertised as a “pogrom play,” and its manuscript is preserved in the estate of actor Artúr Somlay, housed in the Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute.¹⁸ This moment coincided with the rise of anti-Semitic movements at the universities of Budapest and Debrecen. The banning of the play and the temporary closure of the universities due to anti-Semitic attacks were explicitly linked on the front page of *Függetlenség*.¹⁹ The banning of the play after just one performance was widely discussed in the media and received different interpretations. According to the police, “the play is Jewish in subject matter, spirit, and setting, and it is untimely to be staged.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Pesti Hírlap*, December 11, 1932.

¹⁷ The folk theatre stays for the Hungarian *népszínház*, the German *Volksstück*.

¹⁸ Of Artúr Somlay, kept in the Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute. I would like to thank Tamás Gajdó, who was kind to inform me about the play.

¹⁹ “Bengirjon”, *Függetlenség*, December 2, 1933.

The depiction of the Jewish milieu in Galicia or Poland, the horrors of the pogrom in the prelude, the portrayal of weak, helpless, and unstable Christians, in contrast with the great Jewish characters, are likely to sow the seeds of further Christian-Jewish antagonisms and disputes, and thus to cause unrest among the Jewish and Christian population, and even to increase the already explosive state of excitement among the college youth".²⁰ "*Timosa* here, *Timosa* there, *Timosa* everywhere" is the title of an article²¹ published long after the banning of the play, claiming that there are too many Jewish topics around, also at the National Theatre. One of the reasons for the banning of the play was the theatre where it was performed: the Kamara ("Chamber") Theatre was part of the National Theatre, and while more peripheral theatres could tackle Jewish topics, the National wasn't expected to do it.²²

It was not the only play to be banned: Max Nordau's *Dr. Kohn*, which premiered on 14 June 1933 at the same Bethlen Square Theatre where *Timosa* had achieved great success, was also prohibited after its first performance. The official justification for the ban was as follows: "the content and staging of the play juxtapose religious and social issues, in particular Christian and Jewish worldviews, in an all too sharp and hostile a manner, which is likely to disturb the present exemplary order and tranquility of the population of the capital"²³. The interpretation of the ban differed in the newspapers; one of them wrote: "there is no need for sectarian plays, no need for a suburban theatre company to make a business out of an issue that fortunately does not exist in Hungary today".²⁴ Sectarian plays would stay for play of Jewish topics; the play discussed the question of assimilation. The author was born in Budapest, and in his work, he represented the failure of assimilation, becoming a warrior of Zionism.

²⁰ "Ferenczy főkapitány betiltotta a Bengirjon előadását", *Függetlenség*, December 3, 1933.

²¹ "Timosa itt, Timosa ott, Timosa mindenütt", *Függetlenség*, March 25, 1934.

²² I am grateful to theatre historian Tamás Gajdó for pointing out these circumstances.

²³ The banning of the play is presented here: <https://holocaust.archivportal.hu/hu/temak/az-asszimilacio-szomorujateka-doktor-kohn-cimu-szindarab-betilasa>

²⁴ "Betiltották a dr. Kohn előadását", *Az Est*, June, 17 1933.

The Context: the City and the Jewish Artists

The premier of Ignác Weinréb's "Cowards and Heroes" in 1945 takes place in a city which was hit hardly by the anti-Jewish legislation introduced in September 1940, after Northern Transylvania was returned to Hungary. Jewish artists are forced out of the theatre. A Jewish theatre opened in the city, called at the beginning Concordia or Haggibor, then simply the Jewish Theatre.²⁵ The theatre operated from April 1941 to March 1944, when Hungary was occupied by Germany, on today's Dobrogeanu-Gherea Street no. 17. It was run by Sándor Forgách, then Mihály Fekete, who will direct Weinréb's play. János Kemény, director of the local Hungarian Theatre, provided moral and financial support to the Jewish Theatre.

It is important to note that the last performance of the Jewish Theatre, which closes on 7 March 1944, was the musical *Timosa*, co-authored by Ignác Weinréb. This play was put on stage at the demand of the public. It is symptomatic that for each performance held in Cluj/Kolozsvár, male actors had to be replaced with females since males were taken to forced labor.²⁶ The poster of this performance has been preserved as well.²⁷

The city theatre reopens not much later, in October 1944, when the Soviets enter the city. In spring 1945 there are already critical reviews of the theatre, which offers a cheap, operetta-based artistic program, the local critic demanding a more meaningful and artistically relevant repertoire.

Soon there is a change in the leadership of the theatre. Jenő Janovics, the legendary director of the National Theatre in Cluj/Kolozsvár, who ran the theatre for 30 years, comes back to the city from Budapest, where he as a Hungarian Jew survived the persecutions. Janovics's name and activity was dramatically erased from the cultural memory since the introduction of the anti-Jewish legislation.²⁸ A different artistic repertoire is expected from Janovics, who was known for his ambitious artistic programming. Janovics takes the risk to premier the contemporary play about the recent experiences of the Jews.

²⁵ See the history of the Jewish Theatre in Kolozsvár/Cluj in: Sándor Szigyártó, A kolozsvári Zsidó Színház 1941 őszétől 1944 márciusáig. *Honismeret* 23, no 6 (1995): 80-82; Dániel Lőwy, A kolozsvári Concordia zsidó színház története. *Múlt és Jövő*, no 1 (2000): 75-79

²⁶ See Dániel Lőwy's article.

²⁷ See the article of Szigyártó above.

²⁸ I studied this topic in the article: *Ami megszakad. A kolozsvári Nemzeti Színház újranyitásáról 1941-ben*. In: *Színház*, September 2013.

The space now opens up in many respects: artists considered Jewish become part of the company again, and more importantly, the leadership is taken by the legendary director, who recently was viewed as a Jew by the legislation. And with the premier of "Cowards and Heroes", Jewish heroes and their experience are presented to the wider public.

Part of the context is the once-large Jewish community of the city.²⁹ In May 1944 more than 16,000 Jews are taken to the brick factory, now turned into a ghetto, then deported in six transports to Auschwitz (only about 350 of them get on a special and controversial rescue train, called the Kasztner-train).

The Play

In the local daily *Világosság* the play is advertised as follows: "First performance. The actual drama and sufferings of the deportees"; "unfortunate deportees' sufferings" by a world-famous writer.³⁰ The more neutral *deportee* is the word used in this age for the Jews.

The 5-act play, whose typed manuscript is preserved at the Hungarian National Library³¹, has a linear story that follows a family from its deportation to a death camp to finally being liberated.

Act 1 opens in the apartment of a family with two children, one of whom, Efrike, is sick. The family is visited by a doctor, who says the child is not seriously ill. The head of the family, Eizik, asks for information from the doctor about the forthcoming events, saying that he must have a closer relationship with the local authorities; he is not a just "simple Jew" as he, Eizik is. The doctor doesn't want to answer. In a short monologue, Eizik depicts how Jews and "left-wing non-Jews" (the latter were subsequently cut from the script) are taken by Nazis from their homes. No such thing will happen here, says the doctor, as an anti-Semitic song is sung on the street.

²⁹ See major works about the Holocaust in Norther Transylvania by Randolph L. Braham: *Genocide and Retribution: The Holocaust in Hungarian-Ruled Northern Transylvania*. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff; Hingham, Ma. 1983; Dániel Lőwy: *A Kálváriától a tragédiáig* (Kolozsvár: Koinónia, 2005).

³⁰ *Világosság*, July 5, 1945.

³¹ Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, MM 284.

"The scum of our nation", remarks the doctor. "The majority in our country", replies Eizik, looking out the window.

The postman arrives with the salute of the Arrow Cross Party, "Long live Szálasi". Eizik's letter to his parents is being returned; from this he learns that his parents were already rounded up.

The daughter, Edit returns with some medication for her sick brother. Bence meets Edit, they discuss the coming dark events; Bence decides to become a partisan with fake documents, Edit must stay with her family and sick brother.

An old woman, a neighbor visits them in tears and tells the story of how a poor, sick Jew was beaten on the street. Bence rushes into the house, reporting that the "gendarmes" have come to round them up at the brick factory and then take them to Germany. Eizik explains that they as a family cannot hide anywhere; propaganda has killed the love out of their fellow townspeople. "I share the fate of persecuted people", says Eizik. He asks his wife Cene about her plan. In the hell that is waiting for them, Edit stays with her family.

A loud, symbolic storm breaks out. The police are heard from the streets, commanding the people around as they are gathered. Bence escapes, but the police want to stop him – a gun is fired. A gendarme enters, the family is given ten minutes to pack. Policemen start to search the house and the pockets of the women's pants, saying "you don't need this anymore". Money and jewelry are taken from them. The little boy's friend says goodbye to him. The storm gets louder as the family leaves the house. The small town where all these events unfold is not named.

Act 2 takes place in an overcrowded train headed towards an unknown destination; the suffering of the people is portrayed. The mother hugs her son. Two corpses are covered with paper. A man is praying. A newborn is in the lap of a woman, Sára. It is the third day of their travel; the young mother hasn't had any water and she cannot feed her baby. Sára and Edit talk about Sára's suffering. Edit thinks they are taken to forced labor. A man called Simon has lost his faith. Efrike, the sick boy is dying of thirst, Edit tries to get him water. Edit gives a bottle to a soldier, but he breaks it. Her mother has a breakdown. An SS soldier enters. Edit asks him for help. Efrike is shot on the open stage by a Nazi soldier. Simon reflects on human cruelty

in a monologue. Cene, the mother sings like a madwoman. The train arrives to its destination. Selection starts, the family is ripped apart.

Act 3 takes place in the unnamed women's camp. The prisoners recall the good old times, holidays, and their families. They want to hold a liturgy on this day, the Jam-Kipor.³² Life in concentration camp is unfolding, with details of selection, persecution, hints at the gas chambers, starvation. Sara is giving up on life. Edit is trying to keep everybody's spirits high; she wants to survive the camp. She has a plan and shares it with a campmate. A selection is carried out, Sára is selected along with other women. A woman offers to be exchanged for a young girl, who is thus saved. As those selected say goodbye, they give away their possessions – a page from a prayerbook, a blanket. A wave of rage and revolt washes over the barrack. The Jam-Kipor is celebrated; Edit recalls how it was celebrated at home. The Ovinó Málkénó is read, the Kol-Nidré is sung. The kapo enters in rage and threatens with a tough punishment.

Act 4. depicts prisoners laboring outside the barracks, with women subjected to physically demanding work. An emotionally charged love scene unfolds between a female kapo and a German soldier. The sound of enemy aircraft is heard overhead.

The kapo explains how she deals with the Jewish communist prisoners, who show no signs of resistance. She says she hates them because they are stubborn and tough as steel (this interpretation is a contradiction of the play). The organized resistance of the prisoners unfolds. Edit is the leader among them. They manage to obtain weapons and are ready to attack.

Soldiers enter with the kapo and begin discussing the war, expressing both their exhaustion and their fear of the approaching Soviet forces – referred to as the "Katyushas." The German soldier bids farewell to his lover, the kapo.

As the sound of the Soviet army draws nearer, the German soldier unexpectedly joins the prisoners in restraining the kapo. The scene concludes with the arrival of Soviet troops, a brief combat sequence, and the liberation of the camp. (A more extended depiction of the battle is cut from the manuscript.) Edit and Bence are reunited.

³² I keep the orthography of the manuscript.

Act 5. returns to the family apartment introduced in Act I, now in ruins. The father and daughter arrive home; the father is visibly in pain. "Our Arrow Cross friends knew how to do this", says Edit after looking around. (The "Arrow Cross" is cut on page 60 of the manuscript.) In the dialog of the two different narratives that unfolds around their future and past, Edit is looking to the future with hope, she is building a new life, while the father's condition is one of grief, suffering and pessimism. The old woman greets them happily. She describes how those "worms" came and took everything from the abandoned flat. Edit returns with food given by a Soviet soldier. She remarks that the Red Army is now bringing life instead of death to the former deportees. The final act – only four pages in length – concludes with the triumphant singing of the *Internationale*, both onstage and heard from outside.

In this play the author keeps the unfolding dramatic events on an uncertain geographical territory; he does not mention the country or the city from which the Jewish family is deported. Upon arrival to the camp, when the deportees are asked where they are from, the answer is "country x". Nevertheless, the designation *csendőr* (i.e., gendarme) hints at the Hungarian authorities. This designation is used in the first act, but strangely enough, cut from act 3, when the ghetto is remembered. This contradiction can only be explained by dramaturgical inconsistency. The other clear hint at the Hungarian authorities is the mentioning of the Arrow Cross Party in acts 1 and 5. The salute of the party (and the name of its leader, Szálasi) is kept in act 1, while after the homecoming, the reference to "our Arrow Cross (*nyilas*) friends" has been cut out. This is again a strange inconsistency, reflecting the doubtful and uncertain moment: can a reference to Hungarian Nazi authorities be used in a text and directly spoken out loud on the stage? From this point of view, the play reflects – in my understanding – the moment of transition, the permission and simultaneous blocking of references to the Hungarian reality.

The Jewish experience and sufferings are in many respects presented in an almost documentary manner, especially the train and death camp scenes, and from this point of view, Weinréb's play is a unique artistic enterprise. It directly portrays different Jewish identities, from the religious to the secular and assimilated – it is a story of the representatives of the Jewish community. This is also a major strength of the play – the ability to

point out and directly name those who have suffered. The references to a Jewish holiday, traditions, songs, and religious practices outline the reality and diversity of an ethnic group. However, the story lacks strong characters with whom the audience could identify and thus empathize with; some unrealistic and inauthentic scenes (like the one between the kapo and the German soldier) and many melodramatic ones weaken the play, which offers a somewhat simplistic narrative of victim/perpetrator, coward/hero. Women are portrayed as active, politically conscious characters, who are not passive victims, but active heroes; this is, again, part of the strength of the play. It also contains some historical anachronisms (like the one of the opening scene, when the family learns about the forthcoming "hell" – of which people were not aware yet); also, the exaggeration, or even the playwright's self-deception, of the heroic Jewish resistance in the camp; the Jews at the brick factory were generally unaware of their upcoming deportation to Germany (the general idea was that the Jews of Kolozsvár/Cluj will be taken to forced labor to Kenyérmező, a nonexistent place in Hungary). As an early Holocaust play, it offers an optimistic perspective of liberation and salvation (due to the Soviet army), which overshadows suffering. Its language is often sentimental rather than poetic. A strange wording is used twice ("action" instead of "selection"). In some passages – unusual for a drama – author's comments are added; such comments betray the weakness of the author in depicting a situation in actions and dialogs.

Criticism and Performance

According to the local newspaper *Világosság*, the premiere was highly anticipated because of the theme. The unnamed critic³³ (probably Zoltán Jékely) states that the horrors of the wars are generally portrayed in "great and eternal" artistic works only after a decade or two, adding that Weinreb did not wait for his experience to ripen but put it immediately on the stage in a raw form. The critic calls his work a "propaganda play" or a "reportage play" that manages to suppress all hatred but lacks literary values. Thus, according to the reviewer, the true drama about the suffering of the deportees will only be written later.

³³ *Világosság*, July 16, 1945.

The play has been performed at least five times at the very end of the theatre season. It premiered on Saturday, 7 July. It was not renewed in the following season. According to the review in the Social Democratic newspaper *Erdély*, the premier was attended by Soviet army representatives. At the end, the *Internationale* was sung not only by the actors but also by the audience.

One of the articles announces a Budapest premier, of which no further information is available. The critic of the newly founded Social Democratic newspaper *Erdély*³⁴ however, offered a more favourable assessment of the production:

"On Saturday evening, the Municipal Theatre held an extremely interesting world premiere. It presented a new, topical drama by Ignác Weinréb, the author of the highly successful play 'Timosa', which projects in front of the audience the terrible fate of the deportees. The play was understandably very well received, so much so that many people were unable to get into the auditorium because all tickets were sold out. As an indication of the dramatic tension and intriguing plot of this novelty, many members of the Red Army who were present, but understood little or nothing of the text, sat through all five acts in the theatre and applauded the drama and its characters. The plot of the new play is so cinematically interesting and creates such tension that the spectators, their hearts thumping away, await the resolution, the slightest relief from the situation, as they sit, almost frozen, breathless, while all the horror that no writer could have invented, flash before their eyes. The old thesis is confirmed: reality surpasses imagination. And in this war, events have taken place and the flame of suffering has risen so high that, when seen on stage, in the form of people brought to life, the viewer is struck by the shocking effect of what the stage can offer.

The writer has done nothing more than show reality through the terrible fate of a deported Jewish family, full of humanity and soul: the moment of deportation, the horrific journey of the wagon that took the unfortunates to their fate, then the labor camp with its sadistic inspector and soldiers, and finally, the miraculous moment when the Red Army soldiers liberated the victims, who had trusted in this moment with a strong spirit and faith, and who had been helped in their rebellion by an honest German soldier. In this scene, the play reaches its climax, and when a platoon of Soviet soldiers sings, then marches on stage in grey uniforms, young and chanting, a veritable storm of applause and enthusiasm erupts from the audience.

³⁴ "Gyávák és hősök", *Erdély*, July 11, 1945.

The piece, which never stops for a moment, is accompanied by deep sighs and choked sobs in the auditorium, providing the sad background music of experiencing and reliving. The dark, depressive, and horrific scenes are only tempered by a glimmer of humor and cheerfulness in the third act – and rightly so, as the audience's nerves, like the strings of an overstrung instrument, are stretched to the breaking point while the bloody realities of the drama play out before them. We believe that this new play – written by its author with a pen dipped in his own blood – will be a success on our stages, because we can think of nothing more effective and contemporary than the reportage drama of "Cowards and Heroes". Mihály Fekete has put his heart and soul into directing the drama, and as the protagonist, he has heated his sentences to the highest degree of despair and sadness. Mária Felszeghy played the role of the brave young heroine Edit with great feeling. Among the many actors, we must make special mention of József Király, who played the role of a deported man with surprising dramatic power. Zsuzsa Lőrincz, the young opera singer, brought us the despair of the mother separated from her child with vivid power. Endre Senkálzsky was excellent as the honest, rebellious German soldier, and the superbly moving Margit Bara as the cruel young German inspector. Margit Kőszeghy once again proved her versatility. Jenő Flóra was sympathetic as a brave, uncompromising Jewish boy. Lili Hegyi's village woman was first-rate. Borowszky's wicked German soldier was the epitome of Teutonic arrogance. In the barracks scene of the deported women, I was struck by the serious talent and heartfelt lines of the theatre's little dancer, Lenke Pleth. The skillful Ilona Dorián, Béla Lantos and Ferenc Szentes played even greater roles in the performance, which involved almost all members of the dramatic company. The current play is sure to attract a similar full house at the following performances."

