



2016 September
October

Polina Pasztircsák

Johan Inger's Rain Dogs

La traviata

The Spinning Room

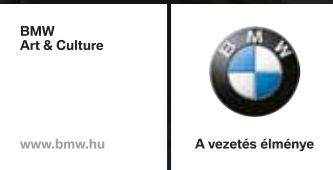
The Mine | Love

Gyula Orendt

Klára Kolonits

Zoltán Zsuráfszky

Ádám Medveczky



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Dear opera fans from all around the world!

The most intense moment in an opera performance is when the curtain goes up, because this is the point of no return when we are dropped into a dream-world. This is why it is touching to get the chance to greet you, even before the curtain goes up on the HSO's first Premiere of the season. When I was setting up my production of *Faust* with this wonderful company, everyone welcomed me with great affection, and I got to experience fantastic teamwork all throughout the process. Since I come from the nearby country of Poland, I got to feel the emotional bonds between our nations and fell in love with Budapest. Immediately.

Now I have been honoured in the new season with the invitation to stage a Hungarian treasure, *The Spinning Room*, composed by Zoltán Kodály from the country's folk music, and here I am again to create an amazing visual world for this masterpiece. When I started planning, my first thought was how far I was from being able to regard this piece as my own, and how long it would take to me to understand the essence of this enchanting composition. But when I began to study it, I was made to realize how pleasant it was to listen to it, and how

I practically felt at home in it, and how exciting it would be to present the marvels of this work to the world.

So it was with complete self-confidence that I opened the door on the world of *The Spinning Room*, but I never lost sight of what a privilege it truly was to work on this assignment. Traditional folk music is always one of the most important bonds holding together those peoples who have confronted many different life-changing challenges in their history. And it is precisely because the nation's heart is rooted so deeply and beats so strongly in it that *The Spinning Room* can become a universal experience for those in the audience who wish to get in touch with what it means to be human.

I wish all the best to everybody at the Hungarian State Opera, and I'm certain that it will be a superb season for the audience as well. Up with the curtain!!

Michał Znaniecki



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OPERA

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA

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Let her act, too

While singing Violetta three times next year, and performing the role of Bess in *Porgy and Bess*, the Opera's young soprano would like nothing more than to have fun on the stage.

© Szilárd Görömbey

○ Photo by László Emmer



○ L.A. BOHÈME | Photo by Pál Csillag

– Are the ties between you and the HSO really that strong? In the season image campaign, you became one of the faces of the Opera. Is it still really possible these days to develop such a strong relationship with an institution?

– I'm very attached to the Opera, because I was born in Budapest, and this was a childhood pleasure for me too. Of course, this kind of bond can only exist on an emotional basis, since many of us today, myself included, work to make sure our artistic and creative ties will not be exclusive. It's like in a relationship: if you bet everything on one card, it's easy to lose out if you feel too secure.

– And do the invitations you get justify this emotionally based relationship?

– I think so, yes. During the 2015/16 season, I couldn't accept too many engagements, but *La bohème* and *Le nozze di Figaro* both fit in, but I had to turn down the performances of *Otello* and *Pagliacci* for the sake of the

– When I first heard you sing at Yevgeny Nesterenko's master class in 2005, I immediately thought, "Here we finally have someone with, along with many other strengths, a beautiful voice that projects an inner radiance." Does this make any sense in appraising a singer?

– For me it does, both as a listener and as a performer. Obviously, the colour of the voice reveals much about the singer's personality, but it's like talent: it's good to have it, but in and of itself it's far from enough to sustain a serious career. You have to train it and take care of it, because you can ruin it, let it harden.

– After Budapest, you studied in Italy, with Mirella Freni. But originally you didn't plan to go into music. How big a change did this entail in your life?

– A huge one! Although I'd been to music school and have known deep in my heart I wanted to be a singer

ever since I was 16, since that was how I could express the powerful and deep feelings inside myself, studying abroad with an international star requires tremendous concentration and dedication. Just understanding what we were talking about was a challenge in itself. Not to mention all the new information: from the language, to the operatic literature, to the musical concepts. And you had to learn it all!

– What was it like to appear in the same production of *La bohème* that you had seen as a child?

– To this day, I still often recall sitting in the upper gallery with my friend. I remember how when Ilona Tokody took the stage, I was excited for her. Perhaps because it was already my audacious dream to sing the role myself one day. Sometimes during performances these days, I wonder whether someone up there is experiencing the same thing.



○ SPIRITISTI, ISTVÁN KOVÁCS | Photo by Szilvia Csíbi



○ OTELLO, WITH JÁNOS BÁNDI | Photo by S. J. Csibi



○ PAGLIACCI, WITH ZOLTÁN NAGY | Photo by Attila Nagy

Strauss opera I did and my responsibilities in Germany.

I had to portray a garrulous maid-servant in Cavalli's *Veremonda*, and I was so happy that finally I didn't have to die! I would really like it if they could try me out in a *buffa* role here in Hungary, or if I could play Norina or Susanna, since I really like to act!

– **On the other hand, you're playing Violetta Valéry for the third time. And of your portrayal of Daphne, you stated that the character's purity and naivety appeal to you. We can't really ascribe naiveté to Violetta, and calling her pure in the everyday sense is quite a stretch.**

– She's one of the most feminine figures in opera! I love her! One of the biggest professional challenges is to find dissimilar characters somewhere in myself. In truth, one has to always absorb and empathise with a character's world, era and psychological states in order to make a role a

success. I have *Porgy and Bess* coming up, and knowing the productions that are in vogue, I clearly won't be hunched over in the cotton field, but instead will have to imagine and live in some similar social environment. I'm afraid that even these days, many people feel their lives are this way, and this is what has to be created in the case of *La traviata* as well.

– **Although you're afraid of being typecast, your repertoire is rather broad.**

– That's why it's good to roam among different styles and eras: because the constant challenges make my career truly exciting for me. I wouldn't enjoy it if I had five characters that I had to perform around the world. I feel I have more ambition than that! I adore Strauss, and *Daphne* was a highly significant and incredibly concentrated moment in my life, but if I had to sing it every day, it wouldn't have the same meaning. My creative existence is currently a beautiful and

inspiring chaos and a very rich process of self-discovery.

– **You don't think about the future or plan out your career?**

– I prefer to take things as they come. I make decisions every day, but not over the long term. There are roles I dream about, of course, such as Salome, but right now I feel this is completely out of reach, so I prefer to listen to my body to see when it doesn't like something. Since this changes with time, as I do myself, my current decisions are based in the present.

– **In other words, it's only the happiness that comes from singing that is important?**

– Absolutely! As long as I feel that I can give both myself and the audience something of lasting value, then my place is on the stage. But if the time ever comes when I'm only singing for its own sake, then I'll have to quit. Right now, though, I can't really imagine this. ○

Fizesszen elő lapunkra hangolva



A Heti Válasz hétről hétre **információt, műveltséget és érveket** ad olvasóinak.

Fizessen elő lapunkra,
és legyen tagja a Heti Válasz hűségklubjának!

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Raise the curtain!

SEASON OPENER, SARASTRO, KRISZTIAN CSER | Photo by Attila Nagy

The season opener is linked to the rest of the Opera's season like the overture to one of Mozart's operas. This diverse event giving a taste of the feeling and atmosphere of the coming months begs the question: why is it necessary for the start of the season to be given its own structure? Viktória Filip

General Director Szilveszter Ókovács put it this way: "The Opera has long been vocal about its aim of opening its doors, going out into the streets to address the masses and convert the prestige genres of opera and ballet into popular favourites. "To demonstrate both the relevance of this and the Opera's competitiveness and alignment with international trends, it's sufficient to take a look at the season openers of the biggest international opera houses and their techniques for attracting audiences. The Wiener Staatsoper, for example, projects se-

lected opera and ballet performances on a 50 m² screen fixed to the building during the months of April, May, June and September. We have something similar in Budapest – in addition to the season opener, two complete performances – *Hunyadi László* and *Swan Lake* – as well as various opera films, will be shown on a giant LED wall erected during the Car Free Weekend on September 17-18.

In Milan, September starts with young people. The joint production of *Die Zauberflöte* by La Scala and the

Accademia di Canto, conducted by Hungary's own Adam Fischer, features the finest young singers. The first premiere on Andrásy Avenue also lets the audience see how young talents are developing. Samu Gryllus's 2013 *a capella* work, *Two Women*, commissioned by the International Society for Contemporary Music and the Wiener Jeunesse Kammerchor, is being brought to life by the soloists from the Moltopera company. Its plot is taken from Zoltán András Bán's novella about an opera house score archivist with a sideline as a prompter. In New York, the premiere of *Tristan und Isolde* is being preceded by broadcasts by Met Opera Radio. The HSO is not lacking here, either, since it launched its own radio service in January. Featuring opera and ballet music 24 hours a day, OpeRadio plays records



Photo by Attila Nagy



SEASON OPENER, LEANDER MARCELL BAKONYI | Photo by Attila Nagy

and its own audio recordings, and in future will broadcast the *Questions*, *Questions* series of expert discussions on premieres, live from the Opera House and Erkel Theatre.

The season opener has also put great emphasis on electronic media from the start. At the first one in 2013, the premiere of *Falstaff* was preceded by a spectacular open-air pageant, which started the tradition of extending enjoyment of the performance beyond the lucky ones in the auditorium to 1200 visitors outside the building, via a projection screen, as well as to numerous others via broadcast video and radio. The most novel and spectacular moment of the programme is the procession of singers returning from the summer break. At first, they made their journal to the Opera by bicycle, but after the inclement weather surround the 2014 premiere of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, 2015's event featured the opera's artists arriving for the premiere of *Otello* in waterproof classic cars and wearing costumes from the season's repertoire pieces. The still new tradition will continue this year on September 24, with afternoon performances of three one-act comic operas (Menotti's *The Telephone*

and two Donizetti masterpieces: *I pazzi per progetto* and *Il campanello*) on the Sphinx Terrace and addresses from Dr Zsófia Hassay, mayor of Budapest's District 6, and General Director Szilveszter Ókovács. These will be followed by the ballet *Between the Balance* performed by the MNB's dancers, the smiling singers arriving in class cars, and the screening of Géza M. Tóth's film *Opera130 – the Palace on the Avenue*. A key part remains the live screening the television and radio

simulcast of the premiere of *La traviata*, directed by Ferenc Anger and conducted by Pinchas Steinberg. Closing the more than eight hours of artistic enjoyment will be a video installation conceived by Mária Simonffy. Whereas in the past, the season opened with the National Anthem and announcements from meetings among the Opera's staff along with the opening address, now the September event offers new traditions in a compact experience featuring all of the Opera's main activities. ○



SEASON OPENER, PAPA GÉZA, ESZTER ZAVAROS | Photo by Attila Nagy

Conflict the curtain!



How are a man and a woman connected to each other? Who leaves the trodden path for the untrodden one? Who are we? Creative beings in divine form or apostates, fallen angels? With pieces from two renowned choreographers, Jiří Kylián and Johan Inger, the HNB seeks the answers to life's most profound questions at the Erkel Theatre this autumn.

Anna Braun

Those Hungarian audience members with an interest in modern ballet have now mostly had the chance to see the pieces by Czech choreographer Jiří Kylián in the repertoire. Indeed, the artist's work is so important for Budapest, that in May of 2015, the Opera presented him with the Seregi Award in May 2015, recognising his impact on the world of dance. In late September and early October, his works *Falling Angels* and *Sarabande* will be presented once again. Although Johan Inger's compositions have been less frequent visitors to the Hungarian stage, *Walking Mad* has already given a taste of the Swedish choreographer's unique and exciting style. Choosing the works involves a special piquancy, for it was Kylián who mentored Inger as a choreographer.

The late '80s. The talented, young dancer had been with the Swedish Royal Ballet in Stockholm for five years, and as a soloist for one, when he encounters the world of Kylián. There was no question of remaining: awed by the greatness of the Czech's works, he immediately decided to sign with the Nederlands Dans Theater in order work with him. The opportunity came in 1990, and he remained there as a dancer until 2002. During this time, Kylián discovered Inger's creative talent and in 1995 asked him to create a cho-

reography to stage with the younger generation in NDT II. With his *Mellantid*, Inger immediately established his place in contemporary ballet history, and his path was set: he would follow in the footsteps of the Czech master. During the early 2000s, he was a member of the Cullberg Ballet, but in 2009 returned to the NDT to work as a co-choreographer, while also visiting the world's major companies as a guest choreographer. In Switzerland in September of 2011, he conceived his masterpiece *Rain Dogs* to the music of Tom Waits.

"It starts to rain. A dog, curious and self-confident. With its sense of smell, moves beyond its usual boundaries, discovering what lives far away. He suddenly can't find his way back, the rain has washed away ever trace." This metaphor is the starting point of Inger's piece. In this strange world of blurry borders, Inger explores the profundities of connections and identities, and the dynamic of male-female relationships. He dissects systems that are integral components, even organising principals, of our lives, those that we are all compelled to relate to, either by adapting to them or resisting.

Tom Waits's 1985 ninth album, *Rain Dogs*, about the dispossessed of New York City, is the backbone and background of Inger's choreography. This densely

textured, suggestive music forms the basis for the stand-alone scenes, which cling to each other through movement, sometimes provoking a sense of irony, and sometimes the viewer's sympathy. This world, sometimes graceful and soft, other times grotesque, paints a portrait of men and women, and the countless colours and ironies of their relationships, with the gender roles wearable like costumes and interchangeable like a skirt and trousers, and where eventually everyone takes off the extraneous pieces and remains there, dressed in their own souls.

Inger's aim was nothing less than to express, through the language of dance and movement, the essence of what it means to be a person. *Rain Dogs* is a highly complex work – and at the same time an utterly simple one. In the routines of the most profoundly quotidian appears the human "condition" that Inger caricatures so easily, while its message, deep in parody and irony, is true. As if there a were microscope that can peer deep in the soul positioned over a man and a woman, which lovingly, yet with relentless insight, examines them. The result, this strange diagnosis, is unexpectedly powerful and unpredictable, despite the fact that we all live in the same world. It's just that Inger has the courage to point out how we do this. o

Love

holding up a mirror to society

The tension between external expectations and individual happiness are at the heart of the new production of *La traviata*. The fresh staging conceived by Artistic Director Ferenc Anger, with sets and costumes by Gergely Zöldy Z was first presented at a pre-premiere on Margaret Island in June and will now run at the Opera House from 24 September.

Zoltán Zsiray-Rummer

A few years ago, András Békés's *La traviata* was retired after nearly 30 years. When a replacement like this is made, the frequently heard doubts about how the Hungarian audience is somewhat conservative and not particularly fond of new productions or "modernisation" always arise. "Actually, we insist on the core of the pieces, on the plot, and I am the same way. Of course, in the case of the most popular operas, even less susceptible viewers have memories and stereotypical approaches in their minds. The reason why *La traviata* is so popular is because it allows many approaches, and this gives great freedom to both the director and the performers," says Ferenc Anger. His view is that the work speaks about human relationships and the predicament of Violetta in such a coherent, honest and powerfully self-evident way, both musically and dramaturgically, that it is always a relevant subject. "The audience is hungry for this sincerity and its depiction on stage," he adds.

