
ABSTRACTS

Gergely Bődök: *Thalia at Ares's Service: Theatre and Its Scenes in Hungary during the Great War*

The outbreak of the First World War brought about new challenges for the established institutions of Hungarian theatre scene. Its stakeholders, directors and actors alike, were not exempt from the draft, and the dramatic shortage of actors caused many theatres to close their doors for some time. Because they had their finger on the pulse and responded to the wartime mass demand for recreation and entertainment, the profitability of commercial theatre companies grew significantly at this time, as opposed to the state-operated theatres which had to suspend their activities due to their moral obligations. Primarily in Budapest, the shortage of actors caused by the military mobilisation coincided with the high levels of unemployment among job seeking actors. The daily life and livelihood of actors were profoundly upset by the war. While those conscripted lived their lives as private soldiers, those who remained at home were confined to charity work and meet general expectations by playing in (often propagandistic) productions staged in aid of the families of front soldiers. In addition, unique institutions emerged on the front and in prisoner of war camps. While front theatres entertaining the military forces created the illusion of the peacetime hinterland, stages in prisoner of war camps were also specifically set up to fight despair and improve the inmates' mental health.

Gyöngyi Heltai: "Realigning" the Theatre: The Crisis of the Self-Regulated Operational Model of the Private Theatre Sector in Pest (1936–1942)

Based on the analysis of the material at the archives of the Association of Theatre Directors in Budapest, the study explores the various stages as well as the internal and external perceptions of the process of perceived prestige loss. The main research questions raised by the author include how the executives of the association, primarily businessmen and theatre directors from the Budapest elite, interpreted the increasing pressure by the authorities which disrupted and gradually rendered impossible the operation of private theatres. How did they see the municipal authorities' involvement in the theatre sector which had flourished according to the rules of market economy in the past? What type of responses did they have when the passing of the first anti-Jewish bills and

the establishment of the Chamber of Theatrical and Cinema Arts abolished their former platforms of negotiation and mediation? How did these events transform their formerly loyal attitudes toward the authorities? The study also touches upon the parallelism between the idealistic, Utopian ideas emerging in the late 1930s and those present after 1949. In both of these cases, directing the “increase of cultural demand” at the theatre industry, stressing the necessary elimination of the commercial character of the sector, and bringing social factors to the forefront, were the strategies that justified state intervention. At these junctures, the unquestionably real problems of the private theatre model were thought to be solvable by central regulation, the re-education of the audience, and supplanting the former “elite” of the sector.

Ádám Ignácz: The Beginnings of Popular Music Research in Socialist Hungary: The First Generation

In Western Europe and the United States the study of popular music was integrated into academic scholarship in the 1970s. In Central and Eastern Europe this field has recently become an important part of cultural and media studies. It is, however, conspicuous, that in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc, this fledgling field of study is often conceived as a Western-oriented, young discipline and that the local research that had actually begun under Socialism remains unexplored, even within the respective national scholarships. This is all the less justifiable because the scene developing in the 1960s and 1970s in contexts – that were fundamentally different from the western side of the Iron Curtain – resulted in works that were at best parallel to, but largely independent from Western output, regarding their methods, subjects, and motivation. Hungarian Marxist musicology and sociology of music was one of the most important domains for such experiments within the Soviet Bloc.

The analyses conducted at the beginning of the 1960s were independent from fans and rock musicians, that is the young people with vested interests in the popularisation of various new types of pop music then recently imported to Hungary. Instead, these contributions were written by academics over forty years of age, with classical erudition, typically affiliated with leading Hungarian intellectual circles and seminal academic institutions of music. The present study examines the work of the first generation of these researchers, Ágnes Losonczy, János Maróthy, and Iván Vitányi. The primary aim is to find out why this substantial academic output, mostly driven by current cultural political motivations, sank into oblivion. In addition, the paper explores how their current positioning within the discipline, as is the case in most publications considered “ideological” due to their affiliation with the Socialist regime, is highly problematic for contemporary historiography.

Zoltán Imre: Staging *The Merchant of Venice* at the Hungarian National Theatre in 1986

The study focuses on the staging of *The Merchant of Venice* in Hungary, which took place in 1986 after the forty-six-year silence following the previous premiere of the play in 1940. The article deals with the long hiatus and the new staging, primarily focusing on why *The Merchant* was considered a “problematic” play within the socialist universe of the Kádár Regime. As a result, the article draws attention to the ways in which the dominant ideology of the Kádár Regime influenced the interpretation of Shakespeare’s play; why it silenced the play to finally acquiesce in a production solely focusing on an apologetic Shylock.

Csilla Kiss: Marriage and Divorce Patterns of Actresses in the Long Nineteenth Century

The study concentrates on the marriage and divorce patterns within the circles of actresses working in Budapest in the long nineteenth century, based on the author’s own database generated out of the data on 239 actresses, who with the exception of the first generation, were all employed in the Hungarian capital between 1790 and 1914.