This article vividly reflects the intense impact of the performance on the audience. According to historical sources, only a thousand deported Jews have until then returned, but the performance is aimed at the whole community of the city, including the Soviet army present in the audience. As a cathartic moment and performative act, the *Internationale* was sung both on the stage and by the audience, showing that the two spaces share the same reality. This celebratory act transformed the drama into a triumph of "democratic powers" and an act of victory.

Zeitstück

The play may be described as a *Zeitstück* – a dramatic genre that responds to recent or current events through direct, immediate language. One reason Hungarian theatre did not, or perhaps could not, engage with contemporary realities on stage lies in a structural, tradition-based limitation. Within the Hungarian theatrical canon, the *Zeitstück* has never been regarded as possessing inherent artistic value. The critical discourse of the 1930s was influenced among others by the critic Aurél Kárpáti.³⁵ The critic would call *Zeitstück* a contemporary drama, a dramatized reportage, talking to the present and about the present, in a fresh and direct manner, as a newspaper article. A “modern” genre, says Kárpáti, ironically putting *modern* in quotation marks. The question the critic asks is whether the appearance of the *Zeitstück* on Hungarian stages is a reason to celebrate, or is this a genre that rather falsifies the drama. Kárpáti contrasts the poetry of a drama and its current content, arguing that all great plays are both poetic and topical, they are timeless and timely at the same time. “She (i.e., the *Zeitstück*) speculates on what she herself has given to the public, but on what life has given them”, he states.

Kárpáti speaks about the cheap and easy ways of the *Zeitstück*’s effect and concludes that this genre represents a danger to Hungarian stages, as instead of illusions, it offers the photographic pictures of rough reality. In this competition, the poetic, classical dramatic literature wins against the “contemporary” drama. In short, Kárpáti did not find any value in this genre. Is it a coincidence that under this angry article about the *Zeitstück* there is a commercial advertisement of *Timosa*, written by Weinréb with his co-author? Probably (but an ironic coincidence for sure).

But this was not the only opinion: soon after Kárpáti’s article, an answer was published by the theatre critic and dramaturg Pál Kürti.³⁶ He claims that there is no such danger as envisioned by Kárpáti in Hungarian theatres, since there is little of what we could call *Zeitstück* on Hungarian stages; there are actually few references to contemporary events. “Out there”

³⁵ Aurél Kárpáti, “Korszerűtlen elmélekedés a korszerű drámáról”, *Pesti Napló*, December 25, 1932. Kárpáti considered this issue so important that he included his essay in his collection of essays: Aurél Kárpáti, *Menekülő lélek* (Vajda János Társaság, Budapest), 1935. *Communication* 58, no. 4 (2007): 619.

³⁶ *Pesti Napló*, December 31, 1932.

(i.e., in other countries), he writes, the *Zeitstück* means brave criticism of the social order, a tool of agitation in the hands of political parties. But Kürti also claims that a theatre that wants nothing and has nothing to say is no more valuable than the pulpit of the *Zeitstück*, adding – and this may be his strongest argument – that the illusion advocated by Kárpáti only serves to veil those social realities which are not to be seen by the public; that journalism and reportage is more honest than cheap aesthetics and entertainment. Another critic claims³⁷ that the topics of the *Zeitstück* are the “quicksand” of everyday interest, hinting at the quickly passing interest for them. “There is no dramatic genre that is less able to stand the winds of time than contemporary drama.”

What I claim here is that there are two major obstacles that withhold the theatre from speaking about the Holocaust in the early years: one is the immanent tradition of the stage, the mistrust towards a genre which directly and immediately reacts to reality; the other is the developing silence around the Holocaust.

Although in his memoirs the author says that other Hungarian theatres in Romania performed this play, I could not find any traces of this. This autobiography, the *Amerikai üzenetek*³⁸ (“Messages from America”), is a heavily fragmented piece of writing, which shows mostly Weinréb’s weaknesses as an author; the text cannot be read as a documentary report, or trustful memoir, as it does not aim to provide an accurate account of events and personal experience. The book went unnoticed and had no critical assessment. Ignác Weinréb was and remained a marginal author, who was always interested in putting stories of Jews onto paper and the stage. His effort to tell the experience of the Holocaust must have been extremely important for him in the summer of 1945 in Kolozsvár/Cluj. His main supporter in this project, Jenő Janovics, died in the fall.

But the question remains: why weren’t there other early Holocaust dramas on the Hungarian stage? We know of some texts³⁹, e.g., Tibor Déry’s

³⁷Gyula Bisztray, “A színházi év mérlege”, *Magyar Szemle* 27, (1936): 249.

³⁸ Ignác Weinréb, *Amerikai üzenetek* (Budapest: Makkabi, 2007.)

³⁹ The play of Meller Rózsi, *Így kezdődött*, which premiered in September 1945, set in 1930s Germany (I am grateful to Tamás Gajdó, who brought it to my attention); and Magda Soós: *A besúgó*, written in 1947 and analyzed in Tamás Kisantal’s book, *Az emlékezés és a felejtés helyei. A vészidőszak ábrázolása a magyar irodalomban a háború utáni években* (Pécs: Kronosz Kiadó, 2020), 237-244.

A tanúk ("The Witnesses"), which premiered 40 years later. The reasons are to be found in the Jewish/non-Jewish conflict's representation and the Brechtian form. Tibor Déry, one of the most outstanding Hungarian writers of the 20th century, despite all his efforts, could not convince the National Theatre to stage his play; he also turned to the future minister of culture, but with no success.⁴⁰ Déry's play about the deportation of the Jewish population of Budapest "would have been part of the discourse on the responsibility of Hungarian society in the field of contemporary literature and theatre, which István Bibó's influential essay, *The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944*,⁴¹ initiated, and to which the nationalized memory and cultural policy had only one response after 1949: silence."⁴²

What could still be staged in Kolozsvár/Cluj had already become impermissible at the National Theatre in Budapest. Weinreb's play was not followed by any further Holocaust dramas. What ensued was a prolonged silence.

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⁴⁰ The case of the Déry play is analyzed in Ármin Szabó-Székely: *A színházcsinálói felelősségvállalásról. Tibor Déry: A tanúk*. In: *Theatron* 14, no. 3 (2020): 35-44.

⁴¹ Bibó István, *Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után*. <https://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02043/html/362.html>

⁴² See Szabó-Székely Ármin's article.

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From School Drama to Director's Theatre

The Paraliturgical and Educational Precursors of Professional Theatre in 16th- to 18th-Century Transylvania: 300 Years of Mystery Plays in Csíksomlyó

Abstract. The first Hungarian-language professional theatre opened in Kolozsvár (present-day Cluj), the centre of Transylvania, in 1821. Prior to that, from the mid-16th century until 1800, drama in Transylvania was performed in secondary schools. As functional theatre, plays were written by teachers and featured students as an integral part of the educational curriculum. The Calvinist colleges of Marosvásárhely (present-day Târgu Mureş) and Nagyenyed (present-day Aiud), the Jesuit grammar school in Kolozsvár, and the Minorite school in Kézdivásárhely-Kanta (present-day Târgu Secuiesc-Canta) excelled in this field. Biblical and historical plays, consultation dramas, carnival comedies, and plays with romantic themes were produced in Hungarian, including adaptations of Molière and Ovid. The 104, almost exclusively Hungarian, works – mostly Passion Plays – performed between 1721 and 1785 by the students of the Franciscan college at Csíksomlyó (present-day Şumuleu Ciuc), a pilgrimage site dedicated to the Virgin Mary, represent a unique example of Transylvanian school drama. In European terms, the Baroque theatre of Csíksomlyó preserved many elements of medieval theatre the longest, until the 1780s, and in the farthest eastern region, in the Eastern Carpathians: archaic traces of Roman antiquity at the easternmost frontiers of classical and liturgical Latinism. While professional theatre was emerging in Transylvania by the end of the 18th century, between 1768 and 1786, the inhabitants of Western Hungary were already entertained by Felix Berner's child actors. Meanwhile, in Csíksomlyó, medieval mystery dramas with apocryphal elements and allegorical characters were still being performed, serving as linguistic monuments. In the history of Hungarian literature and theatre, regular performances in the native Hungarian language of the masses did not begin with the Enlightenment, but rather 100 years earlier, with the liturgically rooted mystery plays of Csíksomlyó. Their antecedents included the 17th-century dramatized devotional songs for Holy Week, associated with János

Kájoni, and the textually folklorized Lazarus Play (Várad, 1646), as well as the rural Nativity Play recorded by János Czerey in Kézdiszentlélek (present-day Sânzieni). In Transylvania, the dramatized devotional songs and multi-character plays from the 17th and 18th centuries trace the evolving forms of liturgical drama, as well as the expansion and secularization of the themes presented.

Keywords: school drama in Transylvania (17th-18th centuries), Csíksomlyó, Franciscan mystery plays, Hungarian passion plays between 1721-1786, folk dramatic traditions

I. Introduction and Presentation of the Genres Explored

This study explores the history of acting in historic Transylvania (the territory bordered by Király-hágó, or “King’s Pass”) during the centuries leading up to the establishment of the first professional troupe (Kolozsvár, 1792)¹ and the opening of the first professional theatre (Kolozsvár, 1821). During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, theatre was primarily devoted to mystery plays, dramatic sermons, and school plays on both sacred and profane themes. There is a transition between the genres, themes, and even actors of school and professional theatres. László Kelemen, who would later lead the professional company in Kolozsvár, was a pupil of József Bernát Benyák (1745–1829), author of several plays for the school troupe. As a student at the Piarist Grammar School in Pest, Kelemen may have acted in school plays himself, but he certainly witnessed them.² In fact, at the dawn of professional acting, Kristóf Simai’s 13-scene comedy *Igazházi, egy kegyes jó atya* [True-House, or a Pious, Good Father] was printed in Kassa (1790). The play is a translation of the German comedy *Der Bürgermeister* [The Mayor]

¹ Given the fact that this paper discusses theatrical traditions in a predominantly Hungarian-speaking context, geographical places are referred to by their Hungarian names. A concordance with their present-day names and variants is provided in an appendix at the end of the paper for further reference.

² For a more detailed discussion of the connections between school plays and professional theatre, see Imre Nagy, *Iskola és színház. Csokonai vígjátékai és a magyar iskolai komédia* [School and Theatre: Csokonai’s Comedies and Hungarian School Comedy] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2007); Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, *A történelmi dráma alakzatai a 16-18. századi magyar irodalomban* [Forms of Historical Drama in 16th to 18th-Century Hungarian Literature] (Budapest: Uránia Ismeretterjesztő Alapítvány-L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2019), 310-379.

by Aloysius Friedrich Brühl (1739–1793); it became famous when László Kelemen’s company in Pest-Buda adapted it for its inaugural production on October 25, 1790.³ For another aspect of the beginnings of professional acting in Transylvania: three adaptations of Molière were performed in Kolozsvár in 1791 and 1793, titled *Az erőszakos házasság* [The Violent Marriage], *A kénytelenségből való orvos* [Doctor Out of Necessity], and *A Scapin csalárdságai* [Scapin’s Frauds].⁴

As for the theatrical genres current in 17th- and 18th-century Transylvania: mysteries or miracle plays (Mysterienspiel or Geistliches Spiel, Mystère de la passion) were theatrical works of 40,000 to 50,000 lines, often performed over two or three days in the cities of Western Europe in the 13th to 15th centuries. These plays presented the entire salvation story, from Creation to the Last Judgment, with a particular emphasis on the life of Jesus Christ (especially his birth and crucifixion). They served as staged Paupers’ Bibles, helping the illiterate masses understand biblical stories and Christian doctrine through performances in the streets. These performances were organized by lay religious groups (congregations, confraternities) of native speakers outside the church (e.g., Lucerne, Bolzano, Donaueschingen, Tyrolean towns, Vienna, Toledo, York, Chester, or Wakefield). Moralities, also of medieval origin, were plays that presented moral lessons, featuring allegorical figures – personified concepts, habits, qualities, occupations – as well as secular elements such as Beauty, Strength, Wealth, Friendship, Drunkenness, Pleasure, Repentance, Conscience, Love, or Mercy. Moralities might also be combined with mysteries. Examples of both genres can be found in the 18th-century Franciscan theatre of Csíksomlyó, as examined below.

School drama was a feature of early modern education. Between the 1530s and 1792, the theatre available in secondary and higher education in Central Europe, including Hungary, was synonymous with performances by students, aligned with the academic year and church holidays, and staged as

³ Published in *Piarista iskoladrámák* [Piarist School Plays], ed. Katalin Czibula, Júlia Demeter, István Kilián, and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér. Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 5/2 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó–Argumentum Kiadó, 2007), 541–627.

⁴ Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér’s edition was published in *Kollégiumi drámagyűjtemények* [College Drama Collections], ed. Júlia Demeter, red. Katalin Czibula, Júlia Demeter, and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér. Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek, XVIII. század, 7. (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 2015), 875–1040.

an integral part of the curriculum. School drama in historic Hungary ranged from short dialogues and declamations with 2 or 3 characters to multi-act plays with as many as 100 to 130 student actors. These plays were written on sacred or profane themes, in a variety of genres, mainly in Hungarian, Latin, and German, encompassing functional, moral, and patriotic acting. *Acting* per se does not presuppose a script, but *dramatic* performances are always based on playtexts. The databases of the Earlier Hungarian Drama Research Group contain information on some 12,000 plays performed between 1535 and 1792 in the Hungarian Kingdom.⁵ Secular works addressed historical, mythological, and romantic themes, as well as social satire, pastoral subjects, and competitions among craftsmen. Sacred drama included biblical and mystery plays, miracles, spectacular pageants, and morality plays. Among the Protestant denominations we distinguish between Lutheran, Calvinist, and Unitarian school drama. The plays of Catholic grammar schools are categorized by monastic order: in the case of Transylvania, we know of Jesuit, Piarist, Observant Franciscan, and Minorite (Conventual Franciscan) plays, and Greek Catholic school plays in Romanian are also on record.⁶ Performances were given on educational occasions (e.g., examinations, declamations, and the opening and closing of the school year), at representational events (e.g., royal coronations, patron feasts, military parades, and the arrival of distinguished guests), and as depictions of the mystery of liturgical feasts (e.g., Christmas, Epiphany, Good Friday, Easter, and the Feasts of the Eucharist and the Assumption). School plays were scripts for *functional* or *pragmatic theatre*: the performances were not primarily used by teachers at grammar schools (colleges) and Jesuit academies to entertain, but to educate and teach. They were not a prop or an accessory, but rather an integral part of instruction. The text of the performance, its memorization, analytical rehearsal, and presentation constituted the very curricula of history, religion, mythology, linguistics, and philosophy. Thus, the work of the teacher-playwrights and the teenage student actors themselves became living textbooks. Stage performances refined the students' speaking style and articulation skills, defined their

⁵ Júlia Demeter extends the timeframe of school theatre into the 1810s in the same volume (*Kollégiumi drámagyűjtemények*), 10.

⁶ Cinzia Franchi, *Occisio Gregorii in Moldavia vodae tragedice expressa. Az erdélyi román iskoladráma kezdetei és forrásai* [The Beginnings and Sources of Romanian School Drama in Transylvania] (Csíkszereda: Pallas-Akadémia, 1997).

poise, and enhanced their memory. Above all, the staging of historical themes transformed student performances into distinctively patriotic theatre. It provided the actors' and the audience's awareness of country, nation (cf. Hungarus patriotism in the pre-1800 Hungarian Kingdom), and religious confession with substantial content.⁷ Through emblematic expressions utilizing both verbal and figurative representation, the school performance became an *exemplum*, i.e., an exemplary parable.⁸

In Transylvania, four towns stood out in terms of 18th-century school drama: Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely, Kézdivásárhely-Kanta, and Csíksomlyó.

II. Protestant School Drama in Transylvania

The centre of Transylvanian Calvinist theatre was the Szekler city of Marosvásárhely, where between 1750 and 1792 the audience was treated to 12 productions. One of the best Hungarian-language school plays in terms of plot, dramaturgy, and scenography – the three-act comedy *Konok pereskedők* [The Dogged Litigants] by György Nagy – was performed here in 1780. Dramaturgically, it is a typical example of *consultation drama*: it consists

⁷ For more detailed information on school drama, including its function, patterns, and dramatic theory of acting, see István Kilián, "Iskolai színház Magyarországon [School Theatre in Hungary]," in *Magyar színháztörténet 1790–1873*, ed. György Székely and Ferenc Kerényi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990). Online: <https://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02065/html/1kotet/2.html>, 23–27; István Kilián, *A piarista dráma és színház a XVII–XVIII. században* [Piarist Drama and Theatre in the 17th and 18th Centuries] (Budapest: Universitas, 2002), 13–32; Júlia Demeter, "Hungarian School Theatre: A Short Survey," in *Színházvilág – Világszínház*, ed. Katalin Czibula (Budapest: Ráció, 2008), 38–60; Pintér, *A történelmi dráma alakzatai a 16–18. századi magyar irodalomban*, 29–54; Norbert Medgyesy S., *Iskoladramák. Színházok, énekek és ünnepek a XVII–XVIII. századi magyarországi iskolakultúrából* [School Drama: Plays, Songs, and Festivals from 17th- and 18th-Century Hungarian School Culture] (Budapest: Magyar Művészeti Akadémia Kiadó), 2019, 17–50. On dramatic and theatrical theory and theatrical language, see Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, *Theatrum és irodalom* [Theatre and Literature]. *Historia Litteraria* 30. (Budapest: Universitas, 2014), 79–114, 175–226.

