



2015 November  
December

## Shakespeare Ball

Star Guest : Plácido Domingo

The Nutcracker

Il trittico

Tamás Solymosi

Wayne Eagling

Michel Plasson

Miklós Szinetár

# PREMIER LÁMPALÁZ NÉLKÜL

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A vezetés élménye

Introduction

## Dear Friends of the Opera!

I am a Transylvanian Hungarian, and as such have never lost sight of Hungarian musicians, no matter where life has taken me. Born in Oradea, I would later spend nine years singing at the Cluj Hungarian Opera before leaving Romania in the late '60s for West Germany. Countless times I have worked together with superb musicians, and loved taking the stage together with singers like László Polgár and Krisztina Laki: the latter and I considered each other to be twin sisters – since she looked just like me, except with brown hair instead of blonde. My joint appearances with Éva Marton are at least that important to me. At one performance of *Don Giovanni* in Munich, I had to jump in as Elvira after recovering from a cold. The first act went very well, but afterwards I started to feel that my vocal chords weren't in perfect shape. One of my castmates helped me out with a mint, and Éva said I shouldn't worry, since she knew my part too, and when my voice couldn't cope, she'd take over. This is one of my most beautiful memories, because it confirmed my belief that at an opera house where the members perform together all season long and have a lot to do, then it's very important for the artists to work together, to know each other well and to trust each other.

(editor's note: Also premiered in Munich, in 1978, was Reimann's opera *Lear*, in which the world-famous soprano sang the role of Cordelia, and which her husband Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau had provided the original inspiration for writing. The Opera is staging the work, based on the original production, in January.) I follow with interest events at the palace on Andrassy Avenue, the renovation of the Erkel Theatre and the construction of the Eiffel Art Studios. I congratulate the Opera on its past successes and wish it much good luck in realising its future plans!

Júlia Várady Fischer-Dieskau



Photo by Anne Kirchhoff



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# A paragon makes his debut

The guest of honour at the Opera's Shakespeare-themed charity ball on 6 February 2016 is an artist who will soon be entering his seventh decade of defining world opera performance. Plácido Domingo's career has been laced with Shakespearean roles, and while the Hungarian audience has already had the chance to hear him sing, this will mark his debut at the Opera House.

Tímea Papp

Photo by Ruben Martin



○ AIDA, 1987 | Source: Opera House Archives



○ AIDA, 1987 | WITH LÁSZLÓ POLGÁR, FERENC BEGÁNYI AND ELENA OBRAZTSOVA | Source: Opera House Archives

Domingo appeared twice in Budapest theatres during the period when Hungarian opera life was isolated and information and singers only made it to the country after significant delay. The first time was on 16 February 1973, when lucky audience members got to hear and see his portrayal of Cavaradossi. "He has made it to the front rank of international star singers with record speed", and his debut "promises to be the greatest performance of the season", and "his career is still in its ascendancy, but he already has a global reputation": this is how the newspapers heralded the Domingo before his arrival. His partner in the title role of Tosca was Gabriella Déry, with László Jámbor playing Scarpia in the Erkel Theatre production directed by János Kerekes. The critics were not stinting with their praise after his 77th Cavaradossi: "the greatest opera sensation of recent years", "a vocal millionaire – an artist of opulent richness and inexhaustible resources, in the unimpaired fullness of his abilities and at the zenith of his career." "No-one has sung the principal tenor role in Tosca on a Hungarian stage to such a high

standard at any time in the past three decades." The world-famous tenor tells Opera Magazine that he remembers the enthusiastic and dedicated audience to this day.

His second appearance was also at the Erkel, at a performance of *Aida* on Easter Monday, 20 April 1987. This evening had Ilona Tokody, Elena Obraztsova, László Polgár, Sándor Sólyom-Nagy, Ferenc Begányi and Gabriella Számadó all taking the stage, with Ervin Lukács conducting the 60th Radames of Domingo's career, and his 1026th appearance overall. At the time, he had already been dubbed "No. 1" and it was no coincidence that the box offices were besieged by people seeking tickets for the performance, with genuine opera fans and those curious to see a truly famous singer standing in line at night. As rumour had it, a Swiss gentleman was ready to offer 3000 Deutsche marks for a ticket, and the largely pension-age ticket purchasers were hiring muscular martial artists for protection. (Owing to the huge interest and success, television viewers were able to watch

a recording of the performance a few days later.) "Even in the role of the dramatically narrowly drawn Radames, who is often frozen into still images, he finds a way to create a complete individual, a total character. "A voice rich in fascinating and unique colours, fantastic musicality and perfect technique. A perfect reading and conveying of both Verdi and the role." This is how he was praised by the critics – who wrote only positive things about the Hungarian singers as well. According to reports, the ovation lasted for 55 minutes.

At that time, Domingo had appeared with – as he also had with Elena Obraztsova – Ilona Tokody on several occasions. When asked in the 70s whom he thought of when he thought of Hungary, although he listed the names Georg Solti, Éva Marton and Lívía Budai, and added that his New York doctor was also Hungarian, he said felt the greatest of our countrymen was Ferenc Puskás (which, coming from a Madridista, that is, a fan of Real Madrid, is something that we concede is entirely natural). However, today it is still primarily the



FAUST BALL, 2014 | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

Hungarians of the music world that come to his mind in connection with the country, including in addition to the above, Gábor Carelli, László Polgár, who sang the Pharaoh in *Aida*, Andrea Rost, Sylvia Sass, Júlia Várady, Tibor Rudas, the impresario who organised the Three Tenors concerts, as well as Zoltán Miklós Markó, who served as his loyal assistant for more than 30 years. He also told Opera Magazine that he remembered the beauties of Budapest, its artistic and architectural treasures and the kindness of its inhabitants.

The following appearance took place at the People's Stadium, before a significantly larger audience, on 30 July 1996, when Hungarian viewers could again cheer him, this time in the company of José Carreras and Diana Ross, as well as of Andrea Rost, where in addition to singing an excerpt from *Bánk bán* in Hungarian, they also performed melodies from *The Merry Widow*.

Operettas always had an important role in his life. One of his mother's major roles was as Sylva in *The Csárdás*

*Princess*, and he himself played Edwin in Kálmán's operetta, while early in his career he performed as Danilo and Camille in Lehár's work, reprising the former in New York in 2000.

13 years later, the list of his Budapest appearances would expand to include a new venue, the Opera House, but still not yet as a singer. At the finals for the joint Pécs-Budapest edition of the 2009 Operalia competition that he is associated with, he instead helped the young talent from the head of the orchestra.

Returning to Shakespeare – Domingo believes that the secret of the Bard of Avon's suitability for the opera stage lies in the human drama of the stories, since the characters he wrote about are just as alive as they were 400 years ago. For this performer, who has to get into their skin in order to understand their minds and their motivations, it's not so difficult this way. We can trust in him, since from the "Shakespeare repertoire" he has sung the roles of Cassio and Otello, Romeo, Macduff,

Bénédict (from Berlioz's opera *Béatrice et Bénédict*, which is a reworking of *Much Ado About Nothing*), Christopher Sly (in Dominick Argento's opera based on *The Taming of the Shrew*), and if we aren't too strict, we can also include Neptune from *The Enchanted Island* on the list.

Thus there will be a truly credible star guest at the Shakespeare Ball, about whose importance the artist harbours no doubts. Such events are needed, because through them many more people can get to know a given city, and in this case the cultural treasures of Budapest, including the Opera's ensembles, while the philanthropic aim is also of no little importance. As he put it: "It used to be that kings, princes and cardinals would support the musical associations and organisation, which could never maintain themselves from their own resources. These days, it is the "princes" of the economy that we turn to to open their wallets, and, what's more important, to open their hearts to this wonderful cultural heritage." ◦

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# A magical tale about growing up

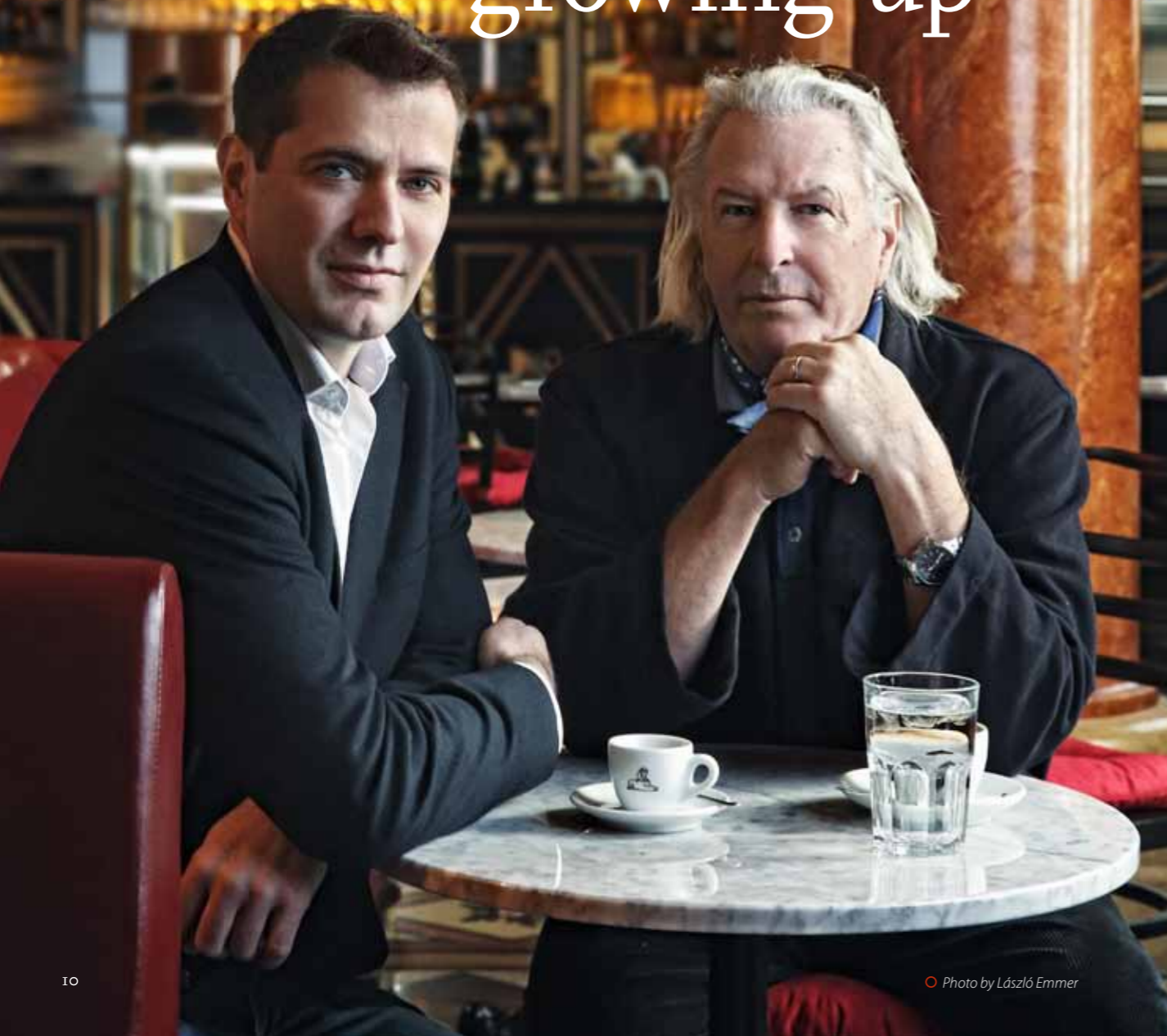


Photo by László Emmer

Christmas isn't Christmas without a fir tree – and December can't be allowed to end without *The Nutcracker*, either. This year, after six decades, the ballet version of E.T.A. Hoffmann's magical story is being updated. Richer visuals, skating dancers and a clearer storyline – this is what we can look forward to this season, say the two choreographers, Wayne Eagling and Ballet Director Tamás Solymosi. *Anna Braun*



– Although this is your first time coming to Budapest to choreograph a full-length ballet, you've encountered and experienced *The Nutcracker* many times before. How will the piece turn out on the Hungarian stage?

**Wayne Eagling:** Three years ago I created a *pas de deux* here in your capital, but of course I got to know the company only slightly through this. This *Nutcracker* will be traditional, because Tamás preferred for us to retain what was valuable from the previous production. Therefore, I didn't alter it radically, but simply modernised it a bit, sped it up, and restructured it to omit the slow scenes. I rejuvenated the piece, reworking it into the present, because it had grown a bit old and grey over the years.

– Why was a new *Nutcracker* needed if the old one was also loved, and the new one still won't be so much different as it could be?

**Tamás Solymosi:** If you have a flat and haven't painted it for 60 years, it might be fine, but it certainly isn't as good as it can be. After so much time, renovation is needed: take out a wall here, hang up a picture there... In Hungary, it's as though we're too afraid of the new.

– You're not afraid of the new when you tell your co-choreographer to still stick to the old way?

**T.S.:** No! I know what the tradition is, I respect it, and I also know what the work's built-in flaws are, and those I'd like to fix. Take the set, for example: the techniques from 60 years ago were no longer serving the piece: in the journey scene they were tugging on rags while the fish were jumping around behind them on broomsticks. When children have grown up on *The Lord of the Rings*, this sight cannot be adequately convincing for them. But there will be other alterations as well: in the street scene, for example, there will be ice-skating, in order to evoke the winter atmosphere. We have to adapt to the times, and the ballet has to change as well. When we take a beautiful production that has survived for 60 years and done its work, and dust it off and give it a new look, we are also ensuring its renewal and continued existence.

– Did you ever consider the idea of taking it out of the repertoire completely for a while?

**T.S.:** No. That would be like saying, we should celebrate Christmas without a Christmas tree.

– Mr. Eagling, you spoke about growing old. Does this refer to the piece or to the company? Has it been played to death in Budapest?

**W.E.:** the ageing refers to the piece, not the company, as the latter has changed quite a bit in recent years. I think that

quite serious efforts are being made to raise the standards at the Hungarian National Ballet to an international level.

– You are now choreographing this piece for the fifth time. Do you still find excitement in it? Or is this the umpteenth output of a mass production line?

**W.E.:** When I work on a new production, I strive to find a new viewpoint. *The Nutcracker*, on top of that, is a much more complex classical ballet than say, *The Sleeping Beauty*. It has many more layers and is a work that can be developed in all sorts of ways, and it depends on the choreography, how the threads are sewn together. I am in fact still looking for "the perfect *Nutcracker*." This one is more closely related to the London production, and is "more naturalistic" than the one Toer van Schayk and I did together in Amsterdam.

– Tamás Solymosi has a very specific idea of what he wants from this production. Why didn't you just do it by yourself?