The creative team aims to depict the mystery of relationships, focusing on Violetta and her connection with her environment, her social milieu. The new production also tries to stress how this woman, formerly surrounded by great adoration but now terminally ill, reassesses her relationships with those around her. Ferenc Anger thinks that the fundamental question in this opera is what the correlation between the society and the individual is: how one attempts to meet expectations. The main dilemma is really the self-definition shown to the external world, which can be portrayed sensitively mainly in the relationship between the two lovers, holding up a mirror to society.

Regarding the problem of modernisation, the director stresses that "Verdi himself set what was already an old story into his own era. So we still have to find the relevance today. Of course, this doesn't mean that the letter here will be an email or SMS." In his concept, the story will appear to be in a universal medium, neither fully historicised nor fully modernised,

creating a "functional timelessness" in the sets and the costumes. As he points out, the story is surrounded by neutral spaces, and the clothes are slightly modern in design: cocktail apparel and suits in keeping with the elegance of the upper crust. Musically, however, it follows tradition, and is played with the usual small number of tiny cuts. The principal roles are sung by Erika Miklósa and Péter Balczó, with Polina Pasztircsák and Attila Fekete in the other cast, with the other roles filled by Alexandru Agache, Zoltán Kelemen, Krisztina Simon, Melinda Heiter, Kornélia Bakos and Erika Markovics.

When asked how long the new production is likely to remain in the repertoire, Anger says that as long as it is able to deliver a living message, it will remain on the programme. "The acceptance of a staging always depends on the audience, that is on the changing values observed in society and the the relationship to the production. No production is eternal, only the pieces themselves can be eternal. ◦

The Spinning Room,

in a Polish style with an Italian set



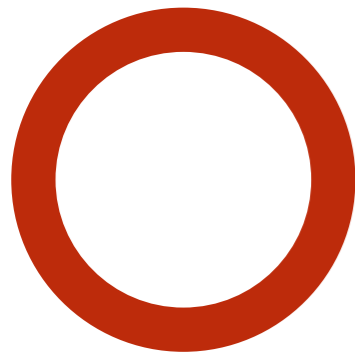
LUIGI SCOGLIO'S SET DESIGNS



LUIGI SCOGLIO'S SET DESIGNS

Can it be true that when it comes to staging a now-classic but thoroughly Hungarian work, the Hungarian perspective is no longer sufficient? How does a world-famous Polish director view us Hungarians through the lens of Kodály's classic musical drama? The similar spirits, legendary love of justice and common histories of the two peoples ensure an accurate interpretation of the work, while the distance of an outside pair of eyes also promises fresh and novel ideas.

Mátyás Bolya



Michał Znaniecki's assignment was not an easy one. It is difficult to define the genre of *The Spinning Room*: Kodály truly created a new style when his series of folk song arrangements expanded into a one-act music drama. *Hungarian folk scenes from Transylvania*, the composer wrote on the score, whereas some of the enthusiastic critics dubbed it a dramatic heroic poem, others an

opera-length ballad. Can we consider the work an opera at all? The prose dialogues familiar from *Háry János* are here absent: the plot linking together the closed musical numbers – in a departure from the genre of opera – emerges not in recitatives, but in orchestral passages and on-stage pantomime.

With numerous awards and more than two hundred productions to his name, Znaniecki courageously took on the subject with ideas built from his theatrical experience all over Europe. In his preparations, the Polish artists examined *The Spinning Room* from several angles, immediately seeking universal Hungarian gestures and motifs in the composition. With help from Hungarian colleagues, he analysed the country's folklore – with special attention to folk music, traditions, costumes and

decorative art, as well as the life and work of Zoltán Kodály.

He also stressed getting to know the era in which the great artist lived and worked, as well as the history of Transylvania and Hungary from the start of the 20th century up to the regime change.

The series of episodes unfolding in a Székely spinning house are moved along by general human experiences: the forced separation and reunification of two lovers, the discovery of a wealthy bachelor's intrigue. The closed life of the rural community is ruled by its own laws linked the natural rhythm of the year. The external (government) control above the village's own organisation structure is symbolised by the gendarmes. Staging the episodes that make up

the plot poses a true challenge for any director. The words to the folk songs linked together in the libretto allow for multiple interpretations, and shrouds certain passages in the murkiness of its ballads.

Michał Znaniecki's concept was to establish two different levels – spatial and chronological – on the stage. On the simple and darker colours of the proscenium, the piece plays out chronologically, in real time. When the curtain rises, however, episodes interpretable as moments from the *Lady of the House's* formerly happy life come to life in vivid and lively scenes on the stage itself, colourful and tableau-like compared to the sombre reality on the proscenium. The contrast between the two dramatic spaces is further nuanced by the set and the costumes, and the

designers – breaking with tradition – avoided an overly specific depiction of the decorative folk art elements, instead following the duality of the director's concept of the space. In developing the visual environment, Italian set designer Luigi Scoglio and Polish costume designer Magdalena Dabrowska assisted the director. Scoglio and Znaniecki have collaborated together fruitfully on many successful productions since 1999.

The final result is a production that is novel visually and in its director's vision and also very exciting, and which does not cut itself off from the work's roots and original ideas, but instead enriches this timeless treasure of Hungarian culture with a new, uniquely European perspective. ◻

A brave baritone

○ SONG RECITAL, 2014 | Photo by Péter Rákossy

Evocative stage presence, acrobatic movement and exemplary enunciation: these are all used to describe the singer from Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) who is equally at home in the worlds of opera, song and oratorios. Gyula Orendt started his international career at the Wiener Volksoper, and has been a respected soloist at the Berliner Staatsoper since 2011. An infrequent opportunity to hear one of the most talented Hungarian singers perform in Budapest comes on 19 September.

Rita Szentgyörgyi

– To what extent can your concert at the Erkel Theatre be considered a continuation of the Song Recitals on Song Street series?

– It's not only a continuation, but a big step forward as well, since the Erkel is capable of accommodating many times more attendees than the Opera House's Bertalan Székely Hall, where the series was held. And this is important, because these days songs are pushed more and more to the side, and so we have to use all available

means to get the audience to know and love this genre.

– What's the concept behind the concert?

– One doesn't always need a specific idea. *Dichterliebe* and Kodály's *Two Songs* were the inspired choice of General Director Szilveszter Ókovács, while Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* is my favourite, and I think it fits perfectly into the melancholy world of Schumann and Kodály. It's a

great honour for me to have Hartmut Höll accompanying me on piano at a recital that is also being filmed.

– Does performing songs require a different approach or technical skills from singing an operatic role?

– Actually, no, because both demand the same style of singing and the same understanding of the text and melody. There is a rich musical world in the intimate and subtle expression, that – in my opinion – is best shown



○ LE NOZZE DI FIGARO, POLINA PASZTIRCSÁK | Photos by Szilvia Csibi

in a song, or rather a kind of artistic freedom that the singer can only truly exercise in this repertoire.

– Here in Hungary, we only get to see you rarely, and meanwhile you get leading roles in Vienna, Berlin, Munich and London. What is the reason for this, in your view?

– Aside from the fact that there are relatively few opportunities in Hungary to present a song recital or portray one of the more serious characters, the biggest reason is in the timing of the invitations. My calendar is usually full for the next two or three years. Unfortunately, this kind of advance planning isn't usual here in Hungary, but as the September event shows, there are always happy exceptions.

– Along with your outstanding vocal gifts, your qualities as a performer and superb sense of movement have all made you one of the

most celebrated young baritones. What do you consider the first important juncture in your career?

– Singing Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* was a huge step for me, and not just because of the importance of the character, but because for me it was more of an acting challenge than a vocal one. It was a great pleasure for me to perform this exciting assignment on the stage of the Berliner Staatsoper in 2011. Also, my life's dream was singing the title role in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, which I debuted at the Opéra national de Lorraine in 2014...

– ...of which one critic wrote, "A Hungarian star is shining in the Baroque sky of singing."

– That's right! I appreciate all positive feedback, but I have to say that even though I love Renaissance and Baroque music, and it's a pleasure to work with this repertoire, it unfortunately offers relatively few opportunities for a high lyric baritone.

– You mean there are no more challenges for you in this area?

– There might still be a surprise left in French Baroque music, but for the time being I don't have anything specific to wish for. Instead I'm concentrating on my coming jobs, of which there are fortunately plenty. This year I'll be singing Count Almaviva in *Figaro* in both Düsseldorf and Barcelona. In 2017, I'll be portraying Zurga in *Les pêcheurs de perles*, at the Berliner Staatsoper, with Daniel Barenboim conducting. During the 2018/19 season, I'll be appearing at Covent Garden in the world premiere of an opera that the ROH commissioned George Benjamin and Martin Crimp to write, which will later also be presented in Hamburg, Paris and Lyon. In Zurich, I'll sing Thésée in Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie*. The jobs always find me, and I'm happy to get them! ○

Knowing tenors

József Simándy and Jonas Kaufmann – on September 25 these two uniquely magnetic names will appear side by side. The universal tenor of our era will be paying tribute to the 20th century Hungarian singer and cult figure on the centenary of his predecessor's birth.

Ferenc László

Stale stereotypes and mischievous prejudices: for those blessed with the highest male singing voices, these come along with the adulation. Although for several centuries, they've regularly received the catchiest melodies, they also sometimes find themselves at the receiving end of jokes, whether about being fat or presumed stupidity. However, there are so many obvious "exceptions", that even the

most dedicated mockers should think twice. Intelligent and good looking singers purposefully building their careers and by no means selfish – singers like József Simándy (1916-1997) was. And like the pride of Germany and perhaps the world's favourite living opera singer, 47-year-old Jonas Kaufmann.

An imposing stage presence and a powerfully charismatic per-

sonality regardless of role, as well as a multi-facetedness that defies typecasting: upon reflection, these characteristics link Kaufmann to Simándy. For even if the Hungarian singer is collectively remembered as *Bánk bán*, we know well that the repertoire of the auto mechanic who became an epochal singer was not simply broad, but that he proved optimal in roles that were completely different from each other.

© JÓZSEF SIMÁNDY | Source: Opera Archives
© JONAS KAUFMANN | Photo by Attila Nagy

The silvery voiced Lohengrin who was so celebrated in Budapest in 1948 that even Otto Klemperer lost his – already frequently misplaced – sang-froid. His Don José was already overcome by passion during *La fleur que tu m'avais jetée*, his naively passionate Turiddu in *Cavalleria rusticana*, his Riccardo, full of princely generosity in *Un ballo in maschera* – all these memorable portrayals were carved solely from Simándy's own self. Just as the sincerity and richness of his being, of his powerful stage personality were shown in the operetta melodies and the classic old Hungarian songs that are still frequently requested on radio programmes.

Most of the opera roles above have also been performed by Kaufmann, with his sensitive musicality and exemplary acting ability. His Lohengrin is familiar from several

productions, although he can no more be described (or simplified) as a typical Wagnerian singer than he can as a specialist in Verdi or Puccini, and the same is true of his complex musical talent. And his performing abilities extend beyond the realm of opera, as he showed brilliantly earlier this year in his concert of songs by Mahler, Strauss and Britten.

A clever tenor is not selfish, but always watches out for himself and is able to look inwardly – this is something Simándy knew well and Kaufmann – who would rather back out of one or more concerts rather than cause disappointment – knows now. "Always sing on the interest of the voice, never from the capital," as the great Beniamino Gigli said, and past the mental and technical crisis of his early career, Kaufmann also follows this practice. Just as Simándy did,

preserving his instrument's brightness and power until a ripe old age.

Kaufmann has always made Munich the regular base of his career and artistic activity, and the city's Staatsoper also played a major role in Simándy career. Ferenc Fricsay's admiration and well-placed confidence in him meant that he would be a frequent guest there between 1956 and 1960. In 1957, the audience of the Wiener Staatsoper also got to applaud the Hungarian Don José, and even if a global career wasn't in the cards for him, this singer whose voice was more suited to German than for Italian was for decades a welcome guest across the German-speaking world.

In the autumn, another virtual connection will be created between the two legendary vocalists, this time in Budapest.



© SIMON BOCCANEGRA, JÓZSEF SIMÁNDY AND MAGDA RIGÓ
HSC Archives



© MARTON GÁLA, 2013 - JONAS KAUFMANN AND EVA MARTON
Photo by Péter Herman



○ JÓZSEF SIMÁNDY ON HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY | Photo: Opera Archives



○ MARTON GALA RECEPTION, 2013 - SZILVESZTER ÓKOVÁCS, JONAS KAUFMANN AND ÉVA MARTON | Photo by Péter Herman

On the afternoon of 25 September, a host of Hungarian tenors will pay homage in song to the memory of Simándy, born 100 years ago. The order will be strictly alphabetical, with Péter Balczó, Szabolcs Brickner, Attila Fekete, István Horváth, István Kovácsné, Boldizsár László, Zoltán Nyári and Adorján Pataki taking the stage at this gala concert. And alongside these eight Hungarian successors will be Jonas Kaufmann too, the Opera's guest for the second time after his appearance

at Éva Marton's gala concert in 2013. And to make the event even more special, appearing alongside Kaufmann and the eight Hungarian minstrels will be József Simándy himself. Through cutting-edge imaging technology, the 3D figure of the eternal Bánk bán will return as alive as if he were singing that aria by Erkel that, no matter how many wonderful singers we've heard sing it (to mention Plácido Domingo, for one), it will always be Simándy's voice that we hear in our minds.

One concert on 25 September will feature two beloved singers: the pride of our national heritage and an international star of our own era. Although at such a time, the audience naturally feels the urge to make useful and pointless comparisons, we should avoid this and instead enjoy this literally unrepeatable event. ○

The best of the Éva Marton Singing Competition in the leading role

THE HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA CONGRATULATES THE ARTIST ON BEING DECORATED WITH THE ORDER OF SAINT STEPHEN

The climax of five exciting days of competition takes place on 25 September with the awards ceremony gala of the Second International Éva Marton Singing Competition, which the Ferenc Liszt Music Academy, organiser of the contest, will again hold in the Hungarian State Opera House with viewers welcome to attend.

Based on the judgement of the preliminary jury headed by Éva Marton herself, around 50 singers will receive the chance to prove their mettle at the music challenge with a total purse of EUR 42,000 between 19 and 25 September 2016 – which will also determine who appears at the gala. "The submitted materials enabled us to get to know many beautiful voices and highly exacting and musical young artists. The competitors chosen from more than one hundred applicants constitute a quite strong field, and there are outstanding examples in every vocal type," says Éva Marton, professor emerita at the Liszt Academy, of those who made it to the next round.

