

Hungarian Theatre Newsletter

2015/2



International Theatre Institute Hungarian Centre
Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute
Budapest
Edited by Anna Lakos
English translation by Attila Szabó

Suggested Performances from the
Hungarian ITI Member Theatres



Katona József Színház – Budapest

Szilárd Borbély: The Man from Olaszliszka

Az olaszliszka

Directed by Gábor Máté

Premiere: 9 October, 2015

'By lies are each of us surrounded,
what matters gets covered up by all the talk
and us, the little men, only the circus
were given by the big and mighty. Against
one another they have us incited: and hatred
is the leader of the times' Szilárd Borbély

Szilárd Borbély (Fehérgyarmat, 1963 – Debrecen 2014) poet, writer, literary historian, university lecturer, candidate of literary sciences. Received his degree at the Kossuth Lajos Science University in 1989. Until his death he was a lecturer and docent at the University of Debrecen, researcher of Hungarian literature. Borbély is known for almost twenty volumes, mostly of poetry. He was also known as a playwright for the Debrecen audiences, since the Csokonai Színház staged several of his plays, most notably *Funerary Pomp* (Halotti pompa), based, based on Borbély's poetry volume with the same title. His most outstanding novel, *Nincstelenség* (The Dispossessed) took him to the forefront of the Hungarian literature.

The play based on the formal structure of the Greek tragedies, uses the lynching at Olaszliszka in 2006, as one of the leading plotlines, while the other line centres on the disappearance of the Jewry from Eastern Europe – used as a starting point for a broader analysis of the contemporary Hungarian society. The history of the lynching is connected on several points with the personal fate of Szilárd Borbély: his parents were the victims of a robbery which took place in 2000, at Christmas, when his mother was killed and his

father severely injured. Szilárd Borbély died in 2014, his suicide deeply shocking the Hungarian literary and public life.

In 2006 a teacher from Tiszavasvár ran over a Roma girl with his car, and the act was witnessed by the teacher's two daughters. Next to the story of lynching, another plotline also appears in the play, the story of the Foreigner, who wishes to visit the Jewish cemetery in Olaszliszka, to remember his ancestors, looking for the memories of his family in a village which tries to methodically annihilate all remembering.

'The world of news builds on forgetting, claiming that an ever newer event will always come, which can be used to disturb people's minds for a few evenings. The point of this process is for the new events to completely delete the previous ones. So that a community loses its memory. Because memory gives strength and stature, serves as conclusion, it gives moral signification. Remembering is work. Often very unpleasant, but still necessary', wrote Szilárd Borbély of the play.



Katona József Színház – Kecskemét

Ulrich Hrub: On the Ark at Eight

Nyolckor a bárkán

Translated by Virág Németh

Directed by Péter Cseke

Premiere: 14 October, 2015

On the Ark at Eight is a play with music, with a moral, for five characters written by Ulrich Hrub, a contemporary German playwright less known in Hungary. The play is aimed at audiences who still take pleasure in watching tales but are also somewhat ashamed of still enjoying them. Yet they are not yet interested so much in the performances for grownups, which might be too complex for them, lengthy, and also the topics could seem too distant.

Three penguins, friends on and off with each other, tell their everyday stories in their habitat, amongst everyday realities and dilemmas so well known to us. They have a spat, then make up, tell each others their problems, yet sometimes it is them who cause the biggest challenges to one another, if they are not busy saving the world. Who is good and who is bad? Is there a God, and if yes, how does he/she look like? What happens to the one who dies? Will all of us go the heaven? What is sin? Who will punish us for our bad deeds? What does one need to commit to be thrown to hell? Is there such a thing as luck, or everything happens according to God's will?

And then, our fourth hero, Pigeon, comes bearing the bad news that a flood is coming, and Noe's ark only offers two tickets to penguins, given to the two of them who had been abandoned by their third colleague, offended by an insignificant thing. They, however, decide not to give up on their little friend and smuggle him on the ark with a cunning but potentially perilous little trick, facing the most serious risk they could ever suffer. In this new environment, unknown and unnatural to them, beyond doing all to hide the third

penguin, they also have to struggle to fit in. They have to get accustomed to the habits of various animals and to each other and to the most unexpected situations, which lead to new conflicts, self-pity, looking for culprits. Their former life, seen as boring and hateful, is remembered in a nostalgic and idyllic light, now they would be able to truly value the things they used to have. The new situation cannot be seen as anything else than a punishment, but of a magnitude which only God can devise, therefore he must exist, even more, he probably is committing a big error with this decision... Pigeon, who seems to be in control of everything, does a great job, is successful, but his efforts do not yield the slightest reward, and even more, he simply had forgotten to take along his beloved companion.

In this hopeless situation everybody is expecting redemption from the future. It will surely get better later, one just has to wait for it. Whatever comes, be it more punishment, or a better life, will come if one's patient enough. But for how long? The tormenting effect of waiting soon enwraps our heroes. And then the flood ends. Everything is revealed and we also get to know Noe, who gives all a fresh start and lights new hopes in the heads of our heroes, who can restart their lives armed with their fresh experiences, lives full of smaller and larger questions, problems and adventures.