**T.S.:** First because I consider it important to invite the foremost masters of the art and the most appropriate creative artists to Budapest, where they can experience the potential inherent in the company. At the same time, I am present in every phase, because I want to avoid having a process or an idea head off

## Premiere

in a direction that I cannot support. My job is to look after the company, the ballet productions, and this piece – and it is in this way that I can most effectively carry out my task.

– **You two have already worked together, in the Netherlands.**

**T.S.:** And in England as well, on several productions. I invited Wayne Eagling based on my own experiences. I don't bring unknown choreographers here.

– **You could also bring them based on their reputations.**

**T.S.:** I don't take risks. I have to develop a repertoire that is a stable basis for the company's artistic image, and this isn't the time for me to risk entrusting productions to unknown creative artists. When I took over the ensemble, we had nothing that was classical. It took a lot of work to rebuild all this, even if I see now that it's easier

and easier for us to attempt these difficult pieces

– **Mr. Eagling, what's this Nutcracker all about?**

**W.E.:** It's about a young girl who is surprised that she is gradually going to grow up. She discovers an attraction to men, although she doesn't yet know what this means. In her dream, however, she can experience such a situation as a young woman. My story is about growing up: not about mice or toy soldiers, and not about mysticism or Christmas. Even despite the fact that it really will be winter on the stage, with a Christmas tree with gifts under it, and that they'll be skating later in the street scene.

– **You work a great deal with young people, with academy students.**

**W.E.:** Yes, and the younger a dancer, the more talented he or she is. As they grow older, they start to act

and behave more and more like ballet dancers, and you know, that's quite disturbing. *(Laughs)* Putting aside the jokes, dancers really do easily lose their naturalness. Teaching a child something new, something that they are unaccustomed to, on the other hand, is quite difficult. To tell you the truth, I find it surprising how long it takes to make them understand entirely simple, fundamental things.

- **Does this mean that the cast list is ready already?**

**T.S.:** Of course.

– **There will be three casts?**

**T.S.:** There will be eight of them, to be precise. I am one to give people opportunities! And I'll say that yes, I'm hungrily searching for what can make this *Nutcracker* even better: the best possible! o

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Ha komolyan szórakozik...

# The Nutcracker speaks in a single language

Photos by László Emmer

**One of them is studying Russian, the other is attempting to master Hungarian to use for her professional work. Nevertheless, newly-signed Russian soloist Tatiana Melnik and the young Gergő Balácsi, who made his debut last season, find a common language in ballet. Both of them are dancing principal roles in this year's completely revised production of *The Nutcracker*. Zsófia Krupa**

**– You are both already well known within a narrow professional sphere, but starting this autumn your work has become visible to a wider audience. What periods did you go through in your lives before winding up in the Hungarian National Ballet?**

**Tatiana Melnik:** I pursued my studies at the Perm State Choreographic College, and then immediately signed up with the Gordeev Theatre. The seven years I spent there were definitive from the point of view of my professional career – that's where

I became a true ballerina. Afterwards, I worked for two years at the Stanislavski Theatre, but then I started to feel that I'd rather take on the challenge of a new stage, perhaps even abroad. Then I met with Tamás Solymosi, who after seeing one of my performances in Moscow, invited me to join the company.

**Gergő Balácsi:** My brother attended the Ballet Institute, so I was in close to ballet from a very early age. Because of my older brother, I too started to visit the Dance Academy, where I experienced, together with the beauties

of the genre, how much work went into each beautiful production. Later on I successfully applied for admission, and never since have I regretted it. After I received the "Graduating Student of the Year" Award from the Hungarian Dance Association and passed my qualifying exam, the ballet director offered me a contract with the Opera, which is still something I have trouble believing. My greatest dream has come true.

**– What was it like to join the company of such a storied institution?**

**T.M.:** My joining came with other big changes, since I had moved to a new country, but when I arrived in Budapest, I immediately fell in love with this fantastic city. The Opera House amazed me with its beauty, and the ensemble welcomed me with the greatest hospitality. I feel at home here, and every day when I wake up, I want to go to work!



**G.B.:** During the initial period, the main thing I had to get used to was the fact that I was no longer in school: this was real life. While we learn the fundamentals at the Dance Academy, the real routine can only be adopted at the theatre: I feel that I still have a lot to learn. In the previous season, I got to challenge myself with minor roles in *Coppélia*, *The Nutcracker*, *Manon* and *Swan Lake*. Those were a tremendous pleasure to dance, but what's around the corner for me now is something that fills me with more excitement than I can express.

**– This season is of special importance for both of you. Following on the heels of last autumn's *Swan Lake*, now you're in *The Nutcracker*. Does either of you remember where you saw it for the first time?**

**G.B.:** It was here. I was six years old, and was completely enchanted. It wasn't just the activities on stage that fascinated me, but that magical Christmas atmosphere that pervades this production.

**T.M.:** I saw it for the first time in a performance by the Perm Ballet, also at

age seven. This work is always of key significance for a ballet dancer, since we have known it since we were very small, love it, and practice the roles in it.

**– While for the audience *The Nutcracker* entails festive times and entertainment, for ballet dancers December is the busiest period of the year. Is it easy to switch between the hard work and the intimate family togetherness?**

**T.M.:** We get used to this over the course of our lives. We dance *The Nutcracker* every Christmas, and in Russia, just like in Hungary, the programme scheduling is the same. I also always find a way to get some rest. Together with my husband, who is also a ballet dancer, we make sure to avoid talking about work when we are alone together at home, this is very important for both of us.

**G.B.:** I am used to waiting expressly for *The Nutcracker* season, and I couldn't imagine the year ending in any other way. For me the piece brings the atmosphere and rhythm of Christmas, so that's why I don't mind a lot of work.

**– You will be taking the stage of the Opera House in the new, 2015 version of *The Nutcracker*, for which Wayne Eagling and Tamás Solymosi have crafted a new choreography that follows classical traditions but nevertheless updates the production with a 21st century visual style. What new elements have you encountered at rehearsals?**

**T.M.:** This year's *Nutcracker* poses a challenge for everybody, because they've tailored the classic piece specifically for the Hungarian company. It brings a completely new and modern set and spectacular costumes.

**G.B.:** The storyline will be much more dense. One big change compared to the previous version is that there will be two acts instead of three. This means that the *Nutcracker* Prince appears in the first part, which makes the task even more exciting for us, the dancers. Not only is this my first leading role in *The Nutcracker*, because it's the new version, I'm looking forward to this year's production with just as much curiosity and interest as the viewers are! ○



# Traversable universes

A special collaboration between two wonderful artists: the joint recital by Andrea Rost and Pál Frenák took place in mid-November at the Erkel Theatre. They gave us some details about the production, and talked about inspiration, consideration and respect.

Veronika Hermann

Photo by Martin Nilsson

## – Where did the idea for a joint performance come from?

**Pál Frenák:** Everybody knows there's no such thing as an accident. Andrea is a wonderful artist, and both of us have followed, and mutually respect, each other's work. We are linked by a sense of professionalism and a commitment to quality. With me, this is an essential aspect of an inspiring creative process.

**Andrea Rost:** I have followed the work of the Compagnie Pál Frenák for quite some time. It was at their most recent premiere that I felt the idea that we should create a fusion of a kind that had fully germinated in me.

Over the course of the meeting during the summer, we came together fantastically, and I felt that he was defining the artistic work exactly the same way I was. This made getting in synch with each other much easier and quicker.

## – How much – if at all – did the original concept change over the course of the rehearsal process?

**P.F.:** There was great room for improvisation. All of our joint work was about how the two traversable universes of music and the world of movement were connected. Andrea drew me into her world, and I drew her into mine,

and this created an innovative manifestation on the stage. While it's about a song recital, it is very important that we compose with light, in a pure and clear manner. We reflected the musical material being played and sung, but not in an illustrative way: it was much more about creating a free and associative space.

**A.R.:** Those songs that I had selected earlier represented a fixed point, to which Pál composed a world of visuals and movement. He approached the subject with extraordinary sensitivity, which for me was key, since I did not have to alter my own artistic conception.

○ DANCETREND'15 - BOYS - COMPAGNIE PAL FRENAK  
Photo by Attila Nagy

○ LE NOZZE DI FIGARO  
Photo by Vera Éder

– To what extent did you have to translate the voice and dance, or if you prefer, the music and the body, into the language of the other in this joint production?

**P.F.:** We didn't have to. That was exactly the point: there was no narrative interpretation and there were no parallel motifs. Within a jointly developed structure, Andrea created the piece's acoustical world, while we constructed an ideal and unconventional space, a corporeal quality, around it, in which she could feel comfortable, which was inspiring for her, and in which she could evolve.

**A.R.:** Exactly. We understood each other, despite the fact that he is a dancer and I am an opera singer. During the rehearsal process, we both expressed our ideas, in addition to having the utmost respect for each other. I very much appreciated the confidence that I received from him.

– Did you have a preliminary idea or direction – perhaps an example or collaboration from abroad or

perhaps from your own previous work – that had an inspirational effect on the production?

**P.F.:** This was an experiment for both of us. We don't want to deny ourselves: certain details were consciously used quotations, but in this special context they gained a new meaning. I often look to architectural solutions, and to devices from the fine arts or film. At the same time, I do so in the clearest and simplest forms possible. The genre of opera is often a crowded one, and at such times it expresses itself in visual exaggerations. What interested me is how to achieve a maximal effect with a minimal set of devices.

**A.R.:** We both like clear lines and colours. The clothes that I wore were wonderful and simple, but still expressive.

– Where do you plan to present this unique production? Might it turn into a series?

**P.F.:** We hope that the joint work is the start of something. We'll see about this.

– To what degree does working in such difficult and separate genres require different preparation and adaptation?

**P.F.:** Every collaboration requires adaptation to a certain degree, but perhaps in this case, that's not even the right word. It's not adaptation, but rather consideration. Since the basis of everything is a kind of uniformity of understanding and thinking, this is entirely organic and visceral.

**A.R.:** I've felt an extraordinary number of stimuli lately, and to this day I've hardly been able to put any of it to rest. For this performance, however, I've been able to combine energies that have put everything in my life in a totally different perspective. I happily learned the vocal parts, and it was a joy to go to the rehearsals, because I knew I was getting something different than I would anywhere else. This kind of psychological recharging is the basis of my own inner harmony. ○

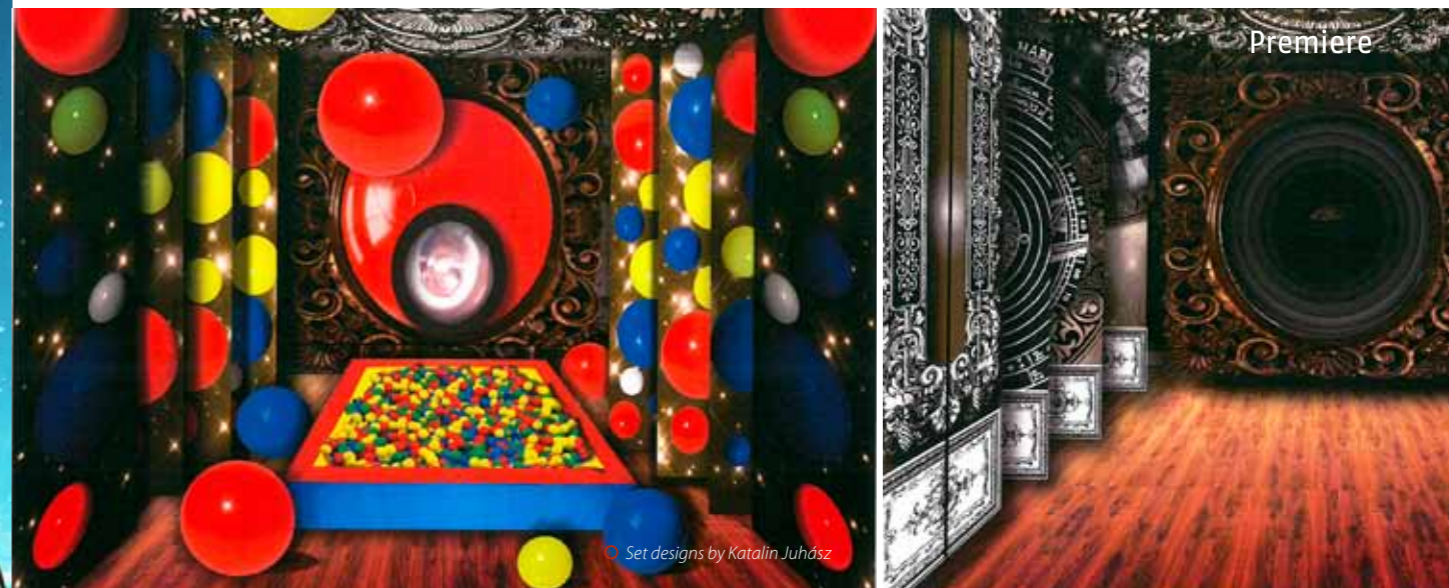
# Interstellar Baroque

**As Attila Toronykő sees it, despite the galactic setting, *Il mondo della luna*, the three-act Haydn work he is conceiving for the stage of the Royal Castle of Gödöllő's Baroque Theatre is not a sci-fi opera. Indeed, where would we send off a stubborn old man today to conquer the omnipotent power of love?** Tamás Jászay

Haydn's *Il mondo della Luna* (*The World on the Moon*), often staged abroad but never at the Hungarian State Opera, was premiered at Eszterháza in 1777. Created for the wedding of Nikolaus Eszterházy's younger son, certain music historians consider the work to be Haydn's most successful opera. In spite of this, it seems likely that it was only staged once during the master's lifetime. Even though it wasn't just anybody who

wrote the libretto: the text written by Carlo Goldoni a quarter-century earlier was put on stage by no fewer than six different composers.

The popularity of the literary source material is understandable, since it includes all of the Goldoni hallmarks: the storyline has a stubborn old man ready to marry off his two daughters to rich suitors, but the two shabby-looking young men



who have turned up at his house (and, of course, his own offspring) have an entirely different idea about how things should be.

To the customary scenario – in which the old fellow is taught a lesson and the power of love is demonstrated – Goldoni has this time added the zany twist of a lunar voyage: the scoundrels convince the father, as he regains consciousness from a drugged sleep, that he is on the Moon, where after a few trials, they also succeed in convincing him that the lovers are meant for each other.

Nevertheless, Attila Toronykő did not conceive of a ruptured landscape of grey craters, familiar from space films, as the venue for the great deception. “The chief question in the piece is how we imagine the lunar landscape to be. People of the Baroque era did not have direct knowledge of this. We, on the other hand, already know how it looks up there, which is exactly why it wouldn't be interesting to build a replica of the Moon on the stage.”