Announced in January 2016, the competition allowed on-line entrants (women aged 18-32, and men aged 18-35) to send a video recording freely selected from the Baroque period, and another from any other period. More than 20 nationalities were represented at the competition, with eight Hungarians, representatives from more than ten European countries, and a dozen Russian singers and young talent from Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China, Korea and the USA testing their skill with one of Liszt's songs and seven arias. The rounds took place publicly, and through live internet broadcasting, the most exciting moments from the music academy could be seen all over the world.

Invited to serve on the jury along with the chairwoman were such luminaries of the Hungarian and international opera world as Miguel Lerín, one of the most influential managers in European opera life, Vittorio Terranova, artistic director of the Ferruccio Tagliavini Opera Competition, Christina Scheppelmann, artistic director of Barcelona's Teatro Liceu, Sung Bin Kim, dean of the faculty of music at South Korea's Daeshin University, Anatoli Goussev, professor of La Scuola Musicale in Foro Buonaparte di Milano, Honghai Ma, professor at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, as well as Andrea Meláth, head of the voice department at the Ferenc Liszt Music Academy and Szilveszter Ókovács, general director of the HSO.

"Compared to the 2014 event, the standard had risen noticeably, it was clear that weaker candidates did not even submit applications this year," adds Marton. "The other two members of the preliminary jury, conductor Balázs Kocsár, chief music director of the HSO, and Kossuth Award-winning opera singer and music academy professor Atilla Kiss B. and I agreed that the applicants were remarkably prepared, and we had no doubt that we could expect a world-class competition. This is a great pleasure for me, proving that we had not erred when we established the competition." ○

“You have to experiment”

The lovely human voice is still a very important thing, and there are professional recognitions to confirm this. This year, it was Klára Kolonits who took home the Székely Plaque. She also recently released her compilation album *Bel Canto Reloaded*. Singing material from the album, the outstanding soprano will give a taste of the classic Italian singing style on October 16 at the Erkel Theatre. *Levente Szabó Z.*

○ I CAPULETI E I MONTECCHI | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ BÁNK BÁN | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ DIE FLEDERMAUS | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ SONG RECITAL | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

– To me, the title of the CD and the concert seems to indicate that “bel canto” has receded into the background a little, and it’s worth rediscovering it.

– That’s exactly what the situation is. The Hungarian State Opera is a repertoire theatre that operates according to German traditions. Although it’s true that under the direction of Ferenc Erkel, bel canto operas were staged here too very early on, afterwards works by Verdi, Puccini and Wagner came to dominate. In spite of the fact that individual works are performed from time to time, it’s primarily *Lelisir d’amore* and *Don Pasquale* that have remained popular. Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* has not been presented regularly since 2003, which is why my most

anticipated production of the season is Máté Szabó’s November premiere of this opera. When I started to discover these arias and roles for myself, I was surprised to see that my abilities show themselves to the greatest advantage in this repertoire. Later on, thanks to receiving the title of Chamber Singer from the Opera, I was able to afford to make the album, and if I can, I’d like to popularise this body of music with concert-format performances.

– You appear in contemporary oratorios, album release concerts, concert-format performances and, naturally, classical opera productions. Is an opera singer constrained by genre?

– Only by the performing art itself. I can present anything that my abil-

ities steer me toward. I can sing jazz or contemporary music, crossover, classical arias, songs, oratorios or entire opera performances. The most important thing is for me to come out on stage without anything being open to doubt, professionally speaking, and for any production I’m in to have a lasting human and musical message. Opera – if I do it well – is a perfectly suitable medium for portraying basic human emotions and predicaments, while the music expands the sense of time, giving an impact even more profound than a spoken drama. While it is always essential for the voice to be convincing, these days there is more emphasis on visuals: dramatic priorities are different.

– Since it’s come up, I saw a version of *Pagliacci* where the director divided the stage vertically: as the action took place down below, up above a massive screen showed the performers from up close, including one who weren’t singing.

– Which is no problem at all, if it helps the director in his intention of improving the production by having the performers moving and thinking in character every second. Acting is also comprised of numerous technical elements: it’s not only the words that have meaning, since the body is also speaking at the same time. This is why it’s easy to get me interested in extreme techniques, provided that it succeeds in contributing genuine value to a piece. In these cases, I’ll sing

standing up, sitting, lying down, dancing, you name it. I know that these days there is a lot of criticism levelled at so-called modern productions, but I think the work of Nadine Duffaut, Pál Göttinger, Artur Szöcs and Róbert Alföldi is all persuasively powerful. Of course, there is also room for new experimentation that might not pay off at first, but you never know how the genre is going to be fertilised. You have to experiment, and eventually, I think, it all comes together and fuses.

– The question is, is there a future for this genre?

– Absolutely there is. One of the Opera’s most successful series is the OperaAdventure programme. The music affects the children with elemental

force, if they are not fed it with instructions to just go into the auditorium, sit down nicely and properly and be quiet and listen to the music. My conductor husband, Dányiel Dinyés, and I also run an opera introduction series at the Katona József Theatre, and later I see a lot of the attendees at performances, because they fall in love with the genre. At the same time, the world is not heading in a direction where singers can relax or look to the future without trepidation. I’m not counting on a long career. On the other hand, winning the HSO’s Chamber Singer title, the Székely Plaque and having the Opera enable me to do the *Bel Canto Reloaded* programme at the Erkel, all of these give me a kind of feeling of confidence. ○



Lad's dance

On 26 September, the Erkel Theatre audience will get to celebrate Kossuth Prize-winning dancer and choreographer Zoltán Zsuráfszky. *Zsura60 – Dance Mosaic from the Life of a Choreographer* will be the title of this milestone birthday programme, which will bring the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble to visit Budapest's biggest theatre.

Judit Várkonyi

Thirty years ago I got to see him hold a rehearsal. He was loud, forceful and confident and clearly dictated the pace. During our interview, he has tight control of the time: he's leading. He has the choreography in his head, and knows what he wants to disclose, and won't answer more personal questions, as if he himself were not important, only what he does is. Even when he does reflect, he always says "we": our family. Even outside of his professional life, he is not important: only those for whom he is responsible.

He wouldn't have celebrated his 60th birthday on his own, but since his co-creator and wife, Zsuzsa Vincze, and colleague Jolán Török planned the anniversary programme, he did not protest – this evening is the occasion for him to give a summary of the decades spent in the profession. It's true, adds the dancer, in the genre of ballet alone he could claim an entire career by the time he was 50.

It is said of Zoltán Zsuráfszky that he has received every possible honour, and as a dancer, choreographer and artistic director has been recognised for his nurturing and passing on of Hungarian folk dance. He has also done intense collection work, and his materials are archived in the Hungarian Academy of Science. "Dance researcher György Martin had a great influence on me and showed me the way forward. I collected Polish and Gypsy dances, and also travelled to different regions of Transylvania. In 1980, I shot a sound film in Gyimes,

which was in itself unusual, considering the enormous equipment used then, which we also had to smuggle out past the Securitate, conducting our work amidst constant atrocities." He says it's still worth doing this, not just for professional reasons, but for the human relationships, and what's most important: the pure sources can still be reached.

Along with collecting, teaching has been at least as important as creating in his career; teaching and raising dancers up to the highest level: stressed along with developing ensembles, which ranged from developing experience with the grant system, to planning programmes, management and organisation to arranging tours.

Among all these wide-ranging activities, it was still creative work that gets him most excited, even developing the minor pieces in programmes of several choreographers. For example, at the WWI production, he contributed the Švejk segments, with images and literary references, reviewing the historical background in order for the steps to fit the dramaturgy and visual style which down to the tiniest details – clothing and weapons – created a complex unity.

The 20 pairs also work in this spirit, with a deep and thorough understanding of the styles of the different regions. "At first I thought that dialectic-type programmes were too technical for the audience, but it turned out that the unity of

costumes, music and dance can captivate anyone," he says. This is why applied dance is important for teaching children and for dance houses as a recreational programme. He took an active part when the movement started, and is now pleased to see countless professionals working in it worldwide: the Hungarian model is very famous, and folk dance is not in danger. It is stronger than globalisation. While dance may be a professional calling, it is also primarily an ancient pleasurable experience.

He gratefully mentions Sándor Tímár, Zoltán Kallós, Bertalan Andrásfalvi, Katalin Györgyfalvai and György Martin, as a student of whose he was able to take on a trailblazing role in the "internal revolution" in the reformation of the Hungarian folk dance scene. He was a 13-year-old growing up in the small town of Szikszó when he applied to the Ballet Institute. "I got in, and survived my own medium: Budapest artistic life," he says. "And still very young, I set the goal of founding my own ensemble." In 1985 he was named dancer of the year, and could have been satisfied with this career, but he wanted more. At the head of the Budapest Dance Ensemble, he struggled to develop its infrastructure before it merged into the Honvéd Dance Theatre, becoming the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble with him as artistic director. ○

70 years at the Opera

○ HUNYADI LÁSZLÓ, 2014 | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

To be popular or a star in today's art world does not necessarily entail recognition based on knowledge and achievement. And yet, there are those young and aspiring musicians who will become guiding lights just like those artists who for decades have been known, honoured, and spoken of with respect both within the profession and by the audience.

Szilvia Becze

Popularity is always a fleeting and certainly not a sustaining feeling, but it still feels good, because I truly feel that it is coupled with affection," says Ádám Medveczky. "It wasn't just after the conducting competition that it was this way, but now too. Wherever I go, I get along very well with people." Many doors opened suddenly for this artist when in 1974, at age 33, he won second prize in Hungarian Tele-

vision's first International Conducting Competition. And while that is a very young age for a conductor, and such a triumph could cause unnecessary immodesty, it can also, as in this case, make a young conductor even more determined and dedicated. A conductor's career starts with an extraordinarily large number of obstacles, and a beginner often hardly dares to speak on the podium. "The

wonderful György Ferenczy was my piano teacher, and he once quoted Liszt, who said that the performer shouldn't stand before the audience like a condemned prisoner before his judges, but like a priest before his congregation. Since I am a person of deep faith, this meant a great deal to me. Another sentence, this one from Saint Francis of Assisi, has also accompanied me on my career:

"What are we if not God's minstrels and musicians, there to fill hearts with spiritual joy?"

A true conductor – though a leader – must not let feelings of power go to his head. One important period in Ádám Medveczky's life not only helped him avoid the pitfalls of megalomania, but also, when he stepped up onto the conductor's podium, to already understand how a symphonic ensemble works, since for many years he had watched and listened as a percussionist.

"One of the core schools of my life was the nine years I spent with the Hungarian State Concert Orchestra, and the years as an auxiliary musician before that. I grew familiar with the lives of orchestras, how their psyches work, what the members' likes and dislikes are. This is also where I got the inspiration to give conducting a serious try."

The openness to music and the love of opera date to childhood. The world-famous alto Mária Basilides was his aunt, while his own mother, Mária Érsek was considered one of the most important répétiteurs of the great era of Simándy, Klemperer and Failoni. She – without a kindergarten and having lost her husband at a young age – when working in the beautiful building on Andrassy Avenue, would take her little son with her, sit him in one of the boxes and tell him to stay put until she came for him. The little boy, however, was amazed by the building and the music there, so it never occurred to him to go anywhere else. "This building is the most beautiful in Europe, in the world! I was toddling on the stairs 70 years ago and know every nook and cranny! For me, it truly

was a second home. Regimes and directors came and went, but for me the Opera never changed, and my feelings have not faded. Even today, retired, I get 15-20 performances a year and I try to do my job, and I'm always joyful to come in.

The other meaning of the opera is the genre itself. Even though I'm happy to conduct orchestral concerts, oratorios, and of course teaching is extremely important, for me opera entails artistic perfection, since this is where all the branches of the arts are present: music, the voice, mime, and the fine arts with sets and costumes. This is a marvellous world which I never could nor wished to escape. I'm always honoured to be invited to Hungary's other theatres, and I've also conducted opera abroad, but my main artistic oxygen is the Opera."

An honorary professor at the Liszt Academy, Medveczky has been sharing his knowledge and ever-increasing experience with the younger generation since 1974, and many Hungarian musicians think of him as their mentor. "I feel the importance of culture and the arts and the support for them have been getting stronger again. And rightly so, because the country is full of great young talents. When I am working with them or teaching them, I spare no effort to help advance their educations or careers. The work, the

This September, the Opera is launching a new series of publications titled *Eternal Members of the Opera*. The first volume salutes 75-year-old Kossuth Award-winning conductor Ádám Medveczky, a former chief music director at the Opera. The aim of the initiative is to eventually have a booklet, similar in format to the *Magazine* and with high-quality design, on each of the eternal members, which in time will form a unified series summarising the outstanding achievements of all of these exceptional artists. The honorific title of "eternal member" is awarded by the Opera to, as General Director Szilveszter Ókovács expressed it earlier, "to those members critical to the artistic prestige and image of the Opera House, and to those pillars upon which the company has always built, and will continue to build, both artistically and personally." The Opera has been able to count on Ádám Medveczky for nearly five decades, and we will be celebrating his jubilee with a new release of an older recording of *Hunyadi László*.

diligence and the technical skill are the most important thing, but even today, without inner faith or humility, one cannot be a true musician. If a wind player inhales, or a singer starts an aria, or if a conductor raises his hand, that all has to come from within. Humility and an artist's charisma – these are things that cannot be taught, but we must work towards them all our lives." ○

○ ERKEL OPENING GALA, 2013 | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



Photo by Benjamin Ealovega

Orchestra in the storm

Eight and a half decades old now, it arose from nothing in lightning speed, and started to dictate the tempo as fast as it appeared: how to play in a brilliant and grand fashion, that is, as befits world-fame, and England.