Ulrich Hrub's detailed characters enhance the biblical story with beautiful thoughts, tasteful humour, based on experiences taken from the everyday lives of youngsters from all times.



Kolibri Children and Youth Theatre

Selma Lagerlöf: The Troll Kid

A trollgyerek

Translated by László Kúnos

Directed by János Novák

Premiere: 28 November 2014

The history of the changeling appears in many folk mythologies. In this poetically beautiful tale a troll witch swaps her newborn kid, repulsive to the human eye, with the young and healthy kid of a couple crossing the forest. The mother realizes that her child was changed through the fact that the baby starts to develop strange and ugly habits, yet still treats him like he were her own. His husband and the village people, however, cannot come to terms with the ugly newcomer. They think that if they kill him the original little boy would return to them. Who is right? The one who wants to commit murder or the one who listens to her heart? The mother is even willing to sacrifice her own life for the life of the troll child she had been raising, when unexpectedly her real son appears at the border of the village. What had happened to him? How did he escape?

Fragments from the review of Gábor Bóta, Népszava, 26 September, 2015

‘In the performance we see the stations of acceptance and rejection (...) Novák encourages viewers of different generations to face up with reality. All this is carried out not in a dry manner, but with very expressive means, mixing tragic and comic moments, often taking spectators near to catharsis, with tireless imagination and working relentlessly. And being very brave, too.

Risks he did take this time as well. That teachers will say it’s too much, not suitable for this age group, that theatre should not show such cold and ruthless stories as the one of a woman so desperate that she is ready to throw off a cliff her adoptive child, who is different from the others. The mountain is forked

together hastily from the previously used set elements, the mother threads on it, we feel her commitment to commit the deed in her final despair, a deed she does not want herself, maybe jumping off the cliff herself. Her arm is about to swing, in which she holds the baby, but still, she presses him to her chest. A beautiful, tense, horrific scene, similar to some of the songs performed not only by the small three-member orchestra, but we well know already that the actors of Kolibri can also transition into a music band.

There is also a magical mirror play in the show: the way how the human mother treats the troll child, it is also how the troll mother deals with the human child. Thus, if one of them had been thrown into the abyss, the other would have met the same fate, too. But this way, seeing how steadfast and relentless the human mother is, the troll witch sets free the human boy, who return to the village on his own foot, getting his own in return, which also concludes the rampage of hatred and angry ostracism.

A fairytale-like happy end. True, it plays out somewhat bitterly in the show, but, contrary to the previous ones, this is more a dream than reality.'







Örkény István Színház, Budapest

Arthur Schnitzler: Professor Bernhardt

A Bernhardt-ügy

Translated by Imre Kertész

The play Professor Bernhardt portrays with documentary objectivity how the characters become more and more entangled, due to their primitive career fights, into an ever deeper hatred against each other, while also looking for political justifications for this hatred, and how finally political cynicism, corrupt stupidity and brutal egotism swipes away all goodwill. All this reminds us very much of our present.'

Tamás Ascher

This is the second staging at the Örkény Színház of Artur Schnitzler's 1912 play in Hungarian. The reason for this is not only the fact that Schnitzler is rarely played on the Hungarian stages. Dormant, and later surfacing, anti-Semitism and its relationship with political recklessness – the real subject matter of Professor Bernhardt – can be considered even today (or yet again) a sensitive topic in Hungary.

The new staging of Professor Bernhardt at the Örkény Theatre (premiered in March 2015) gives a sharp diagnosis of the overall state of the Hungarian society, of that moral crisis in which we have been living in for quite some years. Overt hatred or aggression hidden behind ideologies has become part of our everyday lives. The ensemble acting of the Örkény's troupe, the detailed renditions of the characters, the precise analysis stems from a private and visceral experience of the company members. Behind the glaze of loose jamming in acting, one finds a strong statement about the impossibility for social dialogue and the futility of all attempts towards the dialogue.

Tamás Ascher, an internationally acclaimed director of the company, provides a rough and slightly ironic theatrical frame to the presentation of hatred, human cunningness and the many facets of stupidity. His directoral approach is both light and ruthless, deliberately attacking our intellect with its cheeky humour. With his leadership the company of the Örkény shows its best face, which could also explain why Professor Bernhardt has become one of the most successful performances of the season. The text cut to one hour and fifty minutes, with a very dense dramaturgy, is presented in the translation of the Nobel Prize winning Hungarian writer, Imre Kertész.

Plot

A young woman is dying at the Elisabeth Clinic in Vienna, unaware that she only has a few minutes to live. Professor Bernhardt forbids the priest to enter her room and administer her the last sacrament, thus making her realize the severity of her condition. The woman dies.

This incident quickly comes to the focus of the media and swells into a large-scale scandal. Bernhardt finds himself in the middle of party and career struggles. The case becomes a pretext, the press jumps at it, the Minister of Health and also the parliament joins the dispute. The moral dilemma is degraded to a court case against the doctor with Jewish origins, where facts are substituted by arbitrary interpretations.