⁸ Éva Knapp, "Emblematikus kifejezőmód az iskoladramákban [Emblematic Expression in School Drama]," in *Iskola és színház – School and Theatre: Az iskolai színház múltja és jelene – School Acting in the Past and Present*, ed. Csaba Kedves and Júlia Nagy (Miskolc: Gradatio, 2002) (CD-ROM). Online: <http://regi.magyszak.uni-miskolc.hu/kiadvanyok/drama2002/ea/knappm.htm> (accessed January 11, 2022); for more details on the stage design collection and scenography of the Sopron Jesuits, see Katalin Czibula, *Theater und Öffentlichkeit. Beiträge zur ungarischen Theaterkultur des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* [Theatre and Public Sphere: Contributions to Hungarian Theatre Culture of the 18th and 19th Centuries] (Budapest: Protea Kulturverein, 2016), 9–24, 89–146.

of a series of deliberations and is linked to the rhetorical codes of the time. The comedy parodies courtroom practices. Judges, prosecutors, notaries, and assessors are all bribed in the play. They are accompanied by foul-mouthed costermongers, cavaliers, dames, thieves, feuding nobles and peasants, creditors, and gypsies. The plot of the comedy is episodic, but it holds up a moral mirror to the society of the day.⁹ Of the 17 productions at the Reformed College in Nagyenyed between 1676 and 1799, one that stands out is the Old Testament drama *Izsák és Rebeka házassága* [The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah] by Ferenc Pápai Páriz. This play, performed in 1703, was written by Pápai Páriz, who also authored a medical book (*Pax corporis*, 1690) and a Latin-Hungarian *Dictionarium* (1708). Each scene in this easy-to-read, exceptional play, written in halved 12-syllable lines, is called a *Conversation*, and it features a total of 10 characters. It serves as a textbook example of the biblical story presented in verse. At the end of the performance, the Chorus sings the Creation story (from the Book of Genesis), which serves as an antetype for the marriage of Count Sándor Teleki, Warden of Nagyenyed, and Countess Júlia Bethlen, the daughter of the Chancellor. The drama, composed of interlocutions, was designed to educate young people about marriage. It warns against the dangers of early marriage, recommends marrying within one's denomination, and offers guidance on how to raise aristocratic children. In the parable, the servant Eliezer, known from the Bible, is elevated to the status of a teacher. Abraham enumerates the qualities of a good servant: not a drunkard, gambler, or lazy person; not prone to swearing, but instead loyal, trustworthy, humane, pious, and diligent. The example of the good servant, Eliezer, is contrasted with his counterpart, Duma, the negative exemplum: a mischievous prankster.¹⁰ Sámuel

⁹ Published in *Protestáns iskoladrámák 1-2* [Protestant School Drama 1-2], ed. Imre Varga. Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 1/1. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989). Online: <https://szovegtar.iti.mta.hu/hu/muvek/protest%C3%A1ns-iskoladr%C3%A1m%C3%A1k-i/,647-746>; *Iskoladrámák, (XVIII. század)* [School Plays (18th Century)], ed. Júlia Demeter. A Magyar Dráma Gyöngyszemei 4. (Budapest: Unikornis, 1995), 271-385.

¹⁰ *Protestáns iskoladrámák 1-2*. Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 1/2, 823-886. Between 1637 and 1640, two performances took place at the Gyulafehérvár College in Transylvania; the Calvinists in Kolozsvár produced six plays between 1684 and 1792. Data: Imre Varga, *A magyarországi protestáns iskolai színjátszás forrásai és irodalma* [Sources and Literature of Protestant School Acting in Hungary] (Budapest: MTA Könyvtára, 1988), 423-426 (R 22-23), 431-436 (R 27-32).

Szathmári Paksi (†1774), poetic preceptor of the Reformed College in Sárospatak, wrote *Elvádolt ártatlanság* [Innocence Accused], which was performed for audiences in Sárospatak (1773), Losonc (1786), and Déva, in Southern Transylvania (1794). The play takes the viewer and reader into the world of mythology. The protagonist of the double tragedy in five scenes is Phaedra, who falls hopelessly in love with her stepson Hippolitus. Rejected, the stepmother accuses the innocent Hippolitus, causing Theseus and the council to condemn and execute him. Phaedra then commits suicide. At the request of Diana, the goddess of hunters, Aesculapius, the god of physicians, resurrects the innocent youth. In this play, as in Szathmári Paksi's *Pandora* (1773), its potential source, characters such as the Foolishly Proud, the Over-Ambitious, the Wine-Sick, the Love-Sick, the Deaf, the Poxed, and the Adolescent Girl all come to Aesculapius to try their luck. The play was influenced by Publius Ovidius Naso's (43 BC–17 AD) hexameter collection of myths, *Metamorphoses*, and the first part of Plutarch's (46/48–125/127 AD) *Parallel Lives*. The deliberation condemning Hippolitus and the character of Morio, who often appears in school plays, are the author's inventions.¹¹ Gyula Mihály Szigethi founded a drama workshop at the Reformed College of Székelyudvarhely, from which five plays on secular themes survive from the early 1800s.¹²

The centre of Lutheran drama in Transylvania was Nagyszeben, with 23 productions between 1573 and 1698. Among the Saxon towns, Beszterce (2), Medgyes (3), and Segesvár (4) also occasionally staged educational drama.

In the colleges of the Unitarian denomination in Kolozsvár, a total of 29 performances were given between 1572 and 1797, including a Nativity Play and a biblical Passion Play. Performances also took place in Nagyajta and Torda.

¹¹ *Pandora* and *Innocence Accused* are available in *Protestáns iskoladrámák 1-2. Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 1/2*, Online: <https://szovegtar.iti.mta.hu/hu/muvek/protest%C3%A1ns-iskoladr%C3%A1m%C3%A1k-ii/>, 913-1002 (nr. 31), 1021-1070 (nr. 33).

¹² Published in Katalin Czibula's edition: *Kollégiumi drámagyűjtemények*, 465-712.

III. Catholic School Drama in Transylvania

1. Jesuit and Piarist Drama Performances

The Jesuits delighted their audiences with 12 productions in Gyulafehérvár and 55 in Székelyudvarhely. Most premieres were held in Kolozsvár: from 1579 until the dissolution of the Jesuit Order in 1773, 221 student performances were staged in the “Treasure City.” In terms of prolificacy in the Hungarian-speaking territory, Kolozsvár was second only to Nagyszombat, where 448 plays were produced between 1561 and 1773 at the Jesuit College.¹³ The vast majority of the *periochae* (playbills, programs) were written in Latin or German. In Transylvania, the vernacular culture was stronger, as evidenced by the collection of 12 playbills issued by the Jesuits of Kolozsvár, *Erdélyi Régi Színjátékok 1700–1759* [Old Plays from Transylvania], featuring programs in Latin and Hungarian.¹⁴ Included is the playbill for *Connubium Honouris seu Matthias Corvinus e captivo Bohemiae Regis Gener – Hunyadi Mattas A’ Tsehek Királynak Veje* [Matthias Corvinus Hunyadi, Son-in-Law of the King of the Bohemians], which records that the role of Katalin Podjebrád [Kateřina (Kunhuta) z Poděbrad] was played by Kelemen Mikes of Zágón (1690–1761), later lord-in-waiting to Transylvanian Prince Francis II Rákóczi and an eminent prose author of the Hungarian Baroque period.¹⁵ On another note, a large number of Hungarian-language playbills, pertaining to Jesuit school plays performed in Nagyszombat, have been preserved, thanks to the curatorship of Pál Esterházy (1635–1713).¹⁶ In

¹³ Géza Staud, *A magyarországi jezsuita iskolai színjátékok forrásai* [Sources of Hungarian Jesuit School Plays]. *Fontes ludorum Scenicorum in Scholis S. J. Hungariae*, I. (Budapest: MTA Könyvtára, 1984), 239–302.

¹⁴ Magyar Piarista Könyvtár és Levéltár [Hungarian Piarist Library and Archives], Budapest, P 32/3/10/1–12.

¹⁵ The three-act performance was linked to patronage, as the wedding of Anna Bánffy (Banfi) and Ádám Székely prompted the Jesuits to stage it on July 8, 1702, in Kolozsvár, the native city of King Matthias. The Hungarian-language portion of the *periocha* was published in *Jezsuita iskoladrámák. Ismeretlen szerzők* [Jesuit School Plays: Unknown Authors], ed. Zsoltné Alszeghy, Ágnes Berecz, Attila Keresztes, Katalin Kiss, Éva Knapp, and Imre Varga. *Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 4/2*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó–Argumentum Kiadó, 1995). Online: <https://szovegtar.iti.mta.hu/hu/muvek/r%C3%A9gi-magyar-dr%C3%A1mai-eml%C3%A9kek-xviii.-sz.-iv/,953-960>.

¹⁶ For more details, see Norbert Medgyesy S., “«Eszterhazianorum munificentia premijs donaretur.» Családtörténeti és Esterházy Pál nádor alapítványából bemutatott iskoladrámák (1713–1773) [‘Eszterhazianorum munificentia premijs donaretur’: School

Marosvásárhely, the Jesuits enriched both the liturgy (such as the consecration of the house during the Feast of the Epiphany with a fancy-costume performance, and the addition of verse recitals to the Corpus Christi procession) and the paraliturgy (including the Nativity scene, St. Gregory's visitation, and a costume procession on Good Friday) with shorter plays or scenic parts. These customs, conceived in the theatrical atmosphere of the Baroque period, also alluded to the sacral roots of European theatre.¹⁷

The largest number of Piarist performances took place in the Saxon town of Beszterce, with Medgyes also hosting performances. In Kolozsvár, sung plays were staged in connection with the representation of the governorate and the Hungarian Nobles' Movement. In 1791–1792 and 1797, Governor György Bánffy of Losonc and the Transylvanian assembly were greeted by an *Éneki Szerzemény* [Composition in Song], written by Márton Bolla and composed by János Schreier. The performance featured allegorical figures such as Wisdom, Charity, Respect, Sincerity, Law, Liberty, Patriotism, and Unity.¹⁸

2. Minorite Theatre

The Minorite grammar school of Kanta, near Kézdivásárhely, played a prominent role in the 18th-century Hungarian-language drama of Transylvania. According to István Kilián's research and text editions, the

Plays Produced through Funding by the Palatine Pál Esterházy],” in *Esterházy Pál, a műkedvelő mecénás. Egy 17. századi arisztokrata-életpálya a politika és a művészet határvidékén* [Pál Esterházy, the Amateur Patron: An Aristocratic Career at the Intersection of Politics and Art in the 17th-Century Borderlands], ed. Pál Ács, assistance: Enikő Buzási, proofreader: Júlia Székely (Budapest: MTA BTK ITI-Reciti Kiadó, 2015). Online: http://www.iti.mta.hu/Esterhazy_kotet/Esterhazy.pdf, 477–494.

¹⁷ István Kilián, “Liturgia és színháték a marosvásárhelyi jezsuita iskolában, 1703–1763 [Liturgy and Theatre in the Jesuit School of Marosvásárhely, 1703–1763],” in *Imádságos asszony. Tanulmányok Erdélyi Zsuzsanna tiszteletére* [The Praying Woman: Studies in Honour of Zsuzsanna Erdélyi], ed. Judit Czövek (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó Kör-Európai Folklor Intézet, 2003), 75–86.

¹⁸ Kilián, *A piarista dráma és színháték a XVII–XVIII. században*, 237–241, 289–291, 305–307. The 3 *Compositions in Song* were edited by Júlia Demeter in *Piarista iskoladrámák* [Piarist School Plays], ed. Júlia Demeter, István Kilián, Katalin Kiss, and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér. *Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 5/1*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó–Argumentum Kiadó, 2002), 287–322.

audience witnessed a diverse range of dramas between 1690 and 1779, with 60 productions on themes of history, love, and religion.¹⁹

Few plays with romantic themes were performed on the school stage for fear of leading young people astray. One of the most gripping love tragedies, *Leoninus and Leonina*, was written by the Minorite Cyriák Kertsó and performed at the Kanta grammar school in 1773. The play's fictional protagonist, Roman Emperor Leoninus, wishes to marry his daughter Leonina to his favourite courtier, Charillus. However, Leonina loves Meander, and together they flee to Sicily on the night of the wedding, only to be captured. Meander is banished, but Leonina, at Charillus' intervention, is freed unharmed from prison. Yet she still refuses to go through with the planned wedding to Charillus, secretly summoning Meander to kill his rival while she murders her father. However, Charillus proves to be a better fighter than Meander, and to Leonina's despair, it is Meander, not Charillus, who is left dead on the stage. The patricide Leonina avenges the death of her lover by stabbing Charillus with her dagger before taking her own life. The key line of the play is "True love pursues only the end it sets itself; it thinks neither of God nor of man, nor of lineage nor of good deeds..."²⁰

School drama frequently incorporated folk motifs, with the mockery of spinsters, particularly at the end of the carnival season, being a recurring theme throughout various periods. One of the most successful examples from the Baroque period is the two-character comedy *Borka asszony és György Deák* [Old Hag Borka and George the Student], also written by Cyriák Kertsó (Kanta, 1773). The character of Borka, who is both unattractive and elderly, is determined to marry, willing to go to great lengths to wed the youthful and dashing student György. The book that György carries at the beginning

¹⁹ Data from *A magyarországi katolikus tanintézmények színjátszásának forrásai és irodalma 1800-ig* [Sources and Literature of Theatres in Hungarian Catholic Educational Facilities], texts ed. István Kilián, Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, and Imre Varga, volume ed. Imre Varga (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 1992), 109-138, nr. 145-203; comprehensive critical text edition by István Kilián in *Minorita iskoladrámák* [Minorite School Plays], ed. István Kilián. Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 2. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989). Online: <https://szovegtar.iti.mta.hu/hu/muvek/minorita-iskoladr%C3%A1m%C3%A1k/> (January 11, 2022), 15-184 (nr. 1-4), 269-318 (nr. 6), 379-953 (nr. 10-20); analysis in István Kilián, *A minorita iskolai színjátszás a XVIII. században* [Minorite School Theatre in the 18th Century]. Irodalomtörténeti Füzetek, 129. (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 1992), 60-152, 181-206.

²⁰ *Minorita iskoladrámák*, 437-492.

of each scene and his manner of reading from it foreshadow the emergence of the Garabonciás (student vagabond) character.²¹

Kertsó also wrote the Latin-Hungarian bacchanalia *Az Erdélyországban való borszűkéről* [On the Wine Shortage in Transylvania] (Kanta, 1773). The comedy revolves around the jealousy of Bacchus and an actual wine shortage in Transylvania. Its cast of characters speaks for itself: Epulo (the host of the feast), Ebrietas (the embodiment of Drunkenness), Uxor Epulonis (the feast's host's wife), Venus, Potander (the Heavy Drinker), Edander (the Glutton), the wine-butler, the cook, and Angelus Costor (the Guardian Angel), who serves as a cautionary figure.²²

Ferenc Jantsó's comedy *Kintses Naso bált rendez* [Naso Kintses Throws a Ball] (Kanta, 1774) and its nearly identical variant, the Jesuit János Illei's comedy *Tornyos Péter* [Peter of the Tower] (Komárom and Pozsony, 1789), are notable for being free adaptations of Molière. Their model and source is Molière's comedy *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*; without direct borrowings, the essence and twists of the comedy, as well as certain scenes, are common.²³

3. Nativity Plays

The so-called historic Nativity Plays, performed between 1629 and 1800 and preserved in Catholic and Protestant sources, presented the story of the birth of Jesus by linking it to rhetorical exercises and the everyday school practices of bucolic poetry. These Greek-inspired poems of Roman antiquity served as a natural model for the Christmas mysteries of the Baroque period. Consequently, the Grecian shepherds – Alexis, Coridon, Damaetas, Daphnis, Lycidas, Melibaeus, Menalchas, Mopsus, Palaemon, Pan, Pollio, Sylenus, and Tityrus – known from the Greek poet Theocritus (2nd century BC) and the Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BC), inhabited the Bethlehem wilderness, where they and their blissful companions encountered the infant Jesus.

²¹ *Minorita iskoladrámák*, 493–507; popular publication in *Iskoladrámák* (XVIII. század), 205–220. For the film version by the Blessed Eusebius Company, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZipV7nDFyrw&list=PLlk5pyprK_DhumCgUUpqZHjf33-C9XpDI&index=2.

²² *Minorita iskoladrámák*, 379–436, nr. 10.

²³ *Minorita iskoladrámák*, 681–740; János Illei, *Tornyos Péter*, published in *Jezsuita iskoladrámák. Ismert szerzők* [Jesuit School Plays: Identified Authors], ed. Zsoltné Alszegehy, Katalin Czibula, and Imre Varga. Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 4/1. (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó-Akadémiai Kiadó, 1992). Online: https://szovegtar.iti.mta.hu/site/assets/files/24835/rmde_xviii_4_1_1992.pdf, 445–499.

Historic Nativity Plays typically include the Paradise scene, the search for lodging, and the shepherds' offering scene, either in the wilderness or in Bethlehem. Kanta's dramatic output includes a Christmas play, written in Latin hexameters before 1732, titled *Pro Nativitate Domini*, which also presents serious social criticism through the voice of St. Joseph. The play, combining classical elements with folk themes, gained prominence through the translation of István Kilián, who is credited with its discovery.²⁴

4. Interactions between School and Folk Dramatic Traditions

School theatre and folk culture mutually influenced each other across all genres. One outstanding example, also linked to Transylvania, is the manuscript songbook of János Czerey, a talented and erudite village schoolmaster (*ludi magister*), which preserves a complete Nativity Play. The manuscript, created by the educator active in Kézdiszentlélek and Lemhény in the 1650s, includes a Christmas play in which Sybil's prophecies proclaim the God-manhood of Jesus Christ and the virginity of Mary, and the devil ultimately admits his own defeat at the Incarnation of Christ. Czerey's document proves that school culture had already reached smaller towns by the mid-17th century.²⁵

Of all the school plays of the 17th and 18th centuries, *A dúsgazdag históriája* [The History of the Opulent Man], also known as the Lazarus Play, is the only one that became part of Transylvanian Szekler and Moldavian Csángó-Hungarian folklore, faithfully following the original biblical text in

²⁴ Latin edition by István Kilián, *A karácsonyi ünnepkör színjátékai Magyarországon (11-18. század)* [Christmas-Themed Theatrical Plays in Hungary (11th to 18th Centuries)], ed. István Kilián (Budapest: Ráció Kiadó, 2017), 407-428. For his own Hungarian translation, see István Kilián, "A kézdivásárhelyi betlehemesről [On the Nativity Play of Kézdivásárhely]," *Napjaink* XXV, no. 12 (1986): 20-23; *Misztériumjátékok 1. (Színjátéka - Régi magyar iskolai színjátékok 2. CD-melléklettel)* [Mystery Plays I (Early Hungarian School Plays 2. With CD Supplement)], red. and ed. Norbert Medgyesy S. Sound editing: István Németh (Budapest: Protea Kulturális Egyesület, 2016), Online: <http://publikacio.uni-eszterhazy.hu/4590/>, 29-50; *Régi magyarországi betlehemes játék. XVII-XVIII. századi szövegekkel és dallamokkal előadja a Boldog Özséb Színtársulat (BÖSZK)* [An Old Hungarian Nativity Play. Presented by the Boldog Özséb Theatre Company (BÖSZK) with texts and melodies from the 17th and 18th centuries], Piliscsaba, 2018: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_dYJLyFTw&list=PLlk5pyprK_DhumCgUUppqZHjf33-C9XpDl&index=1. The Nativity Play of Kanta is available on DVD: RMSZ 5.