Benedek Várkonyi

It has never easy to see into the intricacies of Great Britain's symphonic ensembles. The London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra itself

– a true forest, with its trees often intertwined, the branches inseparable. The idea for the London Philharmonic Orchestra came in 1931, practically out of envy; five years earlier a concert had been given in London by the Berlin Philharmonic, which even then was one of the best in the world, and with Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting to boot. Everyone was impressed by the hard-to-match precision and sound. Also in the international forefront, back then too, were the Amsterdam Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under Willem Mengelberg and the New York Philharmonic under Arturo Toscanini, when people could already guess

that they were giants. London needed this kind of ensemble as well. Two "sirs" collaborated (one of them was knighted only decades later): Thomas Beecham and Malcolm Sargent. Many thought that Beecham had magical powers enabling him to attract musicians to himself and his team, because the BBC's ensemble practically sucked instrumentalists out of the musical ether. The first concert was in Queen's Hall in 1932, naturally with Beecham conducting. Looking back at the earlier greats, the clouds of worry dissipated, as England now had an orchestra of world-wide stature - as was demonstrated over the following years.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra has been among the best for decades. Critics have been enthusiastic for more than 80 years, and they love to express themselves with extravagance. For example, in March 1941 the *Musical Times* wrote, "The concert was an enormous success from every point of view. The concert hall was crowded; rapt attention filled the room. The conductor, the musicians and the audience were very spirited throughout." The editors were quite correct: after all it was not chance that brought Bruno Walter, Fritz Buscht and Igor Stravinsky to conduct there, along with a few Hungarians like George Szell and George Solti. However, misfortune arrived as well. In 1941, Queen's Hall was hit by a bomb; many instruments were destroyed. The audience, however, wasn't ungrateful; it donated money and instruments, so that not even right in the middle of the war would their favourite orchestra go silent. One year prior to this, on July 18, 1940, there was another concert in Queen's Hall made unique because it started with a speech from writer John Boynton Priestley's talk. Priestley,

Photo by Richard Cannon



who was also known for his radio commentaries, was passionate about music, which he didn't keep a secret even in his works, and was especially enthusiastic about the London Philharmonic. When, with the departure of Beecham, changes started to happen, and money was required, he, on this July 18 evening made a true Musical Proclamation. According to the participants that evening, he spoke so

candidly and simply that afterwards thousands of contributions large and small arrived (The details of the speech later also appeared in a film entitled *Fight for Music*.) And, unfortunately, history wasn't the only cause of difficulties. Basil Tschaikoff, an immigrant clarinetist from Eastern Europe, summarised the events: "We were approaching the main theme. When the first allegro melody returns, a strong emphasis is required. At this instant a shocking thing occurred: Beecham, with a sudden movement to give emphasis, waved his baton so hard that it pierced the palm of his left hand and came out on the other side. They immediately took him to the hospital, leaving behind the dumbfounded orchestra to await further developments. He returned in the afternoon with a bandaged hand in a sling but in good spirits and with his usual gushing personality." This was not only an "interesting event" in the history of the LPO, but it also demonstrated its founder's attitude: one has to have faith, not only in destiny but in art as well. And then the world can be enriched by a genuine orchestra. ○

Photo by Richard Cannon



“Look with the eyes of an angel,” suggests Mihály Kornis when hope is lost in an impenetrable sea of difficulties. The fact that in October 1956, even if not unstopably, the wheel of history turned around, is due to this perspective.

Viktória Filip

place for it there, then surely there must be a place for it somewhere else also. This thought for me is the source of the greatest hope. The key to progress.” – continues Kornis in his *Consolations*.

After the death of Joseph Stalin, the first attempt at reform, the election of Imre Nagy as prime minister (and his subsequent dismissal), the formation of the Petőfi Circle, the downfall of Mátyás Rákosi, the reinterment of László Rájk, on 23 October 1956, 200,000 citizens marched on the streets of Budapest, peacefully demonstrating for freedom, democracy and national independence. Following an acceleration of events, the unjustified arrival of the Russian troops with superior forces put an end to the rebellion and liberation struggle of barely two weeks' duration. Then, simultaneously with multifaceted reprisals surpassing all imagination, the Kádár era began. János Kádár governed until May 1988, when he was relieved of his post due to failing health. On 12 April 1989, however, appearing unexpectedly and without invitation at the MSZMP KB meeting, he delivered a visibly incoherent and muddled last speech, which was really a desperate attempt to justify himself. This is the

Divine spark

Although more prosaic reasons brought about the discontent, some kind of vision was also required for a nation that lost WWII, lived for nearly a decade under a total and despotic communist dictatorship that trampled rights, marginalized the needs of the population and tortured it with breakneck industrialization to imagine living under their own rule at all.

“How would you respond if I said: to imagine ourselves as something definitely more than we actually are in this moment, this possibility is the key to everything? That is, to suppose that something can happen that in this instant I can't even imagine, but somewhere there is a place for it. If nowhere else, in my imagination. And if there is a

OPERA

MAGYAR ÁLLAMI OPERAHÁZ
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1956

1956 PROGRAMMES AT THE OPERA

SEREGI / KHACHATURIAN ▶ SPARTACUS
14 October 2016, Opera House

RAUTAVAARA ▶ THE MINE (KAIVOS)
World staged premiere ▶ 21 October 2016, Opera House
Director ▶ Vilppu Kiljunen
Further dates ▶ 27, 29 October, 3 November 2016

JUDIT VARGA ▶ LOVE
World premiere ▶ 21 October 2016, Opera House
Director ▶ Vilppu Kiljunen
Further dates ▶ 27, 29 October, 3 November 2016

CZIFFRA 1956
BUDAPEST PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA CONCERT
22 October 2016, Erkel Theatre
Celebration speech delivered by János Áder, President of Hungary
Conductor ▶ Balázs Kocsár
Piano solo ▶ János Balázs
Concept ▶ Szilveszter Ókovács

GIPSY HEROES OF 1956
DIGITAL EXHIBITION AND SCREENING
22 October – 4 November 2016, Erkel Theatre

STATE GALA PERFORMANCE
23 October 2016, Opera House
Conductor ▶ Balázs Kocsár

REVOLUTION, BLACK AND WHITE
JÓZSEF FERENC ÁCS MEMORIAL EXHIBITION
23 October – 18 November 2016, Erkel Theatre

TAMÁS NOVÁK ▶ KÁDÁR'S LAST SPEECH
DOCUMENTARY PLAY
World premiere ▶ 23 October 2016, Opera House,
Underground Trapezium Room
Further dates ▶ 25 October – 4 November 2016

56 DROPS OF BLOOD
REVOLUTIONARY MUSICAL
23, 31 October 2016, Erkel Theatre
Director ▶ János Szikora

CITIZENS OF KASSA – FREEDOM GALA
GUEST PERFORMANCE IN KOŠICE
23 October 2016, Grand Theatre of Košice
Conductor ▶ Máté Hátori

UN DAY GALA CONCERT
24 October 2016, UN General Assembly Hall, New York
Concept ▶ Katalin Bogyay, Ambassador of Hungary to the United Nations
Conductor ▶ Kálmán Szennai

FRIGYES ANDRÁSSY ▶
WEEPING OF THE WINTER NIGHT
MUSICAL HISTORY LESSON ABOUT
THE REVENGE TAKEN AFTER 1956
3, 4 November 2016, Jókai Street Orchestral Centre
Conductor ▶ János Kovács
Director ▶ János Tóth

1956 REQUIEM
Verdi ▶ Requiem
4 November 2016, Erkel Theatre
Conductor ▶ Daniele Rustioni

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The program is supported by the Memorial Committee established for the 60th anniversary of the 1956 revolution and war of independence.

1956
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FREEDOM
FIRST



historical moment in Mihály Kornis's book *János Kádár's Last Speech* that historian and documentary filmmaker Tamás Novák puts on stage, or more precisely, down in the cellar.

For ten showings starting on 23 October, the 80-person basement under the Opera house's auditorium will host the historical fade-outs conceived by the general director and inspired by a previous Ókovács-Kornis television interview.

The sombre remembrance that put the 1956 revolution's 60th anniversary into focus, however, didn't start then. The Opera has reminded posterity before, in unusual ways, of what Arpád Göncz termed "our recent history's greatest purging storm, the creator of our Republic".

A day-long series of family production series *Tuned in to Freedom* (which invites those interested in such on 23 October), started in 2013, then on 4 November 2014, the anniversary of the suppression of the revolution, added the tradition of playing one of the revolution's iconic musical pieces, Beethoven's *Egmont Overture*. This will be no different this year either, and in the autumn of 2016, we are also looking forward to a deeply thoughtful program unmatched in richness.

On October 21, two world-premieres will be shown; the first from a promising, young Hungarian talent, the second from a contemporary and highly important Finnish composer. The opera, *The Mine*, is at least as fate-tossed as the human fates it treats. Einojuhani started to compose his work in 1957, which technically would have received first prize in an opera contest in Finland, but since it touched a politically sensitive theme in a country also living under Soviet pressure, re-

ceived only a letter of appreciation. In 1963, however, somewhat revised, (that is, with the flame of revolution turned lower), it could be performed on television. The composer of the story created from the mingling of the events of the Hungarian revolution and a mining accident didn't envision his work for the small screen, but for a large stage, where the reality of the crowd scenes could come through. The producer of the work's Budapest premiere will be Vilppu Kiljunen, who would like to create a realistic world that is recognizably connected to the Hungary of 1956. "The podium will be dark, with black the main colour. The only exception to this will be Ira, who as an outsider, wears a colourful costume. Radio broadcasts and the sounds of fighting will make the production

authentic," said the director. Kiljunen will also stage Judit Varga's first opera, *Love*, which will be played together with *The Mine* so that the evenings begin and end with the two metaphorical events in a theatrical context; the scenery on the stage will be built up and "fall apart" in front of our eyes.

The piece is the prize-winner of the Hungarian State Opera and the 1956 Memorial Committee's invited competition. Maria Schmidt, the committee's president, spoke about the relationship between the two institutions: "The 1956 memorial year is a collective commemoration for the nation, remembering the heroes and victims of 60 years ago. We work with anyone whose role involves remembering or reminding us of the revolution and the fight for

freedom. The Opera, with its own elevated cultural role with classical music and artistic productions, is a natural partner. The Opera provides an example: if the greatest national cultural institutions remember the revolution, that impacts every person and smaller cultural organization and institution too.

I consider it a great thing that on the 60th anniversary of 1956, art is being made. Minister Zoltán Balog therefore arranged for a contemporary opera to be linked to the '56 theme. With leadership from General Director Ókovács, we have completed a competition, and the winning piece will be shown in October. I hope this is only the first step on a road where contemporary music, and contemporary opera in particular, can profit

After the end of the piece, we will disassemble the set, so that the work comes to an end on a nearly empty stage, symbolising love's nakedness." Ends are also beginnings, and thus the day after the premieres, the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra brings to life the '56 legend of an already world-renowned pianist, György Cziffra, discussed in the next article. On 23 October, a musical will also come to the Erkel Theater, where *56 Drops of Blood*, directed by János Szikora, will play on a real stage instead of a film. And, as to where is home?

The Hungarians of Slovakia could probably tell many stories about this, so simultaneously with the performance of the musical, the Opera's representatives will give a gala programme at the National Theater in Kassa (Košice) with Ádám Medveczky conducting. The Hungarians living there rented the building of the theater for this occasion for a collective remembrance which is worthy of those victims who lost their lives during the fighting and the subsequent reprisals. The suffocation after the suppression of the Revolution is the theme of the singspiel that two married members of the Opera's chorus wrote. After the 2012 premiere of *Weeping of the Winter Night*, a revised version directed by János Tóth will be seen in the Orchestra Center on Jókai utca. Returning to history, we have little information about events from '56 pertaining to the Opera itself. It is not possible to know, for example, whether any written records were kept about the company's meeting at the end of October, when General Director Aladár Tóth stepped down from his post – there is no complete list of those artists who left the

In memoriam

On 27 July 2016, Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928–2016), one of the most important Finnish composers of our time, passed away. During the course of his long and productive artistic career, he created in various compositional styles. In his early years, he was the first Finn to study the technique of 12-tone serialism.

The music produced during the last decades of his life were Neo-Romantic in certain respects, and for subjects he often turned towards the mystical. Standing out among his numerous creations are orchestra composition *Cantus Arcticus* with its birdsongs and his *Seventh Symphony*, subtitled *The Angel of Light*. In addition to his work as a composer, he was a professor at the Sibelius Academy for several decades, where his students included Esa-Pekka Salonen and Magnus Lindberg. In his homeland, he was respected as the greatest composer born since Jean Sibelius. Unfortunately he did not live to see the long-awaited Budapest premiere of *The Mine*.

country at this time, and only some of their foreign careers have been followed and charted.

Anyone interested in researching these subjects would do well to apply to one of the 1956 Memorial Committee's competitions, keeping in mind the framework of the competition. "I encourage all interested parties to participate," says Maria Schmidt. "Countless details large and small of the 1956 revolution still await detailed research. Occasionally my colleagues, the researching historians of the House of Terror, surprise me with details that provide new, serious and important additions to uncovering the events of 60 years ago. Not to mention the fact that this is how historians work: every answer brings up newer questions and issues to be solved and clarified. It would be good to know exactly what transpired in the Opera House and with its company, and how, during the fight for freedom."

It is no coincidence that the programmes produced together with the Opera fall between 23 October and 4 November. "The 1956 Memorial Committee works in a way so that the events of the Rákosi era immediately preceding 1956, the days of the revolution and fighting along with the reprisals' starting period, will have equal emphasis during the memorial year," continues Maria Schmidt. "But, naturally the thirteen days, the history between the end of October 1956 and the beginning of November is what has burned deepest into our collective memory. I believe that for us, Hungarians of today, six decades after the revolution, our task is to appreciate the heroes and understand that we Hungarians cannot live without freedom. As for the individual's freedom, it is unimaginable without the freedom of the nation." ◯

Keyboards, cafés and the trenches

If a Hollywood studio gave me a few million dollars to make a film about an artist's life, I would choose György Cziffra with no hesitation.

Dávid Zsoldos

In relating the eventful story of the life of György Cziffra, many people use the wunderkind-rising-out-of-poverty as the starting point. However, one should remember that the Cziffra family originally lived a respectable bourgeois life in Paris up until the outbreak of WWI, when the French government deported them as nationals of a hostile power. Together with his wife and two daughters, the clarinet- and cimbalom-playing senior Cziffra returned to the Tripolisz section of District XIII, which was really just an area of 16 long barrack-type buildings near today's Gyöngyösi utca – one-room flats without amenities built in the 1910s as emergency housing which stood there, or rather fell apart there, up until the '70s. The younger Cziffra was born here on 5 November 1921, and this is where he first encountered the black-and-white keyboard, on his sister's piano.

All the circumstances were in place for a lost life, but through a coincidence, the eight-year-old autodidact and natural talent was discovered by Ernő Dohnányi,

and the younger Cziffra suddenly found himself at the Liszt Music Academy, where he received some of the world's best musical training, and a few years later was successfully playing concerts abroad, with everything all set for a major career to take off. Then WWII broke out, and with his wife, Soleika, already expecting their child, the 20-year-old titan was drafted and sent to the Eastern front. He was one of the last to return to civilian life, in September of 1946.