Fragments from reviews

Zsuzsa Ferenc, 186 óra

The staging of Ascher does not strive towards actualisation but rather towards modernization. Therefore every minute we feel as if the events would be taking place in our times. Spectators sometimes burst into applause when they recognize a strong reference to the present. The performance makes us face up with the fact that all problems stem from a mutual hatred. From the belief that we are unable to respect value systems and truths different from ours.

Tamás Tarján, szinhaz.net

The fabulous acting of Pál Mácsai rules dominates the evening. The unrelenting professor, who feels responsible for each and one of his words, following his 'victory' becomes a crooked old man with greenish cheeks. Neither then nor in the time of the two end points do we see any external actorial gestures: Mácsai presents a hero of everyday intellectual honour, apparently in the skin of an everyday person, not a heros worthy of the sculptor's chisel, but his authority, his radiant personality also impresses his enemies.

Gábor Csatódi, kutszelikritikus.hu

This mise-en-scène is Ascher's slow but the more deeply rooted tango about the environment in which we live. The doors of enlightenment open slowly in the performance and this slow rhythm will never become more lively – a hallmark of Ascher, the director. This might incite one to savour each of it's moments.

Awards and Nominations

Theatre Critics' Prize, 2015 – Nomination for Best Performance

Theatre Critics' Prize, 2015 – Nomination for Best Supporting Actor: László Gálffi



Vígszínház

Encounter

Találkozás

by Péter Nádas and László Vidovszky

Directed by: Enikő Eszenyi

Premiere 23rd October 2015

Venue: Pesti Színház

The Encounter is a cathartic piece about confronting the past, the passion play of a young man and a woman that carries within the chance of absolution and forgiveness.

Péter Nádas (b. 1942, Budapest) is an outstanding figure in the Hungarian and European literature. A renowned Hungarian essayist, short story writer, and novelist, whose *Book of Memories* Susan Sontag called ‘the greatest novel written in our time, and one of the greatest books of the century.’ He also wrote a trilogy of plays, *Spring Cleaning* (Takarítás, 1977), *Encounter* (Találkozás, 1979) and *Interment* (Temetés, 1980) which, with their revolutionary style and incisive look at life, swept over the stages of Hungary, only to be eclipsed by the success of his monumental novels. All three one-act plays posit a new kind of theater that in Nádas’s own words is not literary but physical—an opera of words, a ballet of movements, minimalist, bare, heavy with pregnant silences imprisoned by space and time. They also evidence Nádas’s masterful use of minute movements on stage, which he considers the basic forms of human contact. ‘The human face and body’, he wrote in *Játéktér* (1988), ‘the play of expression and the system of gestures reveal, in a very real way, the individual’s experiences, and through it, the environment in which he came by these

experiences.' In *Encounter*, his best-known play, this environment is as much political as it is social and personal.

Nádas' voice and style is unique in Hungarian dramaturgy, it has neither forerunner nor follower. It is the duty of contemporary theatre to discover him again and again.

Enikő Eszenyi on szinhaz.hu

I have personally not lived through this era, I only remember the fifties in Hungary through the memory of others, among which Péter Nádas is especially significant, just as the memory of his protagonist, Mária. Through them, I understood many aspects of these times. But in the play by Nádas it is woven not only the history of the fifties but – as Mária says – also the most beautiful love story of the world, which makes it one of the most complex and exciting achievement of literary history. The magic words of Péter Nádas, the acting of the amazing Enikő Börcsök and Dániel Király make this rainy October one of the most important period of my life. We have scheduled the premiere for 23 October, the national holiday commemorating the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution, taking this opportunity to pay our respects to the memory of the victims of these times.





Vígszínház

1914

directed by Robert Wilson
Premiere: 15 October 2014.

Robert Wilson combines Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* and Karl Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind* in this co-production by the National Theatre in Prague, the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava and the Vígszínház.

Švejk, the key novel of Czech literature and an ironic insight into war and its attendant absurdity, is creatively juxtaposed in this production with Karl Kraus's satirical anti-war novel. The modern-theatre wizard Robert Wilson transforms all this into a cabaret replete with scenic images, music and surprising humour in a parable not only of 1914 but also, and primarily, of our life today, one hundred years after the outbreak of a terrible war that marked the real start of the 20th century.





POSZT – National Theatre Festival of Péc

2015 Competition Programme

The National Theatre Festival of Pécs was organized for the 15th time in 2015. The two theatre associations, the joint stakeholders of the festival, the Magyar Színházi Társaság and the Magyar Teátrumi Társaság, appointed the two programme selectors of the festival. Theatre critic Tibor Balogh and dramaturg, director and drama teacher Balázs Perényi carried out the process of selecting the performances to be invited in the period between 1 March 2014 and 28 February 2015, considering performances both in mainland Hungary and also from the Hungarian theatres in the neighbouring countries. The selectors had to watch the performances nominated by the theatres themselves, but they were also free to view and invite any other performance of their choice, however the nominated ones were prioritized. The following shows were part of the competition programme.