²⁵ Czerey János-énekeskönyv (1634-1651), 134r-134v. Published in *A karácsonyi ünnepkör színjátékai Magyarországon (11-18. század)*, 131-142.

its entirety. Lazarus Plays, based on the eponymous parable (Luke 16:19–31), tell the story of the poor Lazarus and the opulent, miserly, and arrogant rich man, who is damned on earth, while the needy but kind Lazarus is saved. The mystery play, set on earth and in hell, expands the Jesus' parable with members of the family of the Opulent Man, allegorical figures (Pleasure, Drunkenness), and devils. The history of the Opulent Man and his lamentation in hell is the second scene of the school drama *Comico-Tragoedia*, printed in a Calvinist context in Nagyvárad in 1646. Its original full text survives in Csíksomlyó, in the *Latin-Hungarian Poetry Collection* of János Kájoni.²⁶ It was popularized mainly through numerous editions of small prints (chapbooks). In Szeklerland (Gyergyó), the Lazarus Play persisted as a carnival folk tradition with several characters, known as *Dúsgazdagolás* [Feasting Like the Opulent]. In Szentegyházsfalu (now Szentegyháza), it remains alive today under the title *The Devil's Nativity*.²⁷

5. A Distinctive Dramatic Tradition: the Franciscan School in Csíksomlyó

One hundred years before the opening of the first professional theatre in Transylvania in March 1821, the first Passion Play with an extant text was performed in Csíksomlyó on Good Friday, April 11, 1721.

If we seek a sacral, liturgical, and simultaneously popular formulation of the fundamental questions of human life and conscience, as well as the history of salvation that unites heights and depths through ancient and modern literary and folk musical expressions, we must turn to the mystery plays of Csíksomlyó.

²⁶ Kájoni-Hymnarium, 1659-1677, 75-100; the Lazarus Scene: 82-88. Published in *Misztériumjátékok 1. (Színjátéka - Régi magyar iskolai színjátékok 2. CD-melléklettel)*, 82-102.

²⁷ Its folk version is analyzed in Erika Karácsony-Molnár, *Dúsgazdagolás. Egy székelyföldi farsangi dramatikus játék* [Feasting Like the Opulent: A Carnavalesque Dramatic Play from Szeklerland]. *Életmód és tradíció* 14. (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Néprajztudományi Intézet, 2016). Online: <http://real.mtak.hu/32675/1/Kar%C3%A1cs%C3%A1r%20Erika.pdf>. The final lament of the Opulent Man, with its opening lines *Ó, búlátott, sok kínvallott gyarló testem...* [Oh, My Sorrow-Seen, Much Tormented Frail Body...], and *Kéjjel élő dúsgazdagnak veszedelmét...* [Perils of the Opulent Man Living with Pleasures...], was traditionally sung at the close of the carnival season, typically on Shrove Tuesday, as well as at funeral wakes, often serving as a parable. Minorite instructor Ferenc Jantso's (1744-1800) play *The Opulent Man and the Poor Lazarus* was performed at the Kézdivásárhely-Kanta grammar school on June 14, 1778. Its text and plot differ from the 17th-century Lazarus Play mentioned earlier.

a. The Earliest Forms of Local Drama as Recorded by János Kájoni

Csíksomlyó is a shrine to the Virgin Mary, curated by the Observant Franciscans since the 1440s. Since its foundation, it has played an unparalleled role in the history of Hungarian-language culture: its influence on liturgy, music, literature, theatre, piety, and religious anthropology is immeasurable. From the time the isolated pilgrimage site of Our Sun-Clad Lady was founded, the library has operated without interruption,²⁸ along with a long-standing bookbinding workshop now gone, a grammar school established in 1667, and a printing press established in 1675. The first publication was the *Cantionale Catholicum* hymnal, edited in 1676 by the Franciscan church musician, organist, and polyglot genius János Kájoni (1629–1687).²⁹ This collection of 795 hymns, with their textual and melodic variants, continues to define the devotional song tradition of the entire Hungarian-speaking world to this day. The cultural and artistic transmission across generations was facilitated by the fact that Csíksomlyó preserved the medieval Catholic tradition throughout the turbulent 16th and 17th centuries.

The link between the medieval tradition and the Baroque theatre, with its array of characters, can be detected in the four dramatic, vernacular passion songs found in János Kájoni's collection of Latin-Hungarian poems (*Hymnarium*, Csíksomlyó, 1659–1677).³⁰ These are identified by their opening

Published in *Minorita iskoladrámák*, Online: https://szovegtar.iti.mta.hu/site/assets/files/24835/rmde_xviii_4_1_1992.pdf, 857–901.

²⁸ Erzsébet Muckenhaupt's works also investigate the history and importance of the bookbinding workshop and the press: Erzsébet Muckenhaupt, *A csíksomlyói ferences könyvtár kincsei. Könyvleletek 1980–1985* [Treasures of the Franciscan Library in Csíksomlyó: Book Finds 1980–1985] (Budapest–Csíkszereda: Balassi Kiadó–Polisz Kiadó, 1999); Erzsébet Muckenhaupt, *A csíksomlyói ferences nyomda és könyvkötő műhely. Kiállítási katalógus* [The Franciscan Press and Bookbinding Workshop in Csíksomlyó: Exhibition Catalogue]. Exhibition and catalogue by Erzsébet Muckenhaupt. (Csíkszereda: Csíki Székely Múzeum, 2007); Erzsébet Muckenhaupt, *A Csíki Székely Múzeum „Régi Magyar Könyvtár”-a, I (1498–1710): Katalógus* [The “Old Hungarian Library” of the Szekler Museum of Csík, I (1498–1710): Catalogue] (Csíkszereda: Csíki Székely Múzeum, 2009).

²⁹ Critical edition in “...édes Hazámnak akartam szolgálni...” Kájoni János: *Cantionale Catholicum*. Petrás Incze János: *Tudósítások*. Ed. Pál Péter Domokos (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1979). The melodies of the second edition of the *Cantionale Catholicum* (1719) were preserved in the 18th-century *Deák-Szentes Manuscript*, published in Réka Kővári, *A Deák-Szentes-kézirat – The Deák-Szentes Manuscript* (Budapest: Magyarok Nagyasszonya Ferences Rendtartomány–MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont), 2013.

³⁰ For the latest research on Kájoni's *Hymnarium*, see Ádám Réger, “Kájoni János *Hymnarium*ának szerkezetéhez [On the Structure of János Kájoni's *Hymnarium*],” in

lines: *Jaj, nagy kedven tartot szerelmes szülöttem* [Woe Me, My Beloved, Adored Son; Mary's lament] (12 strophes); *O, draga szerelmünk, egyetlen örömünk* [O, Our Precious Beloved and Sole Joy; dramatic planctus] (7 strophes); *O, nem ez volt amaz szomorúság napja* [O, It Was Not the Day of That Sorrow, "De Passione Domini"; verse passion] (34 strophes); and *Regi példázatok immáron beteltek* [Ancient Prophecies Have Now Been Fulfilled, "Ugyan Nagy Péntekre / For Good Friday"; passion song] (22 vsz.).³¹ The passion songs take the form of folk hymns, divided into strophes, with dialogues between characters – such as Jesus, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the narrator – structured like dramatic sermons. These dialogues are interwoven with strophes or lines spoken by the narrator-preacher, who sternly exhorts the congregation (the actual audience, in this case) to repent, urging them to reflect on the message through both spoken and sung verses of these 17th-century poems. The structure, content, style, motivic system, phraseology, and purpose of these multi-strophe hymns can clearly be identified as specific, local antecedents and the primary source for the 18th-century Passion Plays at Csíksomlyó. Kájoni's hymns are more closely aligned with the late medieval tradition (such as dramatic sermons and devotional Passions) than with their 18th-century counterparts, which were divided into acts and scenes, featured multiple characters, and were staged. In the case of the hymns written or copied by Kájoni, we can infer a paraliturgical practice that was distinctly associated with Good Friday at Csíksomlyó. The dramatic presentation of the Passion of Christ (or, at the very least, the singing of it in dialogue form around the Sepulchre, likely within the context of a procession) at Csíksomlyó can be dated some 50 to 60 years prior to the first surviving Passion Play script of 1721. Given the 116 strophes of the "Passio de vita Christi" in Kájoni's *Cantionale* and the

Népelemek és gyülekezeti énekek a 17. századi Magyarországon [Folk Songs and Congregational Hymns in 17th-Century Hungary], ed. Vera Szádóczi, Pázmány Irodalmi Műhely, Lelkiségtörténeti tanulmányok, 16. (Budapest: MTA-PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, 2017), 131-140.

³¹ The songs were published and thoroughly analyzed in Norbert Medgyesy S., "A *theatrum sacrum* elemei a Kájoni-Hymnarium nagypénteki paraliturgikus tételeiben [Elements of Theatrum Sacrum in the Paraliturgical Items of the Good Friday Chapter in Kájoni's Hymnal]," *Magyar Egyházzene* XXIV (2016-2020), no. 4. (2019/2020): 361-400. Online: https://egyhazzene.hu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/361-400_Medgyesy-S.-Norbert.pdf.

significant number of translated hymns, it can be concluded that a vernacular tradition existed in Csík and Gyergyó during the 17th century. This tradition, based on the liturgical texts of the Church, translated them into Hungarian,³² while also developing its own paraliturgical and, where applicable, dramatic practices. Evidence of this can be seen in the aforementioned Nativity Play (c. 1650), written by Czerey, as well as in the Franciscan *Filius prodigus* (c. 1630–1640) and the mystery play *Jesu Filius Mariae* (c. 1650), both of which are also centred on Eucharistic themes.³³ The Passion Plays of the 18th century evolved from Kájoni's spiritual workshop, adapting his method to the same message, but shifting from the church to a more distinctly theatrical setting.

b. Genres, Manuscripts, and Purpose of the Csíksomlyó Drama

The same Franciscan spiritual workshop provided the backdrop in Csíksomlyó for the longest flourishing period of classical mystery plays with medieval roots in the easternmost part of the Latin-rite region of Europe, lasting well into the 1780s. During the 18th century, a total of 104 school plays were produced here, including 42 Passion Plays, 12 moralities, five Old Testament plays, four dramatic lives of martyrs, 12 history plays, four social dramas, and two comedies.³⁴

The manuscripts of these mystery plays span 2,000 folio pages and are preserved in the compilations *Liber Exhibens Actiones parascevicas...*,³⁵

³² The local vernacular liturgical initiatives are presented on the basis of the hand-written entries of the *Hungarian Prefaces in Csíksomlyó* (16th century), the *Franciscan Psalter* (second half of the 14th century), and the *Anonymous Franciscan Music Writer's Manuscript* (1741) in Medgyesy S., *Iskoladrámák...*, 148–153.

³³ Published *ibid.*, 191–205; analyzed in Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, *Ferences iskolai színjátszás a XVIII. században* [Franciscan School Theatre in the 18th Century]. *Irodalomtörténeti füzetek*, 132. (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 1993), 35.

³⁴ *A magyarországi katolikus tanintézmények színjátszásának forrásai és irodalma 1800-ig*, 44–77, nr. 10–89f.

³⁵ *Liber Exhibens Actiones parascevicas ab anno 1730 usque ad Annum 1774 diem aprilis 27. Libellus, Scholarum Csik Somlyoviensium, nihilominus Mediam Syntaxeos, ac Grammatices signanter, specialiter concernens; et continens Repraesentationem, Eucleationem Mysteriorum Passionis Dominicae, seu Actiones Tragico-Parascevicas, Devoto Populo ad aedificationem quott Annis exhiberi solitas, in usum faciliorem Moderatorum sedulo congestas. Confectus 1774.* (Csíksomlyói Ferences Kolostor Könyvtára [Library of the Franciscan Monastery at Csíksomlyó], Csíksomlyó, A VI 7/5275; hereafter referred to as *Liber Exhibens Actiones parascevicas...*)

Actiones Comicae,³⁶ and *Actiones Tragicæ*.³⁷ They are currently in the process of being published by the Old Hungarian Drama History Research Group, under the direction of the late István Kilián (1933–2021) and Zsuzsanna Pintér Márta, in the book series *Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek – Ferences iskoladrámák* [Records of Early Hungarian Drama – Franciscan School Plays]. Over the past 25 years, the Csíksomlyó dramatic corpus has been the subject of popular³⁸ and critical³⁹ editions,

³⁶ *Actiones Comicae in vitia invectivae ac ex adverso ad heroicos virtutum actus exstimulantes*. Csíksomlyó, 1776–1780. (Csíksomlyói Ferences Kolostor Könyvtára [Library of the Franciscan Monastery at Csíksomlyó], CSFKK A VI 8/5276.)

³⁷ *Actiones tragicæ sanctissimæ domini et redemptoris nostri passionem ac mortem, aliaque sacrae et evangelicae historiae mysteria lamentabiles casus in ea signatos, divinaeque iustitiae ac misericordiae exempla piae Christi-fidelium meditationi et compunctioni scenice proponentes*. Csíksomlyó, 1776–1780. (Csíksomlyói Ferences Kolostor Könyvtára [Library of the Franciscan Monastery at Csíksomlyó], CSFKK A VI 6/5274.)

For the latest summary of the plays in the *Actiones Comicae* and *Actiones Tragicæ* volumes, see Katalin Czibula and Júlia Demeter, "Az Actiones Tragicæ és az Actiones Comicae kötet drámái: a csíksomlyói színháztörténet utolsó szakasza," in *A szövegtől a szcenikáig. Tanulmányok a dráma- és színháztörténet köréből*, vol. II, ed. Katalin Czibula, Júlia Demeter, and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, (Eger: Líceum Kiadó, 2016), 400–413. (*Régi Magyar Színház*, 6.)

³⁸ „Nap, Hold és csillagok, velem zokogjatok!” *Csíksomlyói passiójátékok a 18. századból* [“Sun, Moon, and Stars, Cry with Me!” 18th-Century Passion Plays from Csíksomlyó], ed. Júlia Demeter; afterword: Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér; Latin: István Kilián (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 2003).

³⁹ *Ferences iskoladrámák I. – Csíksomlyói passiójátékok, 1721–1739* [Franciscan School Drama I – Passion Plays from Csíksomlyó, 1721–1739], ed. Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, Júlia Demeter, and István Kilián. *Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 6/1*. (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 2009); *Ferences iskoladrámák II. – Csíksomlyói passiójátékok, 1740–1750* [Franciscan School Drama II – Passion Plays from Csíksomlyó, 1740–1750], ed. Júlia Demeter and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér; red. Júlia Demeter, István Kilián, Norbert Medgyesy S., Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, Réka Kővári, and Antal Miskei. *Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 6/2*. (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2021); *Ferences iskoladrámák III. – Csíksomlyói passiójátékok, 1751–1762* [Franciscan School Drama III – Passion Plays from Csíksomlyó, 1751–1762], ed. Júlia Demeter and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér; red. Júlia Demeter, István Kilián, Norbert Medgyesy S., Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, Réka Kővári, and Antal Miskei. *Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek XVIII. század, 6/3*. (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2021); *Ferences iskoladrámák IV. – Csíksomlyói passiójátékok, 1763–1774* [Franciscan School Drama IV – Passion Plays from Csíksomlyó, 1763–1774], ed. Júlia Demeter and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér; red. Júlia Demeter, István Kilián, Norbert Medgyesy S., Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, Réka Kővári, and Antal Miskei. *Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek, XVIII. század, 6/4*. (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, é. n. [2022]); *Ferences iskoladrámák V. – A csíksomlyói kötetek színháztörténeti (1773–1780)* [Franciscan School Drama V – Plays from Csíksomlyó in *Actiones Comicae* and *Actiones Tragicæ*, 1773–1780], ed. Júlia Demeter; red. Katalin Czibula, Júlia Demeter, István Kilián, Réka Kővári, and Antal Miskei. *Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek, XVIII. század, 6/5*. (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2023); *Ferences iskoladrámák VI. – Csíksomlyói magyar és latin–magyar nyelvű drámák, töredékek a 18. századból* [Franciscan School Drama VI – Plays from Csíksomlyó], ed. Júlia Demeter and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér; red. Júlia Demeter, István Kilián, Norbert Medgyesy S., Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, Réka Kővári, Bernadett Jenei, Péter Juszti, János

monographs,⁴⁰ Hungarian and foreign-language studies,⁴¹ as well as two DVDs produced by the Boldog Özséb [Blessed Eusebius] Theatre Company.⁴²

According to the extant dramatic texts, Hungarian-language Passion Plays written by Franciscan teachers, mostly in verse, were performed at the Franciscan college in Csíksomlyó by local Szekler students on Good Friday almost every year between 1721 and 1785. Each performance featured 70 to 100, sometimes up to 130 students. The regular Good Friday performances and the odd ones connected with the feast and indulgence of Pentecost were attended by thousands of people. Passion Plays complemented the liturgical rites of Good Friday; in fact, they were an integral and indispensable part of pastoral work, paraliturgical practices, and lived (or popular) devotion throughout the 18th century. In Oberammergau, Bavaria, for instance, there was only one Passion performance every ten years. Several factors hint at

Rédey-Keresztény. Régi Magyar Drámai Emlékek, XVIII. század, 6/6. (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2025).

⁴⁰ Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, *Ferences iskolai színjátszás a XVIII. században*; Medgyesy S., *Iskoladramák...*, 147–304.

⁴¹ *A magyar színjáték honi és európai gyökerei* [The National and International Roots of Hungarian Theatre], ed. Júlia Demeter (Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetem, 2003). See pp. 11–120 for Júlia Demeter's, Csaba Kedves's, István Kilián's, Norbert Medgyesy-Schmikli's, Júlia Nagy's, Szilvia Nagy's, Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér's, and Dénes Szentimrey-Vén's studies; Szilvia Nagy, "A csíksomlyói iskolai színjátszás és a korabeli iskoladráma [School Theatre in Csíksomlyó and Contemporary School Drama]," in *A Csíki Székely Múzeum Évkönyve 2009 – I. Régészet, történettudományok* [Annual of the Szekler Museum of Csík 2009 – Vol. I. Archaeology, History], ed. Imola Kelemen (Csíkszereda: Csíki Székely Múzeum-Pro Print Könyvkiadó, 2009), 425–478; English and French versions in Júlia Demeter, "Csíksomlyó: Medieval Elements in the 18th Century Passion Plays," in *Baroque Theatre in Hungary: Education and Entertainment*, ed. Júlia Demeter (Budapest: Protea Egyesület, 2015), 84–96; Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, *Le théâtre dans le Royaume de Hongrie aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Textes dramatiques et représentations théâtrales* (Nagyvárad [Oradea]: Partium, 2015), 21–34, 77–84.