The Budapest of the strange post-war years, however, had no use for him, and he was compelled to play piano in cafés and bars – including at the Savoy, the Dunacorso and the Arizona – and to help out as a bouncer when needed. Understandably, he was not satisfied with this life and, in 1950, decided to defect with his wife and son. It was very nearly a tragic decision. The ÁVH secret police captured them before they reached the border. Cziffra received beatings and 18 months of forced labour, which nearly completely des-

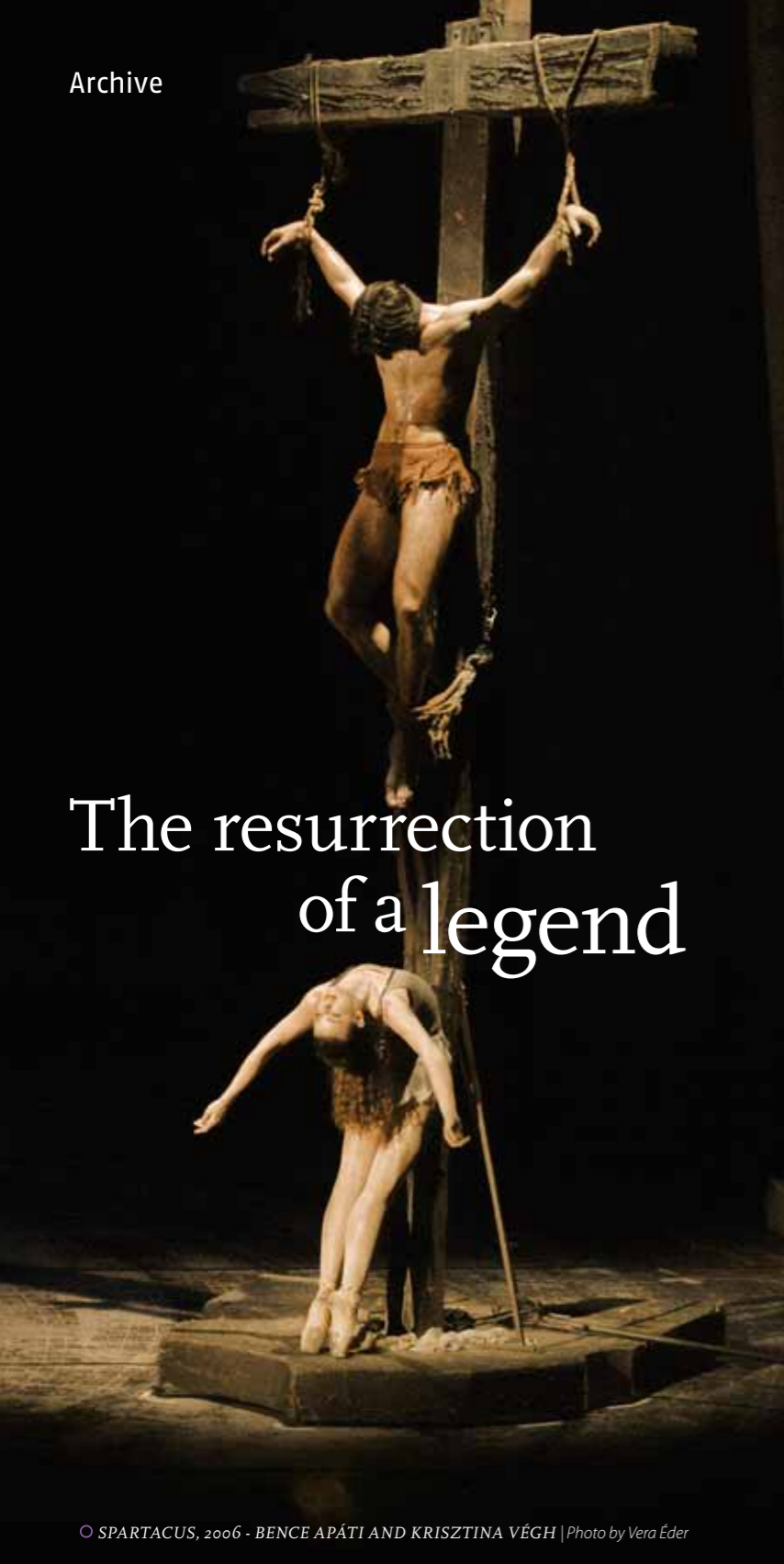
troyed his hands. After his release in 1953, the constraints around him relaxed slightly. On 22 October 1956, on the eve of the revolution, he appeared at the Erkel Theatre (*Editor's note*: not at the Music Academy, as was erroneously written in the May-June edition) to play Bartók's *Piano Concerto No. 2*, but a few weeks later he was in Vienna, where he received great acclaim at his debut – just as he would within the year in Paris, New York and Los Angeles.

He chose France to settle in, established a festival and piano competition, was made a member of the legion d'honneur, but the happiness did not last long. His son, a talented conductor, died in an accident in 1981, and Cziffra never recovered from this: he would never again play with an orchestra or make another record. He died near Paris on 15 January 1994.

The Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra will pay tribute to one of the most outstanding piano virtuosos of all time, one with a unique sound, at its 22 October concert, whose soloist will be Liszt Award-winning pianist János Balázs, who says, "György Cziffra is one of the greatest artists not only of Hungary, but of the world: an icon whose impact can be felt to this day."

The ensemble's next concert on the last day of October will focus on another musician whose impact remains crucial today: Giuseppe Verdi. The Italian composer's *Requiem* has been on the Opera's programme since the '30s, and for nearly 20 years was performed as a staged version every 1 November. Since the early '80s, it has not been given a specific date, but as part of the All Saints Day observations, gets a sure place in the repertoire this year and every year. ◯

The resurrection of a legend



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In the history of Hungarian ballet, few dates are more important than the 18 May 1968 premiere of László Seregi's *Spartacus*. Perhaps only the 1917 world premiere of *The Wooden Prince* and Gyula Harangozó's iconic 1956 *The Miraculous Mandarin* are in the same category. After a hiatus of more than ten years, and also in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the 1956 revolution, the classic work will again be performed on eight October evenings, with a young triple cast. Marton Karczag

It took no little courage and insight for General Director Miklós Lukács to entrust László Seregi, after a few successful ballet interludes for operas, to create a full-length choreography on the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. After a bit of hesitation, Seregi, then in his late thirties, remembered a book he had read when he was younger: the novel *Spartacus* by the Ukrainian-American Howard Fast. Even though the book was about the ancient slave uprising, its author had abandoned the American Communist Party in 1956 as a result of the events in Hungary,



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meaning that Fast's name could not be used, and has only appeared on the Opera's playbill since the ballet's 1999 revival. Other than this, the censor raised no objection to the piece – even though Culture Minister György Aczél urged Seregi for an optimistic ending – which is surprising given the two unsuccessful uprisings – in Paris and Prague, around the same time.

After Seregi got hold of Aram Khachaturian's score, he immediately began to create. "While working, I gratified without hindrance all the irresponsibility that only a first-rate choreographer feels. With great dedication, of course, but my ideas were soaring wildly! Like they never would again, since then!" At his side was conductor Tamás Pál, with whom he completely reshaped the musical material. Khachaturian's ballet had been premiered in Leningrad in 1956 to Nikolai Volkov's libretto and Leonid Yakobson's choreography. At Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, it was Igor Moiseyev's version that the audience first saw, although Yury Grigorovich's version has played there since 1968.

Seregi didn't think the Soviet libretto was strong enough, and moved forward using Fast's novel. This is when he used the dramaturgical concept, hitherto known only from film, of framing the story. The start and end of the piece show the crucified Spartacus reliving the story of the revolt. Later on, there would be similar drama as Amor arrived in the dance studio amidst the clouds, or as *Romeo and Juliet* was being performed at the Globe Theatre, or with Petruchio's story *The Taming of the Shrew* penned at a pub table. Seregi's *Spartacus* was incredibly successful even at its premiere. Despite the early summer premiere, it had five performances that season, and ran for 21 the next. Everyone was satisfied, except for one person. This was the composer, Khachaturian himself, who was subject to sudden rages and had won the Lenin Prize for *Spartacus*. At a rehearsal, after first being confronted with how much Seregi had rearranged his work, he grew so angry that General Secretary Pál Fejér only caught up with him outside on Andrassy Avenue and had to beg him to return to the auditorium. Today it would be difficult to even

imagine what complications might arise if the Great Soviet Composer banned a production right before the premiere. Seregi even admitted subsequently that they hadn't treated the score with kid gloves – as with his later works, he only viewed the music as a base material – but the final result was a very dense and unified production. Khachaturian, however, would not forgive this "barbarian attack" on his work for a long time, and at the premiere it was only at the forceful insistence of the Soviet ambassador that he took the stage for a bow. "We held the premiere, and it is well known that there was a 35-minute standing ovation after the curtain went down. The audience and the critics both realised: even if Seregi wasn't a trailblazing figure, but more of a summariser, even though he wasn't moving the path forward, but was encapsulating, *Spartacus* nevertheless had exceeded the traditional forms of Romantic grand ballet," the choreographer told Zsuzsa Kaán years later.

In exploring the reasons for the spectacular success, today we can be sure that



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Seregi was not merely summarising the Soviet ballets well known by then to the Hungarian audience and the virtues of Hungarian dance drama stamped with the name of Gyula Harangozó, but had also moved forward, creating a timeless masterpiece that, along with choreographies developed for Bartók music, became one of Hungary's forms of cultural currency in the '70s. Over the past decades, the HSO's dance ensemble has taken Spartacus to countless cities, from Baalbek to Paris and Leningrad to Mexico City, and even a few years ago to China. Seregi also taught his creation to several foreign ensembles, allowing audiences in East Berlin (1973), at Rome's Baths of Caracalla (1987), and in Melbourne and Sydney (1978) to see the production. The Australian Ballet, in turn, took it to Athens, Santiago de Chile, and finally for four evenings in 1990, to the stage of New York's Metropolitan Opera.

Naturally, contributing a great deal to this march of triumph have been the dancers whom Seregi put in the principal roles, who successfully danced the role of Spartacus and merged their art into the character. Their faith and energy have given life to the performances, of which there have been 244 in the Opera House and 47 abroad.

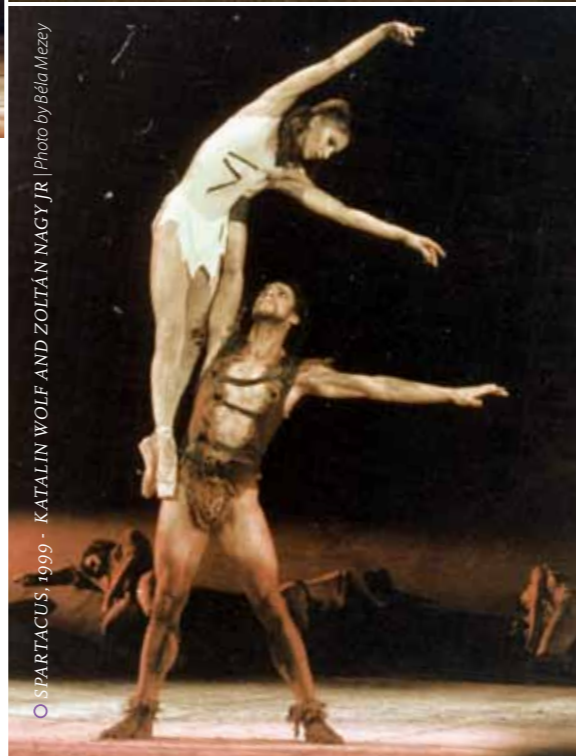
In the double cast of the premiere, Viktor Fülöp and Viktor Róna danced the title role, with Zsuzsa Kun and Adél Orosz dancing Flavia, and Ferenc Havas and Imre Dózsa as Crassus.

Several years ago, Seregi revealed the ars poetica of Spartacus: "I knew that in order to make a drama from real life into a drama on the ballet stage, the only way to get there was through the characters and the specific situations; I can only express it with feeling and suffering people who have been humiliated and violated, and now yearn to rise up and rip off their chains. This was my objective, and I think this is what makes this piece enjoyable even today." ◊

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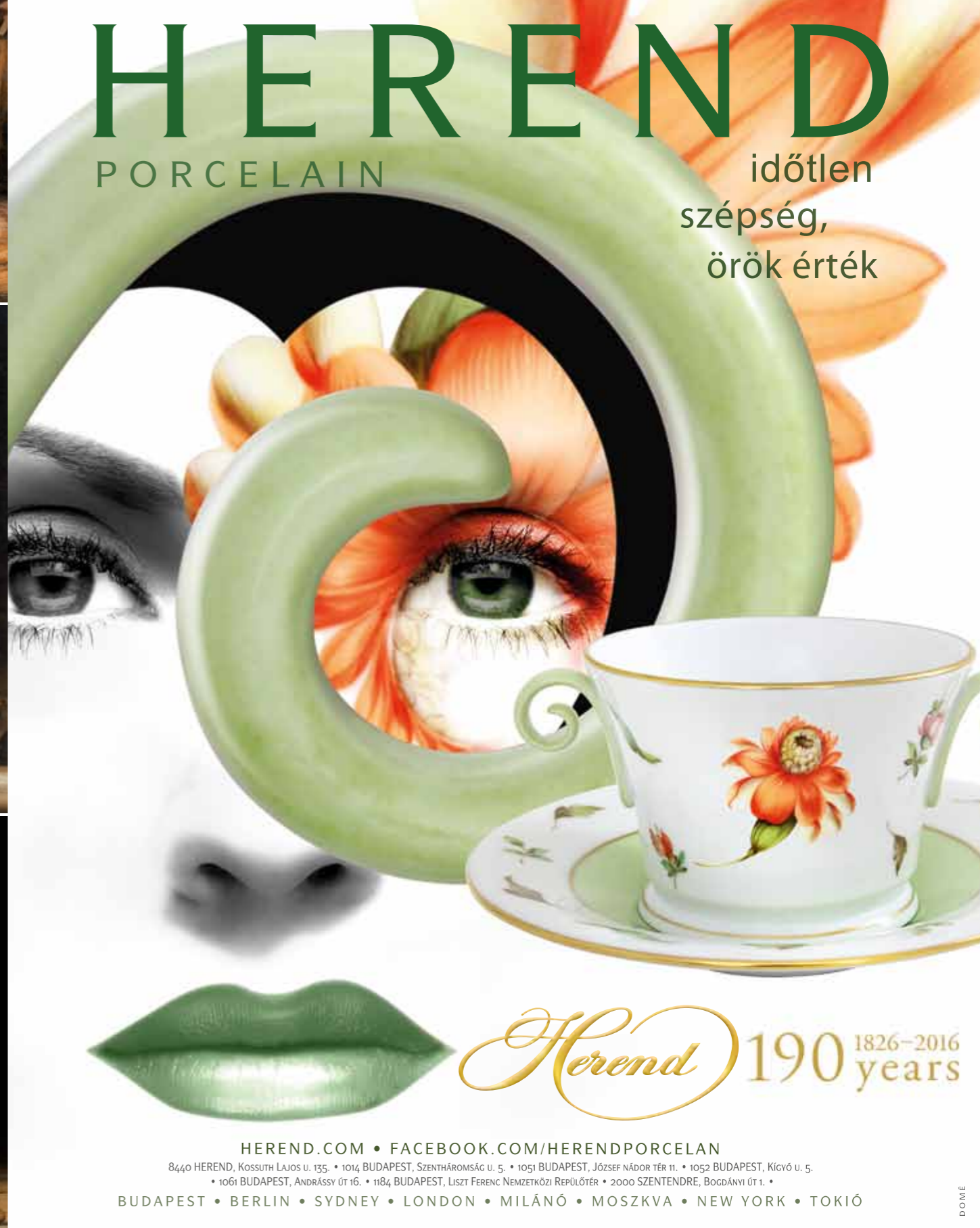


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Talent that offers hope

Although Ferenc Liszt departed on his (even by today's standards) massive tours in an extravagantly luxurious coach, his trips were about more than just flash, since he frequently gave benefit concerts solely for charitable purposes on his stops. With the revenues gained from his appearances, he supported an orphanage, a women's association, a civil guard and a music school. Following Liszt's example, the Opera is holding its Piano Arias recital again this year under the patronage of Anita Herczegh, wife of the President of the Republic of Hungary. *Viktor Hankó*



It was very likely on many occasions that Ferenc Liszt served as a statesman in place of the professionals in the job. And without regard to nationality, either. No matter how much his career soared, it would always be elevated higher by selfless deeds. In 1839, he conducted benefit concerts at Pest's Vigadó Theatre and in Vienna to aid flood victims. And his urge to help was felt by all: just as he gave a benefit concert for victims of the workers' uprising, he also supported the creation of Bonn's Beethoven Monument and Budapest's music academy.