Members of the jury at POSZT

Péter Balázs, actor, managing director of the Szigligeti Színház in Szolnok

Balázs Blaskó, actor-director managing director of the Gárdonyi Géza Színházi in Szeged

Katalin Keserü, art historian

Viktória Nagy, set and costume designer

Szilveszter Ókovács, principal managing director of the Hungarian State Opera

Vera Venczel, actress, member of Vígszínház, leader of the jury

János Vincze, director, managing director of the Pécsi Harmadik Színház

Róbert Vörös, dramaturg, permanent collaborator of director Róbert Alföldi



Jel Színház, Magyarkanizsa

Wilhelm Songs by Ottó Tolnai

Wilhelm-dalok

Directed by József Nagy

Premiere: 30 October 2013 at M Stúdió (Sepsiszentgyörgy)

At the 56th Sterijino pozorje festival, the most important Serbian theatre festival, the performance titled the *Rose from Kishinov* received four prizes. The performance was staged by the Kosztolányi Dezső Színház in Subotica, based on Ottó Tolnai's work. The nursing-home from the *Rose from Kishinov* represents a level of Nirvana, which gives rise to a certain consciousness of a spirit set free from the burden of daydreams, arousal, passion, ideologies and monomanias. The process of decomposition is built up, and this also gives its dialectics. The same dialectics is continued by Tolnai in the character of the philosophical fool of the *Wilhelm Songs*. There the company enters carrying black music stands, foreboding a reading performance. When at the end of the show the great puzzle, the peak-performance build up, one can finally feel the coherence of Tolnai's poetic world. The few flamingos become a team, due to the framed and decorative Magyarkanizsa mirrors, lined up with great care, not darkly, but, on the contrary, giving a clear and poignant shape to everything, like when all objects-bodies lose their shadows. A row of cymbals on stands face the mirrors perpendicularly. First, an ecstatic cymbal and drum music fills the air closed by a pianissimo coda: from the stage heavens the salt of life seeps down on the cymbals. The cymbals due their job: the salt rolls with an echo. Time. The same time the nature of which – the transition from quantitative time (chronos) to qualitative time (chairo) is presented by József Nagy alone, in a caprice framed by a liturgical form. (Dramaturg and theatre critic Tibor Balogh)



National Theatre, Budapest

The Scourge of God

Isten ostora

Based on *The Great Lord* by Miklós Bánffy

Directed by Attila Vidnyánszky

Premiere: 19 December 2014

‘...to you, all people unknown are barbarians’ – says Attila. His appearance, grooming, behaviour are described in thousands of different ways. As many were the reasons to fear him, as many the reasons for being worshipped by the subjugated. And then, in a moment of weakness, he was encircled by the amorous death. Vidnyánszky tells us a tale – his own – , and thus broadens the book of legends. Neatly balancing on the verge of irony and awe, the performance follows the compositional path of *The Boy Turned Into a Stag* and *Funeral Pomp*, while also discovers a new female figure for himself, the one of the playfully fatalist amazon, stuck in her adolescent capriciousness. (Tibor Balogh, theatre critic, dramaturg)





Weöres Sándor Színház, Szombathely

Csaba Székely: Michael the Valiant

Vitéz Mihály

Comic historical tragedy in eighteen images

Directed by Attila Béres

Premiere: 6 February 2015, Emília Márkus Hall

Csaba Székely's tragic grotesque with an irresistible humour is presented through a spectacular ensemble work. The leading actor, György Bajomi Nagy, delivers one of the best acting of the season. I don't remember the last time I saw such a swell fight scene, if ever. Yet another notable performance which questions our identity making historical stereotypes. It entertains and provokes us, does not allow a moment of relaxation. (Balázs Perényi, drama teacher)





Csokonai National Theatre, Debrecen

Bulgakov: The Master and Margarita

A mester és Margarita

Directed by Gábor Rusznyák

Premiere: February 27, 2015.

Dramaturgy owes the world a masterful and full-blooded stage adaptation of this novel abounding in inspirational moments, which can often be also the hotbed of directoral error. The Master can be perceived as an egotistic-depressive half-genius and Pilate, sending Jesus off to death, a miserable coward. Gábor Rusznyák is a careful reader, casting each of the characters in the position specified by the author. The swooning Master is Bulgakov's, while the strong and powerful Woland, ready to confront humanity with its own vileness, is the self-ideal of the writer. By the time it gets in front of the audience at the Pécs Festival it has a good chance of being a sweeping and fast-paced how, which encourages reflection.



National Theatre, Budapest

Ibsen: Brand

translated by László Kúnos and Zsuzsa Rakovszky

Directed by Sándor Zsótér

Premiere: 22 February 2015, Kaszás Attila Hall

Fervour, passion, the sacred dimension and wise knowledge of people, and well, yes, humour, the most noble kind. Meditating on the fundamental questions of existence in the theatre today: is a gift for both the artist and the audience. This is exactly what the performance does, authentically, without false notes and crunchy weightiness. Pure thought transformed into theatrical effect. Marvelous actors, some of them 'only' bring their best shape, some have their abilities discovered and highlighted by the performance, and some who appear as never seen before. Zolt Trill plays Brand in a way that I cannot even imagine anybody else to embody this grandiose hero. (Balázs Perényi, drama teacher)





Csiky Gergely Színház, Kaposvár

Bohumil Hrabal: Closely Watched Trains

Szigorúan ellenőrzött vonatok

Adapted to the stage by László Bérczes and Mónika Kiss, based on the translation of András Zádor

Directed by László Bérczes, Premiere: 16 January 2015.