The Baroque Theatre's postage stamp-sized backstage area is already built to only allow for three flat displays: “Originally one could vary between a garden, a room interior and a street

scene, but we managed to convince the theatre's technical management to let us install new elements, and thus an extraordinary landscape was put into place.”

The theatre's attributes are the determining factor in all sorts of ways: it can fit hardly more than 100 viewers at a time, and the proscenium is only five metres wide: “Whereas in the Opera House, one has to concentrate on the monumental spectacle of the movement of the chorus, in this highly intimate space, what becomes emphasised, fortunately, are the human relationships, the gestures and the facial expressions. There are many who still believe that opera performers are singers first and only actors second, but this is a fallacy: today's generation in their 30s and 40s trained with teachers for whom acting and singing were of equal importance. In addition, they'll do any kind of “craziness” on the stage, which is needed very much in a comic opera.

Asked for an example, Toronykő reveals that he had originally conceived of the scene for the lunar voyage as a fitness centre, where the protagonists would have to engage in serious body build-

ing in order to fulfil their desires. Then, consulting with designer Katalin Juhász, they came up with another location, which we'll keep secret here. “The aim of the lovers is to trick the old fellow, and for this, the spot we chose is an ideal medium. And since the father would give anything to reach the Moon, they can make him believe anything...”

The contrast between the Baroque period and our own era is underscored by Katalin Juhász costumes and Lajos Csákovics's new translation. “The comic opera has to be performed in Hungarian: the events unfold so quickly that a viewer reading surtitles would be left out of the jokes. We also shortened the opera shorter to make it livelier for today's audiences. In Baroque opera, the plot moves forward during recitatives, and the arias are long frozen moments. As a director, staging these entails a genuine challenge, since I have to justify them.

As to whether everything eventually turns out for the good, this depends on one's point of view: after the lunar antics, the newly-weds are also overcome by the seriousness and mundaneness of everyday life. ○



Visual design by Gergely Zöldy Z.

# In the spotlight: “the director’s friend”

**At the December 12 premiere of Puccini's three one-acts, considered a novelty, *Il tabarro*, *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi* will once again all be presented on the same evening, as the composer originally intended. We chatted with dramaturg Judit Kenesey about the premiere.**

András Oláh

– The three works in *Il trittico* are a verismo love drama that ends in tragedy, a tale of atonement depicting woman’s fate teetering on the verge between the sacred and profane and, less characteristically for the composer, a work borrowed from Dante that evokes the *commedia dell’arte*. What kind of commonality is there for a production that unifies such different subject areas?

– Puccini intentionally built the three works along different lines to cover different aspects of life with each of the completely different stories. Most theatrical creative teams naturally would like to find some kind of connection that ties the works together. Because of this, and also, in the end, for practical reasons, the set is going to represent this unity: director Ferenc Anger and set designer Gergely Zöldy Z. have decided to create a ship-type



structure that is superbly suited to each opera, and which also simplifies the set changes. The stage technology at the Erkel Theatre is not as advanced as at the Opera House: there is no revolving stage or lift. Evoking the world of the Paris waterfront presents a challenge.

– **The dramaturg is often referred to as the director’s friend, but what does your work really consist of, and how does your work at the Opera House differ from those of your counterparts in prose theatres?**

– A dramaturg performs practically every dramaturgical function in a production, from lighting a scene to costuming the characters to the length of a general pause. That’s why a dramaturg has to know the work and its background perfectly, all while taking the intention of the author and the director into account, so that each function is

employed properly in the production. In a practical sense, our tasks amount to the following: providing background material to the piece from the perspectives of history, music- and art-history and literature, as needed we help the director in preparations and collaborate in developing the concept. We participate in rehearsals, where we attempt to provide an outside, objective point of view, since directors, even unintentionally, are prone to getting wrapped up in their own works and after a while might not be able to see from outside what’s working and what isn’t working so well. We assist in character analysis, in the interpretation of certain sentences and phrases, and also in writing and checking the programme booklets and other text and marketing materials provided to the audience.

Many people wonder what an opera house dramaturg does, since here we

don’t seem to be cutting and adding text. But in fact we do! Parts of operas are often left out, naturally with the mutual consent of the conductor and the director, since the elisions have to square musically and in terms of the staging as well. In Hungarian-language productions, we often have to add, change and fix bits, if the directing or singability warrants it. In addition, we also have to provide the surtitles for all concerts and performances.

– **Starting a year and a half ago, since you’ve been working at the Opera, dramaturgy has again been institutionalised there. Why is this needed, and what feelings did you have taking on this task?**

– When I was in my third year at the UTFA, where I graduated in 2009, a teacher suggested that I consider orienting myself toward music. Not long



afterwards I was collaborating in a university puppet-opera production, and I realised that I was really interested in opera, but I never thought that I would ever have a chance to work as the Opera's dramaturg. Even though I bet there is even greater need of dramaturgs here than in prose theatre. Those who follow the Opera can see that there have been more events taking place at the two venues recently: last year we held 24 premieres, and this year it's 32. Those tasks that, since autumn of 2014, I have been handling together with Eszter Orbán were previously divided among several internal and outside colleagues, which caused splintering of certain tasks, difficulties with the information flow and potentially a lack of uniformity. With so many premieres and other events, it's practical to use permanent staff, considering

that we don't just work on one production or partial task, but on the entire season; with this outlook, we are able to add to the efficiency of activities flowing through the various areas as well.

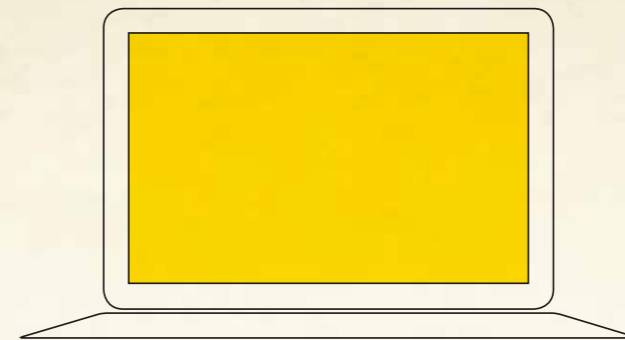
**– To put it simply, you do an enormous amount of work. What's important to look out for during all this?**

– The most important thing is perhaps scheduling, in both work planning and coordination. For example, it's worth going to the first rehearsal with a répétiteur in order to help the singers learn their roles. This is the only time when we can effectively collaborate on improving pronunciation, correct interpretation and developing emphases, since at the blocking and technical rehearsals the focus is on creating the role on

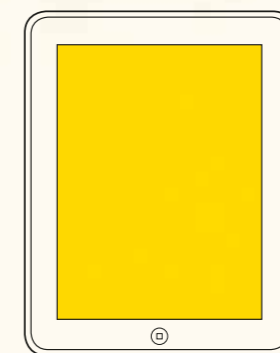
stage and technical matters. It's also important when we make a comment or suggestion, regardless of whether it is technical or psychological in nature, to a singer or director. It might be worth waiting for the next rehearsal, but on the other hand, by then it may be too late to change it.

**– As I understand it, your working conditions are also improving, and the dramaturgs now have a separate office commensurate with the work they do.**

We have been the house's "Flying Dutchmen" for a while, but now we're getting a quiet, secluded office where we can work in peace. Our chief headquarters will be by the Dalszínház Street entrance to the Opera House, where the old Opera Shop was. ○



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# ERKEL

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THEATRE

I L T R I T T I C O

Giacomo Puccini

## Il tabarro Suor Angelica Gianni Schicchi

One-act operas in Italian, with Hungarian surtitles

Librettos: ▶ Giuseppe Adami, Giovacchino Forzano

Director ▶ Ferenc Anger

Set design ▶ Gergely Zöldy Z.

Dramaturg ▶ Judit Kenesey

Chorus director ▶ Kálmán Strausz

Head of the Children's Chorus ▶ Gyöngyvér Gupcsó

Conductor ▶ Gergely Kesselyák

Premiere ▶ 12 December 2015, Erkel Theatre

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Caritative

# Redemptive Music

More than 2000 years ago, in a manger in Bethlehem, a little boy gasped his first breaths. His eventual message, even though not completely consistent with that of these musical notes, still has a similar meaning: to free people from evil and from isolation. *Viktória Filip*



Photo by Attila Nagy

During World War I, a sensitive French doctor named Georges Duhamel was serving on the front lines as a military surgeon. As he was very keen on music, in one of the letters written to the wife he had left back home, he asked for a flute. After he had induced the instrument to "speak" and "breathed life into the magic tube", fate also hastened to his aid.

Thanks to a reassignment to a different unit, he discovered musician friends. Together they dedicated their limited free time to pieces by Corelli, Mozart and Beethoven.

"In our terrible work, such moments of devotion were also the redemptive moments of liberation. I began to feel

that music makes my further life possible. Of course, I couldn't reduce the horrors of the slaughter, the suffering or the anguish, but it brought to me, even at the very centre of that graveyard, the breath of heavenly mercy, the source of hope and salvation."

The recollections of this doctor who is also recognized as a poet, writer and essayist is about the power of musical notes, which during World War II again (the children's opera *Brundibar* is a good example of this) offered various degrees of spiritual solace. This, of course, they continue to do, during historical periods both difficult and less so, and in individual life situations, for those who are receptive to them.

All of this is also understood and felt at the Opera, where for years the serious season-long charitable activity has culminated in two events. The first intensive period arrives with the approach of the Christmas season, when the well-known *Nutcracker Festival* begins. At this time, Andrassy Avenue fills with E. T. A. Hoffmann's fairy-tale characters, now vividly animated: the *Nutcracker* doll comes to life, the sledge arrives on Dalszínház Street, and even the sphinxes join in the fun by donning their colourful winter garments. In the weeks between 29 November and 23 December, real-life magic is accompanied by a unique atmosphere and good cheer. As has been the custom in



○ KATALIN HÁGAI, ETERNAL MEMBER  
Photo by Attila Nagy

recent years, underneath the enormous Christmas tree erected on Andrásy Avenue and richly decorated with ornaments, the institution's leading artists portion out Christmas delicacies, while the Opera Shop, relocated outdoors, entices shoppers, with the revenue constituting a donation benefiting Hungarian Interchurch Aid. Continuing the series of Advent programmes, the next event falls on the second Sunday before Christmas. In the past two years, nearly 3000 people have participated in the programmes of the National Large Family Association and the National Retirees Union, while on 13 December of this year, the Erkel Theatre will be welcoming 1800 children, parents and grandparents for a production of *John the Valiant*. The aim will be the joy of togetherness, just like it is at the *Little Christmas* concerts



○ ESZTER ZAVAROS, AWARD ESTABLISHED BY MR. AND MRS. ANDOR MÁNDI  
Photo by Attila Nagy

initiated by the Opera's musicians for charitable purposes and produced in the *Nutcracker's* Christmas salon. Last year 1500 people attended the concert, which this year will take place on 16 December. The physically handicapped, socially and economically disadvantaged children arriving from, among other institutions, the Patyolat Street "Ákombákom" kindergarten for children with special educational needs, the Bajza Street and Bárdos Lajos primary schools, and from the Pető Institute, will receive, along with the musical treat, a small present as a farewell gift. On the Sunday before Christmas, MKB Bank and the International Children's Rescue Service are for the seventh year organising a joint program, in which



○ ZSUZSA BARLAY, ETERNAL MEMBER | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ ZSUZSA MISURA, ETERNAL MEMBER | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ KATALIN VOLF, ETERNAL MEMBER | Photo by Attila Nagy

this year 1100 economically disadvantaged young children from both inside and outside Hungary will celebrate together. On this occasion, they will get the chance to see the newest *Nutcracker* production on 20 December. Unfortunately, however, there are little ones who are fighting serious illnesses and aren't able to visit either Princess Marie or the Nutcracker Prince. Attempting to bring a smile to their faces K&H Magical Healing Magical Fairy-Tale Doctors programme, which the House is joining. During the live and web-based story-telling sessions, the Opera's artists, wearing costumes and with scenery around them, will tell the stories from productions in the repertoire, including *The Nutcracker*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *John the Valiant*. Leaving the Christmas lights and the holiday's pine fragrance behind, the winter appears to show its more severe face. However, even in these drearier months, the Opera also strives to bring good cheer and assistance, since the other focal point of its caritative activities can be found during the season of balls. Now for the third year, the National Ambulance Service will enjoy the institution's support, as part of which, during the "K&H Move!" running race this summer, the organizers were collecting contributions for the purchase of an ambulance, just as the did at the Silver Rose Ball and at this year's Faust Ball, and this will be its mission at the



○ JUBILEE COMMEMORATIVE RING | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ SOLOIST SÁNDOR EGRÍ AND GENERAL DIRECTOR SZILVESZTER ÓKOVÁCS | Photo by Attila Nagy

Shakespeare Ball on 6 April as well. No-one will be left out from the splendid, collective artistic event: on the day following the event, as part of the "Breadcrumb Ball", around a thousand disadvantaged children will get to hear the fairy-tale opera *Hansel and Gretel*, with the sponsorship of TV2, the Lions Club and K&H, and others. The staff at the palace on Andrásy Avenue also taking into account the pleasures of those who are somewhat older. For high-school students and for civil organizations, they have announced the *You Shall go the Ball!* programme, which from Epiphany until Ash



○ CHORUS MEMBER ZOLTÁN SOMOGYI AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR FERENC ANGER | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ BALLET DANCER ZOLTÁN VÁRKONYI | Photo by Attila Nagy

Wednesday allows applicants to take a few pieces from the collection of no longer useful but lovingly preserved costumes that may still be good for service at a dance or a congenial photo session, or perhaps as a finishing decorative touch. And as long as we are on the subject, the star guest of the Shakespeare Ball will be the very same Plácido Domingo whom UNESCO named a Goodwill Ambassador in 2012 and who has collected millions of dollars at charity concerts to benefit the victims of natural disasters. (editor's note: for an interview conducted with Domingo, see pages 6-8.)