Following the great musician's model, this autumn for the fifth occasion, in what by now can be termed a tradition, superb musicians will join members of the audience for a concert with proceeds going to help cure, via the Örzök Child Cancer Foundation, children with tumours and leukaemia. The concert will feature star soprano Erika Miklósa, whom we can safely refer to as The Queen of the Night, since this role has been one of the cornerstones of her rich career so far on the stages of Milan, New York, Berlin, London and, of course, Budapest.

Her companions on stage will be two brilliantly talented young people. Ivett Gyöngyösi took off towards world fame from the Liszt Academy's programme for exceptionally talented children. She has won countless awards, and the word "countless"

should be taken literally. She twice took the grand prize at the Budapest International Chopin Piano Competition, took first place at the Lions International Piano Competition, and in Hamburg received the title Steinway & Sons Young Steinway Artist. She is a winner of the UNESCO special prize and of first place at the Lancaster International Piano Festival in the USA, and shortly afterwards also triumphed in Darmstadt. She has taken the stage with superb artists, with more to come: most recently, Plácido Domingo, guest star at the Shakespeare Gala, invited her to perform with him.

Mihály Berecz, the other great hope, is all of 18 years old, but has already achieved more than most others do in twice that time. It's no surprise, then, that he started playing bass at age three, appeared in the Csángó Festival at four, and took up violin in his life at age nine. In 2010, he received first prize with honours at the 12th National Music School Piano Competition, and in that same year appeared in the Berlin Music Festival as the soloist for his high school's orchestra. In December 2011, he came home from the Third National Béla Bartók Music School Piano Competition with an award of excellence with honours. He commenced his music composition studies at age ten, and now has his own full-fledged works to his name.

What would Liszt say if he were still alive? Perhaps he would lean back in his seat, looking as calm as his statue at the Opera House does, to see that talent continues to give hope, and that good deeds remain important and in good hands. ◊

AZ „AGYFÉNYESÍTŐ” ZENE



Hogyan születik meg fejünkben a zene? Miként raktározzuk el a dallamokat? Miért hat érzelmeinkre? Valóban hat, vagy csak úgy hisszük? Milyen utakon, milyen eredménnyel hat a gyerekekre a zene, befolyásolja-e a zenehallgatás és a zenélés a gyerekek értelmi és érzelmi fejlődését? Sokan keressük a választ ilyen és hasonló kérdésekre az ember megismerő funkciójával foglalkozó tudományokban – a pszichológiában és az idegtudományban is... A zene az érzelmek kiváltásának egyik legősibb eszköze, ennél fogva összekapcsolódik emlékeinkkel is. Az emlékezetünkben tárolt események olyanok, akár egy mozifilm, s ennek gyakran a zenéje is segítheti az emlékek felidézését; a dalok szövegét a dallammal együtt tároljuk, bizonyos zenék pedig a hozzájuk kapcsolódó érzelmeken keresztül elvezetnek mélybe sülyedt emlékeinkhez. Összeforognak, ugyanúgy, mint például a látogatás emlékképei a sütemény ízével és illatával Az eltűnt idő nyomában című Proust-regényben...

(Részlet dr. Csépe Valéria cikkéből. Mindennapi Pszichológia)

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◊ IVETT GYÖNGYÖSI | Photo by Zsófi Birtalan, Liszt Academy



◊ ERIKA MIKLÓSA | Photo by László Emmer



◊ MIHÁLY BERE CZ | Photo by Gábor Zsugonits

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More than a daily grind

There exist certain professions where we're certain not to be too far off if we guess what the physiques of its practitioners are like. At the Opera, an obvious example is the ballet, where reed-thin ballerinas and sculpted male dancers enchant the audience. But would one think that the supporting staff can claim a particular appearance?

András Várhegyi

Photos by Zsófia Pállya

Every theatre has its share of strong people, this is particularly true at the Opera, since what needs to be built around all those airily moving dancer and rich-voiced singers is a world on stage that is both light and realistic while also being highly durable and precisely planned. The dedicated craftsman behind the sets of the Hungarian State Opera's rich repertoire work to create the designer's vision on the stage: alongside the carpenters and painters, the machinists also help develop the concepts from the first moment.

They are led by Attila Selyem, who is also the most senior member of the team, with 15 years at the Opera, although he was captivated much earlier by this world of metallically clanging iron rods, since he also spent a great deal of time here as a child, thanks his stepfather, who headed the workshop previously. For him, it was

no question that he would choose this profession – although internal motivation is not enough – you also have to be able to handle the hammer! The machinists do difficult physical work, requiring that they be fit. "Look at any one of my chaps, and you'll see he's a strapping fellow," Attila says proudly, himself looking like he works out more than just designs.

There's plenty of work, though, since it's not unusual for them to be working on more than three productions at once, in addition to having a repair here and a mid-rehearsal change there keeping the eight-man team busy. With sets, the machinists make the support structure, frames, vehicles and other conveyances, and not infrequently some of the props as well. They still work mostly with iron, but increasingly frequently use aluminium, which is extremely light and easy to work with. "Ever since this light metal passed the test in practise,

we have often been the ones to build the walls instead of the carpenters, which presents a new challenge," adds Selyem.

They always work based on standard sizes, because it is an essential requirement that all the backdrop elements have to be able to fit in the painting workshop. The machinist workshop has operated immediately by the Opera House, on Hajós utca, for nearly 50 years, with the sole disadvantage of having inadequate space to assemble the sets, although this will soon change. "In the near future, we will be moving over to the much more modern Eiffel Art Studios, where we'll have much more usable space, as well as an assembly room," reports the workshop head, who also mentions a unique task. They are creating a replica of a model 301 steam locomotive, originally manufactured in 1911, which will recall the location's railway past.

The past has also given a gradual path forward for modernisation. Selyem himself has already seen many changes, since new materials, tools and methods have been added to their palette in past years. One such innovation is the bending machine for working hollow segments and tubes. "It used to be that we had to bend the iron manually on the floor. Now we can easily make any kind of arc with it," says Selyem. Lots depends on having a good team, which is one thing that guarantees that the employees will be happy to remain here, even for decades. "The other thing is the love of opera," adds András Nagy, second man in the machining group, an eight-year veteran of the workshop. The group leader particularly loves the challenges in the work, and has always strived to make sure their structures are never visible. "Just like with a car, the machinist's work is not in the foreground."

Other times, the machinists are the only ones who can achieve the desire effect, such as when a chandelier, carriage or parts for a weapon are needed. "For *The Fairy Queen*, we built a bed out of wrought iron, because the designer especially requested that it not be crafted out of wood," says Selyem, adding that it's never the task that's difficult, it's just that the available time is short for the production to

come together, he says, while eyeing the set for *La traviata*, under construction and ready for welding. Presently the work continues, the grinder starts up, and we are given to the unique concert experience created by the interplay of the noise from the workshop and the scales heard through the windows of the Opera House. ◻



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Peculiar weather

A few months apart, the Opera's audience got to see premieres of two contemporary operas. First came *Lear* in January. Then, in May, Thomas Adès's *The Tempest*, originally premiered at London's Covent Garden in 2004, successfully passed inspection by critics and audience alike.

"Adès really didn't write popular music for Prospero's story, (...) the but even so, *The Tempest* is truly genuine, dramatically twisting opera. The kind of opera that has a valid message about what happens on the sorcerer's island: about the two parallel worlds sliding into each other, about hope and resignation, and of course, about magic. About the magic whose supernatural performer, Ariel, received a musical part whose unreality (and nearly mechanical perfection) is more radically demonstrated with the Queen of the Night and Olympia, the robot doll in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, as

well as in Ligeti's secret policewoman in *Le Grand Macabre*, opera singing in the traditional sense enriched with warbling and nearly mechanical sounds.

The music played in the up-to-date Budapest premiere was due largely to the joint excellence of self-assured guest singers closing ranks with domestic forces, and a conductor who can impressively bring the production together. Although Péter Halász is no longer the Opera's chief music director, his talent as a conductor – which has nothing to do with his official title – was proved brilliantly on the night of the premiere as he penetrated, mastered and played Adès's forbiddingly rich score. The greatest vocal bravura was shown by the portrayal of Ariel, the above-mentioned fairy: Laure Meloy, who, sometimes balanced on alarmingly high heels and sometimes dangling from the wires, sang, chirped



○ LAURE MELOY | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

and sawed away. In the middle section of this opera dominated by high parts (in addition to the coloratura soprano, there are around four tenors and a counter-tenor), sweater-clad baritone Prospero has his revenge, and also declines to take revenge, and in doing so, the ruggedly manly Franco Pomponi demonstrates serious vocal stamina and exemplary musical discipline." (Ferenc László, *Magyar Narancs*)

"At first, I didn't see how William Shakespeare's drama could be successfully adapted for opera, thinking that the plot was too multi-layered and tricky to be rationally simplified according to the rules of the classical opera libretto. Fortunately, Adès and his librettist, Meredith Oakes, thought differently, and the result certainly vindicated their steadfast dedication. (...)

One pleasant surprise was Tamás Tarjáni's surefooted interpretation the incredibly delicate range of the unsympathetic character of Antonio. The very beautiful and noble part of Ferdinand was sung by Péter Balczó, with his love interest, Miranda, brought to life with lovely, soft and airy soprano heights of Andrea Szántó, who also stood out. I also fondly remember András Palerdi's Gonzalo from the Neapolitan court." (Zéta, *Café Momus*)



○ ANDREA SZÁNTÓ | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ FRANCO POMPONI | Photo by Zsófia Pályi



○ ATTILA FEKETE, ANDRÁS PALERDI | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ TAMÁS TARJÁNYI, ZSOLT HAJA | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

"Ludger Engels's surrealist vision, the ingredients of a world falling apart came to life on the stage of the Opera House. (...) The great virtue of the production is that it didn't slip past the philosophical questions, but also was able to convey these through the visual effects and approaches. Engels was primarily interested in depicting Prospero's alienation from the world, the sense of time being out of joint, which cannot be pushed back into position. (...)

The cleverly designed visuals on stage vividly create the the core atmosphere of the production, which is in complete harmony with the libretto and the music. Using a simple system of references, the directing helps the audience absorb the unknown the piece." (Zoltán Péter, *Kortársonline.hu*)

"Adès's music is perhaps unfamiliar to the ear, but is still easy to identify with, thanks to the dramaturgically and emotionally precise structure. I would even go so far as to say that Adès is the third pillar of English music, after Purcell and Britten. (...) Conductor Péter Halász had a huge responsibility: the instrumental parts are extraordinarily rich, with constantly changing moods. He resolved the task before him perfectly, as did the chorus, led by Kálmán Strausz." (Pavel Unger, *Opera Plus*)

Andrea Szántó was a surprising Miranda, playing Prospero's daughter with a soft, ethereal voice. Péter Balczó portrayed an uplifting Ferdinand, the king's son. (...) András Palerdi was truly touching as Gonzalo, the former king's sincere and elderly counsellor. (Harald Lacina, *Der neue Merker, Der Opernfreund*)



○ LAURE MELOY | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

"This production by Ludger Engels employs imaginative visual and musical metaphors that refer to the work's eponymous tempest. All this is realised with singers who each coped with challenge of interpreting Adès's music, making the evening a memorable one with its magical genius. (...) Despite the fact that the score eschews easily recallable memory, Adès's musical language has an intuitive logic. By the third act, every ear had grown accustomed to it, and the packed audience, made up of every generation, showed their approval with rousing applause at the end." (Alexandra Ivanoff, *Bachtrack.com*)



○ ANDREA SZÁNTÓ, ANDRÁS PALERDI, PÉTER BALCZÓ | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

"This fundamentally difficult-to-absorb piece, which closes not with Prospero's monologue, but with the metaphorical solitude of Caliban, as he is left alone on the island, was given an enormous ovation from the audience at the end." (Livia Bidoli, *Gothic Network*)



○ LAURE MELOY | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

SHAKESPEARE 400+

Shaking up the repertoire

May's *Shakespeare 400+* Festival was an event of superlatives worthy of the Bard's name. With 13 different adaptations at three venues, including several premieres, the programme was crowned with a concert by world-famous baritone Bryn Terfel in the Opera House.



With the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I felt that one couldn't let such an excellent premiere pass without a few words. And this is not to emphasize my own vocation, but rather the exceptional high standard of the production: in its extraordinarily packed season, the Opera has given great pleasure with this gem playing for all of two nights. The production took place with the collaboration of the Liszt Academy and the Opera. (...) In addition, conductor Dominic Wheeler of London's Guildhall School (who might be familiar to the audience from this year's Opera Examination Festival) and director Máté Szabó, artistic director of the National Theatre of Miskolc. (...)

other – also were not hackneyed, and the strangest joke neither seemed forced nor compromised the integrity of the overall production. With great awareness throughout, Máté Szabó leads the plot, preserving while still summarising all of the layers of the original work. (...) The young singers move on the stage with naturalness and grace to put pros to shame. Their act shows no artifice, whether in terms of comedy or – often more difficult – pathos. Perhaps an even greater pleasure is that their vocal performance deserves recognition."