The permission of Bohumil Hrabal's inheritors was mediated by Hofra Kft. (www.hofra.hu)

Kata Szvetnyik, last-year acting student at the Kaposvár University, performs two women with two faces (the double-faced nature of women): as the future *Máša* of the young Milos, the station guard, she is a soft-spoken manizer, while as the telegrapher *Zdeniřka* she provokes train dispatcher *Hubiřka* on their first night without train traffic, to tickle her naked backside with stamps, in a very professional act of methodical love. In the

meanwhile the wife of the station master is stuffing a goose, while the station master turns the attic into a love nest, and, quite incidentally Dresden is being bombed to dust in the neighbourhood. A TNT courier girl frees Miloř of his virginity, being blown up by the afterwards. The viewer is facing a test of perception : not the actions are theatrical but rather the signs which are devised to assist the imagination of these actions, which, on their turn, are not coldly enigmatic but fascinatingly impulsive. The layers behind the level of consciousness come to the surface, and following the images scattered with great artistic care the viewer can furnish his/her paradise. A tragic

joy-grotesque from László Bérczes and the fresh spirited Kaposvár company. (Tibor Balogh, theatre critic)



Miskolc National Theatre

Transylvania – Garden of Fairies

Erdély - Tündéerkert

Adapted for the stage by Barbara Ari-Nagy, based on the novel with the same title by Zsigmond Móricz

Directed by László Keszég, Premiere 20 February 2015

'Prince Gábor Bethlen always used to say that politics has to be made for hundred years ahead. But what I say is that the smart person is the one who can make do with the present. The one that thinks in the next one hundred years is a mad one.' – we read the highlighted motto on the programme of this novel adaptation. The future bearer of Transylvania's golden age confronts with his predecessor, the hedonist-delusional Gábor Báthory. We are with tragic sympathy for the capricious state management of the latter, while the upraise of the first is the promise of a boring redemption. Their clash is a pure spiritual adventure for the hopeful spectator (Tibor Balogh, theatre critic)





Zayzon Zsolt



Harsányi Attila

Tamási Áron Színház, Sepsiszentgyörgy

Chekhov: The Cherry Orchard

Meggyeskert

Translated by János Elbert, Árpád Tóth, Sardar Tagirovsky

Premiere 7 November 2014

The compulsory Chekhov in a truly different light, I wouldn't even say it is deconstructed or turned against itself. An intelligent and meticulous analysis, which places it firmly in the Hungarian theatrical canon, but at the same time fresh and lively and speaks an original form language, thus it is also an attempt at the renewal of the momentous tradition of Chekhov acting. The young directing student from Marosvásárhely gives an unmistakable and unified style to the acting of the outstanding company from Sepsiszentgyörgy. A site-specific performance, I can't wait to see how it will find its place in Pécs. (Balázs Perényi, drama teacher)



Újvidéki Színház

József Katona: The Viceroy

Bánk bán

'national drama, societally useful theatre performance'

Directed by András Urbán

Premiere 25 November 2014

Sponsored by the Cultural Secretary of the City of Újvidék

They tell us the story of Bánk with swerve, clarity and enjoyment, while they face up with and make us, too, consider a question: what does it mean to be a Hungarian, to speak in Hungarian and live here and there (in Újvidék, Serbia) as a Hungarian person. This is what one of the best Hungarian companies has to offer to the it spectator. Without compromises, as they always do. We have a worthy Bánk: Árpád Mészáros, Gertudisz: Szilvia Krizsán and Melinda: Emina Elor. Fifty minutes of wonderful Viceroy, perfectly blended with fifty minutes of reflection. And both are exquisite. (Balázs Perényi, drama teacher)



Békéscsabai Jókai Színház

Brecht: Threepenny Opera

Koldusopera

musical theatre play in eight scenes with a prologue

Translated by Tamás Blum

Directed by Ferenc Katkó (exam performance)

Premiere: 17 October 2014

Ferenc Katkó graduated in Kiev at the University of Theatre and Film as an actor in 1998. He continued his studies as a director at the same university. In 2014 Threepenny Opera was his 'thesis' performance.