⁴² *Régi Magyar Színpad (RMSZ) 1. Csíksomlyói Passiójáték a 18. századból* [18th-Century Passion Play from Csíksomlyó], performed by PPKE BTK Boldog Özséb Színtársulat [Blessed Eusebius Company], directed by Albert Godena. Edited and annotated by Norbert Medgyesy S. *Régi Magyar Színpad* [Early Hungarian Stage] 1. (Piliscsaba: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar, 2010). Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYRAWpRIbr0&list=PLlk5pyprK_DhumCgUUUpqZHjf33-C9XpDI&index=5; *RMSZ 7. Misztériumjáték Szűz Mária mennybevételeéről (Csíksomlyó, XVIII. század)* [Mystery Play on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Csíksomlyó, 18th Century)], performed by PPKE BTK Boldog Özséb Színtársulat [Blessed Eusebius Company], directed by Árpád Barta. Edited and annotated by Norbert Medgyesy S. *Régi Magyar Színpad* [Early Hungarian Stage] 7. (Budapest: Magyar Napló, 2016). Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpQ1gO7N-Yk&list=PLlk5pyprK_DhumCgUUUpqZHjf33-C9XpDI&index=4.

liturgical roots. The early performances were divided into *feretra* and often into stations; even processions are sometimes mentioned in the stage directions. By the second half of the 18th century, the plays of Csíksomlyó had become increasingly secular, and the story of Volfgangus in the 1760 Passion Play even preached the positive effects of love. The three-level stage, with the Holy Trinity and the angels in heaven at the top, earth in the middle, and hell with the devils at the bottom, was located in the square in front of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and on the Somlyó hillside, respectively. The students were dressed in costumes true to the plot, evoking biblical times. We know from the stage directions that musical instruments (e.g., trumpet, trombone, drum, bagpipes), cannons, water, fire, smoke, donkeys, horses, and doves were used for special effects. Devotional songs, especially Mary's and Peter's Laments, were sung solo or with the crowd. Dance became part of the performances on the lower stage (hell), with the devils.

The mysteries of Csíksomlyó are based on Franciscan passion mysticism, with the spirituality of Jesus Christ suffering and being tortured for humanity in focus. While the mystery plays of the 14th and 15th centuries in Western Europe focused on the whole story of Salvation, the Passion itself was given special emphasis at Csíksomlyó. The devotional passions (13th to 18th centuries), dramatic sermons, Good Friday lauds, chants of the hours, popular songs on the Way of the Cross, and lamentations can be identified as primarily Northern Italian ancestors of this stage tradition, which organically developed medieval characteristics, only to be destroyed by the spiritual desolation of Josephinism, with the 1784 dissolution of the lay local Society of Mary, which organized the productions together with the Franciscan Order.

The primary aim of the Good Friday performances at Csíksomlyó was to arouse the repentance and penitence of the actors and the audience. In keeping with Pope Benedict XIII's bull *Paternae Sedis* (1725), the actors and spectators, reflecting on the Passion of Christ, could obtain a full indulgence under the right conditions, no doubt a spiritual incentive behind the performances.

c. The Source Area and Apocryphal Scenes of the Passion Plays

Another purpose of the mystery plays was to teach the mostly illiterate pilgrims coming to Csíksomlyó, in order to deepen their biblical and theological knowledge. The story of the Passion of Jesus was told through a reading of the Passion in the four Gospels (Matt 26:36–27:66; Mark 14:32–15:47; Luke 22:39–23:56; and John 18:1–19:42). The Franciscan playwrights, of known or unknown identity,⁴³ paraphrased the biblical texts in free rhyming verse. Almost all the plays detail the arrest and trial of Jesus. Judas' betrayal was used as a negative parable 25 times, his lament 26 times. The repentant apostle Peter's denial and lyrically beautiful, sincere lamentation were performed 11 times as a positive example of contrition. In addition to the events of Good Friday, a total of 53 mystery events and parables from the life of Jesus were performed. The 71 Old Testament prefigurations were presented in a way that moved out of the historical timeline (*chronos*) and into a universal, grace-filled time (*kairos*).⁴⁴ Insights of faith were enhanced by on-stage polemics and verse meditations by individual characters. These poetic and theatrical devices were used to teach, for example, about the Trinity, the Eucharist, the Creation, the rebellion of the fallen angels (devils), the Incarnation and Birth of Jesus Christ, his parables, miracles, suffering and its meaning; the Immaculate Conception, joys, pains, and Assumption of the Virgin Mary, as well as the Last Judgment.

The Franciscan tradition combined apocryphal elements with biblical action. To understand the Passion, the Fall of Adam and the Parliament of Heaven (*Procès de Paradis*; *Consilium Coeleste super Unigenitum*), which determined the Incarnation and the Crucifixion of Christ, were also represented. In essence: in the court of Deus Pater (God the Father), the

⁴³ To name a few: Absolon Borbély, Márton Boros, Krizogón Csergő, Bálint Donát, Vitus Ferentzi, Patrik Fodor, Fábián Fülöp, Joákim Kajcsa, Bazil Keresztes, Gracián Kézdi, László Kuna, Bonaventura Potyó, Ágoston Szabó, Regináld Szentés, Boldizsár Tima, and Sebestyén Tóth.

⁴⁴ The database and source catalogue of the biblical scenes were compiled and published by Norbert Medgyesy S., *A csíksomlyói ferences misztériumdramák forrásai, művelődés- és lelkiségtörténeti háttere* [Sources and Culture Historical Background of the Franciscan Mysteries of Csíksomlyó]. *Fontes Historici Ordinis Fratrum Minorum in Hungaria – Magyar Ferences Források 5. – PPKE BTK Művelődéstörténeti Műhely, Monográfiák 1.* (Piliscsaba-Budapest: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem BTK-Magyarok Nagyasszonya Ferences Rendtartomány, 2009), 355–369. Online: <https://edok.gyorkonyvtar.hu:443/hu/book/-/record/kkmk3007969> (accessed 11 January, 2022)

patriarchs, prophets, kings of the Old Testament, as well as Misericordia (Mercy), Iustitia (Justice), Amor (Love), Dolor (Pain), Sapientia (Wisdom), and Innocentia (Innocence) spoke and voted on the fate of Verbum (the Word). The Parliament of Heaven originally consisted of two parts: a liturgical drama called *Ordo Prophetarum* (The Prophets' Play), inspired by a pseudo-Augustinian sermon, *Sermo contra Iudaeos et Paganos et Arianos de Symbolo* (5th century), influenced, in turn, by Byzantine ideas. The actual Parliament of Heaven can be traced back to the popular collection *Meditationes vitae Christi* [Meditations on the Life of Christ] (13th century) by Pseudo-Bonaventure (John of Caulibus?). In the Middle Ages, the scene was transformed from a matin lecture of early Christian origin into a liturgical play and, later, in the cities of Limoges, Laon, Tours, Rouen (Rotomagen), into a mystery drama. The first examples of the heavenly pageant, as perpetuated in school dramas, are the *Passion d'Arras* by Eustach Marcadé (1414–1440) and the *Passion de nostre sauveur Jhesu Christ* (Paris, 1448), a mystery by the French Franciscan musician, stage director, and theological magister Arnoul Grèban (1420–1471). In Hungary, the Parliament of Heaven was first linked with the Passion in Osvát Laskai's Good Friday sermon (*Sermones Dominicales [...] Biga salutis intitulasi*, Hagenau, 1506; sermo 47).⁴⁵ The direct source of the debate in the mystery plays of Csíksomlyó is Part 69 of the biography of Jesus and Mary, *Makula nélkül való tükör* [The Mirror without Blemish] (1712), entitled "Miként tartatott Tanács az ártatlan JESUSra" [How the Council Was Held Concerning the Innocent Jesus].⁴⁶ At

⁴⁵ For an abundance of international and Hungarian literature on the Parliament in Heaven, see Norbert Medgyesy S., *A csíksomlyói ferences misztériumdramák forrásai, művelődés- és lelkesítő történeti háttere*, 200–231, 413–438.

⁴⁶ Facsimile edition in *Makula nélkül való tükör*, Melly Az üdvözítő Jesus Kristusnak, és Szent Szüleinek életét, úgy keserves kinszenvedését és halálát adgya elé. Melly Superiorok Engedelmeiből Szűz, Szent Klára Szerzetében lévő Ujfalusi Judith által Cseh nyelvből Magyar nyelvre fordított, Es a tekintetes és nagysagos Ujfalusi Ujfalusi Klára Asszonyoknak, tekintetes és nagysagos Karancs Berényi György Uram ö Nagysága kedves Házás-társának költségén ki-bocsátatott. Nagy-Szombatban, A' Jesus Társasága Académiája bötűivel 1712. Esztendőben [Mirror Without Blemish, Presenting the Life as Well as the Bitter Torment and Death of Our Savior Jesus Christ and His Holy Parents. Authorized by the Superiors to Be Translated from Czech into Hungarian by Judith Ujfalusi of the Order of Saint Clare, and Issued in Nagy-Szombat at the Expense of the Honourable Lady Klára Ujfalusi of Ujfalu, Beloved Spouse of His Lordship the Honourable György Karancs Berényi, Typeset in the Letters of the Academy of the Society of Jesus in the Year 1712], red. Krisztina Frauhammer (Budapest-Szeged: Pytheas Könyvmanufaktura-MTA-SZTE Vallási Kultúrakutató Csoport, 2015), part 69. 304–308.

Csiksomlyó, in the mystery drama presented in 1733, the *arma Christi* episode was linked to the aforementioned Parliament: angels brought down from heaven the instruments of Christ's torture to the Garden of Gethsemane, where the Messiah sweated blood. The names of the angels and the instruments of suffering are inseparable attributes: the Angel of Hope brought the rope, the Angel of Strength the pillar, the Angel of Innocence the whip, the Angel of Endurance the nails, the Angel of Wisdom the crown of thorns, the Angel of Temperance the bitter cup, the Angel of Faith the spear, and, finally, the Angel of Love the cross. Mary's gripping grief was staged in several scenes: in the so-called Bethany scene, a 14th-century scene from the German Low Countries, Mary bids farewell to her Son, who is about to suffer. On the morning of Good Friday, the mother learns from the Archangel Gabriel and the Apostle John that her Son has been captured and sets out through the streets of Jerusalem to find her child. According to the Good Friday *Actio* of 1746, before the high priest Caiaphas, Mary is even willing to take the blame for the accusations thrown at the innocent Jesus. Finally, under the cross and in the Pietà scene, she weeps in agony and sings the richly poetic planctus in 17th-century melodies. At the climax of two Passion Plays (1745, 1756), Our Lady (Maria Advocata) intercedes on behalf of sinful humanity.

The devils, led by Luciper (Lucifer) – Acheron, Amamaon, Beelzebub, Daemon, Diabolus, Drumo, Pluto, Satanas, Tentator – most often appeared in scenes with Adam and Judas in the Good Friday mysteries at Csiksomlyó. The devils tempt Mary Magdalene through various sensual allegories, such as Amor Mundanus (Mundane Love), Caro (Corporeality, Flesh), Caupo (Innkeeper, i.e. Drunkenness), Genius Infernalis (Infernal Spirit), Genius Malus (Evil Spirit), Mundus (World, Worldliness), Spiritus Avaritiae (Spirit of Avarice), Spiritus Superbiae (Spirit of Pride), and Voluptas (Lust). They also seduce the youths – Adolescence, Cosmophilus, Ephebus, Eusebius, Iuvenis ("of young age"), Myrtillus, Syneius, or Volfgangus – into sin. In several cases, the senses themselves appear: Visus (Sight), Factus (Action), Odoratus (Smell). Opposing these, angels such as Genius Charitatis (Spirit of Love), Fides (Faith), and Spes (Hope) direct the deceived characters back to the path of righteousness. The theatrical representation of the devil figures may have a double background: on the one hand, they appear in Church doctrine as fallen angels (cf. Rev 12:7–13; Is 14:9–13) and enemies of the

Kingdom of God, and are thus the cause of evil; on the other hand, they can also be derived from folklore and late medieval jests. The names of the devils are comical; Drumo (1752), for instance, gives nine names of devils, in contrast to the nine angelic hierarchies: one-eyed, goose-legged, chick-nosed, crooked-backed, one-and-a-half-legged, round-nosed, block-eared, bootlast-necked, colt-toothed, or else onomatopoeic names such as *bityinkoró*, *karabille*, *prittyá*, *koronbitty*, *hipp*, *hopp*, *Hem*, *Rem*, *Bam*. The piquant and sometimes juicy humor, the hey-hoeing, the dancing, as well as the references to local topography (e.g., Little Somlyó Hill, Hargita, Olt River, Csík Region), or the mention of Borszék water, pálinka, wine, and folk remedies condemned by the Church, most often come from the devils, for these themes do not fit within the paraliturgical specifics of this theatrical tradition, although they savor of the home and evoke the homeland, raising them into the sacral sphere.

Popular songs were inseparable from mystery dramas and were often sung by the characters along with the audience. Using the texts of Kájoni's *Cantionale* (1676, 1719), the laments of Christ, Mary, Adam, Peter, and Judas were sung either solo or aloud in unison.⁴⁷

Translated by Boldizsár Fejérvári

⁴⁷ The songs of the Csíksomlyó mystery plays were published and analyzed by Réka Kővári in *Ferences iskoladrámák I. - Csíksomlyói passiójátékok, 1721-1739*; *Ferences iskoladrámák II. - Csíksomlyói passiójátékok, 1740-1750*; *Ferences iskoladrámák III. - Csíksomlyói passiójátékok, 1751-1762*; Réka Kővári, "«Ad notam...» - énekek és énekelt drámaszövegek három 18. századi csíksomlyói passióban [‘Ad notam...’ - Songs and Sung Dramatic Texts in Three 18th-Century Passions from Csíksomlyó]," in *Tükröződések. Ünnepi tanulmánykötet Domokos Mária népzene kutató-zenetörténész tiszteletére* [Reflections: Festschrift in Honour of Mária Domokos, Ethnomusicologist and Music Historian], ed. Olga Szalay (Budapest: L'Harmattan-Könyvpont Kiadó, 2012), 385-416; Réka Kővári, "Mária-síralmak a Ferences iskoladrámák 1-3. kötetében [Mary's Laments in Volumes 1-3 of Franciscan School Drama]," in *Dulce et utile. Tanulmányok Pintér Márta Zsuzsanna 60. születésnapjára* [Dulce et Utile: Studies in Honour of Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér's 60th Birthday], ed. Gabriella Körömi, Judit Kusper and Attila Verók (Eger: Líceum Kiadó, 2021), 135-154. Online: <http://publikacio.uni-eszterhazy.hu/7254/>.

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Actiones tragicae sanctissimam domini et redemptoris nostri passionem ac mortem, aliaque sacrae et evangelicae historiae mysteria lamentabiles casus in ea signatos, divinaeque iustitiae ac misericordiae exempla piae Christi-fidelium meditationi et compunctioni scenice proponentes. Csíksomlyó, 1776–1780. (Csíksomlyói Ferences Kolostor Könyvtára, CSFKK A VI 6/5274.)

Liber Exhibens Actiones parascevas ab anno 1730 usque ad Annum 1774 diem aprilis 27. Libellus, Scholarum Csik Somlyoviensium, nihilominus Mediam Syntaxeos, ac Grammatices signanter, specialiter concernens; et continens Repraesentationem, Enuclationem Mysteriorum Passionis Dominicae, seu Actiones Tragico-Parascevas, Devoto Populo ad aedificationem quott Annis exhiberi solitas, in usum faciliorem Moderatorum sedulo congestas. Confectus 1774. (Csíksomlyói Ferences Kolostor Könyvtára, CSFKK, A VI 7/5275)

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The Aspects of Directorial Methodology Approach Reflected in Vlad Mugur's Production Books

Abstract. This study examines the directorial methodology of Vlad Mugur through a detailed analysis of his production books, focusing on his actor-centred instructions and use of contradiction in staging. Drawing on Gábor Tompa's insights, the paper explores how Mugur's interpretative notes serve as dynamic tools that guide the actor's understanding of character motivation and emotional state throughout the rehearsal process. These instructions stimulate spontaneous, organic responses, thus preserving actor autonomy while deepening character interpretation. The analysis reveals how Mugur's method achieves a delicate balance between directorial control and actor freedom. A central aspect of his technique is acting "against the text," a strategy that disrupts theatrical unity through contradiction – between word and gesture, light and dark, movement and stillness – ultimately enriching dramatic expression. The paper argues that Mugur's rehearsal strategies and dramaturgical decisions – especially his nuanced treatment of subtext, alienation, and emotional memory – constitute a distinctive theatrical pedagogy. It concludes by advocating for the inclusion of production book analysis in performance training, proposing it as a powerful educational tool that bridges theoretical understanding and stage practice.

Keywords: Vlad Mugur, production book, directorial methodology, actor's work, instructions against the text

The Significance of the Production Books in Theatre Studies

In theatre history – as one segment of our cultural memory – the discourse on the actor's work remains problematic to this day. This is precisely why

the exploration and understanding of actors' performances and gesture systems across different eras remain an underutilized field.¹ "The history of Western theatre has often been canonized in theatre historiography as a text- and playwright-centric spoken theatre."² For centuries, the predominant method of theatre analysis has produced a historiographical approach that examines different theatrical periods based on their relationship with dramatic texts and their modes of staging.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, with the rise of director's theatre – and even earlier, with the 19th-century Meiningen movement – a significant dialogue began regarding the reevaluation and redistribution of stage processes. Many directors left behind extensive notes on the theoretical and aesthetic contexts preceding performances, their visions of theatre, and the practical realization of those ideas. In Hungarian-language theoretical materials, the most detailed discussions of the director's theatre movement appear in *Theatergeschichte in einem Band* by Peter Simhandl and *A rendezés színháza* [The Theatre of Directing] by Árpád Kékesi Kun. However, these works provide little insight into the actor's work and the aspects of the staging process that describe the interaction between the director and the actor. Director's theatre not only redefined the director's role but also fundamentally reinterpreted the work of actors and other collaborators. Their contributions were no longer confined to merely performing or presenting a text on stage but became deeply embedded in continuous interaction with the director. Within this framework, it is often directors who write about actors' work. While major actor aesthetics and techniques are well-documented, some details can also be found in directors' legacies – notes, journals, production books, and letters. In fortunate cases, such records appear in dedicated chapters of monographs on individual directors.