(Kata Kondor, *Opera-Világ.net*)

○ A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM - MIKLÓS PAIZS | Photo by Attila Nagy



The director does a superb job of operating with the implements available for the production, making for a lively and entertaining performance. I don't remember when I laughed so freely at an opera performance, and at this one the humour worked so splendidly, with the scene with the Mechanicals eliciting the most chuckles. The tools of classical comedy – man in women's clothes, lovers unsuited to each



○ WEST SIDE STORY - ATTILA SZAKÁCS, SZNEZSANA CIKOVSZKI, BENCE APÁTI | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

The production of *Otello* included many outstanding performers, including those in the HSO Chorus and Children's Chorus. The latter ensemble's performance was quite convincing. The robust Ferenc Cserhalmi was a fine Lodovico, and Andrea Rost, with her generous vocal colour, was more powerful than ever. With blissful softness, Judit Németh was an ideal Emilia. (...) Gergely Boncsér's very pure singing as Cassio was worthy of praise. The members of the HSO Orchestra do not contradict their reputation: the playing in each section was perfect. (...) Praise also goes to Sándor Gyüdi, who with minute attention handles the unique variety of styles that is so characteristic of Wolf-Ferrari in *Sly*. The singers also did not let us down (...) The three principal roles were distributed advantageously. With his robust vocal chords, he agilely portrays the imperious character of the Count of Westmoreland, while Krisztina Kónya, with her gentle legato, was captivating. In the main role we find Boldizsár László and his penetrating voice: we have already admirably mentioned his heldentenor abilities in relation to Goldmark and Busoni. (Bertrand Bolognesi, *Anaclase*)

○ OTELLO - MICHELE KÁLMÁNDY | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ SLY - PÉTER BALCZÓ | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

"Boldizsár László did a superb job in the role of the poet Sly, with his dynamic voice and great mental dedication. At his side as Countess Dolly stood Krisztina Kónya, with a strong soprano voice sturdy in every range. Also deserving of praise is the crusty baritone Zoltán Kelemen, who portrayed her husband, the Count of Westmoreland (...) Since some of the roles required dancing, we must mention Gábor Katona's humorous choreography, in which two dancers amusingly appear as a camel. Kornélia Kovács coached the chorus of the National Theatre of Szeged so carefully and in such a way that it became the motor driving the evening. Conducting the National Theatre of Szeged's orchestra was Sándor Gyüdi, who brought blazingly illuminating power to Wolf-Ferrari's dynamically planned verismo score." (Harald Lacina, *Der neue Merker, Der Opernfreund*)



○ SLY - ANTAL CSEH AND KRISZTINA KÓNYA | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

Sándor Gyüdi and his colleagues in the production of *Sly* tried hard and admirably to have Wolf-Ferrari's opera win over the audience. With his sturdy tenor and, never averse to strong gestures, powerful acting abilities, Boldizsár László in the title role won great approval from the audience. (...) The part of Westmoreland, the instigator of the plan to convince the sleeping Sly that he is a lord, was played by Zoltán Kelemen, whose noble baritone caused no disappointment this time either, just as Krisztina Kónya got the better of her role as the Countess. (...) We must also mention the name of Simándy Singing Competition-winner György Hanczár, who in his dual role showed not only a promising lyrical tenor voice, but his ability to make himself noticed on stage, which even for an opera singer is no small virtue."

(Ferenc László, *Magyar Narancs*)

"Göttinger's production of *Sly* movingly conveyed the drama lurking beneath the surface, while its visuals – with monumental sets by Péter Horgas – continuously emphasised the dreamlike character of the story. One of the productions biggest merits is the coordinated movement on stage of the soloists, the dancers and the members of the chorus." (Zoltán Péter, *Operaportál.hu*)



○ FALSTAFF - AMBROGIO MAESTRI | Photo by Péter Rakosy

The festival would not have been complete without *Falstaff*, which ran in the packed Erkel Theatre in a modern production. The orchestra, under Balázs Kocsár, played almost flawlessly and with technical precision. Ambrogio Maestri, in the title role, was a perfect choice both physically and vocally and made a perfect partner to the young baritone Gunyong Na, who sang with beautiful colours. (...) Outstanding were Zoltán Megyesi and, among the women, Bernadett Wiedemann." (Pavel Unger, *Opera Plus*)

"We can now actually be a direct part of the 1978 premiere of *Lear* at the Bayerische Staatsoper, since this opera has shuffled around the world's stages only very slowly, arriving in London only in 1989. The press photos from the time show that Gergely Zöldy Z's reconstructions of the costumes and sets succeeded splendidly, and these two elements certainly played a leading role alongside the singers. (...) The performers – also due to their vibrant interpretation of parts so difficult, they border on the unlearnable – we're one and all superb and deeply immersed in their characters."

(Zoltán Végső, *Élet és Irodalom*)

◉ HAMLET - JÁNOS KOVÁCS AND PÉTER FRIED | Photo by Péter Rákossy



◉ BALÁZS CSÉMY AND ESZTER ZAVAROS | Photo by Attila Nagy



◉ SHAKESPEARE ARIA RECITAL - BRYN TERFEL | Photo by Péter Rákossy

Is it a bit much? Of course it is! Bryn Terfel is a showman, no doubt about it. But not because he clowns around on the stage, but because he does this with unthinking musical professionalism. It is this professionalism that gives legitimacy to the intense presence of this bass-baritone. (...) In the second half of the recital, the Welsh singer was possessed by the devil: Bryn Teufel (!) sang the demonic passages from Boito's *Mefistofele* and Gounod's *Faust*. We can't say he was born to play Mephisto, because Wotan, Falstaff, Iago and Dulcamara were all perfect. He was then the most diabolical-looking singer I had ever seen, with a set of grimaces that are capable of changing him into a completely different character from one moment to the next. And each of his grimaces comes with professional and effective vocal material. (...) To mention a few words about Gareth Jones and the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra: there were no complaints about the musicians summoned up to the stage. It was impossible to suppress Terfel with volume, and the orchestra paid freely and naturally. It's good to see sometimes



◉ MACBETH - ISTVÁN RÁCZ | Photo by Péter Rákossy

what our "invisible" musicians can do. Jones, who was also in on Terfel's tomfoolery, conducted clearly without more movement than necessary, and reacted sensitively to the mighty bass-baritone's tiniest jokes. There were two other singers at the recital: Orsolya Sáfár and Boldizsár László. The former sang of the duets from *L'elisir d'amore* with Terfel, the latter got a solo part from Verdi's *Macbeth*. These were respectful performances, which made no attempt to outshine the man of the hour, but instead merged pleasantly into the show." (Dániel Mona, *Opera-Világ.net*)



◉ DIE LUSTIGEN WEIBER VON WINDSOR | Photo by Zsófia Pályi



◉ LEAR - ÉVA BÁTORI, ISTVÁN KOVÁCS, ESZTER SÜMEGI, TÓMAS TÓMASSON | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

SHAKESPEARE



◉ SLY - ZOLTÁN KELEMEN | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

OPINIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

"I live in England, and I was lucky to have been able to travel to Budapest lately to see your new production of *Lear* in your exquisitely beautiful Opera House. As a fan of *King Lear*, I've seen a dozen performances at different places around the world, and I can tell you that the Budapest staging succeeded incredibly well!" (Gareth Carr)

"Having a background in musical theatre and directing, I often visit your two venues, where I've seen many memorable performances. Now I'm

writing to praise the extraordinary achievement represented by your singular Shakespeare400 Festival. This huge undertaking shows ambition that is very rare at any institution. Where else could one see, for example, *Sly*? In particular, I congratulate you for *Lear*, based on Ponnelle's original conception, and *The Tempest*. Staging either of those poses a huge challenge to any opera house, not to mention the incredibly demanding music. The wonderful and unforgettable experience was enriching. Congratulations!" (Sven Henning, artistic director of the Bergen International Festival and of the Bergen International Theatre (where he is also a stage director), programme director of Norway's Rikskonsertene, and artistic director of the Queen Sonja International Singing Competition.)



◉ LEAR - TÓMAS TÓMASSON | Photo by Zsófia Pályi

◉ THE TEMPEST - FRANCO POMPONI | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



Happiness, where can I find you?

Brimming with treats and premieres alike, the Shakespeare Season closed with a four-performance run of Purcell's opera *The Fairy Queen*, in a production merging Baroque music, jazz, film noir and the genre of semi-opera in a highly novel way.



○ NÓRA DUCZA, ZOLTÁN DARAGÓ, ZITA SZEMERE | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ Photo by Attila Nagy

"Sebastian Hannak's sets perfectly evoked the atmosphere of the era – the mid-20th century – with an elegant affect that expanded the space with a superb sense of rhythm while also playfully alternating between external and internal perspectives. Krisztina Lisztópád's costumes showed a rich imagination: atmospheric and of strikingly high quality, they were one of the few nods to Baroque opera performance, and the effect of this contrast conveyed the superficial and parasitic nature of this "black" world well. Finally



the dance scenes, especially of the two – wanton – girls recycled from Purcell's two fairies, were a credit to the performers and to the work of movement director Kristóf Widder. (...) Conductor Benjamin Bayl furnished the performance's musical side with convincing musical character, good tempos and unerring tempos. The chorus, tonight under the direction of Kálmán Strausz, truly rose to heights never before heard; its discipline, perfectionism, the purity of its sound and intonation are unusually good for an opera chorus. (János Malina, Revizoronline.com)



○ EMÓKE BARÁTH | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ EMÓKE BARÁTH, TIBOR SZAPPANOS, GIANLUCA MARGHERI | Photo by Attila Nagy

The comic aspects are sensibly apportioned throughout the entire evening. Director András Almási-Tóth succeeded in everything he tried to do. Figure out a plot based exclusively on closed numbers that don't drive the action: check. Say something different from what is in the libretto: Check. (In an interview, Almási Tóth said this is the essence of contemporary theatre.) Dilute the Baroque music in terms of both imagery and sound so that the audience remains engaged: check. It took the director around a year to figure out what order to put Purcell's movements in and what to do with the many dance interludes to round out the plot. He was given tremendous freedom, since he ended up with his own story about his own characters." (Dániel Mona, Opera-Világ.net)



○ NÓRA DUCZA, PÉTER FRIED | Photo by Attila Nagy

"Kornél Fekete-Kovács's jazz numbers integrated into the piece well." (Eszter Veronika Kiss, Magyar Nemzet)

"Director Almási-Tóth has given us a unique and entertaining production. I'd enjoy watching it again on video. With clever cutaways, the creative team showed that Baroque music and jazz fit together well." (Márton Devich, Magyar Idők)



○ FEKETE-KOVÁCS QUINTET | Photo by Attila Nagy

Emóke Baráth crowned her vocally sensitive portrayal with the sad and lovely hit *O let me weep*, but the constant pair of Nóra Ducza and Zita Szemere were also fine both in their singing and movement. The young Italian baritone Margheri's world-conquering upper body was fortunately often paired with a vigorous and in places beautifully flowing voice. Of the two tenors, Tibor Szappanos got to demonstrate his sense of humour, while Gyula Rab showed the youthful agility of his voice, while the boyish-looking counter-tenor Zoltán Daragó made his brief solo shine with graceful elegance. (Ferenc László, Magyar Narancs)

○ EMÓKE BARÁTH, GYULA RAB | Photo by Attila Nagy



○ EMÓKE BARÁTH | Photo by Attila Nagy

At the end of an extremely rich season, the Opera's management distributed its most prestigious professional recognitions in a grand gala celebration established in 2012 to honour active soloists and assess their talent and performance.

Superlatives of the superlatives

Of the three Chamber Singer titles, one went to Atala Schöck, who upon receiving her porcelain swan, stressed that she never would have been able to portray her dream role, Charlotte in *Werther*, at such a high standard without the love and support of her colleagues. Polina Paszircsák said on the stage that she had not been counting on it, but she had really hoped for it and believed that she deserved it, while András Pallerdi emphasised the importance of continuous quality work.



○ ANDRÁS PALERDI | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ POLINA PASZIRCÁK | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ SCHÖCK-ATALA | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ GERGELY LEBLANC | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ ATALA SCHÖCK | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

During the next season, the Opera's title of Chamber Artist will go to concertmaster Galina Danyilova, who trained in the Leopold Auer school of violin playing in Saint Petersburg, and as a wandering soul, made Hungary her new homeland. The HNB's étoile went to the ever cheerful Gergely Leblanc, who was moved to receive his white statuette in an art-deco ebony frame with genuine



○ PÉTER VIRÁG, LÁSZLÓ PÓLUS, ÉVA SZENDRÉNYI, SZILVESZTER ÓKOVÁCS, ERIKA TÓTH, MONIKA TURKOVICS, KRISZTIÁN CSER, BALÁZS KOCSÁR
Photo by Szilvia Csibi

Csillagóra Pálaest

silver inlay, and said that at the end of this exhausting season, the award gave him so much energy he could even start the next season during the summer.

The awards established in the memory of major artists and memorable artists from the House's past were handed out at the invitation-only Night of Stars Gala the previous evening. The Ferencsik Commemorative Plaque for outstanding artistic work this year went to HSO Orchestra cellist László Pólus, who said that this, along with his audition and



○ LÁSZLÓ PÓLUS | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ KRISZTIÁN CSER | Photo by Szilvia Csibi



○ ERIKA TÓTH | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

being named a solo cello, was a pivotal moment in his life. The Vilmos Komor commemorative plaque was merited by horn player Péter Lakatos, who said that he wishes to continue on the artistic path he has started down. The Tivadar Márk Commemorative Plaque this year went to Éva Szendrényi, who has created sets for many opera productions and met her husband working at the Opera House. The award founded in memory of Gusztáv Oláh was won by soloist Krisztián Cser, the most promising bass



○ ÉVA SZENDRÉNYI | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

of his generation. In his short address, using a sport metaphor, he said that even though it was a beautiful goal, it wouldn't have happened without the team. "I can't sing opera alone, because you need the musicians, conductors, directors, set and costume designers and the management." The Gela Plaque went to the steely-nerved assistant director Erika Tóth, who shed little light on her activity, as she believes she works best when her work remains unnoticed.



○ PÉTER LAKATOS | Photo by Szilvia Csibi

May I have this dance?

September brings the resumption of the musical that represents a first in the history of the Opera after its summer run. Aimed at families, Elton John and Lee Hall's masterpiece *Billy Elliot – the Musical* continues its efforts to popularise the art form of ballet.



ILONA BENCZE | Photo by Péter Rákossy



JOHN BAILEY McALLISTER | Photo by Péter Rákossy



ÁRON VIZLENDVAI | Photo by Péter Rákossy

"What counts as a betrayal, and what are compromises? Where is the limit? This isn't the dilemma in *The Fifth Seal*, but it's a burning question, especially today. All of this is coded into the work, although it, along with the entertainment factor, would be lost without acting credibility and gravitas, without which parallels with the Hungarian reality wouldn't occur to anyone. What was required most for this was portrayals by two strong actors of musical theatre (emphasis on both adjectives!). One is András Stohl, who plays a tough widowed father who, unsure how to deal with his two sons and hardly capable of communicating openly and guided by the use of force, cannot be softened up even by the traditional clichés

of male roles, because that would mean backing down. Still, at the critical moment, he is capable of love and taking a risk out of paternal instinct. The other is Éva Auksz, who as dance teacher Mrs. Wilkinson portrays a woman who never left the mining town. Perhaps out of a sense of mission, or else she had no other choice, but she stayed. After years of futile work, she's a tired, burnt-out teacher, but she recognises talent when she sees it, and the new motivation gives her energy and shakes her out of her torpor, making her suddenly stubborn and ready to fight. Strongly adding to the local colour are Eszter Csákányi's completely optimistic and completely senile grandmother, Richárd Borbély's Tony, burning with energy and the impulse to act, and István Fillár, who brought character to his minor roles. Naturally, we can't omit the children, who were skilful, tight and credible. It's obvious that they and their instructors put in a huge amount of work, because it's not just the cuteness factor that John Bailey McAllister in the title role and Zalán Kamarás, as Michael, use to build on."