○ CHORUS MEMBER MÁRIA BALOGH, GENERAL DIRECTOR SZILVESZTER ÓKOVÁCS AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR FERENC ANGER | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ ORCHESTRA MUSICIAN GÁBOR MAGYAR AND GENERAL DIRECTOR SZILVESZTER ÓKOVÁCS | Photo by Attila Nagy

And let us also not forget about the Opera's superb artists who, sometimes through considerable amount of work, serve the theatre and the audience each night with excellent performances and all the other employees working in the background. In order for their sacrifice and world-class work to receive even greater exposure, in contrast to past practice, the artists now received their certificates of appreciation not within the closed circle of the season-opening company meeting, but on 7 November, which is both the birthday of Ferenc Erkel and Hungarian Opera Day. Returning to Duhamel and his recollections in his book *La Musique consolatrice*, he writes about playing music with others: "In those men to whom the comfort of religious belief has not been given, this too has turned to belief, meaning something that nourishes, energizes and consoles. I was no longer lonely." Among other things this is what the advent season is about, and the charity as well: no one remains alone. ○

# Not Hiltons

Michel Plasson, the 82-year-old French conductor, is one of today's living "great old ones". When it comes to French opera, he ranks in the top three, and when it comes to Massenet's *Werther*, then his name is practically synonymous with the work. Gábor Mesterházi. *Gábor Mesterházi*

Photo by László Emmer

– Its success depends mainly on the singers or on the orchestra?

– Mainly on the orchestra. It's a world-wide phenomenon that ensembles are globalising: they have lost their unique characteristics and individualities. This is a big problem, that they are so unvarying. The French repertoire is only seldom played everywhere you go, which means that it is not played in the correct style. Faster and faster, louder and louder – that is the preference of the modern era. The instrumental training has also vanished. The music world is a little bit like that of hotels: everywhere in the world, you have Hyatts and Hiltons, and they are the same everywhere...

– In 1979, you made the gold-standard recording of *Werther*.

Has your view on the piece changed since then?

– I have performed it many times, and have made several recordings of it. I've done both the baritone version and the tenor version, with all of the world's tenors and all of its Charlottes. The music has remained the same, but we are not living in a refined age, and French music suffers a great deal from this. That is, the music hasn't changed, but the medium in which it is played has changed.

– How could the story narrated in the epistolary novel, the *Sturm und Drang*, be shaped into an opera in Massenet's era?

– It was with Massenet himself that the *Werther* story changed. Massenet's composition is linked to its own era just as much as Goethe's novel is to his. Naturally, the text cannot be identical, just as it is different in Gounod's (or Berlioz's) *Faust* than it is in the original. There are some similarities between the two: to play either

○ ATALA SCHÖCK, ARTURO CHACÓN-CRUZ | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

Goethe's 1774 epistolary novel belongs to the *Sturm und Drang* movement, meaning that it has everything we expect from the style. *Sturm und Drang*, however, was not simply a stylistic movement: it was much more of a zeitgeist, and from this point of view it's little wonder that Goethe's work sparked a true *Werther* fever, while also making the name of the then 25-year-old writer. It is perhaps the difficulty involved in deriving a musical, operatic version from an epistolary novel that meant that the world would have to wait 118 years for Massenet's opera. (Let us just think about how many versions were made of the much more dramatic *Faust* story in the intervening time!) I asked Michel Plasson about these oddities after his orchestral rehearsal.

– How difficult is it to perform French opera in an environment more accustomed to the Italian and German repertoire?

– This is a problem everywhere in the world: the French repertoire doesn't have enough of a presence, and because of this, not only the musicians, but the singers as well, get no opportunity to practice the style, the language and the music, which is very, very delicate. And which also relies very much on the performance style. Wagner, for example, remains Wagner whatever the circumstances are, because it has that certain structure and arrangement. With French opera, the situation is different, because it is much more complex than Italian, or even German, opera. If circumstances do not adapt to it, then it simply won't work. That's why a great deal of rehearsal is required.

## Orchestra

Gounod or Massenet's opera in a German spirit, like Wagner, is impossible: a complete misunderstanding. The words to the work only show half of it. The musical poetry is completely different.

### – Do singers who are not native speakers of French struggle with the language?

– Nothing substitutes for being a native speaker. But I've often met performers who, while they can't speak French, can sing in it. Anglo-Saxons are the best at this, whereas it's very difficult with Italians, who have very strong accents. Much depends on the circumstances.

### – Why do you love it?

– Because I've lived together with it for a long time, as I have with other French operas. And it's the first one that I conducted in my life. I've performed it with Gedda, Kraus and Domingo... with everyone. This is one of the most-performed of Massenet's operas. I've made more than 100 recordings of French operas. When I've worked with German orchestras, we'd play German music: I've recorded Wagner, Strauss (and even Teufel) and Liszt's symphonic poems. So I'm not exclusively a French specialist. I love Bruckner very much, for example, and generally those pieces that have a generous portion of metaphysics, that aim heavenward. I'm not interested in trash. I love the music of the heart.

### – Have you worked with Hungarian musicians before?

– Although October was my first time in Hungary and Budapest, I am connected to Hungarian music and musicians in many ways. I recorded Verdi's *Requiem* with Júlia Várady. I also did



○ ZSOLT HAJA AND MÁRIA CELENG | Photo by Attila Nagy

Bartók's *Bluebeard* for German television. For me, this is an absolutely essential masterpiece: along with *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Dialogues des carmélites* and *Wozzeck*, one of the most important operas of the 20th century. I've been fortunate enough to work with Éva Marton and László Polgár, which left a fantastic memory. The mystery and beauty of the music, its beauty relative to the language, and the wonderful Hungarian language have all had an enormous impact on me. In addition, I've conducted numerous orchestral works, although nothing rivals *Bluebeard*. This is also unthinkable in a different language. Hungarian music, and Hungarian performers are not "Hiltons"...

– Recently I was re-listening to Fricsay's *Bluebeard*, in German, and no matter how beautiful

### the recording was, the language truly was a barrier.

– I agree with that. To complete the list: I also played under Doráti, gave concerts with Géza Anda several times, and there's István Kertész, and among the French, Christian Ferras, Samson François, Charles Munch and Pierre Monteux. I got the chance to play with others like Rubinstein, Rostropovich and Milstein. There are still splendid talents living today, but I don't see such towering artists. I was just speaking about this recently with Pinchas Steinberg, and he sees it the same way. Something is gone, lost, from the world. At the same time, I consider it a hopeful sign that – based on what I've observed at the Opera House over the course of these *Werther* performances – that working with Hungarian musicians remains a very fine experience. ○

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# Concerts at the Opera

Concerts by the Budapest  
Philharmonic Orchestra!

30 November 2015, 7:30 pm

Brahms ▶ **Piano Concerto in D minor, op. 15**  
Elgar ▶ **Symphony No. 1**

Conductor ▶ **Alexander Lazarev**  
Featuring ▶ **Sofya Gulyak** – piano

21 December 2015, 7:30 pm

Händel ▶ **Messiah**

Conductor ▶ **Paul Goodwin**  
Közreműködik ▶ **Malin Chrisstenson** –soprano  
**Gabriella Balga** – alto  
**Tibor Szappanos** – tenor  
**István Kovács** – bass  
and  
the Hungarian State Opera Chorus  
(chorus director: **Kálmán Strausz**)

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# Stars and nights of stars

A host of big names have come and are coming to perform as guest artists in the Budapest Philharmonic's concerts for the final months of the year. Whether making their Budapest debut or returning in triumph, the singers and instrumentalists all have one thing in common: the highest standard of quantity. Ferenc László

It's a challenge to make it into the annals of the history of the Budapest Philharmonic! After all, one can hardly compete with the legends of Brahms, Furtwängler and Georg Solti, who all gave concerts here, no matter how world-famous the next guest artist to appear here is. The intimate reality of concerts, however, is fortunately entirely different, and is not just about recalling and honouring the greatness of past history. The great figures and emerging major talents of the present become our benefactors at these nights of stars just as much as the titans mentioned above did for generations of our forebears.

This hope was an especially lively one when so many magnificent singers marched out onto the stage of the Opera House, and later the Erkel Theatre, for the concerts in early November. Verdi's *Requiem* funeral mass was conducted by Péter Halász with an extraordinary quartet of soloists singing the marvellous work for us: the world-renowned Ildikó Komlósi joined by Anja Kampe, Andrei Dunaev and Liang Li. After hearing Anya Kampe, one of the most remarkable sopranos of our time, sing arias by Beethoven and Wagner at her Budapest debut at last September's memorable Freedom

Every year of my musical life I have performed or conducted *The Messiah*. Each time I try to take an invitation from a different choir and orchestra and re-visit this timeless masterpiece in a new light.

I am very excited to experience the power and grandeur of the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra and Choir, and in such beautiful surroundings, to lift the spirits of all at this special time of year.

Paul Goodwin.

"Every year of my musical life I have performed and conducted *The Messiah*. Every time I try to take an invitation from a different choir and orchestra and re-visit this timeless masterpiece in a new light. I am very excited to experience the power and grandeur of the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra and Choir, and in such beautiful surroundings, to lift the spirits of all at this special time of year."

- PAUL GOODWIN

I was in Budapest for the first time in 2015, on my birthday! My birthday present was to sing *Rigoletto* in the Erkel Theatre. I loved working on such a beautiful traditional production with wonderful colleagues. I'm thrilled to be back and sing Verdi's great music once again in this great venue!

Thank you, Budapest!  
Andrey Dunaev

"I was in Budapest for the first time in 2015, on my birthday! My birthday present was to sing *Rigoletto* in the Erkel Theatre. I loved working on such a beautiful traditional production with wonderful colleagues. I'm thrilled to be back and sing Verdi's great music once again in this great venue! Thank you, Budapest!" - ANDREI DUNAEV

OperaGala, this time singing a Verdi solo part she was perhaps in even better form. Along with Kampe, the Hungarian audience also again met the splendid Russian tenor Andrei Dunaev who also sang the Duke of Mantua for them at the beginning of the year, performing the part, rich in famous arias but still quite difficult, with tremendous elegance and a soaring voice. The quartet's bass was South Korean Liang Li, a superb singer with the Stuttgart Opera. This concert also marked his own Budapest debut.

The final evening of November will bring yet more guests for the concerts of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra: the conductor Alexander Lazarev and the pianist Sofya Gulyak.

Lazarev, who turns 70 years old this year, is just like the tenor at the *Requiem* concert, the pride of Moscow's Bolshoi Opera: between 1987 and 1995 he was the Russian opera's principal musical director. Originally

C. utószóval fog  
Lazarev & Gulyak  
C. Győzelem  
C. Győzelem  
A. Lazarev.

"I am looking forward with interest to meeting you in Budapest." - ALEXANDER LAZAREV

discovered by Herbert von Karajan, he is a respected artist in every corner of the world, from Great Britain to Japan.

At his Budapest concert, he will conduct Elgar's *Symphony No. 1*, having developed an intimate relationship with the "perfect English gentle-

I am extremely excited and pleased to have an opportunity to perform at such a historic and beautiful venue as the Budapest Opera House. It is a great honour for me. Looking forward to playing one of my favourite piano concertos, Brahms No. 1, with your excellent orchestra.

"I am extremely excited and pleased to have an opportunity to perform at such a historical and beautiful venue as the Budapest Opera House. It is a great honour for me. Looking forward to playing one of my favourite piano concertos, Brahms No. 1, with your excellent orchestra." - SOFYA GULYAK

man" at least since his tenure as principal guest conductor with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The Kazan-born pianist, the winner of a plethora of competitions, will play the solo part in a Brahms piano concerto with her highly lauded intensity and energetic playing.

Although it was the composer's concerto in B-flat major that received its world premiere from the Budapest Philharmonic, with Brahms himself on piano, Gulyak will instead be playing his Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, but still feels a connection to the dimensions of music history entailed by collaborating with the orchestra.

And finally, before Christmas, there will be a performance of *The Messiah* on 21 December! With Paul Goodwin, it will not be simply a world-famous conductor directing the oratorio's performance, but a true specialist in early music and Handel. The artist, who spent the first half of his career as an oboist, first gained world

## Világ sztárok a hangversenyeken

attention in 2007, when he won the Handel Music Prize from the city of Halle, thanks to his efforts to popularise the Baroque master's works Goodwin is active and extremely effective not only as a guest conductor of concerts, and of opera, but also as a recording artist and educator of orchestras. The *Messiah* concert will feature the wondrous singing of the Swedish soprano soloist, Malin Christenson, who is highly sought after as an oratorio-singer of rare sensitivity, as well as an appealing figure personality on the opera stage. Who knows? We might even be seeing her again on the stage of the Opera House before too long. ○

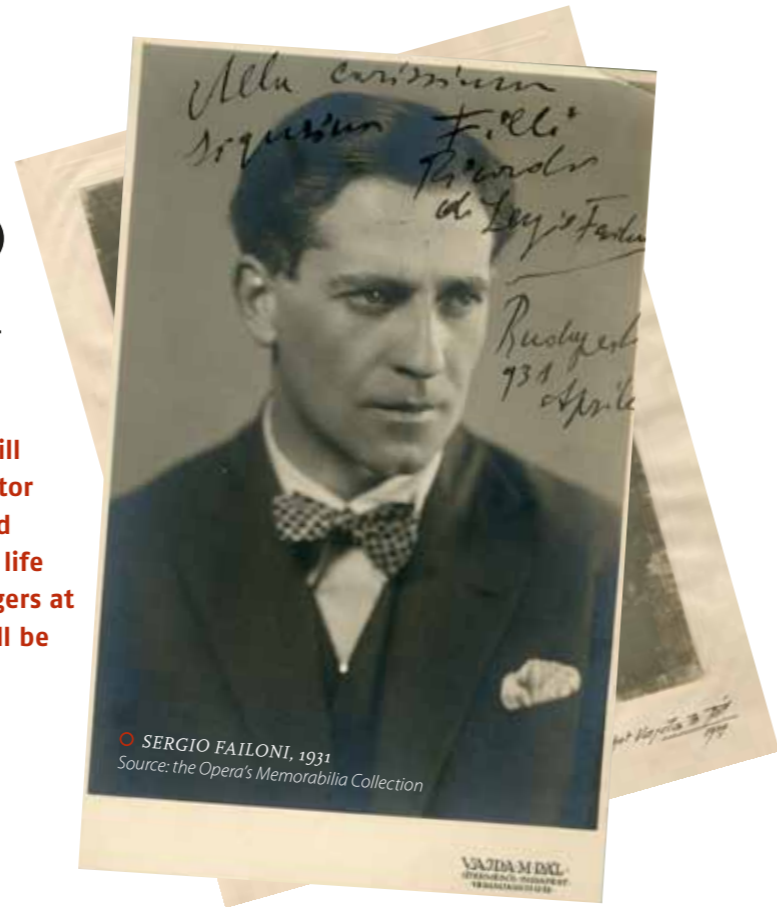
I'm looking forward to come back to your wonderful opera house. When I had the great pleasure to sing for the last year's Liberty Opera-Gala. I really like the atmosphere with the great feedback from the audience and I can't wait to perform together with the marvellous musicians of the orchestra and the chorus artists of your opera house. The epic music of Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem*, which has been in my head since my childhood.