Theatre history is a field where, beyond written records consciously left behind, we can also examine production books that have received less attention. These books allow for the analysis of directorial instructions,

¹ György Székely, *Színháztörténet-írásunk alapelvei* [The Principles of Our Theatre History Writing]. Online: https://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/i_osztaly/1_Eloadasok_tara/Szinhaztudomany_ma_20011106/SzekelyGyorgy_Szinhaztortenet_iras_20011106.pdf.

² Zoltán Imre, *Színházak – történetek – alternatívák. A színháztörténet-írás és -kutatás lehetőségei és problémái* [Theatres – Histories – Alternatives: Possibilities and Challenges in Theatre Historiography and Research]. Online: https://www.academia.edu/29169345/Színházak_történetek_alternatívák_A_kortárs_színháztörténet_írás_és_kutatás_lehetőségei_és_problémái_Theatres_Histories_and_Alternatives_The_Possibilities_and_Problems_of_Contemporary_Theatre_Historiography.

which not only shape the structure of a performance but also reveal the quality of interaction between the director and the actor. However, the extent to which traces of actor-director collaboration can be discerned in surviving production books is deeply influenced by the prevailing artistic movements and directorial methodologies of the time. Consider, for example, Max Reinhardt's atmospheric, expressionist theatre, Erwin Piscator's documentary theatre, or the clearly identifiable actor-training methods in Stanislavski's production books.

In theatre studies, German and Russian directors' production books are often considered exemplary, and the in-depth historical research of such materials has only recently begun in German-speaking territories. Analyzing the books examined in studies and literature, and using Bertolt Brecht's terminology, I consider every production book to be model-worthy if it surpasses mere technical documentation of a performance's structure and instead reflects the director's thought process. Such books should reveal aspects of directorial practice, text interpretation, and collaborative creative thinking with actors and fellow artists. While the interpretation of these books is often aided by supplementary epitexts about a director's career, this does not diminish their significance. Instead, it provides the necessary context for production books, as artifacts,³ to foster valuable and meaningful discourse about the invisible creative process and theatre itself, across any period in theatre history.

The masters of director's theatre, by systematizing the general rules of their theatrical culture and creative thought, also developed a graphic means of expression for theatre directing. This method eventually spread throughout European theatre-making and became standard practice for later directing schools. One need only examine the production books of the Romanian theatre director Vlad Mugur,⁴ who was born into this tradition and later directed in Germany as well.

³ The term is used by Sophie König in her analysis of Erwin Piscator's production books. Sophie König, "Der synoptische Blick. Funktionalität, Materialität und Medialität der Regiebücher Erwin Piscators [The Synoptic View: Functionality, Materiality, and Mediality of Erwin Piscator's Production Books]," in *Das Regiebuch. Zur Lesbarkeit theatraler Produktionsprozesse in Geschichte und Gegenwart* [The Production Book: On the Legibility of Theatrical Production Processes in History and the Present], ed. Martin Schneider (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2021), 295-320.

⁴ Vlad Mugur (1927-2001) was a Romanian theatre director and manager who worked across Romanian, Hungarian, and German-speaking regions. In 1971, he emigrated to Germany, but after the fall of Romanian communism, he returned to directing in

Aspects of the Directorial Methodology Approach Reflected in Vlad Mugur's Production Books

In analyzing Vlad Mugur's production books, several of Patrice Pavis' performance analysis criteria prove useful – not only for examining the relationship between the creator and the stage or the creator and the audience, but also for investigating the dynamics between different creators involved in the production. I consider Pavis' questionnaire-based analytical framework a well-founded choice, as these structured categories – when viewed from the perspective of a practicing dramaturg – can outline the dramaturgy of a theatrical performance. Examining dramaturgical aspects and their interconnections reveals how different interpretive and communicative “elements” within a directorial concept – including the actor – are linked together. Moreover, the physical and textual characteristics uncovered in the production book, through directorial notes and instructions, authentically incorporate the director's personality into this framework, highlighting their pedagogical approach as a driving force and the key to integrating these analytical aspects.⁵

Romania, collaborating with both Hungarian- and Romanian-language theatres. He is regarded as one of the key figures in revitalizing Hungarian theatre in Transylvania. Reflecting on his work in the 1970s, Mugur stated: “I began with a theatre that was highly realistic, where comedies dominated. At a certain point, I moved away from this and turned toward great tragedies, among which I distinctly remember *Hamlet*. Then came a series of experiments in which I sought to eliminate the scenic framework entirely, focusing solely on the ballet of movement and light. I allowed external elements to take hold of me – sometimes to the point of excess – and neglected the classical Greek notion of balance. From the confrontation between my initial, rather modest realism, through a phase of mannerism, and my challenge to the aesthetic understanding of grand compositions from a higher perspective, I feel I arrived at purification – the most difficult yet essential path to authentic expression. Today, the stage represents the entire universe for me. I want actors, free from props and external aids, to rely on their own creative power to convey the deepest emotions in service of the most urgent ideas to the audience.” Vlad Mugur, “Important pentru noi – Să fim noi înșine [Important for Us – To Be Ourselves],” *Teatrul*, no. 8 (1969). Online: https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/view/Teatrul_1969/?pg=794&layout=s. The process described by Mugur reflects a continuous dialectical dialogue – one that began with mastering a foundational approach passed down from great theatre practitioners. Through its gradual deconstruction and dismantling, he transcended the theatrical conventions traditionally accepted in theatre history. In doing so, he created a *tabula rasa*, upon which he established a new, authentic balance – a fresh starting point.

⁵ My doctoral dissertation, *A rendezőpéldány mint rekonstrukciós forrás. Vlad Mugur Csehov-példányai* [The Production Book as a Source for Reconstruction: Vlad Mugur's

Using Pavis' questionnaire as a foundation, I developed the analytical criteria that best characterize Mugur's production books. Through these criteria, the details of his creative process emerge, forming coherent units. Beyond attempting to define the visual structure of a performance, this methodology also emphasizes capturing the director-actor interaction. The order of these analytical aspects is deliberate, considering all the factors that might have served as starting points for Mugur's productions. While these aspects build upon one another, they collectively create a final interpretive layer that consistently elevates the artistic work and its representation of reality (such as acting and visual presentation) toward a poetic dimension. Ultimately, Mugur's artistic vision resists easy categorization within any specific theatrical movement. His productions are neither realist-naturalist like those of Stanislavski, nor politically charged like Brecht's, nor expressionist or constructivist like those of Meyerhold or Reinhardt. Instead, his work aligns with the spirit of director's theatre as a communal artistic endeavor, synthesizing the various artistic tools that director's theatre has established for processing reality.

In his book *A hűtlen színház*, Gábor Tompa explicitly links this elusive, communal creative phenomenon to the personality of the director who shapes the artistic atmosphere. To some extent, directorial methodology itself is tied to this indispensable "ingredient." As Tompa observes, with the birth of the director-driven theatre, the 20th century "was defined by the artistic-aesthetic programs of the most significant and representative directors, under whose leadership theatre productions of historical importance were created. [...] However, it is not easy to classify each significant theatrical creator."⁶ Tompa divides the directorial artistic efforts into four broad groups,⁷ highlighting the ongoing hierarchical struggle between the

Chekhov Production Books], explores in detail the possibilities of reconstructing a production book, the challenges inherent in the reconstruction process, and the methods by which one can adapt to the specific characteristics of the production book being reconstructed. The study also develops a unique reconstruction method, acknowledging that each director's production notes possess distinct features – whether in the use of symbols, the graphical arrangement of written text, or other conventions. Additionally, my research emphasizes the significance of both the formal and content-related characteristics revealed through reconstruction. These details are crucial for interpreting the aesthetic and conceptual value of production books.

⁶ Gábor Tompa, *A hűtlen színház* [The Unfaithful Theatre] (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1987), 111.

⁷ "1. The Director as the Mediator Between the Written Work and the Performance. [...] The director's creative contribution is minimal: the performance remains faithful to the

playwright, the dramatic text, and stage representation – a struggle that continues until the director ultimately breaks away from the written text. What stands out in Mugur's work is his ability to integrate essential elements from each directorial era into his productions, using these elements as artistic tools to express his own ideas, mindset, and personal reality. Although his work remains faithful to the written word, his productions ultimately evolve into "independent" artistic creations. Yet, he never allows a director-co-creator hierarchy to be disrupted; he does not swap roles with any other creative contributor or stage element. He remains the director – the unifying force behind the creative process – choosing actors precisely for their individuality. With this responsibility, he guides them through the paths of transformation and alienation – key to theatrical representation – while fostering a democratic creative space built upon the actors' talent, play intelligence, and unique abilities. Often, the audience itself becomes an active participant in this process, whether through interactive acting or by challenging conventional spatial dynamics. This pursuit of collective creativity may even constitute a fifth category, one that upholds the ideals of ensemble theatre, carefully seeking balance amid diverse artistic approaches. His approach is deeply mindful of the sanctity of the creative process, the actor's talent and vulnerability, and the essence of ensemble play,⁸ ultimately making the actor's work inseparable from all other creative components.

written text but does not become an independent artistic creation. One of the most well-known representatives of this model was Adolphe Appia. 2. From Director-Centricity to Dictatorship. [...] The previous model essentially remains unchanged, except that the two 'authors' switch roles. In both cases, the communal nature of theatre is pushed into the background, and the principle of hierarchy prevails. [...] This is the first step toward the performance becoming a relatively independent, self-sustaining work of art, separate from the written literary text. This approach is embodied by figures such as Artaud, Craig, Piscator, and Copeau, as well as several key figures of the post-Stanislavski directing school, including Meyerhold, Tairov, and Vakhtangov. In this model, the performance has only one creator: the director. 3. The Rejection of Dictatorship. [...] Roger Planchon, Peter Brook, and Otomar Krejča distanced themselves from the idea of directorial dictatorship, although they did not fully embrace the concept of collective creation. 4. The Democratization of Creation. [...] Let us regard theatre as a model for human coexistence. [...] Instead of historicity, timelessness prevails; there is no distinction between spectators and performers – only participants exist. [...] This category includes The Living Theatre (the ensemble of Julian Beck and Judith Malina), the Odin Theatre in Holstebro, and the later experiments of Jerzy Grotowski's theatre laboratory." Ibid.

⁸ Peter Brook, *Az üres tér* [The Empty Space] (Budapest: Európa, 1999), 161.

However, the creative drive, vitality of play, and sustained energy of rehearsals depend not only on the director and actor but also on another crucial, personality-driven factor: the performative nature of rehearsal. Beyond serving the dramatic action on stage, this involves activating instructions on a psychophysical level – turning them into acts. Even during the preparation phase, every gesture – the reading of the selected play, its aesthetic interpretation, casting decisions, and the actor’s movement annotations within the production book’s spatial diagrams – reflects an approach in which action is the sole driving force. “One must think on an active psychophysical level. This way of thinking is based on the idea that humans approach everything through action and conflict. If we approach directing in this manner, our production will not be boring or stagnant, nor will it descend from the heavens – it will emerge from life itself.”⁹ The production books themselves, in their inherent openness and fluidity, serve as mirrors of this performative mindset, embedding dynamic creative dialogue within their pages.

I attempt to outline the directorial methodology according to the following aspects, adapted from Patrice Pavis.¹⁰

Preparation for Dramatic Action

- Preliminary work, the director’s prior research
- Creation of the production book

The Authorial Text and the Stage Narrative

- Dramaturgical work: What changes are made?
- How much space does the *mise en scène* allow for the dramatic text?
- The relationship between text and image, ear and eye

Actor’s Work

- The actor’s performance (speech, movement system)
- Exploring the actor’s potential for transformation, their connection to the role and to their own self

⁹ Anatolij Efrosz, *Szerelmem, a próba* [The Joy of Rehearsal] (Budapest: Korszerű Színház, 1982), 29.

¹⁰ Patrice Pavis, *Előadáselemzés* [Analyzing Performance. Theatre, Dance and Film] (Budapest: Balassi, 2003), 42-44.

- Role analyses, states, and intentions described as directorial instructions for the actor

Spatial Instructions

- The relationship between the audience's space and the scenic space
- The relationship between the actor and the scenic space
- The nature, function, and material of objects; their relation to space and bodies, and the system of their usage

Sound Design

- The musicality created from the unity of silence, words, and noise

These aspects all appear in Mugur's production books through instructions and notes. In my doctoral dissertation, I elaborate on these criteria by analyzing Vlad Mugur's Chekhov production books from both Romania and Germany, occasionally addressing the unified and unique system of signs present in these documents. By examining this integrated sign system – including gestures, spatial movements, the actor's relationship to the stage and set, and the unfolding of the creative process – Mugur's methodological approach becomes interpretable. Even if the stage event itself cannot always be easily described, gestures, mimicry, and physical movements convey tangible information. Together, they form a network of meanings that can be cohesively understood, revealing significant insights into the performance and the director's complex work: text interpretation, dramaturgical tasks, psychology, actor guidance, performance (actor and stage), spatial composition, object usage, rhythm, and visual concepts. Due to space limitations, this study focuses specifically on the actor's work, occasionally highlighting its close connections to other elements.¹¹

Actor's Work – The Action

The most complex and powerful component of the production books – both in terms of aesthetic reception and the written documentation of stage practice – is the set of actor-focused instructions. This collection, which

¹¹ See the full description in Réka Szabó, *A rendezőpéldány mint rekonstrukciós forrás*.

guides the actor's work from multiple perspectives, is what truly defines Mugur's production books. These instructions not only reflect the quality of stage work (the complexity of dramatic actions) but also reveal the director as a master and pedagogue. In some cases, the dynamism and expressive force of particular instructions even suggest a form of directorial pre-acting.

In every production book, the interplay between cues and instructions clearly conveys an ongoing search for – and determination of – the performance's tempo and the rhythm of the actor's play, which in turn establishes the overall timing of the production. The markings include cues that introduce delays, as well as those that make a scene feel "nervous," accelerated, ridiculous, or tragic – in other words, cues that disrupt the naturalistic flow of stage events. All of this contributes to a sense of apparent action, creating a theatrical play on time (tempo) within an illusory timelessness shaped by multiple factors, including visual and sound effects. In his writings on directing, Efros discusses how, for certain directors, "style is the manifestation of method; in this sense, playing style and method are one and the same. [...] Actors engage in situational exercises; they improvise. This method creates an astonishingly lively style. And the method itself likely stems from the right way of seeing."¹² In Mugur's work, the style of acting is crucial in defining both the story and the theatrical reality of the stage – it is key to the aesthetic reception of his productions. This style is shaped by the dialectical dialogue between identification and alienation, approaches that deconstruct and reconstruct 20th-century acting methodologies from different perspectives. However, Mugur does not use these two methods as established conventions but as a provocation – a creative challenge. While their tools may be recognizable to professionals and associated with their respective originators, Mugur continuously departs from them, subordinating them to his own directorial thinking and to the actor's acting ability and intelligence. Since my analysis is based on Mugur's Chekhov production books, and considering that he began his artistic journey within the Stanislavski school before progressing toward the empty stage, my approach to explaining the instructions follows a trajectory from Stanislavski-Danchenko to Brecht.

"To the blind eye, it may seem that Chekhov merely glides along the external line of the plot, concerned only with depicting everyday life and its minute details. However, all of this serves only as a contrast to the elevated

¹² Anatolij Efrosz, *Szerelmem, a próba*, 31.

dream that constantly lives in his soul, yearning with anticipation and hope."¹³ This *blind eye* becomes *theatrically blind* when it fails to recognize that these external plotlines serve as tools of *alienation*. During the rehearsal process, the actor must become aware that the external action is, in the playwright's intention, deceptive. The director must guide the actor in addressing this deception and ensuring that the audience perceives it. Stanislavski attributed the frequent misinterpretation of Chekhov's works to Symbolism and the rise of various (avant-garde) "ism" movements, as they required a higher level of experiential awareness, which he called the "supraconscious."¹⁴ Here, Stanislavski articulates a concept that later becomes fundamental to modern acting styles, guiding directors and actors – through the experiments of Meyerhold, Brecht, and others – toward a new understanding of realistic acting. This redefined realism incorporates elements of comedy, irony, and grotesque representation, with the degree of their application depending on the cultural, political, and social context of a given time and place. Mugur masterfully integrates these possibilities into his directing. Maria Shevtsova's research directly highlights this phenomenon: "Nemirovich-Danchenko pulled rehearsals out of their stalemate with, as he wrote to Chekhov, a 'brighter, faster, more forceful tone,' not 'weighed down by unnecessary pauses'. And he advised Artyom, Stanislavsky, Kachalov and Moskvina in these four problematic roles in the order just given to stand beside their roles as if they were outside, looking at them, and deliver their speeches like reports or lectures: this would enable them to distance their characters and present them at face value, without bothering about 'inner' substance. As a result, the production acquired the sharpness indispensable for its socio-political intent. Note how closely several of Brecht's techniques for *Verfremdungseffekt* resemble Nemirovich-Danchenko's instructions so much earlier in 1902."¹⁵ Even Brecht himself never denied the necessity of emotional identification, but he sought to strip away misleading expressions associated with the subconscious and psychological realism. Mugur, working decades later, drew on the artistic experiments of his predecessors, incorporating their insights into his own

¹³ K. Sz. Sztanyiszlavszkij, *Életem a művészetben* [My Life in Art] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1967), 258.

¹⁴ "Symbolism, Impressionism, and other sophisticated 'isms' in art belong to the realm of the supraconscious; they begin where the supernatural ends." Ibid., 253-254.

¹⁵ Maria Shevtsova, *Rediscovering Stanislavsky* (London: Cambridge University Press, Goldsmiths, 2020), 204.

directorial approach. Through his meticulous development of the actor's work, Mugur pursued the same goal as Giorgio Strehler: "To make the listener and the spectator feel how human relationships function, to present human actions in all their complexity, contradictions, and sometimes even incomprehensibility; to convey the concrete, simple reality of life, which is the shared reality of all people, one that we are all capable of understanding, expressing, and transforming."¹⁶

In a 1969 interview, Mugur stated: "In what we call 'theatre-making,' the most important factor is the actor."¹⁷ Almost thirty years later, he reaffirmed the same principle: "I was, and remain, a director for actors. I am not the only one – Penciulescu and others could be named as well. I am a director who builds metaphors through the actor's performance. The intellectual essence of the production depends on the actor's belief. This is the only kind of theatre I know."¹⁸ His actors consistently confirmed this in interviews, emphasizing his exceptional ability to guide them both artistically and intellectually.