(Tímea Papp, Revizoronline.com)

"This production by director Tamás Szirtes and choreographer Ákos Tihanyi fits in perfectly with their many previous collaborations, with *Billy Elliot* an instructive adult fairy tale about freedom, love, courage, accepting oneself and making sacrifices for others.

Even though we're sitting in the Opera House on Andrásy Avenue, it feels like the West End. Partly because of the Englishness of the performance: the miners of Easington are protesting Margaret Thatcher's economic reforms, something without a Hungarian parallel. The Iron



ANDRÁS STOHL, ÁRON VIZLENDVAI | Photo by Péter Rákossy

Lady remains her wicked self, and is not replaced with, say, Lajos Bokros for the sake of understandability, nor has anybody translated the "stage door" sign. Nor is it needed.

And also in part – and more importantly – because this production is at the very least competitive with the original we saw in London.

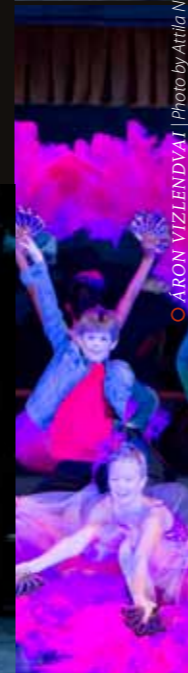
In the title role, the presumably half-Hungarian John Bailey McAllister moves, dances and acts wonderfully, and sings without anxiety. He is self-confident, loveable, and an equal partner to the adults. Zalán Kamarás excels in the role of his friend, the effeminate Michael. The two young lads command the stage with their presence and charisma, performing tap dance and musical revue numbers with flawless mastery of their lines. Bravo! (...)

István Szlávik's sets also bring out the feel of an English town and, together with András Vízvárdi's projected images, complement the Opera House's modern stage technology. Yvette Alida Kovács's costumes tastefully illustrate the story, with an important role also played by János Madarász's lighting, which contributes to raising this work's visual effect above the usual standard. The Budapest *Billy Elliot* is a new theatrical ode to freedom, a feel-good piece suggesting in a scant three hours that the world can be changed for the better.

(madainyer, Ványa bácsi.blog.hu)



ÁRON VIZLENDVAI | Photo by Attila Nagy



"Zalán Kamarás as Michael is light, funny, relaxed and infantile, the consummate clown – and not just because he really does don a clown suit in one musical scene to sing and tap dance with the suddenly liberated McAllister. (...)

Going beyond the call of duty are Richárd Borbély and, in the role of piano accompanist Mr. Brathwaite, who obtained his knowledge of ballet from a correspondence course, Bálint Ekanem. The ballet-dancing young girls are tight, able and natural, with Mrs. Wilkinson's own smart-tongued and far-from-naïve daughter among them."

(Krisztina Horeczky, Tánckritika.hu)

"Should the Opera put on musicals? – this question was long answered in the negative. The practical answer is just the same as the theoretical one, since its greatest failure in recent times was perhaps its 1992 production of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* in the Erkel Theatre, with János Koós and Lajos Miller in the title role. The 2015/16 season, however, saw the Opera making serious efforts to turn this grim "no" into a "yes" with last autumn's premiere of *West Side Story*, elevating it to the ranks of the classical, and now, with the *Billy Elliot* musical at the very end of the season."

(Ferenc László, Magyar Narancs)

"The *Billy Elliot* musical is about the most important things in the world, not just a young boy who dances. The story is so strong, nothing is too much for it.

"Everything went right in this production – it's rare to see a musical that has been well thought through in every respect: it had the audience at a fever pitch, with cheers, applause and a standing ovations for the entire company, but especially the child actors. It's worth seeing!"

(Ira Werbowsky, Der neue Merker)



ÁRON VIZLENDVAI, JUDIT LADINEK | Photo by Péter Rákossy

VIEWERS' OPINIONS

"It was divine: I recommend it for everyone! The entire production was sensational!"
(Judy Komáromi)

"We saw it in London too, and I was extremely curious what the Opera and the Budapest actors would make out of the piece. I wasn't disappointed, because the performance was both funny and thought-provoking. Hats off to the actors and the staff! They've created something great for children and adults alike, and we mustn't forget the orchestra or the brilliant directing either. Thank you for the lovely and unforgettable evening!"
(Adrienn Parti)

"It's a wonderful piece, and in my view will be the musical of the year. It has my vote."
(Bálint Ferenc)

"Selecting the actors must have been a huge undertaking. There are very few who can both sing and dance so well, especially as children, one also has to contend with their voices changing."
(Mária Gmezei)

"It was wonderful! It was heart-warming to see how many young talents got a chance to perform."
(Veronika Várkonyi)



Inklings

Photo by Attila Nagy

Stars of the cinema screen like Dexter Fletcher, Mike Myers, Simon Pegg and their younger colleagues like Margot Robbie are well known to many. Edita Gruberová, one of the stars of the opera world, also has millions of fans around the world. But what could all these popular artists have in common? *György Jávorszky*

In the past year, it has been made public that the Opera is expanding into a new logistical and artistic centre, to be called the Eiffel Artistic Studios and built on the site of the old Northern Vehicle Repair Workshop that was closed in 2009. Right now the demolition process preceding the restructuring is in full swing, in order for the building to be ready to open its doors to the public in late spring of 2017. Along with different studios and a visitor centre, there will also be a small theatre named after the Opera's legendary former intendant Miklós Bánffy, which next year will host the queen of bel canto, Edita Gruberová herself, in a concert-version performance of Donizetti's opera *Roberto Devereux*.

In May 2016, however, this enormous space looked completely different, which allowed for it to be turned into a train station for a few days for filming Vaughn Stein's dystopian thriller *Terminal*. In keeping with the tone of the film, filming started each day in late afternoon and lasted until the wee hours. On the last night, I visited with a few colleagues from the Opera, to see a functioning, albeit not in the least bit modern, train station sprawling before our eyes. Line producer Danny Gulliver told us that the location scouts had inspected many facilities whose style and atmosphere would satisfy the director, who is also credited with the script, and also be suitable for creating the scenes he had outlined.

Opera fan



Photo by Attila Nagy



MIKE MYERS | Photo by Matt Petit / ©A.M.P.A.S.



Photo by Attila Nagy



SIMON PEGG | Photo by Andy Buchanan BAFTA



MARGOT ROBBIE | Photo by Matt Petit / ©A.M.P.A.S.

Opera fan

Several offers were made, but the British staff eventually settled on Budapest because, they said, they would never have found such a large, unused complex in the U.K.

Producer Molly Hassell took us around, showing how they had converted different parts of the building. There was a metro station, with advertising pillars covered with peeling posters and pre-digital train schedules, pay telephones from the '80s, along with a waiting-room café lined with the glass walls of an old office. They had set up the interior space in a completely different part of the Art Studios. "It's incredible how huge this building is! We can even film scenes that don't take place in this train station," she said, as one object in a distant wing revealed itself to be a sort of confessional.

Where soon there will be a modern scenery warehouses and elegant dressing room, the tension in the billowing smoke and dust of the film was palpable. The air between Dexter Fletcher's hired assassin and Mike Myers's mysterious porter crackled, and café waitress Margot Robbie (who burst onto the scene in Martin

Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street*), wasn't who she seemed to be at first either. During the breaks, the actors transformed back into everyday people, and since the new production is still under a non-disclosure agreement, they, unusually enough, asked us about the secrets of the Art Studios, and were primarily amazed at the idea that there would be opera performed here only a year later.



DEXTER FLETCHER

The make-up artists had conjured Mike Myers (*Wayne's World*, 54, the *Austin Powers* films, *Inglourious Basterds*) into an ageing, broken-looking railway employee, a shadowy figure in the gloom whose eyes flashed with terror when a knife is brandished at him. Then the director shouted "Cut!", and Myers's familiar impish grin returned to his face. As the cameras were realigned, he asked how, say, *Madama Butterfly* would be performed here. Well, it won't be... since The Eiffel Art Studios won't be used for large productions, and we showed him where the Bánffy Stage will be built to house chamber



Photo by Attila Nagy

pieces and concert performances. Dexter Fletcher, best known in Hungary from *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, has also directed in recent years, and his 2013 film *Sunshine on Leith* did very well in the English-speaking world. "With this film, I went further than I had dared to before," he said in an interview. "I wanted a challenge, to push my own limits." Fletcher is also familiar with the world of musical drama through his Lithuanian-born wife, Dalia Ibelhauptaitė, who is primarily known, along for her spoken-word theatre productions and short films, as an opera director. She is

partial to staging works by Mozart and 19th century composers, but occasionally gives more modern pieces a go, including Prokofiev's *The Gambler*, the musical *Sweeney Todd* and the electronic opera fantasy *XYZ*.

Ibelhauptaitė studied at the Moscow Academy and has worked in many European countries apart from Lithuania, and made her New York debut last year. Although she's lived in London for 25 years, her work never abandons her Eastern European roots, while her philosophy draws much from her experiences in the Far East.

Important for her are self-reflection and meticulous analysis. "We must examine every detail, but not those surface things that we often see and immediately forget," she says. Ibelhauptaitė was here with her husband in Budapest, where work on *Terminal* continued at other locations around the city. When the film is released in cinemas, the audience will already have taken possession of the Eiffel Art Studios, but the atmosphere of the former repair shop won't be lost, since it will be preserved on celluloid as the background for its most spectacular scenes. ○

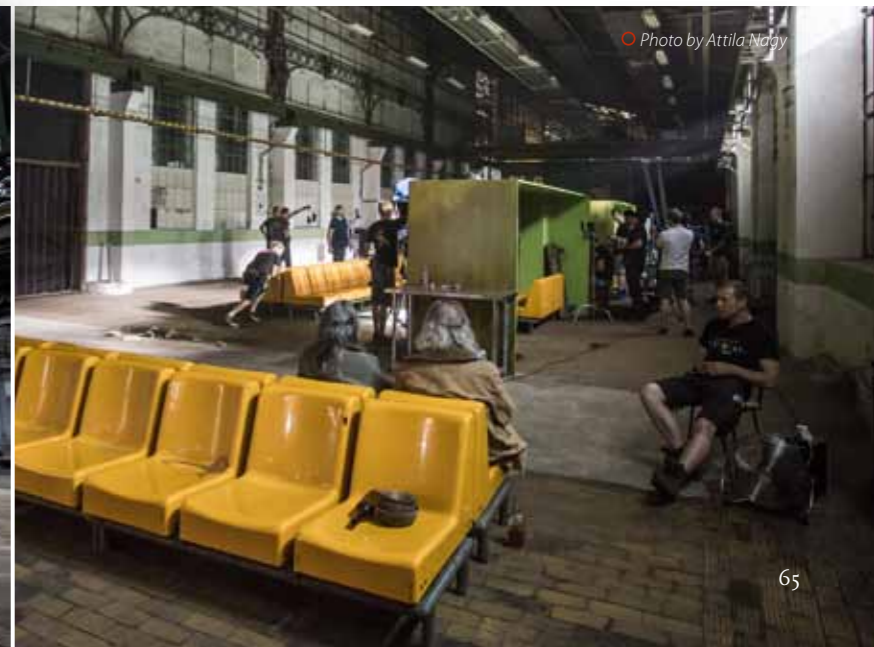


Photo by Attila Nagy

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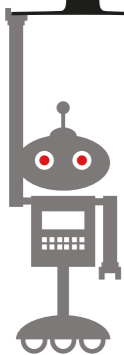
Színház

MOZI



KOMOLYZENEF

KONCERT



KIÁLLÍTÁS

gyerekprogramok



Jegyvásárlás

OPERA

MAGYAR ÁLLAMI OPERAHÁZ
HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA

2016
17
Oktober
November

ERKEL

SZÍNHÁZ
THEATRE

OPERA HOUSE

1 October 12 November	Royal Music Hall
1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 October	THE SPINNING ROOM ZOLTÁN KOLDÁLY
2, 8, 9, 15, 16 October	La traviata Giuseppe Verdi
13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 28, 29, 30 October and 4 November	Spartacus László Seregi / Aram Ilyich Khachaturian
21, 27, 29 October and 3 November	THE MINE EINOJUHANANI RAUTAVAARA LOVE JUDIT VARGA
15 and 22 October and 5 November	La serva padrona Giovanni Battista Pergolesi
24 October	Piano Arias
23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 October and 2, 3, 4 November	KÁDÁR'S LAST SPEECH
31 October	Requiem Giuseppe Verdi
2, 6, 9, 12, 17 November	Die Walküre Richard Wagner
5, 10, 13, 16, 20 November	Faust Charles Gounod
18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 November	DON QUIXOTE MARIUS PETIPA / ALEXANDER GORSKY MICHAEL MESSERER / LUDGWIG MINKUS
30 November	LES CARMÉLITES FRANCIS POULENC
ERKEL	
1 October	Kyling It – Modern Ballet Recital Walking Mad J. Inger / M. Ravel / A. Pärt Sarabande J. Kylaán / J. S. Bach Falling Angels J. Kylaán / S. Reich Johan Inger's Rain Dogs J. Inger / T. Waits
2, 28, 29, 30 October	La Bohème 2.0 Giacomo Puccini
11, 12, 13, 14, 15 October	Billy Elliot – The Musical Sir Elton John / Lee Hall
16 October	Bel Canto Reloaded Klára Kolonits Gala Night
22 October	Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra Concert
23, 31 October	56 Drops of Blood Tamás Mihály - A musical of revolution performed at the Székesfehérvár Vörösmarty Theatre
4 November	Requiem Giuseppe Verdi
5, 11, 12, 17, 19, 25 November	Tosca Giacomo Puccini
6 November	Bátori Mária Ferenc Erkel
13 November	Cinema Szingetár
18, 20, 24, 26, 27 November	LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR GAETANO DONIZETTI
19, 20, 26, 27 November	King Pomádé's New Clothes György Ránki

OPERA

MAGYAR ÁLLAMI OPERAHÁZ
HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA

Zoltán Kodály

The Spinning Room

Folk scenes in Hungarian, with Hungarian and English surtitles

Director ▶ **Michał Znaniecki**
Choreographer ▶ **Zsolt Juhász**
Chorus director ▶ **Kálmán Strausz**
Set designer ▶ **Luigi Scoglio**

Costume designer ▶ **Magdalena Dabrowska**
Animation and lighting designer ▶ **Bogumił Palewicz**
Dramaturg ▶ **Judit Kenesey**
Conductor ▶ **Balázs Kocsár**

Featuring the members of the Duna Art Ensemble.

In the first part, István "Szalonna" Pál and his Band's dance house will get the audience tuned in and keyed up for Hungarian folk melodies.

Premiere ▶ 1 October 2016, Opera House | Further dates ▶ 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 October 2016

Partner ▶