"I'm looking forward to coming back to your wonderful opera house, where I had the great pleasure to sing at last year's Freedom Opera-Gala. I really like the atmosphere with the great feedback from the audience and I can't wait to perform together with the marvellous musicians of the orchestra and the chorus singers of your opera house the epic music of Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem*, which has been in my head since my childhood." - ANJA KAMPE

# The maestro in search of truth

Shortly before Christmas, on 22 December, an evening of opera music at the Erkel Theatre will be dedicated to the memory of Italian conductor Sergio Failoni, who was born 125 years ago and played a significant role in Hungarian musical life in the interwar period. Joining Hungarian singers at the event will be Francesco Demuro, which will be conducted by Giacomo Sagripanti.

Tamás Pallós



"Sergio Failoni, conductor of the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa, began his guest appearance in Budapest today. His debut is given special importance by Director Radnai's statement: if he meets with the approval of the Hungarian audience, he will be offered a contract with the Opera for several months in the forthcoming season. It must be noted that the expected success did in fact occur. The Italian conductor's impressive interpretation of *Aida* today was welcomed by the audience with general enthusiasm and earnest celebration. The reviews contributed to this favourable atmosphere too. (...) He is a musician of great knowledge and fine taste. His technique is clear, his movements are expressive, transmitting his intentions to the singers and the orchestra in a suggestive way,"

wrote István Péterfi in the 6 June 1928 issue of the daily *Magyar Hírlap*. Failoni turned out to be so convincing that the period of several months mentioned in the article would end up lasting for two decades. The conductor, who established a family here and was regarded as an honorary Hungarian, excelled in the exceptionally profound interpretation of the Italian and German operatic repertoire as well as the popularisation of new Hungarian works. He sought the truth in the works he conducted: "We can't express what we don't believe in," he said. He deeply believed in Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, Puccini and Richard Strauss; and understood Bartók and Kodály perfectly. Failoni studied the cello in his native Verona; during his years in the Milan Conservatory – partly influenced by his model and

master Arturo Toscanini – his interest turned to conducting. He made his debut as a conductor in Rameau's *Platée* at the Teatro Carcano in Milan in 1921, and then quickly conquered one Italian opera house after the other. From his base at the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa, he was often invited to guest performances abroad, making tours to London, Madrid, Santiago de Chile – and Budapest. He never split with Verona, however: visiting his home town occasionally starting in 1924 to conduct the grand open-air performances at the city's Arena: *Parsifal*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Moses*, *Gioconda*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, and finally, *La traviata* and *Aida* after the Second World War in 1946.

His "ultimate commitment" bound him to Budapest after 1928. Thanks to his practice and prestige as a conductor, he raised the levels of the performances of the Opera to a world standard. On 24 April 1932, Failoni conducted the world premiere

of Kodály's *The Spinning Room*, and in January 1933 he conducted the same "theatre piece with music" at Milan's La Scala. He also had a part in the oft-mentioned Bartók reprise, the triumphant revival of *Bluebeard's Castle* in 1936. He rehearsed the premiere of Respighi's *La Fiamma* and the contemporary Italian composer's posthumous work *Lucrezia*. Failoni strove to enhance the limited Verdi repertoire of the Budapest opera. His legendary productions include those of *Otello*, *Falstaff*, *Tristan* and *Meistersinger*. He often performed concerts with the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra; He was the one who presented Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7 (Leningrad)* to the Hungarian audience for the first time in 1945. In the sad stupor after the Second World War, he surrendered to the temptation of an international career for the first in his life: he went to New York, but was always prepared to return to his chosen homeland. He was in Budapest in 1948 when he collapsed while rehearsing Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*... We can portray

this well-educated and committed humanist, who saw his profession as a "priestly activity", with the help of his writings, which convey a valid message even today. He served musical geniuses with humility, unquenchable enthusiasm and discipline while demanding discipline from others as well. In addition to his resourceful analyses, in his outspoken and witty notes, he did not hide what he thought about the temperamental tenors or the snobbish and pedantic theatre-goers... His "deepest truth" in the world: "I only have what I have given". ◉



◉ BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE, 1936. BÉLA BARTÓK, ELLA NÉMETHY, SERGIO FAILONI, KÁLMÁN NADASDY, MIHÁLY SZÉKELY, GUSZTÁV OLÁH  
Source: the Opera's Memorabilia Collection



◉ SERGIO FAILONI AND LASZLO MARKUS | Source: the Opera's Memorabilia Collection



# JELEN A KULTÚRÁÉRT!

Minden eszközünkkel  
Önökért vagyunk!



NÉPSZABADSÁG

## Restoring the detailing, step by step



© ANNAMÁRIA SZÉKELY | Photo by Attila Nagy

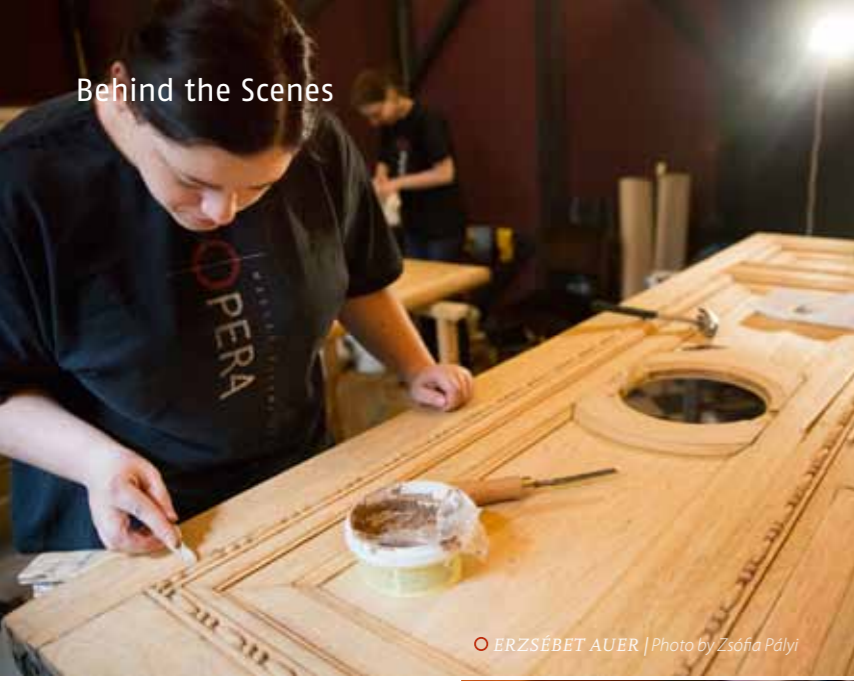
**Sometimes we tend to criticise flaws and take the beautiful for granted without even thinking about how much work there is behind any aesthetic experience. A team has been working invisibly at the Opera House to meet General Director Szilveszter Ókovács's request that the building be made ready to welcome audience members with a restored interior in 2018.**

*Z. Levente Szabó*

Every building is exposed to the effects of its environment, and this is true not only of its exterior: the natural movements and the activities inside have their impact on the internal ornamentation and painting. This is especially true for institutions with such a large number of visitors as the Opera House has. In addition, many guests do not come here exclusively to listen to a performance: they also wish to marvel at the beauty of the building designed by Miklós Ybl. There are four ladies who are working in a dedicated and usually inconspicuous way so that these visitors can leave satisfied. "When I started to work here, everyone was surprised to see a woman in the maintenance department.

Our artistic colleagues, in particular, were astonished when I turned up at the workplace equipped with spackle knives, gypsum and emery cloths. This happened when I was restoring the marble door-frame painted in white on the Grand Staircase. They were even more astounded when I was cleaning the columns of the ground floor cloakroom, which were generally thought to be dark brown, but in fact have decorated ornaments of green-coloured painted marble," said Annamária Székely while plastering a surface under a newly-opened wall when we met in early October. One of the old box office halls at the side entrance was being rebuilt, and in the autumn this was the principal workplaces for the

Behind the Scenes



ERZSÉBET AUER | Photo by Zsófia Pályi



ERZSÉBET AUER, MÁRIA KOVÁCS, ZSUZSA ECET AND ANNAMÁRIA SZÉKELY | Photo by Attila Nagy



MÁRIA KOVÁCS | Photo by Attila Nagy

restorers, whose standard tool seems to be their favourite spackle knife. "We specifically ask to be allowed to do the last phase of the masonry work ourselves in the cases of smaller reconstructions. This makes it possible to make the base surface necessary for the decorative painting to be similar to the priming of the original painting on which the pattern will be added later," she continues. "By profession I'm actually a decorative painter, but



Photo by Zsófia Pályi



ANNAMÁRIA SZÉKELY | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

As we have mentioned, these works are always supervised by restorers. Of course, it is a fundamental factor that the Opera House was completely refurbished between 1980 and 1984. Paintings by Károly Lotz's, among others, on the ceilings prepared with the so-called *secco* technique were restored too, and the layers of pollution that had covered it over the decades were cleaned off; the best experts in the country dealt with the ornamental paintings of the Foyer and the Grand Staircase very carefully. Therefore, a simple cleaning with dry technique is sufficient now. "Of course, minor repairs which cannot be postponed might still be necessary, but the jobs should be planned and scheduled in view of the continuous operation of the



ANNAMÁRIA SZÉKELY  
Photo by Zsófia Pályi

my colleague Mária Kovács and I have worked on the team of restorers for many years. When there was a more complicated task, we always did it under the supervision of a specialised restorer. Our most important tasks are the continuous maintenance, care, conservation and the preservation of the original beauty of the building. If possible, we get back to the old plans, descriptions and photos."

Fortunately a large number of documents have survived, which is a great help to the work. Such documents revealed, for example, that Miklós Ybl designed natural oak panelling covered with beeswax, and now they are trying to restore these step by step. The wooden surfaces are treated every other year, and the doors, the cloakroom and the boxes will be renovated as well.



Photo by Attila Nagy



Behind the Scenes

Photo by Zsófia Pályi

Opera House," Annamária Székely said. "When we were working in the foyer, our scaffolding was erected in the morning and dismantled in the afternoon or evening. Everything had to be organised with the maintenance staff, because they order the materials and tools we need for our work. Fortunately, we are on very good terms with them us, and they give us all the necessary support." The complexity of the team's tasks is shown by the fact that in addition to decorative painting and the treatment of walls, their help was needed with two of the statues by

painting in it, which had been in the possession of the Opera House for a long time. I did it for the *Goldmark100* exhibit. Learning new things is an experience, and discovery is a joy, and not only when you are working on the walls of a building designed by Miklós Ybl, but also inside, in the vicinity of the objects that exude the spirit of the place and their reality which is still tangible."

The team's idea is to extend their activities gradually to other parts and materials of the building, so Mária Kovács joined Annamária Székely, as in-house employees Erzsébet Auer and Zsuzsanna Ecet did as well later on. "I found myself in the world of the Opera House quite early on, as my mother Erzsébet Auerné Pádár worked in the women's costume workshop for more than twenty years. I came to work while still in her womb and almost grew up here," Erzsébet Auer said. "Later, when I was really working here, I painted costumes, and Zsuzsanna worked as a set-maker. So our team has members who know new materials: textile and upholstery. Our goal is to provide for the maintenance and care of the beauty of the Opera House in the most comprehensive way possible." ◯



ERZSÉBET AUER | Photo by Zsófia Pályi



Válassz élményt!



○ CASHIER LAJOS POGÁTHER  
Source: the Opera's Memorabilia Collection

## Treasures from the Opera House's secret recesses

**The custodian of the Opera's past always gets into a tizzy when an incoming telephone call starts with the words: "I've found something that might be interesting... I think you'll want to have a look..." The theatre's Memorabilia Collection has been enriched with numerous remarkable pieces after such telephone calls. In the past months, two exciting items have appeared, with both of them having lain in the Opera House for a good long time. What follows are two stories about the treasures that are concealed in the palace on Andrassy Avenue.**

Marton Karczag

About a year ago, on an overcast autumn day, I received a call from Éva Kovácsné Mihályi, the Opera's chief cashier. Before the days of the bank transfer, the chief cashier's office was one of the favourite gathering places, where employees collected their pay at the beginning of each month, and still pick up their Erzsébet Vouchers and public transport passes, and handle advances and account settlement. On the second floor of the administrative building, in a barred-room, stand two attractive old vaults. Nobody knows how long they have been in the theatre's possession, but they once probably guarded millions of pengős. One day, out of curiosity, Éva Mihályi opened the lower drawer of one of the vaults, and after recovering from her initial surprise, grabbed the telephone.

POSTCARD FROM BÉLA VENCZELLÓ  
Source: the Opera's Memorabilia Collection



At the top of a pile black from decades of grime lay an old pair of opera glasses and ripped-out invoice books, with the date written on them: 1958. This is probably when the compartment was closed up for the last time. The real surprise, however, was at the bottom of the drawer: several dozen letters written a hundred years ago, at the start of World War I, by employees of the Opera to the theatre's chief cashier. Lajos Pogátscher was contracted to the Opera by Count Miklós Bánffy in 1911, and the stalwart officer remained at his desk all the way until the end of the next world war. Uncle Pogi, as the artists fondly

called him, was for decades one of the theatre's most important people.

Especially toward the end of the month, people esteemed him more highly than even the director himself, since "all" one could hope for from the director was a role, while the chief cashier could give you an advance. Uncle Pogi distributed wages and pensions. (At that time, the theatre's employees did not receive state support even at an advanced age, and both the Opera and the National Theatres transferred a portion of their earnings during their active years into a joint pension fund, so that they would receive a stipend later on.

The discoveries found in the vault reveal the incredible amount of correspondence Pogátscher received. Artists were often prevented from coming on paydays and authorised someone else to collect their money from the chief cashier. Uncle Pogi could have boasted an impressive collection of autographs, if he had collected the artists' signatures. These little letters reveal much to posterity. Some are official, and others attempt to be official; there was one person who wrote on a ripped off scrap of paper or calendar, and others who wrote on the back of their name-cards. A similarly interesting discovery is that many orchestra members still wrote in

MILITARY CAMP POSTCARD  
Source: the Opera's Memorabilia Collection



German at that time. The most interesting writer was Róza Szabo. Retired since her marriage in 1882, the elderly singer was living in Békéscsaba and, as the widow of Sándor Erkel, claimed his pension. The most distant one correspondent was Giovanni Carbonare: a solo dancer at the Opera House between 1894 and 1901, he wrote his letter with finely drawn letters and in perfect Hungarian.