Through various attempts to classify different acting styles embedded within the instructions, I initially sought to clearly separate them. However, at a certain point, I realized that if I did not allow these boundaries to blur naturally, a significant portion of the instructions would lose their meaning and cease to function. What constitutes complete immersion or total abstraction and alienation in one context gains an entirely new meaning when juxtaposed with a contrasting element – whether it be verbal and text-based, physical and movement-driven, or visual. Mugur's approach to stage presence is built on this contradiction. In Florica Ichim's collection of interviews, Mugur himself articulates a similar thought regarding text interpretation: "Instructions that contradict the text itself add far greater value to the text. This could become a method because it is highly effective, but I cannot sell all my secrets, can I?"¹⁹ This statement reflects both a desire to protect his developed techniques and his deep appreciation for

¹⁶ Giorgio Strehler, *Az emberi színházért* [For a Human Theatre] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1982), 132.

¹⁷ Mária Földes, "Beszélgetés Vlad Mugurral [Conversation with Vlad Mugur]," *Utunk*, August 15, 1969.

¹⁸ Dorin Serghie and Ioan-Pavel Azan, "Eu am fost regizor de actori și am rămas regizori de actori! [I Was a Director for Actors, and I Have Remained a Director for Actors!]," *Mesagerul Transilvan*, October 3, 1996.

¹⁹ Florica Ichim, *La vorbă cu Vlad Mugur* [Talking with Vlad Mugur] (București: Revista „Teatrul Azi” – supplement, 2000), 206.

spontaneity – the instinctual stage event driven by momentary inspiration, for which there is no formula, no predefined concept, only the talent for perceiving the given circumstances and the presence of the moment.

The Dialogue Between External and Internal Action: the Actor as Metaphor

Setting aside spontaneity, individual taste, intuition, and improvisational scene-building, Mugur's production books contain specific instructional elements that clarify the actor's task. These instructions shape the process of experimentation and mastery (fixation), while simultaneously creating a space for artistic creativity and psychological self-expression. This space allows the actor's mystical presence to manifest and fosters the magic of ensemble play, ultimately leading to the emergence of theatrical metaphor.

Mugur rarely uses adjectives to describe an actor's in his instructions; instead, he prefers verb-based structures that generate action. He expands upon or explains a feeling, records al patterns, or indicates what hidden information or psychological state the actor should respond to in an improvisational, instinctive manner. In doing so, he indirectly signals the actor's task in the given scene, providing them with the freedom to push the boundaries of their own personality. This prevents actors from resorting to stereotyped, prepackaged reactions, replacing them with "a newly discovered truth."²⁰ In Stanislavski's system, the actor's work begins with mapping actions through text analysis. By breaking down the main action into smaller tasks, the director guides the actor toward executing various sub-actions, all of which embody a particular form of action. However, Stanislavski does not define action merely as "an external, physical execution" but also considers a form of creative gesture that can manifest internally, psychologically, in service of the main objective. In this sense, even emotional states are not static – "they must be understood as active processes, defined by verbs."²¹ This is precisely how Mugur's instructions function as well. Approaching Mugur's instructions from Stanislavski's method,²² we can see

²⁰ Peter Brook lists the exercises that help guide the actor toward an authentic revelation of inner truth – breaking through their own limitations. See Peter Brook, *Az üres tér*, 161.

²¹ Árpád Kékesi Kun, *A rendezés színháza* [The Theatre of Directing] (Budapest: Osiris, 2007), 67.

²² Stanislavski emphasizes that by recognizing Chekhov's literary aesthetics, he was able to discover a new methodology for interpreting Chekhov's works. This methodology – the "system" – not only transformed the understanding of Chekhov's plays but also revitalized the art of acting in his time.

that his notes simultaneously focus on both the actor's internal and external actions:²³ "While external action amuses, entertains, and agitates us on stage, internal action nearly infects, seizes, and mesmerizes our soul. [...] It is best when both – internal and external action – are present together, fused as one."²⁴ Here, Stanislavski not only directly addresses the potential for alienation between the two types of action but also emphasizes that in Chekhov's plays, the psychological makeup of the characters is central. Mugur handles this with exceptional skill, as evidenced by numerous references showing that his actors genuinely "inhabit and exist within" these characters.

Mugur's external action instructions fall into different categories. Some indicate automatic, physical actions through verbs ("Looks at the clock," "Stands up," "Puts down the hat," "Follows," "Grabs," "Crosses," "Takes").²⁵ However, depending on the dramatic situation, they can also imply an intentional distancing from dramatic identification, aligning with Brechtian thought – inviting the actor to engage in intellectual, demonstrative play. At times, this provokes the audience's reaction; at others, it generates strong theatrical self-reflection. Mugur's production books for *Three Sisters* and *The Seagull* contain detailed examples of these techniques.

Every production book assigns significant importance to the actor's physical actions, including the technical description of stage movements. Many instructions describe the actor's spatial positioning, the direction of their movements, and the positioning of their body in certain situations. These technical instructions can also serve as a foundation for the potential reconstruction of past performances (see Max Reinhardt's production books and their critiques). Since they precisely document the set design and the placement of its elements, they provide detailed movement paths for actors, which closely correspond to spoken lines. As a result, entire sequences of gestures, movements, and gazes can be reconstructed with precision, down to the cue line:

²³ Stanislavski differentiates action in an actor's work based on its relation to the external and internal elements of a state. Action serves the external aspect of a state when the goal is to achieve "a sense of external form," "movement," and "the consistent logic of physical actions." Regarding internal elements, action is connected to "emotional memory," "the consistent logic of feelings," and "inner rhythm." Cf. K. Sz. Sztanyislavszkij, *A színész munkája. Egy színővendék naplója* [An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988), 607.

²⁴ Ibid., 257.

²⁵ Originally in Romanian: "Apucă pe..." / "pune mâna pe...", "trece", "ia," e.g., Anton Chekhov, *Drei Schwestern* [Three Sisters], trans. and edit. Peter Urban (Zürich: Diogenes Verlag, 1974), Vlad Mugur's production book, Konstanz, 13, 73. These types of instructions are present in all production books.

"Sorin enters from the back right, speaking while leaning on his cane, moving in the opposite direction of Masha, who is lighting a cigarette." "M. stands with their back to the audience, looking at nature. Speaks while facing away from the audience." "Treplev, centre of the proscenium, kneeling – watching the light effect." "During the line, Dorn sits down."²⁶

But we can also trace the movement choreography that renders certain characters ridiculous as they perform these actions. In *The Seagull*, the chasing-and-fleeing "dance" of Masha and Medvedenko, or Dorn and Polina; in *The Cherry Orchard*, the movements of Lopakhin or Yepikhodov – which serve as defining traits of their personalities – are all genuine choreographies. These types of instructions provide form, structure, and stage order to the performance while also offering the actor both technical and psychological anchors, allowing them to experience the aesthetic coherence that emerges from the sum of movements. The role of instructions that determine positioning or movement is not always limited to technical details – except when they fully align with the author's stage directions. By placing actors in space and guiding their movements, Mugur designs and documents the physical aspects of their performance. However, he does not stop there: his actor instructions also include references to metaphysical aspects, inner states, and energy, interpreting technical movements through an aesthetic lens.

Movement-direction instructions trigger emotional reactions, and when paired with a specific spoken line, they gain deeper meaning and additional layers of content. They carry both directorial and acting intentions, transforming physical action into an exploration of the character's inner state. This demonstrates that the physical and metaphysical levels are not separate – often, a single instruction simultaneously addresses both. For example, in *The Cherry Orchard*, during Act One, a single spatial shift floods the stage with sensory information about Lopakhin's presence and aura as a rising figure in this world.

LOPAKHIN (5. *completely from the background*): Yes, time does go.

GAEV: Who does?

LOPAKHIN (*approaching the others*): I said that time does go.

GAEV: And it smells of patchouli here. (6. *A response to Gaev?*)²⁷

²⁶ *Die Möwe* [The Seagull], trans. and edit. Peter Urban (Zürich: Diogenes Verlag, 1973), Vlad Mugur's production book, Konstanz.

²⁷ Anton Chekhov, *Der Kirschgarten* [The Cherry Orchard], trans. and edit. Peter Urban (Zürich: Diogenes Verlag, 1983), Vlad Mugur's production book, Würzburg, manuscript

Mugur speaks remarkably about gazes, peering, and seemingly secretive acts, using directed external gestures in his instructions to reveal deeper layers of drama. He pays close attention to the path and direction of glances, further developing the already established or emerging internal relationships between characters. Although the description of gaze direction is technically a physical action, its intensity challenges the actor to find a balance between the image conveyed by the body and the emotional state experienced within.

In Mugur's productions, the facial expressions and gesture systems of his actors often emphasize the expressive power of glances, sometimes to the extent that they take on the qualities of a mask. Depending on the situation, this can create comic, dramatic, or grotesque effects, occasionally even alienating the actors from the state they experienced moments before. Particularly significant are the instructions where a physical movement is accompanied by a specific bodily reaction from another actor, as physical contact conveys not only external action but also an underlying internal intent.

Polina places Dorn's hand between her own and pulls it close to her.
Dorn stands up.²⁸

Although this is also a directed external movement, it primarily defines the potential for physical connection between the two characters. By marking a gesture of rejection, the director simultaneously assigns a psychological charge to the physical interaction from both characters' perspectives. When combined with dialogue, this charge becomes even more perceptible.

Another example,²⁹ which is more choreographed, involves tableau-like compositions emerging from physical action and additional layers of

from 1988, 15. The English version of the drama: Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard* (Oxford Theatre Guild, 2019). Online: <https://www.oxfordtheatreguild.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Cherry-Orchard-Script.pdf>.

²⁸ "She takes his hand between hers and pulls it next to her. D stands up." Anton Chekhov, *Die Möwe*, 32.

²⁹ See the original in the Appendix. What may not be fully conveyed in the English translation is the shift from formal to informal address between the characters. This is a crucial directorial decision, occurring at the moment when the playfulness itself signals that Trigorin and Nina have found a connection within a specific life situation. English translation: Anton Chekhov, *The Seagull*, Project Gutenberg, 2006. Online: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1754/1754-h/1754-h.htm>.

meaning, transforming into interaction. These frozen images, created through stillness, acquire metaphors connected to the set or stage composition:

TRIGORIN

~~What success have I had?—I have never pleased myself; as a writer, I do not like myself at all. The trouble is that I am made giddy, as it were, by the fumes of my brain, and often hardly know what I am writing: 6. I love this lake, these trees, the blue heaven; 7. nature's voice speaks to me and wakes a feeling of 8. passion in my heart, 9. and I am overcome by an uncontrollable desire to write. 10. But I am not only a painter of landscapes, I am a man of the city besides. I love my country, too, and her people; I feel that, as a writer, it is my duty to speak of their sorrows, of their future, also of science, of the rights of man, and so forth. So I write on every subject, and the public hounds me on all sides, sometimes in anger, and I race and dodge like a fox with a pack of hounds on his trail. I see life and knowledge flitting away before me. I am left behind them like a peasant who has missed his train at a station, 1. and finally I come back to the conclusion that all I am fit for is to describe landscapes, and that whatever else I attempt rings abominably false.~~

6. Tr looks at 1. the trees, 2. the water, 3. the sky, 4. Nina. He might even say, "*Mereu ich liebe.*"

7. He says, "*I love...*," pauses at Nina... they laugh. Nina breaks branches and throws them into the sky. Tr does the same.

8. They break branches. Nina throws them at him and at herself.

9. Play! They search for branches on the ground, crawling on all fours, throwing them at each other.

10. Tr stops Nina's hand on the branches on the floor. Then they continue playing.

1. Poses. No longer looks at Nina – faces the audience.

DU

NYINA

2. You work too hard ~~to realize the importance of your writings~~. What if you are discontented with yourself? 3. To others you appear a great and splendid man. If I were a writer like you, I should devote my whole life to the service of the Russian people, knowing at the same time that their welfare depended on their power to rise to the heights I had attained, and the people should send me before them in a chariot of triumph.

2. Understands – Tr hints at it without looking at Nina.

3. Looks at Nina. Nina excitedly crawls toward him.

TRIGORIN. ~~In a chariot?~~ Do you think I am Agamemnon?

4. [They both smile.]

NINA. 5. For the bliss of being a writer or an actress I could endure want, 6. and disillusionment, and the hatred of my friends, ~~and the pangs of my own dissatisfaction with myself~~; but I should demand in return fame, 7. real, resounding fame! [She covers her face with her hands] 8. Whew! My head reels! 9. Uh!

10. THE VOICE OF ARKADINA. [From inside the house] Boris! Boris!

TRIGORIN. She is calling me, 11. probably to come and pack, but I don't want to leave this place. 12. [His eyes rest on the lake] ~~What a blessing such beauty is!~~ How beautiful!

NINA. 12. Do you see that house there, on the far shore?

TRIGORIN. Yes. Ühü.

4. They both smile.

5. In excitement, she rises to her knees.

6. At the peak of her excitement, she stands up.

7. Almost screams.

8. Staggers.

9. Runs to the barrel, falls to her knees, presses her head into the water.

10. Arkadina's voice. Trigorin kneels.

11. Waking up from a dream - black humor.

12. Towards the lake.

12.' Nina crawls towards the footlights, signaling Trigorin. Trigorin follows on all fours.

While Trigorin speaks about how one can paint a remarkable landscape of human fate and suffering, his physical interaction with Nina – their deliberate movements, postures, and physical positioning – simultaneously creates a landscape of their present life situation and their unfulfilled desires. Stage movement, thus, follows “the laws of human al norms.”¹ “If the form is precise, then the content, the intentions, and the emotions will be as well, as these are determined by posture.”²

By Mugur, certain emotional states are not necessarily driven by internal immersion during performance but are sometimes primarily

¹ *Mejerhold műhelye* [Meyerhold's Workshop], ed. László Peterdi Nagy (Budapest: Gondolat, 1981), 117.

² Vszevolod Mejerhold, *Színházi forradalom* [A Revolution in Theatre] (Budapest: A Színháztudományi Intézet és a Népművelési Propaganda Iroda közös kiadványa, 1967), 89.

expressed through physical action, conveying what in other cases would be performed through emotional, internal experience.³

Mugar's instruction referring to "black humor" also signals the scene's awareness – that is, the actor must recognize that this situation is, in reality, ridiculous, even pathetic, and must make this apparent through their performance. When we consider this in conjunction with the spatial description of *The Seagull* in the production book, this seemingly romantic game immediately takes on a different meaning within the faded, withered, sandy garden setting described in the text. Through contrasting effects, what initially appears to be a realistic acting style gradually transforms into something absurd, drawing closer to the clown play that Mugar frequently employed, which incorporates mechanical movement as part of the physical characteristics of the character. "Movement in itself is a mechanical action and is limited to specific muscular movements. Physical action, however, is something entirely different. It inevitably has a psychological dimension, as its execution involuntarily engages will, thought, imagination, and ultimately, emotion."⁴

The dreamlike vision illustrated above is suddenly shattered by Arkadina's voice, followed by her entrance onto the stage (while the author's stage direction states that she should call out from the window, Mugar instead brings her into the space). This is a simple directed movement, but it must be carefully constructed to fit within the visual composition (tableau) created by the sequence of movements. Dramaturgically, this appearance, this moment of "being caught," is timed to imbue it with further meaning, illuminating the thematic framework of the situation within a broader context.

These situations, along with the instructions that determine an actor's physical position in relation to their line delivery, not only serve to interpret the character but also define the network of relationships in which the character exists, expresses themselves, and is compelled to speak. In *The Seagull*, Mugar reinforces two key relationships: Masha, by turning her back on Medvedenko (and also on the audience) while speaking about her misery to the artificially constructed natural setting, physically expresses her detachment from the situation and her rejection of Medvedenko's advances.

³ See Meyerhold's theory of biomechanics.

⁴ Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Színházi forradalom*, 114.

At the same time, she draws the audience's attention precisely by speaking "improperly" with her back turned, which requires her to carefully balance diction, clarity of speech, and the effective transmission of meaning in her line, as well as the extent to which her intention is successfully realized. The physical reinforcement of verbally expressed intent also grants the director the authority to condense or edit the dramatic text, creating room for the actor's full presence and expression. When this is achieved, balance emerges between the fixed literary text and the living theatre.

Another important methodological technique for revealing relational dynamics is when the emphasis is shifted from the speaking actor to the one listening. This means that the spoken line gains its significance not from the speaker but from the one receiving it. In *The Seagull*, during Sorin's first nostalgic reflection on his youth, Mugur does not assign the physical reaction⁵ to Sorin himself but instead places this task on Treplev: "Treplev kneels, watching the light effect." Examining this instruction within the context of the text, the moment simultaneously becomes poetic and psychologically profound, as this gesture transforms Treplev into a metaphor for Sorin's younger self, demanding that the actor portraying Treplev embody the appropriate emotional state and authentically convey it. The allegorical representation of suffering and reflected pain, which is also a fundamental experience of modern existence,⁶ simultaneously emerges from the actor's individual emotional world and becomes a metaphorical image of the characters' fates. "The spectator must see beyond the actor's role and recognize the social archetype that the role mimetically reflects."⁷

The Inner Life of the Actor and the Role

According to Gábor Tompa, genuine pedagogical work processes and the valuable artistic performances that emerge from them are those in which interpretative rehearsals do not end at the reading table but continue throughout the staging rehearsals. These rehearsals help the actor navigate the logic of dramatic relations and meanings, so "the analytical process

⁵ See *The Seagull in Konstanz (and Bern)* chapter in my doctoral dissertation (forthcoming).

⁶ Ildikó Regéczi, *Csehov és a korai egzisztenciabölcselet* [Chekhov and Early Existential Philosophy] (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2000), 116.

⁷ Gábor Tompa, *A hűtlen színház*, 96.

permeates the other rehearsals as well.”⁸ Some of Mugur's instructions clearly reflect this approach, as they actively reveal and signal the inner life of the characters, making the conceptualization process dynamic and deeply engaging in the production book. This, in turn, helps the reader grasp not only the internal workings of the dramatic characters but also the task of the actor in shaping the role, through the recording of the genuine inner motivations behind the spoken lines. At the same time, these instructions precisely highlight shifts in the characters'. However, because these instructions focus exclusively on psychological positioning, they do not reveal (nor can it be inferred from the production book) what movement or physical reaction might accompany a given state. This is likely because the physical action remains open and adaptable, belonging to the concrete rehearsal process, where it is built from the spontaneous, organic reactions of the actor in the moment. Based on my experience with rehearsals, these instructions achieve their true purpose when the actor has already reached a certain level of understanding of their character. Until then, these directions may only trigger preliminary, schematic reactions. Such instructions often use verbs, adverbs, or adjectives that indicate states of being, psychological conditions, or changes in emotional states, for example:

“He must admire her.” “She knows that Lopakhin has tender feelings for her.” “Tells the story with a ‘once upon a time’ gesture.” “Towards the audience, unconsciously.” “T. smiling.” “Distrustfully.”