The figures suggest that the number of marriages to actors or theatre professionals is consistently high until a significant drop from 83% to 49% at the end of the period under scrutiny. At the beginning of the period studied, actresses entered the profession through their marriage or because of the family background rather than as a result of their own conscious career choice. Later, their career decisions appear to be increasingly independent, mostly due to the aforementioned decrease of husbands affiliated with the theatre industry and the fact that actresses in the second generation of the sample usually married after their theatrical career was established.

While the proportion of actor husbands was decreasing, that of theatre professionals was on the rise (with some fluctuation). The analysis of individual life stories allows for the speculation that actresses often married to promote their own interests. Actors and theatre professionals as husbands were able to help their wives’ career, while “civilians” could help them rise to higher social status; and new marriages often also served to stabilise the actresses’ financial situation. The divorce ratio was rather high across all generations of actresses in this period: with the 15–30%, it was significantly higher than the national average. It is conspicuous that the new husbands were, almost without exception, more successful, affluent or respectable, than the previous ones. Extramarital relationships were frequent mostly before, between and after marriages. The motivation

for affairs was to some extent similar to those for marriages, although adventure and sensuality clearly played a greater role in these relationships.

Orsolya Ring: The Bulwark of Culture or Tabloid Theatre for the Working Class? The József Attila Theatre under Imre Fodor's Directorship (1956–1975)

Following the nationalisation of theatres in 1949, the context of stage productions was profoundly transformed. The previously market-based theatre model was replaced by state subsidies, which were granted in return for the dissemination of ideology as determined by the political decision-makers of the time. The study investigates the contemporary ideas about influencing a certain group of theatre-goers, actual audience preferences, and the theatre directorate's responses to them. One of the main tasks of the József Attila Theatre, independent since 1956, was to stage productions for the population of northern Pest, primarily workers, to be enjoyed in their own cultural environment. The study presents and analyses the mass education measures taken in order to transform workers into theatre-goers, specifically audience building, season tickets, supporting ideologically endorsed plays, and various events organised for the public in connection with ideologically approved productions. The first half of the period between 1956 and 1975 is still largely characterised by the practices of the early 1950s. In the second half of the 1960s, however, the language of the discourse changed and the emphases shifted dramatically. This is what makes the story of the theatre's transformation, as it is indicated in the title, from the bulwark of culture into a tabloid theatre entertaining the working class.

Eszter Szabó-Reznek: The Self-representation of the Aristocracy during the Centenary Celebrations of Professional Acting in Transylvania

In 1892, on the days of 10–12 November, the Hungarian Theatre of Kolozsvár (today Cluj Napoca) celebrated the centenary of professional acting in Transylvania. This was a great opportunity for both the theatre and the city to stress the importance of Kolozsvár as a regional cultural capital, introducing it in the context of heterogeneous Hungarian cultural life, with relevant centres next to the capital, Budapest. At the same time, it was an ideal occasion to stage the past and plan the future of the institution. The author in her paper chose a single moment of this three-day celebration for her analysis, namely two tableaux presented on stage by members of the Transylvanian aristocracy, descendants of

those families who took an important role in the foundation of the theatre of Kolozsvár, the very first Hungarian permanent public theatre. As the aristocratic representative publicity was pushed into the background by the bourgeois public sphere, the aristocratic patronage was replaced by new supporters, such as the intellectual and economic elite or the state. Despite this fact, in the preparation and presentation of the tableaux – formerly the private practice of aristocratic palace theatres – as well as the (self)staging of the aristocracy as the historical patron of the theatre, for a few days it seemed that nothing had changed in the past hundred years. However, behind the scenes the most pressing problem was to find a solution for the constant financial crisis, and the answer was a new patron, the state.

Lilla Szalisznyó: The Quarrelsome Actor, the Negligent Cloakroom Attendant and the Drunk Supernumerary before the Theatre Tribunal: The Internal Ethical Code of the Hungarian National Theatre and Its Practical Use in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

The study sheds light on a single aspect of the professionalisation of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest (the later National Theatre), inaugurated in 1837, based on the examination of the in-house ethical codes and the written minutes of in-house tribunals. These two types of sources reveal the internal processes deployed to build and manage the professional everyday operation of this new, representative, and unique institution. Within a decade after its opening, the theatre could boast three generously supplemented codes. From 1842 onwards, the code of ethics stipulated the job description, jurisdiction and financial liability of all employees, extending to the regulation of the moral conduct of the staff and actors both in and outside the theatre, the enforcement of the regulations and the potential retribution for violating the code. The minutes taken at the hearings contain details, resolutions and fines imposed upon professional misconduct and other violation. A comparative analysis of surviving documentation of the code itself and that of its enforcement and execution presents the stage productions and their behind-the-scenes work from an unusual angle. The misdemeanours recorded reveal a wealth of information about the private life of the nation's leading theatre community, including episodes such as discovering the sartorial mishap of Zsigmond Szentpétery's overly tight costume minutes before his stage appearance or the deplorably loud quarrel erupting behind the scenes between two leading actors, Gábor Egressy and Márton Lendvay.