1914 is an important date in European history. At the start of the world war in Budapest, none of the state theatres could open the season, since all men of fighting age had been conscripted. No-one could get out of it. The most moving pieces from Pogátscher's vault are the camp postcards from members at the front or languishing in captivity, inquiring about their wages. The senders include Béla Venczell, the theatre's principal bassist (who was demobilized quite quickly afterwards), and the eldest Gyula Harangozo, the choreographer's father, who worked as a dresser and tailor. At the end of summer, the phone at the Memorabilia Collection rang again. László Bertok, one of the theatre's caretakers, described how in the advance



GENERAL DIRECTOR SZILVESZTER ÓKOVÁCS | Photo by Attila Nagy



GENERAL DIRECTOR SZILVESZTER ÓKOVÁCS AND ACTING TECHNICAL DIRECTOR PÉTER VIRÁG | Photo by Attila Nagy



MINISTER LÁSZLÓ SOMOGYI, 1985  
Source: the Opera's Archives



MILITARY CAMP POSTCARD  
Source: the Opera's Archives

ticket sales office on Dalszínház Street, which in recent years had provided the organisational department with a temporary and not particularly ideal office subdivided with pasteboard walls, but which was now being converted into an Opera Shop commensurate with 21st century requirements, the renovation work had necessitated having the enormous marble tablet affixed to the wall in 1985 to commemorate the centennial renovation of that year. The text on the commemorative plaque immortalising the restoration work seems a bit dated today: "Erected for the centenary opening of the Andrásy Avenue Palace designed by Miklós Ybl following the the coordinated and dedicated modernisation work conducted on it by decree of the government of the People's Republic of Hungary and under the direction of the Cultural Investment Company (...) in the years 1981 – 1984(...)"

On 9 September 1985, as in the old days, a time capsule was hidden behind the plaque. In the presence of Director András Mihály, Minister László Somogyi packed away the day's relics: money, newspapers and some lines

from Culture Minister Béla Köpeczi printed on patent leather, with a list of the companies participating in the reconstruction. 30 years later, Acting Technical Director Péter Virág lifted the capsule out of its place for Szilveszter Ókovács to unseal. The old documents, however, did not spend too much time at large, since at the celebration of the Opera Shop's opening on October 15, the resealed capsule, its contents now supplemented with that day's documents as well, was reentered in the wall. And what did the general director put away in the copper case? Let's leave something for posterity to discover... ○



PUTTING THE COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE IN PLACE, 1985  
Source: the Opera's Archives

POSTCARD FROM GYULA HARANGOZÓ JR., 1914  
Source: the Opera's Memorabilia Collection

# Timeless new spaces at the Opera

Although it is usually astronauts, athletes and even singers that we celebrate for their achievements, it is no less dangerous or difficult to rebuild anything in one of the most beautiful and important monumental buildings in the country. After thirty years, the buffets of the Opera House were refurbished last autumn. We talked to the designer, Tibor Somlai.

György Réz



**– Exactly which areas have been renewed at the Opera House and the Erkel Theatre?**

– A new café, the Opera Café, has been created in the place of one of the former box offices. The grand buffet on the first floor, now called the Feszty Bar, has been completely refurbished, and the cafeteria on the third floor, which has been known as the “confectionery” since Miklós Ybl’s time, has been renovated too. The two buffets at the Erkel Theatre have also been renewed, and – although the audience cannot see it – so has the artists’ cafeteria. I began to work on these spaces in the middle of July.



**– It must have been difficult to agree with everyone involved about changing the old catering units and creating new ones.**

– We always managed to reach a consensus, but various interests must be coordinated during an undertaking like this. In our case, the operator, the Zsidai Group, which was my direct client, and the Opera House as an institution had several requests as well. We also had to respect the artists’ wishes. The monument protection authority naturally examined the renovations from a different perspective.



**– The Opera House is one of the most elegant historical buildings in the country. How did its various functions change with the renovations?**

– Having myself been an opera-lover for decades, I see many performances every year and I know the building very well. In place of one of the old box offices, where the Organisational Department’s offices had been, the Opera Café has been established in the antechamber leading to the staircase up to the third floor on the Hajós Street side of the building. This room, with its four columns, opens from the street, and, according to the client’s request, it recalls the traditions of a café from the era of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.”



**– What was the most difficult task when creating this new space?**

– The environment is so colourful and heavily ornamented that most solutions would have been too much here. It was very difficult to create designs that contain modern elements but which, due to their classical features, do not stand out from the environment. I recommended very modern minimalist furniture, but the Zsidai Group insisted on seeing that particular antebellum atmosphere again. This resulted in the black and golden colours, a kind of timeless effect of the furniture, which fits perfectly in the decorative built environment. I have noticed that modern trends become

## Renewal

outdated within five or six years and interiors get changed according to the new fashion. Out of the interiors I designed 20 or 25 years ago, perhaps two have survived, but I trust that the areas I have redesigned at the Opera House will be much more lasting."

### – Are there any motifs in the new spaces that reveal to us immediately that we are at the Opera House in Budapest?

– I walked around the building many times to find something like that, and finally I found the image of the swan in the parallelograms on the railings of the proscenium boxes. This motif can be seen in many places in the café. The legs of the sofas are based on those of the ottomans that were scrapped during the renovation 31 years ago. I was designing Amerigo Tot's house in the Castle



ceiling and the walls are illuminated from here. The front part was ornamented with the decorative painting and marbling of the walls, so those who were not familiar with the previous arrangement might think that the counter was old as well, and that only the functional rack made of steel and glass in the middle is the product of the 21st century.

– What about the other buffets?

– Beyond a complete technical overhaul, there was only a bit of a visual "facelift". The confectionery on the third floor became lighter, with a white counter, and the wooden parts made 30 years ago were painted a greenish white colour with red anti-aging, which matches the colourful ceiling better. Like everywhere else, the kitchen equipment was replaced with state-of-the-art fixtures, thereby expanding the range of offerings as well. For the Erkel Theatre we made eight mobile counters, which can be used for a wide range of products, and their striped and black-and-white chequered patterns match the foyer, which was repainted recently. I hope everyone will be satisfied with the sight, or at least will soon get used to them! ◦

District at the time and bought some pieces of these. They served as the model for the present ones.

### – Major changes have been made on the first floor too.

– Yes, in the buffet on the first floor, now the Feszty Bar, where the counter was placed in the middle. It was very important to me, because it had been in front of the French windows of the three little balconies facing the staircase, blocking access to them. The 12-meter-long counter in the middle posed a great challenge, because the equipment had to be installed in the middle of the room. Light and sound equipment was placed in the middle of the counter, and the large frescos on the



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Looking back

# Modern-day Romeos and Juliets

○ ISTVÁN DÉNES AND BOLDIZSÁR LÁSZLÓ | Photo by Attila Nagy

Mingling operatic voices with elements of dance theatre in a world-famous musical based on Shakespeare's masterful story and with monumental sets marking the first appearance on the Hungarian opera stage by this classic work by Leonard Bernstein, *West Side Story* starts this year's Shakespeare season off with a bang.

○ HELGA NÁNÁSI AND ZSÓFIA KÁLNAY | Photo by Péter Rákossy

○ HELGA NÁNÁSI AND BOLDIZSÁR LÁSZLÓ | Photo by Péter Rákossy

○ BARNABÁS SZABÓ SIPOS | Photo by Attila Nagy

○ ATTILA SZAKÁCS | Photo by Attila Nagy

With the premiere of this musical that has become world-famous because of Leonard Bernstein's music more so than because of the juvenile plot, the Opera manages to kill several birds with one stone: the production first of all serves as the opening piece for the Shakespeare season; second, it is serving as the new autumn fare for the OperaAdventure programme aimed at high-schoolers. It was exactly for this reason that Péter Novák, the director of the piece being premiered on the opera stage with its original score, conceived of a "youthful" musical for the theatre, an effort which has been in large measure successful: the inclusion of graduating students from the Hungarian Dance Academy, the black and white film clips that open it, the authentic costumes (by Mónika Szelei) and the monumental set erected from moveable frames (by Péter Horgas) underscored all of

this. While the appearance of the singers in tandem with their ballet-dancer alter-egos took some getting used to, there was little to laugh about with the skilled singing voices: Gergely Boncasér (Tony), Erika Miklósa (Maria) and Lúcia Megyesi Schwartz (Anita). (Anita Farkas, *Demokrata*)

"There was no problem with the music: under the conducting of István Dénes, it is played properly, and is affecting as well: powerful, gut-wrenching, and even soaringly romantic, it traverses the entire scale of the emotions." (Gábor Bóta, *Népszava*)

"The directing managed to affectingly develop those parts that allowed the crowd scenes to be realised. The *America*, chorus and *Tonight*, for example, were

entertainingly stirring and expressive, while the scene from the dance also had some cleverly worked-out approaches. Also imaginative was the short film screened during the overture, which showed genre scenes from the characters' everyday lives, introducing them at the same time. (...)

The most successful portrayal of the two casts was probably Erika Miklósa's Maria. With delicate vocal nuance, the singer credibly depicted the young girl's psychological world. Her characterisation dispensed with any affectation, and her high notes sounded pure and confident.

(...) Playing Maria in the other cast was Helga Nánási, who also exhibited sure-footed vocal technique and credible characterisation. Her nicely timbred soprano voice was balanced in every register. (...)

Lúcia Megyesi Schwartz's Anita turned out to be surprisingly suitable for musicals. The singer did a superb job of appropriating the stylistic world of Bernstein jazz and pop music. Clearly sensing the character's personality and striving to convey the music's Latino nature as well, her tart remarks and her rebuking of Maria were among the most successful aspects of the production. With her lovely vocal timbre and illusory stage presence drew attention to her last year as well.

Vocally, in the role of Anita, she also delivered a nuanced, quality performance, with every detail worked out. (...)

Providing a fine portrayal of Tony was Boldizsár László, whose background in popular music had him feeling at home in the more popular musical styles. (...)

Of the prose actors, the best portrayal was Barnabás Szabó Sipos's Doc: he created his role credibly, free of any unnecessary adornment. A similarly fine portrayal came from Gábor Szirtes – also in the role of Doc. (...)

Levente Molnár gave a fine characterisation as the teacher (Glad Hand), doing a good job of highlighting the character's characteristic features." (Zoltán Péter, *Prae.hu*)



○ ANDRÁS KÖRÖSI, ANDRÁS KÁLDI KISS, BOLDIZSÁR LÁSZLÓ, BARNABÁS SZABÓ SIPOS AND PÉTER BOZSÓ | Photo by Péter Rákossy



○ ATTILA SZAKÁCS, SZNEZSANA GIKOVSZKI AND BENCE APÁTI | Photo by Péter Rákossy



○ ANDRÁS KÖRÖSI, ZSÓFIA KÁLNAY, HELGA NÁNÁSI, BOLDIZSÁR LÁSZLÓ, ANDRÁS KÁLDI KISS, BENCE APÁTI, SZNEZSANA GIKOVSZKI, ILDIKÓ BOROS AND LEVENTE BAJÁRI | Photo by Péter Rákossy

"On the occasion of the Shakespeare anniversary, several opera-performing institutions have discovered the possibility inherent in Bernstein's *West Side Story*: the work is highly popular, and thus can motivate new audience segments, while at the same time the demanding nature of the musical material makes it worthy of treatments of an operatic standard. In Hungary, the work has not yet been performed in a manner similar to the current one, with almost exclusively performers of classical music being featured. (...) The choice of director fell on Péter Novák: this emerges logically from the piece's, and the work's, position between genres. One could expect from this director and performer who works comfortably in the areas of dance, theatre and music, and who himself has appeared in the piece (having portrayed Bernardo), a viable and enjoyable production. At the same time, the task was made more difficult by, this being a modern work, the fact that copyright stipulations tied the director's hands when it came to interpreting the work. (...)

Although the director, therefore, was largely confined within limits of interpretation, he was able to stage Bernstein's work with richer options in terms the set of tools at his disposal. With an extensive background in dance, the artist naturally took advantage of the significant role of dance as a medium to the extent that he created different performance tracks, in which the dancers depicted the interactions between the characters in place of the singers, or alongside them. (...) As far as the choreography (Éva Molnár and Attila Bordás) and the visual style of the overall production are concerned, one can say that it was primarily the showy grand tableaux that constitute the most enjoyable aspects of the production. The direction, in total, is dominated by the visual elements, and its use of space is definitely memorable. It is good to see that certain directors don't bring the performance to the auditorium simply because it is trendy at the moment." (Kata Kondor, *Operavilág.net*)

Looking back

# S Demented pace

Johan Inger, a former dancer with the Royal Swedish Ballet and the Netherlands Dance Theatre and one-time artistic director of the Cullberg Ballet who took to the opposite side of the stage at the behest of Jirí Kylián, has won several awards for his choreography. In his piece *Walking Mad*, constructed around Ravel's *Bolero*, nine dancers engage in an increasingly crazy dance in a shrinking space, to the music as it increases in tension and speed from measure to measure. This autumn, for the first time, and hopefully not for the last, the Hungarian audience will get the chance to watch this breathtaking dance work.

BARBARA TÓTH, DMITRY TIMOFEEV, BALÁZS KRAJCZÁR, BALÁZS MAJOROS, JESSICA CARULLA LEON, BORIS MYASNIKOV, CRISTINA BALABAN

DMITRY TIMOFEEV



Looking back

BALÁZS MAJOROS AND CRISTINA BALABAN



JESSICA CARULLA LEON



Photos by Attila Nagy and Zsófia Pályi

JESSICA CARULLA LEON AND BORIS MYASNIKOV



"The edgy and steamily erotic *Walking Mad* is a surreal reconception of Ravel's *Bolero*. It is a dark and ironic vision of desire, solitude and the terrifying projections of the subconscious danced by three women and six men. The sole set element is a moveable, push-able grey wall with doors that can be opened and closed. The ghostliness, reminiscent of the world of René Magritte, is about crossing limits and the membrane-thin line that separates the "normal" from the mad. In presenting this psychological work, the company under the direction of Tamás Solymosi has far exceeded its own limits. (...)