Prizes given by the jury

Best performance: The Scourge of God
Directed by Attila Vidnyánszky
National Theatre, Budapest

Best directing:
Attila Vidnyánszky
The Scourge of God
National Theatre, Budapest

Best Actress
Szilvia Krizsán
The Viceroy
Újvidéki Színház

Best Actor
Tibor Pálffy
The Cherry Orchard
Tamási Áron Színház, Sepsiszentgyörgy

Best Supporting Actress
Ibolya Csonka
Closely Watched Trains
Csiky Gergely Színház, Kaposvár

Best Supporting Actor
József Kelemen
Closely Watched Trains
Csiky Gergely Színház, Kaposvár

and
Tamás Szalma
The Master and Margarita
Csokonai National Theatre, Debrecen

Best Stage Design
Oleksandr Bilozub
The Scourge of God
National Theatre, Budapest

Best Music and Sound
Tamás Rozs
Closely Watched Trains
Csiky Gergely Színház, Kaposvár

Special Prize
Wilhelm Songs
Jel Színház, Magyarkanizsa

The jury did not award prizes for Best Costume and Best Stage Text



Theatre Critics' Prize

The best performances of the season according to the theatre critics

On 20 September the Theatre Critics' Prize was awarded for the 35th time, which is one of the most prestigious theatre prizes in Hungary. The members of the Theatre Critics' Association decide on the prizes through a secret vote. The members must see at least 90 premieres in a season to be able to fill in the voting ballots. There are fifteen categories, among them prizes for the Best Actor, Best Performance, Best Stage and Costume, Best Theatre Music of the past season.

The theatre critics awarded a Career Prize for the fifth time this year, which is awarded to recognize the merits of an artist at least 65 years old, who can be proven to have done very much for the development of the Hungarian language theatre, and also contributes to the shaping of the future of the Hungarian theatre art, the education and guidance of the younger generations. The Career Prize this year was given to actress Piroska Molnár, member of the Thália Színház. She used to perform, among others in Szeged, Kaposvár, at the National Theatre in Budapest, at the Katona József Színház also in Budapest. Spectators could see her in more than two hundred roles. A fragment from the laudation of Andrea Stuber and Katalin Gabnai: 'Piroska Molnár is a universal actress. Her dramatic powers are momentous, and her comic skills no less. Her singing talent makes her a keystone of operetta and musical shows and we cannot forget either – how could we – that she could easily do splits in her sixties.'

The prize for Best Performance was given to *No Place for the Likes of You* from the Örkény Színház, directed by János Mohácsi. This is not the first instance for the director to chose a traumatic event from the recent history of Hungary (see for instance his performance *We Live Once...* at the National Theatre in 2011). In 1941 over twenty thousand Hungarian Jews were deported by the Hungarian authorities to

Kamenec-Podolsky, where they were exterminated by the Germans – with the active collaboration of Hungarians. Mohacsi and his team of artists decide not to be judgmental in the piece: they only remember and remind us of a tragic series of events, which was forgotten by almost everyone. Tamás Koltai wrote in October 2014 about the performance: ‘The performers present this story as an example of the nonsensical which is impossible to grasp with the human mind, a painful tragicomedy of absurdity. Here again they employ their customary use of language based on playful distortion and grotesque counterpoint, a mixture of the horrible and funny, the unchaining of a frightening character that lurks in ‘national folkish’ music.

Árpád Schilling, known world-wide with his works within Krétakör (e.g. *Seagull*, *BLACKLAND*, *W-Workers Circus* etc), this time staged a monumental *Faust* at the Katona József Színház, the stronghold of psychological realism in Hungary. The two parts performed on two consecutive nights are an uncommon venture in the Hungarian theatre history. The unusual production was awarded with four prizes by the theatre critics: Monori Lili received the prize for Best Supporting Actress (she could be familiar from the productions of Kornél Mundruczó), Márton Ágh for the Best Stage Design, Marcell Dargay for Best Theatre Music, the Special Prize went to László Márton for the retranslation of both parts of *Faust*. Critic Judit Csáki wrote following the premiere: ‘they were weighty evenings, the first one uplifting the second one wobbling... I would like to consider the grandiose undertaking of Katona Theatre as an exhibit of a normal theatre life in Hungary, while I well know that it isn’t. I think I understand Árpád Schilling’s passionate interest. Also the question what we have to do here and now with Goethe’s *Faust* – that, too. The same that we have to do with our own lives. If I project on myself what can be projected I must say: I left the theatre with troublesome questions.’





Ibsen's dramatic poem, *Brand* was staged at the National Theatre. Sándor Zsótér received a prize for the best directing and Zsolt Trill received the prize for Best Actor for the leading role. Critic Andrea Tompa wrote: 'in Zsótér's performance there is not 'one' play, with one interpretation, with a moralist attitude, but rather it's full of many, complex, layered, contradictory "messages". A breach, a tragic duality. That life and ideals are tragically incongruent, and living by the ideals equals committing endless mistakes, sacrificing other people, crucifying oneself. But this deep faith emanated from Brand/Trill's every word has a moving truth inside.'