These instructions, which bear a strong resemblance to Stanislavski's, allow the actor to know with great precision – down to the exact line or even second – what emotional state their partner is in, what they are thinking, and how they respond to that thought in reality. This includes what “mask” they choose to conceal their emotions, how they react physically and verbally, and how they might express something different from what they truly feel. If we place the second instruction into the specific dramatic situation, we can see that it also provides a key to interpreting the character of Lubov Andreyevna. This woman is not naive; she remembers everything from the past and recognizes from Lopakhin's gestures and glances that he harbors genuine feelings for her. She also understands that he is buying the estate partly because he cannot possess the woman he has loved since his youth. In

⁸ Ibid., 72.

this interpretation, Lubov Andreyevna, despite being “under love,” also holds a superior knowledge – a deeper life experience and psychological insight into her surroundings – which, along with her dignity and property, is lost, has become meaningless, and thus, it proves to be worthless.

These directorial instructions do not restrict or frame the actor’s possibilities in a schematic manner. Instead, by presenting them with a concrete, clear situation, they open up the actor’s imagination, liberate them, and provide impulses for grasping the invisible essence of the play. Most importantly, these types of instructions reveal the director’s decision regarding the true nature of the literary character. “A director must provide a clear answer to every question in the creative process. While an analytical study may offer multiple interpretations of why Hamlet delays his revenge, a concrete theatrical production must give a definitive answer.”⁹ This idea is deeply connected to the casting process as well, as the chosen actor is the one who brings the imagined character to life. “The director envisions the role’s physical and psychological characteristics and its communicative apparatus through the qualities and abilities of the selected actor.”¹⁰ Immediately connected to this are the instructions that assist the actor through adjectival phrases, helping them shape their performance.

These instructions not only define the nature of the given situation but also gradually build the character’s complexity, adding new layers, instruction by instruction. However, it is crucial that such instructions remain limited in number. If the director were to over-instruct the actor, they would lose the freedom to shape the role more organically. Mugur maintains this delicate balance, ensuring that while some instructions remain general, they still establish a necessary, pre-programmed emotional state that becomes intrinsic to the character. This is supported by the use of adjectives or adjectival phrases, which help define the character’s fundamental emotional state.

These adjectives (which may also take the form of adverbs indicating condition, manner, or state, depending on the nature of the instruction) provide only a starting point. Their specific meaning must ultimately be discovered by the actor through experimentation and rehearsal, including improvisation.

⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

"Treplev is nervous until Nina arrives."

Commonly used adjectives:

"bored," "sweet," "embittered," "jealous-comic," "ironic," "aggressive,"
"angry," "unconscious."

These instructions are not only relevant to the given situation but also form part of a broader character and analysis, helping the actor align their performance with the psychology and emotional state of the role. "Many of the lived but invisible emotions are reflected in facial expressions, eyes, voice, speech, and movements – in our entire physical apparatus. This makes the observer's task easier; yet, even under such conditions, grasping inner human content remains difficult, as people rarely reveal their true selves. Most often, they hide their emotions, and the external mask deceives the observer, making it even harder to detect hidden feelings."¹¹ Mugur emphasizes this constant struggle between external and internal content, transforming it into an artistic tool by consciously revealing these tensions. Some instructions pose existential questions that cannot be fully answered within the script itself but require further exploration in rehearsal through actor-director discussions and improvisational exercises. The instruction "I. Why does he remember?"¹² is a clear example of how the director seeks to define the quality of the actor's presence – a presence fueled by emotional memory, drawing from past experiences not only within the character's narrative but also from the actor's own life. "Just as an image of a long-forgotten object, landscape, or person can suddenly reappear in visual memory, past emotions can be revived through emotional memory. They seem entirely forgotten until a trigger – an idea, a familiar figure – suddenly brings them back with full intensity."¹³ This process, however, requires a pedagogical approach that fosters an atmosphere in rehearsals where the actor feels secure enough to allow memory to surface. It is within this openness to internal vision that genuine, human emotion emerges, manifesting in a gesture that transcends mere theatrical convention. This gesture is not just for the audience – it is also a communication between the actor and the role itself, as evidenced in one of Mugur's letters to Magda

¹¹ K. Sz. Sztanyiszlavszkij, *A színész munkája*, 125.

¹² "I. Warum sich erinnere", Anton Chekhov, *Drei Schwestern* [Three Sisters], trans. and edit. Peter Urban (Zürich: Diogenes Verlag, 1974), Vlad Mugur's production book, Konstanz, 2.

¹³ K. Sz. Sztanyiszlavszkij, *A színész munkája*, 204.

Stief, where he clearly articulates her task in *The Cherry Orchard*: “Do not think about the audience, the critics, etc. Think about the love you feel for this woman. And how, through this love, you will be able to make some people better... This is the only key to art and happiness... If we want to be loved, we must not focus on whom we work with, but on whom we work for... You are terrifying in this role because you are human.”¹⁴

When examining these multifaceted, actor-centred instructions – not only as individual acting tasks but also in relation to the specific lines where the director places them – a different type of instructional system emerges, one that operates in opposition to the text itself, leading to an alternative approach to acting and directorial methodology.

Action Against the Text

A fundamental feature of Mugur’s method is the consistent use of instructions that oppose the spoken text, shaping entire scenes through contradiction and enabling the performance to span multiple genres simultaneously. This duality evokes conflicting emotions in the audience, creating a complex and layered experience. “A dramatic work has a thousand faces, and to make it tangible and alive, it is enough to reveal just one or a few – we do not need to see them all at once. This is how theatre generates conflict: a dialectical opposition between two fundamental elements – the text and the actor’s performance. One obstructs the other. This disrupts theatrical unity, transforming it into the dialectic of contradiction.”¹⁵

Mugur employs contradiction in various ways. While he explicitly refers to instructions that oppose the text, the phenomenon appears in a more layered manner in his production books and performances. He begins by preserving the essential textual meaning required for realistic storytelling. However, anything that leads to over-explanation or didacticism is either removed or counteracted, while all elements that enhance subtext and deeper meaning are emphasized. In many cases, the stage design itself contradicts the text; the actor’s movement clashes with spatial elements;

¹⁴ Vlad Mugur’s note for Magda Stief during the rehearsal process of *The Cherry Orchard* in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

¹⁵ Giorgio Strehler, *Az emberi színházért*, 187.

costumes contradict character traits; and the actor may even play against the audience – for example, by turning their back to them or performing an entire scene in darkness. Even tone, rhythm, and external sound effects can disrupt the primary communicative function of the text.

Particularly expressive examples of this method of contradiction appear in *The Seagull*, where Mugur deliberately overturns every stage direction related to the characters' physical positions. He replaces them with opposite instructions, completely disrupting the "meaning" of the text and altering the of the characters. In theatre, the actual speech situation always influences the text, adding new layers of meaning to its literal interpretation. In Chekhov's plays, this dynamic is especially emphasized, as text cannot be separated from its stage environment – where, how, and under what physical conditions a line is spoken fundamentally changes its meaning.

Mugur fully exploits the actors' exposure to their lines, subverting the dialogues with an acute awareness that their primary meanings are "dead" when simply recited. The stage does not allow for falsehood – the actor must perform the underlying truth behind the text. Through this approach, the director not only ensures an immediate and authentic stage presence but also forces the audience to confront their own reality, compelling them to either accept or reject the truth being staged. A clear example of this appears in *The Seagull*, where Treplev's outburst against his mother's passivity is originally staged as a seated conversation with Sorin. However, Mugur pushes Treplev into action, making him imitate work, thrash about in frustration, and behave hysterically, turning himself into an almost comical figure while delivering his tirade against his mother, Arkadina. "Alienation can be achieved through its antithesis – parody, imitation, critique – every rhetorical tool is available. This dialectical interplay is a fundamental theatrical method. Alienation is a language as rich as poetry itself: a tool for the dynamic theatre of a changing world. Through alienation, we can reach the same expressive depths as Shakespeare did through the dynamic use of language. Alienation can be something very simple, a mere series of physical tricks. [...] The goal is to constantly puncture the balloon of rhetorical acting."¹⁶

¹⁶ Peter Brook, *Az üres tér*, 101.

Acting against the text also reshapes the traditional positioning of actors on stage. The space-constrained delivery of lines is no longer taken for granted. Instead, new experimental movements emerge, compelling the director to rethink the actor's presence and position within the performance. Given Mugur's strong tendency toward opposition and contrast, he frequently places situations in new dimensions, thereby challenging the actor in unexpected ways – a method clearly visible in his German production of *The Seagull* in the 1970s. The actor must learn to establish direct communication with the audience, while also mastering its opposite – delivering an artistically crafted message even with their back turned. Two examples from Act I of *The Seagull* illustrate this approach:

MASHA.

The air is sultry; a storm is brewing for tonight. ~~4. You do nothing but moralize or else talk about money.~~ To you, poverty is the greatest misfortune that can befall a man, but I think it is a thousand times easier to go begging in rags than to... You wouldn't understand that, though.

4. M. with her back to the audience, looking at nature. Speaks while facing away from the audience.

SORIN

But we can't do without a theatre.

To a spectator.

TREPLEV

3. No, but we must have it under a new form. If we can't do that, let us rather not have it at all.

3. Clears the path.

In these two situations, the actor's position and tone determine what the simple statement actually conveys and to whom it is directed. Masha speaks with her back to the audience, stating that those who have not experienced what she has "will never understand" her misery. By delivering this directly aimed line while turned away, she prevents the moment from becoming didactic, overly emotional, or self-pitying, while simultaneously challenging the audience not to remain indifferent to the issue. Similarly, Sorin turns away from the audience when discussing with Treplev the futility of attempting to create new theatrical forms without spectators. Treplev, the aspiring innovator of theatre, never turns his back on the audience while conveying this message, highlighting his immaturity in

fulfilling his artistic mission – he seeks to impose new forms upon the world while neglecting the most crucial factor: the spectator. This contrast underscores his superficiality and narcissism, while Sorin, the old man, exhibits the keen insight of experience, emphasizing the importance of a generational dialogue on artistic perspectives. “An actor, through a certain tone, gesture, or combination thereof, ‘highlights’ something by extracting it, positioning themselves ‘outside’ what, at that moment, signifies something specific. In that instant, they either stop or accelerate time, thereby transforming it into something ‘other.’ This moment thus illuminates something previously unknown, turning it into ‘new knowledge’ and, through its unexpectedness, urging discovery.”¹ This type of provocation mirrors a technique Mugur used twenty years later on the Cluj stage, where he had actors deliver their lines in complete darkness during a production of *The Cherry Orchard*. Such experiments reveal Mugur's intent to dismantle ingrained theatrical conventions, which had distanced actors from their true artistic purpose – preserving the sharpness of their acting intelligence.

As for the additional “indescribable” methodological secrets that Mugur alludes to, they likely involve the director's personal disposition, their level of identification with the text, their ability to explore interpretive possibilities through genre, and their recognition of the actor's artistic intelligence, seamlessly incorporating it into the stage performance. It is impossible to define how alienation humor (which is inherently intuitive) is created, particularly since the quality of humor depends on the individual, their personality, and intelligence. This humor does not necessarily emerge from Chekhov's original context, yet in its contradictions, it remains an organic part of the Chekhovian text – whether through physical gags, verbal delivery, tonal shifts, or wordplay. However, these nuances can only be fully appreciated in a live performance.

From Mugur's known productions, it is evident that he prioritized rhythmic speech patterns – for him, speech was a stylistic tool just like any other audio-visual element. The emphasis and intonation of spoken lines played a crucial role in his method of contrast, marking a stark opposition to the outdated, actor-hostile approach that dominated much of the theatrical

¹ Giorgio Strehler, *Az emberi színházért*, 131.

landscape of his time – an approach that insisted on word-for-word fidelity to the playwright’s text without considering the theatrical medium.

Through my research, I was ultimately able to achieve my primary goal: although only partially, Vlad Mugur’s productions can be reconstructed and visualized through his production books. These sources reveal the world, atmosphere, and psychological depth of his productions, offering a precise understanding of the methodological processes he used to challenge actors, prompting them toward the level of performance that later became foundational in the training of subsequent generations of directors. His stage aesthetics remain undeniably influential to this day.

While the study of production books has little tradition in Hungarian and Romanian theatre studies, the German examples I encountered during my research confirm their validity from multiple perspectives. The production books of Stanislavski, Brecht, Max Reinhardt, and Beckett’s notes were not published decades after their deaths by mere chance. Even unrealized production books from Craig or Stanislavski remain subjects of contemporary research. Similarly, Vlad Mugur’s unrealized production books are invaluable resources for analyzing his directorial legacy.

Having explored the rich historical and methodological background surrounding production books, and recognizing their potential for aesthetic interpretation and artistic expression, I decided to incorporate the study of production books into a seminar curriculum. Through this approach, students will learn to analyze dramatic texts by engaging directly with the director’s vision. Their dramaturgical interpretations will intersect with those of a “master” director, and their questions about textual adaptation will find possible answers in the director’s instructions and dramaturgical solutions documented in the production book. This process will transform the selected drama from merely a theoretical or abstract text into a living, practical framework that offers tangible solutions for stage performance – a medium that exists within the complex system of rehearsal, staging, and theatrical realization.

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Appendix

Geographical Names and Their Present-Day Equivalents

Hungarian name	Official name today	Other names
Abrudbánya	Abrud, Romania	Gross-Schlatten, Altenburg
Alsószolcsva	Sălcuia, Romania	Sundorf
Aranyosbánya	Baia de Arieș	Offenburg
Beregszász	Berehove, Ukraine	
Beszterce	Bistrița, Romania	Bistritz, Bästerts
Besztercebánya	Banská Bystrica, Slovakia	Neusohl
Bethlen	Beclean, Romania	Betlen
Brassó	Brașov, Romania	Kronstadt
Buda	Buda (part of Budapest), Hungary	Ofen
Csík	Ciuc (County), Romania	
Csíkсомlyó	Șumuleu Ciuc, Romania	Schomlenberg
Csíkszereda	Miercurea Ciuc, Romania	Szeklerburg
Dicsőszentmárton	Târnăveni, Romania	Sankt Martin
Dés	Dej, Romania	Deesch
Déva	Deva, Romania	Diemrich, Schlossberg, Denburg
Eperjes	Prešov, Slovakia	Preschau
Erzsébetváros	Dumbrăveni, Romania	Elisabethstadt
Fogarás	Făgăraș, Romania	Fogarasch

Hungarian name	Official name today	Other names
Gyergyó	Gheorgheni, Romania	
Gyulafehérvár	Alba Iulia	Karlsburg, Weißenburg
Hátszeg	Haţeg, Romania	Hatzeg, Hötzing
Kanta	Canta, Romania	
Karánsebes	Caransebeş, Romania,	Karansebesch
Kassa	Košice, Slovakia	Kaschau
Kolozsvár	Cluj(-Napoca), Romania	Klausenburg, Claudiopolis
Komárom	Komárno, Slovakia	Komorn
Kézdiszentlélek	Sânzieni, Romania	
Kézdivásárhely	Târgu Secuiesc, Romania	Szekler Neumarkt
Lemhény	Lemnia, Romania	
Lippa	Lipova, Romania	Lippa
Losonc	Lučenec, Slovakia	Licenz
Lugos	Lugoj, Romania	Lugosch
Lőcse	Levoča, Slovakia	Leutschau
Magyarlápós	Lăpuşul Unguresc, Romania	Ungarlaposch
Marosvásárhely	Târgu Mureş, Romania	Neumarkt am Mieresch
Medgyes	Mediaş, Romania	Medwesch, Mediasch
Munkács	Mukachevo, Ukraine	Munkatsch
Máramarossziget	Sighetu Marmăţiei, Romania	Sighet
Nagyajta	Aita Mare, Romania	
Nagybecskerek	Zrenjanin, Serbia	Großbetschkerek
Nagybánya	Baia Mare, Romania	Frauenbach
Nagyenyed	Aiud, Romania	Straßburg am Mieresch
Nagykanizsa	Nagykanizsa, Hungary	Großkanizsa
Nagykikinda	Kikinda, Serbia	Großkikinda
Nagysomkút	Şomcuta Mare, Romania	Großhorn
Nagyszalonta	Salonta, Romania	Großsalontha

Hungarian name	Official name today	Other names
Nagyszeben	Sibiu, Romania	Hermannstadt
Nagyszombat	Trnava, Slovakia	Tyrnau, Tyrnavia
Nagyvárad	Oradea, Romania	Großwardein
Naszód	Năsăud, Romania	Nussdorf
Nyitra	Nitra, Slovakia	Neutra
Óbecse	Bečej, Serbia	Alt Betsche
Pest	Pest (part of Budapest), Hungary	Pesth
Pozsony	Bratislava, Slovakia	Pressburg
Rimaszombat	Rimavská Sobota, Slovakia	Großsteffelsdorf
Rozsnyó	Rožňava, Slovakia	Rosenau
Segesvár	Sighișoara, Romania	Schäßburg, Schäsbrich
Sepsiszentgyörgy	Sfântu Gheorghe, Romania	Sankt Georgen
Szentegyháza	Vlăhița, Romania	Szentegyházás-Oláhfalú
Székelyudvarhely	Odorheiu Secuiesc, Romania	Oderhellen
Temesvár	Timișoara, Romania	Temeswar
Torda	Turda, Romania	Thorenburg
	Toruń, Poland	Thorn
Ungvár	Uzhhorod, Ukraine	Ungwar
Újvidék	Novi Sad, Serbia	Neusatz
Versec	Vršac, Serbia	Werschetz
Zenta	Senta, Serbia	Senta
Zilah	Zalău, Romania	Zillenmarkt
Zombor	Sombor, Serbia	Zombor

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An OPAC of over 6000 local theatre journals he has identified – and in many cases has copies of – is on the website of the Don Juan Archive in Vienna (www.theaterjournale.at). His fields of interest were primarily 19th century German theatre, theatre almanacs and journals, playbills, the prompter, theatre rules and regulations, theatre repertoires, guest performers and theatres.

The studies assembled in this volume, which focus on theatre history and performance studies, were originally presented to commemorate the bicentenary of the inauguration of Cluj's permanent theatre building. Yet the scope of this collection extends far beyond the history of a single institution, namely, the stone theatre inaugurated in the spring of 1821 on Farkas Street (now Kogălniceanu Street). The contributions collectively offer a rich exploration of Transylvanian theatre, tracing its evolution from sixteenth-century dramatic texts to contemporary directorial practices.