The most outstanding moment of the evening is the duet between Cristina Balaban and Balázs Majoros to music by Arvo Pärt. The inspired closing duet ascends to poetic regions, enriching the opus with more profound layers which are more grim, throat-tightening and tragic in tone than the Cullberg Ballet's version." (Krisztina Horeczky, Nol.hu)



BALÁZS MAJOROS AND CRISTINA BALABAN



JESSICA CARULLA LEON AND BORIS MYASNIKOV



BORIS MYASNIKOV, BALÁZS KRAJCZÁR, DMITRY TIMOFEEV AND BALÁZS MAJOROS



# Historical Whirlwind

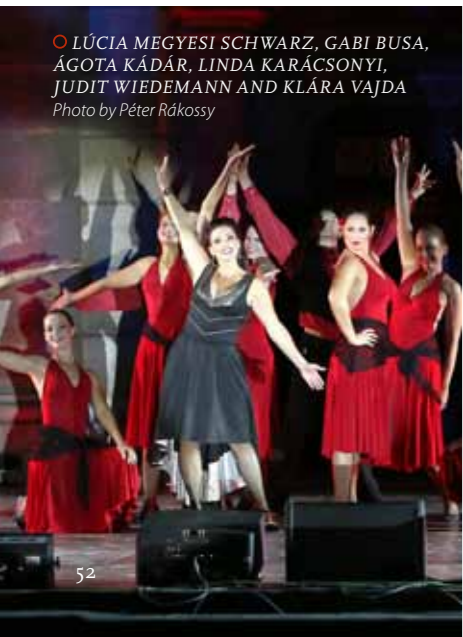


Photo by Péter Rákossy

**Shakespeare himself would have envied the September cavalcade that emerged out of his stories on the car-free Andrassy Avenue. The director of the evening's show was Péter Kálloy Molnár, the Opera's (hitherto non-existent, but potential) phantom, who personally stepped out on the asphalt between productions. The afternoon lead-in, on the other hand, was given a boost by a premiere and performances of *The Telephone* and *Il campenello*.**

the audience also got the chance to watch an open-air performance on Mobility Week: Donizetti's *Il campenello* and Mennotti's opus *The Telephone* (editor's note: both pieces were also performed at the September 19 event.). It is already a tradition for one student from each the UTFA and the Hungarian University of Fine Arts to handle the staging. Following the two often-played works, this year the choice fell on a lesser-known piece: the Hungarian audience would get its first chance to watch Donizetti's opera *I pazzi per progetto* (...) performed in

"Many people no doubt have experienced the atmosphere of ensembles closing the scenes of opera buffas: we step out of our traditional roles and lose our sense of identity. This feeling of life, however, is not tragic, but more like being gripped by a dizzying tension, a whirling dance and a carnival cavalcade. Bálint Szilágyi's directing depicted these moments with effective visual and theatrical devices. As part of the Car-Free Day programme, the Opera premiered Gaetano Donizetti's one-act opera buffa *I pazzi per progetto* on the northern Sphinx terrace. In each of the two previous years,



○ LÚCIA MEGYESI SCHWARZ, GABI BUSA, ÁGOTA KÁDÁR, LINDA KARÁCSONYI, JUDIT WIEDEMANN AND KLÁRA VAJDA  
Photo by Péter Rákossy



○ MIHÁLY KÁLMÁNDI, ATILA FEKETE AND SÁNDOR EGRI  
Photo by Péter Rákossy

the circular space in front of and behind the Sphinx statue, with the orchestra's tent standing alongside it. (...) The directing and the production's visual effect (director: Bálint Szilágyi, visual design: Adrienn Főgel, dramaturg: Judit Kenesey) were characterised by eclectic references and self-ironic historicisation. The "postmodern" and self-parodying kitsch-like staging featuring historical styles was spectacular in the scenes that were parodies of *opera seria*. Norina (Orsolya Hajnalka Röser) appears on the stage as a queen in mourning and feigning madness, with a large Christian cross. Eight supernumeraries assisted in the production: four male and four female. The lads appeared dressed in histor-



Photo by Péter Rákossy



○ SHAKESPEARE SHOW - ANDRÁS GÁSPÁR, ORSOLYA SÁFÁR AND PÉTER KÁLLOY MOLNÁR |  
Photo by Péter Rákossy



○ SHAKESPEARE SHOW - KRISTINA STAROSTINA AND BENCE APÁTI | Photo by Péter Rákossy



○ I PAZZI PER PROGRETTO - TAMÁS BUSA, ORSOLYA HAJNALKA RÖSER | Photo by Péter Rákossy

icising costumes as melancholy and androgynous Amors, and the young ladies as postmodern carnival flower-girls. (...) In the second half of the performance, Orsolya Hajnalka Röser (Norina) matured practically into a prima donna: with full tone colour, she sang with precision and convincing drama, including in the lower registers, without forcing the closing notes. (...) Áva Várhelyi's (Cristina) warm mezzo-soprano tone won over the audience in a character role. Tamás Busa's (Blinval) sang with natural, speech-type articulation. Antal Bakó (Frank), sang clearly and delightfully without the mannerism typical of character roles. Ferenc Cserhalmi (Venanzio) distinguished himself with his mature and full voice. (...)

In the closing scene, the eight supernumeraries took the stage in historical costumes evoking various eras, portraying Norina and Blinval's (fictional) lovers. Darlemont was dressed up as the Pharaoh, and in order to further enhance the Egyptianness of the scene, the hitherto covered Sphinx was revealed, with the graffiti-sprayed statue on the one hand serving as a parody of the colourfully painted marble statues of antiquity, and on the other hand, elevating to the stage the alternative "street" art that makes great cities more colourful. The postmodern ball, which didn't take itself seriously, was crowned by a covered multi-person bicycle stylised as a swan carriage." (Péter Merényi, Operavilág.net)

# Going Italian



○ MIHÁLY KÁLMÁNDI AND RAFAEL ROJAS | Photo by Attila Nagy

As the varied programmes unfolded outdoors amidst more overcast meteorological conditions, indoors a pleasantly warm and thrilling premiere awaited visitors to the season premiere on Andrásy Avenue. The highlight of the Italian-themed evening was Stefano Poda's production of *Otello*, which will also return to the Opera next May.



○ GERGELY BONCSÉR, MIHÁLY KÁLMÁNDI AND LANCE RYAN | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

"Just as certain scenes from Falstaff did a few years ago, and one or two passages from Faust did earlier this year, now the entire first act of the new *Otello* creates the pleasant and equally longed-for impression that this is the kind of thing that one might also see in the world's major opera houses. (...) The first act of *Otello* now linked the participants and the audience in a single closed circuit, and in the twisting music and plot, the struggling and writhing male bodies in loincloths in the gale scene said something just as significant about Verdi and Shakespeare's story as the web of ropes encircling Cassio, as Jago gets him drunk, did. (...) This desirable feeling of having reached an international standard was contributed, fortunately and substantively, to by the overall performance of the orchestra and singers. That Pinchas



Steinberg, the most popular conductor in Budapest opera history, is capable of conducting a taut performance of *Otello* is beyond questions: he kept a careful hand on the orchestra's playing, rich in contrasts and dynamic changes, and the singing on the stage. (...)

The two Hungarian principals were an even greater hit with the audience, and deservedly so. Gabriella Létay Kiss had already previously sung a Desdemona of poetic beauty, and now once again proved herself to be the rightful owner of the part, whose dual climax, that is, the *Willow Song* and the *Ave Maria*, she had to sing credibly this time right after the grand finale of the third act (without an interval's break for a set change), and this she did quite successfully. Mihály Kálmándi, on the other hand, was now singing Jago for the first time, and as might have been deduced in advance:



○ GABRIELLA LÉTAY KISS | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ GERGELY BONCSÉR, MIHÁLY KÁLMÁNDI AND LANCE RYAN | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

the role suited him splendidly. His powerful persona, dramatic energy and the genuineness of his Verdian baritone asserted themselves well even when the production lapsed back into traditional opera performance. It wasn't so long ago when Gergely Boncsér took the minor role and part of Roderigo in *Otello*, and now has proved himself to be a useful Cassio, while Judit Németh, approaching her part of Emilia from, like Ryan, a Wagnerian direction, added to the contours and nuances of this dramaturgically important part. And the chorus also delivered: the Fire Chorus, for example, was truly worthy of such a fine first act." (Ferenc László, Magyar Narancs)

"Although I've always known that the personality of the conductor sets the basic foundations of the performance, this time it became completely clear that his role is even more important than even perhaps those of the singers. Pinchas Steinberg is working wonders with the orchestra: the harmony between the singers and the orchestra is fantastic, including the tempo, the dynamic shading and the arc of the music. The various tones turned out nicely, and with each different motif available for reading, the music takes on an image-like quality. The finest performance on the first night of this season came unmistakably from the orchestra pit." (Eszter Veronika Kiss, Magyar Nemzet)

○ Photo by Zsófia Pályi



# Twisted triangle

The vagaries of fate and the ways we have of discovering ourselves are the subject of the biblical tale of Solomon and the *Queen of Sheba*, which Károly Goldmark used as the basis for his opera named after the latter character, exactly 125 years ago. With its spectacular staging of the romantic legend unfolding among sets recalling the Art Nouveau style, the Opera commemorates the composer, who died 100 years ago.

"In *The Queen of Sheba* in Budapest, it was as if the title role had been written specifically for Erika Gál's fiercely erotic mezzo-soprano voice. Her radiance made the wonder of the legendary queen something that comprehensible. Invited to play the extraordinarily demanding role of Assad was the young Thai tenor Nutthapom Thammathi, who possesses a powerful spinto voice which could get the best out of both the lyric and dramatic parts, as he is self-negatingly ground down between the two completely contrasting women.

Portraying Sulamit in the newest in a procession of German-language successes was Eszter Sümegi, whose soprano voice, while thin, is stable in the upper range, expressive and at the same time full and pure of sound. (...)

Deserving special praise are the wonderfully sung solo roles: Katalin Töreky portraying the Queen of Sheba's slave girl Astaroth, Zoltán Kelemen, with his resonant baritone, singing King Solomon, and the solid bass Péter Fried in the role of the High Priest.



ERIKA GÁL | Photo by Zsófia Pályi



ESZTER ZAVAROS AND ERIKA GÁL | Photo by Attila Nagy



ZOLTÁN KELEMEN AND NUTTHAPORN THAMMATHI | Photo by Attila Nagy



ERIKA GÁL | Photo by Péter Rákossy



ESZTER SÜMEGI AND ZOLTÁN KELEMEN | Photo by Attila Nagy

"The premiere of Goldmark's first and most popular opera, *Die Königin von Saba*, took place at the Erkel Theatre, Budapest's "people's opera", but had already been preceded by a summer open-air pre-premiere. Csaba Káel's directing also made the stage, which might be deemed quite small, seem intimate, since the action – with the exceptions of the natural settings of the introduction and the finalé – took place in King Solomon's palace in Jerusalem. Columns and an exterior staircase, and above all, the costumes constructed from immense amounts of material and highlighting the Oriental characteristics, expressed the contrast between the Arab world and the Hebrews in the time of the Old Testament. (...)

Erika Gál portrayed the Queen of Sheba temperamentally and emotionally, but singing even more beautifully was Katalin Töreky in the role of her servant girl. The men acted nobly, first and foremost Zoltán Kelemen, who sang King Solomon with proportion and culture. It should be noted that his was the loveliest costume of the lot, designed by Anikó Németh: a square-shouldered golden coat with Art Nouveau elements."

(Marieluise Jeitschko, Theaterpur)

Róbert Resznyák's powerful baritone as Baal-Hanan and Ferenc Cserhalmi's deep bass as the Temple Watchman rounded out the company to the greatest satisfaction. The Hungarian State Opera's chorus, singing precisely and in an unusually homogeneous manner played a major part in the premiere's success. They sometimes had to struggle with more powerful passages, for which Kálmán Strausz had prepared them well. The diversity and abundance of Goldmark's music were made to shine by János Kovács, who standing on the podium before the Hungarian State Opera's orchestra also served as an empathetic accompanist to the singers."

(Harald Lacina, Der neue Merker, Der Opernfreund)



Photo by Attila Nagy

"It's a question of approach. One can also look at it as an entirely unique occasion, an attempt at resurrection. A Hungaroton recording was made of it in 1980, with a famous tenor and featuring fine Hungarian artists, but it has languished since then. It's not performed elsewhere either: in this millennium it has only been played once. It was a success when it came out, but was gradually edged out by *Aida*, and perhaps by *Nabucco* as well. It was similar to the latter in terms of stage set, and to the former in terms of the story, with its weak-minded tenor floundering between a soprano and a mezzo-soprano.

Possibly as a one-time opportunity, here is *Die Königin von Saba*: similar, but still different. Nothing serves as better proof of Goldmark's ability as a composer than the *Magische Töne* aria. The music and text are exceptionally unified: what's sung is exactly what's happening in the music, with magical notes following each other. It's truly a great composer who could create this moment."

(Miklós Fáy, Nol.hu)



RÓBERT RESZNYÁK | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

Looking back

# Mozart in a suitcase

Coming to Szeged in October and Kecskemét at the end of November is the Opera on Wheels production of *Figaro 2.0*. The director, opera singer András Hábetler, says that Mozart and Da Ponte were a perfect creative pair, who brilliantly depicted the drama among everyday people. This reconceived version of *Le Nozze di Figaro* is being conducted by Géza Köteles, who has packed Mozart's notes into a score for six instruments that will fit into a suitcase.



○ ISTVÁN KOVÁCS | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ VIKTÓRIA MESTER | Photo by Péter Rákossy



○ KRISZTIÁN CSER AND BORI KESZEI | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ ZOLTÁN MEGYESI, MÁRIA FARKASRÉTI, ISTVÁN KOVÁCS, BEATRIX FODOR, KRISZTIÁN CSER AND BORI KESZEI | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ BORI KESZEI AND VIKTÓRIA MESTER | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ BORI KESZEI AND KRISZTIÁN CSER | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ VIKTÓRIA MESTER, ANNAMÁRIA BUCSI, MÁRIA FARKASRÉTI, BORI KESZEI, ISTVÁN KOVÁCS, BEATRIX FODOR, LÁSZLÓ SZVÉTEK, BENCE PATAKI, ZOLTÁN MEGYESI, KRISZTIÁN CSER | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ ANNAMÁRIA BUCSI, VIKTÓRIA MESTER, BORI KESZEI, ZOLTÁN MEGYESI, BENCE PATAKI, ISTVÁN KOVÁCS, BEATRIX FODOR, LÁSZLÓ SZVÉTEK, ANDRÁS HÁBETLER AND GÉZA KÖTELES | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ VIKTÓRIA MESTER AND BORI KESZEI | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ BORI KESZEI | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ BENCE PATAKI, BORI KESZEI, KRISZTIÁN CSER, MÁRIA FARKASRÉTI, ANNAMÁRIA BUCSI | Photo by Attila Nagy

# Gloomy Sunday?

ARTURO CHACÓN-CRUZ | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

Goethe's epistolary novel became the best-seller of the age, a tragic love story that Massenet later dressed up in music. The title role of Werther has been sung by numerous artists of great stature, including Domingo, Carreras, Villazon, Kaufmann and even Thomas Hampson. The bar, therefore, was set very high, and all indications show that it was also met at the premiere at the Opera House.

ATALA SCHÖCK, ARTURO CHACÓN-CRUZ | Photo by Attila Nagy



SCHÖCK ATALA, NYÁRI ZOLTÁN | Fotó: Nagy Attila

"I can also say Szikora makes a good Werther; the title role actor looks good; the ladies perhaps even more so in Alida Yvette Kovacs's eye-pleasing sparkling costumes. The garments of all of the actors, the quality of the material, the details, the varied ideas perfectly satisfied the audience's desire for historical authenticity.