Róbert Alföldi staged *Cabaret*, the musical at the Budapest Puppet Theatre, which was awarded the prize for the Best Musical and Entertainment Performance, while Péter Bercsényi received the prize for Best Supporting Actor for the role of the Emcee. 'Alföldi takes use of the possibilities given by the shift in scale between puppet and puppeteer: maximal attention towards each other, harmony versus the distancing effect of quickly getting rid of the puppet or breaking this harmony. (Tamás Koltai)'

The other performance sharing the prize for Best Musical and Entertainment Performance was the coproduction between Vígszínház and Sputnik Shipping Company (closed in the meanwhile), *The Threepenny Opera*, directed by Victor Bodó. 'Bodó not only has the auditorium lights turned on, thus letting the unattentive spectator know that the story is about hm/herself, but he also sends down beggar king Peacock (played by Géza Hegedűs D.) among us, who asks one of us how much money he/she gives to a beggar on the street for the first time. And for the second time? Just half that much, right? And the third time you just walk past him, don't you? We, the voluntary prisoners of the velvet-covered Vígszínház were right to feel uncomfortable at this time, and if we learned to look a little bit differently at the one-legged beggar outside the theatre after leaving Vígszínház at 10 in the evening, we can say it was already worth it.' (Tamás Jászay) The prize for the Best Independent Performance also went to the Sputnik, namely to director Dániel D. Kovács for the staging *Katie of Heilbronn or The Trial by Fire* by Heinrich von Kleist. 'The secret of the mise-en-scene by Dániel D. Kovács is that all the impossibilities of the play become images: through the careful synchronization of poor theatre and both direct and reflected acting' (Judit Csáki)

The prize for the Most Promising New Entrant was given to Attila Vidnyánszky Jr. 'Graduating this year from the University of Theatre, in the class led by László Márton he already displayed his talent in the exam performances of the previous years: forming his roles with much colour, detail and outstanding suggestivity. This year he also made his debut as a director in *Timon of Athens*, with a strong atmosphere, great rhythm, full of actorial power and surprising ideas. We would probably remember this performance if a few years as the first station in the career of a very important director.' (Balázs Urbán)

(Tamás Jászay, Theatre Critics' Association)

Links:

<http://www.thalia.hu/index.php/main/muveszeink/molnar-piroska>

<http://orkenyszinhaz.hu/index.php/eloadasok/repertoar?view=szinlap&id=1058:mohacsi-istvan-mohacsi-janos-e-fold-befogad-avagy-nincsen-szamodra-hely&catid=35>

<http://katonajozsefszinhaz.hu/eloadasok/repertoar/41446>

<https://nemzetiszinhaz.hu/eloadas/brand>

<http://www.budapest-babszinhaz.hu/repertoar/kabare>

<http://vigszinhaz.hu/szindarab/291+koldusopera/>

<http://www.szputnyik.com/2014/12/heinrich-von-kleist-heilbronni-katica.html>





International Cooperation Projects
of the Kolibri Theatre

Small Size – Performing Arts for the Early Years

This project supports small children's rights to the access of valuable artistic achievements at the youngest age, also taking part in artistic processes which support the development of their emotional intelligence.

In Hungary, the pioneer work of the Kolibri Színház made this form of theatre popular in the whole country. Their first toddler theatre performance, *TODA – csoda gyereknyelven* (2005) toured in many countries worldwide (Japan, Turkey and many European cities), and it is still part of the repertory of the theatre. The performance produced in the framework of the project Small Size, Big Citizens (2009-2014), *Tekergő*, based on the poems for children by Ottó Orbán also toured extensively in Europe. The next performance of this genre was *Kippkopp gyermekei* by Vera Marék, also part of this project. The next show,

based on another play by Marék, *Kippkopp és Tiptopp* was also shown on a festival in Japan. There the performance was received with great interest by both the children and adult audiences, and the theatre professionals alike.

In September 2013 we presented our show titled *Pont, pont, vessző cske* [Dot, dot, little comma], directed by Barbara Kölling, leader of Helios Theater (Hamm, Germany), which received recognitions in Hamm and neighbouring towns, at the ASSITEJ Biennial in Kaposvár and the Youth Theatre Festival in Budapest.



Our new project, Small size, Performing Arts for the Early Years is realized with the participation of 17 European partner theatres. Every country participates with individual productions and minifestivals. Our first contribution to the project launched in April, 2014, based on the play *The Bear, Who Was Called Sunday*, by Axel Hacke.

PLATFORMshift+

PLATFORM shift is an international network of cooperation, which was founded to provide new forms of theatre which is challenging enough for the new generations of ‘digital natives’. Together with our partners we firmly believe that the future of theatre will be guaranteed by real-time performances in a real world, but in order of renewing its forms, it is crucial to provide a creative cooperation with the digital world.

The programme of the project is to create 40 theatre performances during the four years of cooperation, following newly developed concepts, also using digital technology. Our joint objective is to comply with the requirements of the theatre expectations of the new age, by also surveying and better understanding the needs of our target audience. At the end of the project 10 creative forums across Europe will offer training programmes and tools in order to secure the sustainability of the project in the future.

Next to our professional artistic work, our plan is to constantly cooperate with young people themselves.

In the project preceding this one, titled PLATFORM 11+, we have been constantly working together with young Hungarian authors, and the following performances were born from this cooperation at the Kolibri Színház, between 2010–2014: *Cyber Cyrano* by István Tasnádi, *Delete* by Katalin Győri, *The Bell* by Márton Kiss.

Our next performance in the frame of this project was premiered in March 2015, titled *Three Quarters* by Sára Oláh-Horváth and *Father Mother Son Daughter* by Holger Schober, two one act plays. The rehearsals for the first Hungarian performance in the Platform Shift+ project will start in January 2016 at the Kolibri Színház, directed by György Vidovszky.





News from the Hungarian Theatre Museum
and Institute

Lecture of Professor Marvin Carlson at the Gizi Bajor Actors' Museum

Professor Marvin Carlson from CUNY New York visited Budapest and gave a lecture at the Actors' Museum on 19 May 2015. The title of his lecture was: Immersive Theatre in the US and Abroad, and its Implications on Modern Performance Studies. The lecture was followed by a discussion moderated by Attila Szabó, Deputy Director of the Theatre Institute. The text of the lecture was published on the website of the Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute, where you can also watch the video of the discussion. One of the most acclaimed researchers of world theatre, Marvin Carlson is a Sidney E. Cohn Distinguished Professor of Theatre, Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies. His research and teaching interests include dramatic theory and Western European theatre history and dramatic literature, especially of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. He has been awarded the ATHE Career Achievement Award, the George Jean Nathan Prize, the Bernard Hewitt prize, the George Freedley Award, the Edgar Rosenblum Award, the Oscar G. Brockett Prize, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. He has been a Walker-Ames Professor at the University of Washington, a Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Indiana University, a Visiting Professor at the Freie Universität of Berlin, and a Fellow of the American Theatre. In 2005 he was awarded an



honorary doctorate by the University of Athens. His best-known book, *Theories of the Theatre* (Cornell University Press, 1993), has been translated into seven languages. His 2001 book, *The Haunted Stage* won the Calloway Prize. His newest book is the *Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia* with Khalid Amine (Palgrave 2011).



Prague Quadriennial 2015



The world's most prestigious international expo of scenography is organized every four years in Prague. Traditionally the Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute is appointed by the cultural government, to be the curator of the Hungarian exhibition. Based on the decision of the theatre organizations and the Ministry of Human Resources, in 2015 set designer Csaba Antal was appointed to design the Hungarian exhibition for the section Counties and Regions. Piroška É. Kiss, lecturer at the University of Fine Arts in Budapest, was appointed to curate the Student Section. This exhibition, based on models made by students of scenography, was titled The Collector's Room. Csaba Antal's installation was called Donor For Prometheus, especially devised for its space at the Saint Anne's church in Prague. This is how the artist summarized his project:

DONOR FOR PROMETHEUS is a theatrical NARRATIVE INSTALLATION, in which artistic craftsmanship and science interact in the CAUSE OF CREATION.

Yes, the CAUSE OF CREATION is at stake here.

Interpreting the ancient myth, the classic philologists claim that the 10000 years of punishment Prometheus had been subjected to would soon be over, namely that an eagle bites off and eats a part of his liver every day, while, afterwards, the hero recreates his own liver repeatedly. Set free from this horrible punishment, he would most certainly contribute again to the development of human kind with fire, writing, metal casting and other unbelievable gifts. In this final period, however, Prometheus seems to have trouble with the daily recreation of liver.

Every citizen committed to CREATION, already sensing in his/her imagination the explosive and all-embracing change to be fulfilled in the near future, which is now yet ungraspable for us, must help promote the CAUSE OF CREATION with the token of his/her own solidarity.

Our social solidarity will be required.

This tomorrow will look nothing like today. In its integrative ethos everyday life, politics and all aspects of culture, technology, talent will erupt towards sublime heights with yet unseen verve.

CREATION will shine as infatuated hope in the eyes of the people.

To prevent a possible hepatic deficiency for Prometheus, we will need liver donors.

This sort of help, which could be but a modest token of gratitude for all that Prometheus had undertaken and done for the sake of humanity, could only be conceived on the technological level of our times, since the practice of liver transplantation is quite recent.

I therefore turn to the citizens committed to CREATION to join and register as a potential DONOR at the counter of the HUNGARIAN ORGAN COORDINATION OFFICE situated in the Saint Anne's Church.

Your liver would also not be wasted if it is not reincarnated in Prometheus, but used to save a mortal soul.



Csaba Antal, scenographer



Conference of Puppet History and Theory

In the Department of Puppetry of the Hungarian Theatre Institute and Museum we have documents, photos and puppets dating back 150-200 years concerning the history of Hungarian puppetry. Like in any other country, puppetry has many forms in Hungary, and the Institute keeps the most comprehensive collection of Hungarian puppets from the XIX. century's market-play-marionettes and rod puppets to the artistic form of our days. We organise historical and promoting exhibitions, conversations, scientific conferences. Recently, the Institute has organized an exhibition about Béla Büky's work and life, with a special emphasis on puppetry as a central instrument of pedagogy and education, which was also in the focus of Büky's oeuvre. This year was a special one, when within the framework of the Autumn Festival of Museums, the Hungarian Theatre Institute and Museum had puppetry as its focus. In honour of the occasion, we organized the conference, "Puppetry in contemporary discourses", about the science of puppetry. The four sections of the conference aimed at a better understanding of puppetry from a perspective of philosophy, history in order to explore the language and possibility of puppetry as theatrical genre. The great interest in the conference showed the power of, and the potential in current scientific researches.