A true world-renowned personality and specialist in French opera, the 82-year-old Michel Plasson conducted. From this musical globetrotter, one can expect the interpretation of the work to be on the level of a native language. His performance is inspired, never routine, led by his commitment to always create afresh and to find new solutions, especially if the work in question is French. Aside from the epic sentimental musical leadership, he also creates the required tension, as exemplified by the dramatic incandescence of the love duet in the third act. The orchestra played with dramatic force, most strikingly in the musical introduction and in the interlude before



ZOLTÁN NYÁRI  
Photo by Attila Nagy

the fourth act, but the genre pictures and the Charlotte-Sophie duet's colourfulness also emerged under the French guest's baton. (...)

Michel Plasson's Budapest premiere probably brought joy to many, and after the performance probably many of us felt that to be in the same space with a person of such tremendous stature, such a legendary consummate artist, was uplifting. (...)

Atala Schock was a charming Charlotte singing with a lovely voice. With her beautiful mezzo voice, she was the ideal vehicle for the part.

Her character's smiling face is just as credible as the sentimentally suffering and struggling one. The aria Va! laissez mes larmes was one of the most beautiful moments. (...)

As the triangle's third point, we saw and heard Zolt Haja in the role of Albert. His noble bearing and his movements on stage perfectly illustrated that ideal life which we imagine for the rich bourgeois characters of romantic novels. The importance of his part trails behind that of the two main characters, but in his important appearances he is present with weight. His singing is smooth; his light, lyrical baritone sounds beautiful. (...)

Sophie, the always cheerful, clownish slip of a girl's role was beautifully sung by Maria Celeng. She is the dramaturgical counterpoint to Werther's constant melancholy, and performed with the appropriate intensity.

Tamas Busa, as well as Sandor Egri and Janos Szerekovan, received roles that were well suited for their voices and characters. The children's chorus, trained by Gyongyver Gupcso; successfully managed the harmony of their Christmas song, not an easy task to achieve.

(Karoly Fulop, Operavilag.net)



MÁRIA CELENG  
Photo by Zsófia Pályi



ARTURO CHACÓN-CRUZ | Photo by Attila Nagy

"Brought to Budapest to conduct the premiere was French conductor Michel Plasson gave a wonderful sound to Massenet's music's spiritual vibrations together with the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra. For the title role, Budapest welcomed Mexican tenor Arturo Chacon-Cruz, an ideal Werther who doesn't get immersed into his lamenting, self-satisfied situation, but instead fights for his love within the limits set by Charlotte. Atala Schock gave concrete form to Werther's worshipped, but for him unattainable, Charlotte. Her mezzo sounded wonderfully nuanced, perhaps somewhat cold at times, and so Charlotte's role gave the impression of a hunted wild animal looking for a non-existent exit from her personal misery.

(Harold Lacina, Der neue Merker)



SÁNDOR EGRI, TAMÁS BUSA AND JÁNOS SZERÉKOVÁ | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

Atala Schock especially in her long lyrical solos and duets played a wonderful Charlotte, and Zolt Haja, with his beautiful baritone, played her deceived husband.

The audience, which like the Viennese one is enthusiastic about opera, clapped long and steadily."

(Marieluise Jeitschko, Theaterpur)



ZSOLT HAJA AND ATALA SCHÖCK | Photo by Attila Nagy

# Opera, sweet Opera



Photo by Attila Nagy

**Both he and his career are inseparable from the genre of opera: the eternal member of the Opera, where he keeps returning home. It's no exaggeration to call Miklós Szinetár a living legend of Hungarian opera, one whose more-than-six-decade career as a director and man of the theatre was recently honoured with a special gala, with film footage, at the Erkel Theatre.**

András Várhegyi

**– What do you feel when you look around the Opera House?**

– Many, many personal memories. If I look up to the third floor, I think about how I would watch performances from there when I was 15 years old; that's where I learned the Opera's repertoire and decided to work in opera. Later, I would sit for long years in the director's box on the right side over the orchestra, which was an excellent spot, because I could focus in two directions: on the one hand, following the performance on stage and also observing the auditorium to see how the audience was reacting. When I go up the staircase, I see the portraits of the great singers, conductors and directors whose portraits I had put up there during my

tenure as director, and who have been gazing from the wall ever since. I also have an early memory of the Erkel Theatre from 1949, when they first started performing operas there: the opening performance was *John the Valiant*. I was the supernumerary who shouted out to János Sárdy, who was in the title role, "Look out, Johnny! They're coming!"

**– The building and its atmosphere themselves exude the old days. What has changed in the passing decades?**

– Back then singers would spend more time inside, whereas nowadays you really only see people in the building who have business there. It is, however, a very good feeling that whenever I come, I'm always greeted very affectionately, and I still feel very much at home here, since for me this will always be *the House*.

**– You have worked together with a number of major artists here. How would you find a common voice with them?**

– What might have been the main thing is that it was always about the

work, about the production, and not about who was right. One thing that is very important about directing is that the profession has only been around for a little over a century. The theatre managed for 2,000 years without it, and opera did for five or six centuries. Most directors mean something different by it. For one director, the most important thing is where everyone should stand. I remember, I had one production of *Così fan tutte* where I explained at length to two singers what the piece was about, what the background for the situations was, to which one of the singers asks "That's all fine, but where should I stand?" I answered, "Does it make a difference?" (Laughs)

**– In October the Cinema Szinetár gala gave the opportunity to look back at the six decades spent in the career. You are the only Hungarian director who has 12 opera films to his name – including 1963's *Volo di notte*, in which one of the central elements is night itself.**

– At the time it was practically revolutionary for television to produce an opera film. In the end, the film was a big success, and the composer, Luigi Dallapiccola, was overjoyed. With his intercession, I was invited to be vice-chairman of the jury at the Cannes Television Festival, where, as the crowning event of the event, they screened my film separately from the competition. Although the technology used was still very rudimentary, its greatest virtue was without a doubt that it preserved the work of such great artists as Róbert Ilosfalvy, József Simándy, György Radnai and Erzsébet Házy.

**– You mentioned Erzsébet Házy. The two of you were scholarship winners at the Opera at the same time.**

– That was the institution's first scholarship, in 1951. There were four of us: myself, Erzsébet Házy, György Melis and Edit Gáncs, who made her career in Germany. Afterwards, we all worked together a great deal, and they appeared in most of my productions.

– How do you see the road ahead that awaits young people of today who would like to prove themselves on this career-path?  
– They are not in an easy situation. When we were students at the drama academy, the actor Tamás Major, who was the head of the department at the time, came to us and told us, "work and study hard, because you are badly needed." I've seen that, in recent decades, this is no longer the case. In spite of this, I've always tried to support young people as I can, and I'm pleased to see that I'm not alone in this, because last year I saw some excellent performances at the Opera of productions directed by students at the University of Theatre and Film Arts.

**– What great opportunities do you see today?**

– The Opera's current management has succeeded in enabling the masses to attend opera performances at the Erkel Theatre. I think this is an enormous opportunity to popularise the genre, and one which me must use. ○



Photo by Attila Nagy



**“READY TO LEAP”**

**“WE SEARCHED, AND WE FOUND HIM”**



**“FROM BOXING GLOVES  
TO BALLET SLIPPERS”**

**“BILLY IS HERE”**

**“WHO’S WHO AT THE ERKEL, AND WHO WILL BE BILLY?”  
“THE LEAD IS READY TO GO”**

**“CASTING”**

**“WHO  
IS HE?”**

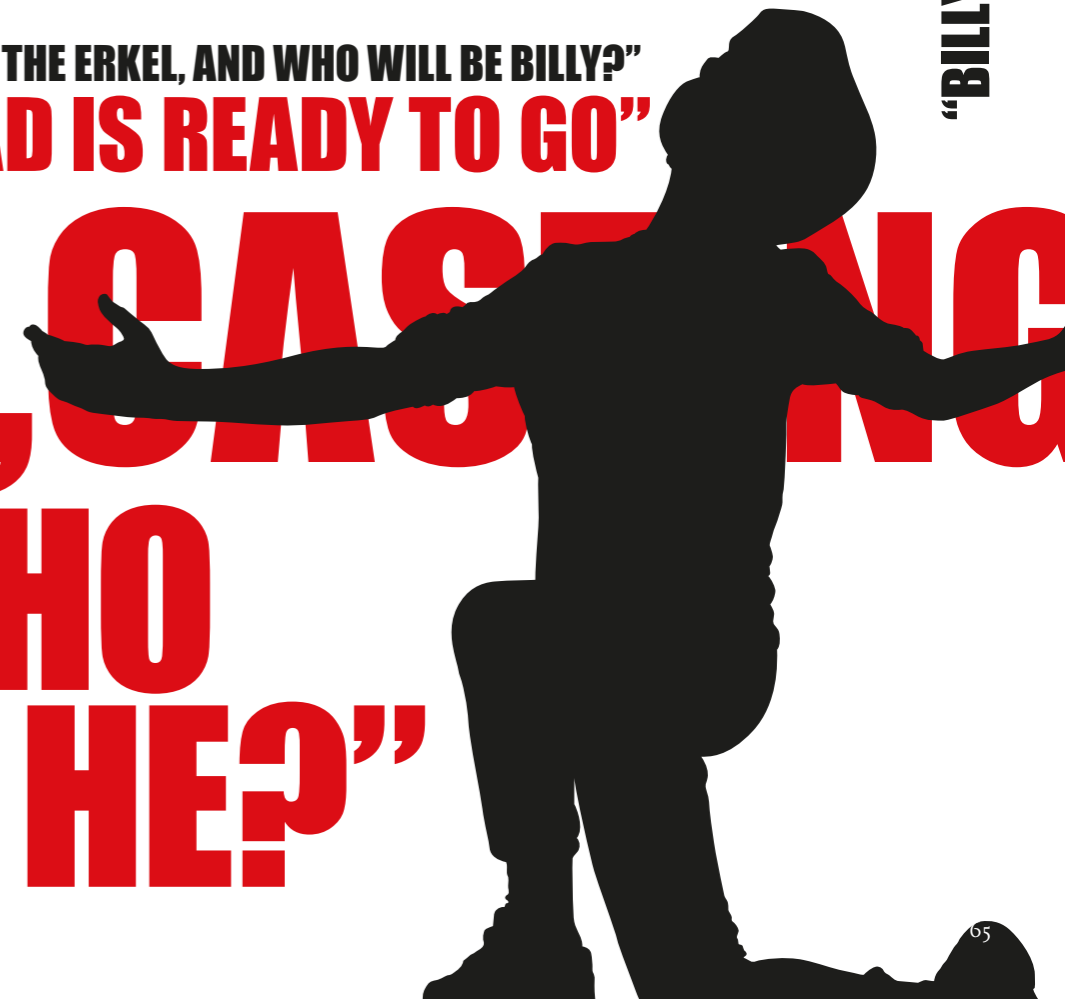
**“SUCCESSFUL CASTING:**

**WE’VE GOT A BILLY!”**

**BILLY**



**“BILLY HAS ARRIVED IN BUDAPEST”**



# ORIGO

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December  
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## OPERA

1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30 December	<b>THE NUTCRACKER</b>   WAYNE EAGLING-TAMÁS SOLYMOSI-PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
2, 4, 6, 11, 13 December	<b>Farnace</b>   Antonio Vivaldi
5 December	<b>Song Recitals on Dalszínház Street</b>
5 December	<b>Madama Butterfly</b>   Giacomo Puccini
10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 23, 25, 27 and 30 December and 3, 7, 10 January 2016	<b>La bohème</b>   Giacomo Puccini
12 December	<b>Royal Music Hall – Where Chamber Music Comes Alive</b>
19 December and 16 January 2016	<b>Artists Unmasked – The Unfamiliar Faces of Familiar Artists</b>
21 December and 18 January 2016	<b>Concerts by the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra</b>
22 December	<b>Opera Christmas</b>
31 December and 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17 January 2016	<b>Die Fledermaus</b>   Johann Strauss
1 January 2016	<b>New Year's Concert</b>
14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22 January 2016	<b>Romeo and Juliet</b>   László Seregi-Sergei Prokofiev
23, 27, 29, 31 January 2016	<b>Falstaff</b>   Giuseppe Verdi
28, 30 January 2016	<b>LEAR</b>   ARIBERT REIMANN
31 January 2016	<b>Edita Gruberová Recital</b>
<b>ERKEL</b>	
4, 6, 11, 13, 17, 19 December	<b>Don Giovanni</b>   Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
5 December	<b>Don Carlos</b>   Giuseppe Verdi
6 and 26 December	<b>John the Valiant</b>   Pongrác Kacsóh
12, 16, 19, 20, 26, 29, 30 December	<b>IL TRITTICO: IL TABARRO; SUOR ANGELICA; GIANNI SCHICCHI</b>   GIACOMO PUCCINI
22 December	<b>Failonir25</b>
23, 24, 25, 29 December and 2, 3, 9, 10 January 2016	<b>Little Magic Flute</b>   Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart–János Lackfi
8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 30 January 2016	<b>Turandot</b>   Giacomo Puccini
9, 14, 16, 23, 31 January 2016	<b>Don Pasquale</b>   Gaetano Donizetti
21 January 2016	<b>Miklósa25</b>
23, 24 January 2016	<b>Leander and Linseed</b>   Zsófia Tallér– Andor Szilágyi–Barnabás Szöllősi
29, 30, 31 January 2016	<b>WHITE, BLACK – OPPOSITES IN ATTRACTION</b> J. KYLIÁN–S. REICH / J. KYLIÁN– J. S. BACH–D. HEUFF / H. LANDER– C. CZERNY–K. RIISAGER

HUNGARIAN NATIONAL BALLET  
MAGYAR NEMZETI

# BALETT

*Wayne Eagling  
Tamás Solymosi  
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky*

# The Nutcracker

Fairy-tale ballet in three acts, two parts

Choreographers ► **Wayne Eagling and Tamás Solymosi**

Set design after ► **Gusztáv Oláh – Beáta Vavrinecz**

Ballet masters ► **Mária Aradi, Imre Dózsa,  
Wayne Eagling, Angéla Kövessy, Ildikó Pongor,  
Tamás Solymosi and Marianna Venekei**

Composer ► **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

Costume designer ► **Nóra Rományi**

Dance Academy students trained by ► **Evelyn Janács**

Premiere ► **28 November 2015, Opera House**

**OPERA**

MAGYAR ÁLLAMI OPERAHÁZ  
HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA