

“...ON DISPLAY IN THE READING ROOM OF THE HISTORY OF THEATRE COLLECTION AND THE CATALOGUE CORRIDOR...”

The minor jubilee exhibitions of 2011, following the major anniversaries of past years



The Collection of Theatre History's most spectacular and most popular activity is manifested in exhibitions of theatre art and history and various related publications. An exhibition or a published volume is always the outcome of serious research and archival work, as well as one objective of finding sources in theatre history.

The non-museum type exhibition spaces of the National Széchényi Library occasionally house exhibitions remembering outstanding events and marked

Ede Paulay as Rákóczi in Ede Szigligeti's *Kolozsvár* production of *The captivity of Ferenc Rákóczi II* (29 September 1861)



achievements of Hungarian cultural history and theatrical art and their greatest figures, enabling us to display visual and audio documents of varied forms and content. Grasping a creative moment (a performance) in the historical process or the stages of a fleeting career, we try to show what it is that survives of the theatre and of a production. We have to be aware of the fact that the production and its mortal creators are not enduring in the way the products of some other more fortunate artists are. Thus we have to rely on documents scaffolding viewers' memories, that with human involvement (that of the creator and the receiver) the essence will last ("what the eye cannot behold"), the effect and memory of the play will stay in the viewers' and the nation's memory.

In 2011 the professional staff of the Theatre Collection offered visitors several new exhibitions. After 2010, the year of the Erkel bicentenary and of the Emília Márkus jubilee (the actress was born 150 years earlier), this year themes of lesser significance but of equal interest were identified for introducing our exciting and rare items.

Hardly had the major Miroslav Krleža exhibition, which started in the spring, been closed coupled with the launching of the virtual web page on the Museum Night, in cooperation with the Collection of Theatre History, we opened our doors to night visitors with our own display as well. Our chamber exhibition remembered the theatre aspects of the Rákóczi War of Liberty, focusing not only on Rákóczi and the anti-Habsburg *Kuruc* men, the heroes. We explored outstanding drama and operetta writers and composers, actors and designers. The historiographer and cultural historian Dr. Domokos Dániel Kis, whose narrower research field is the Rákóczi period, discovered a large number of data and documents from the stage representation of Rákóczi and his contemporaries. As part



The poster of the Sándor Kertész exhibition

of the Museum Night program many people saw our chamber exhibition displayed in the Reading Room's two cases and in some tableaux (*Rákóczi on Stage*). The later drop in visitor numbers was due to our restricted summer schedule and also to being overshadowed by other events. In the autumn, we staged two new chamber exhibitions. The first commemorated the 100th anniversary of Sándor Kertész's birth and the Art Theatre he founded, which worked continuously in Toronto for 30 years. The event was compiled by Magdolna Both and Lujza Erdélyi with the cooperation of restorers Judit Papp and Pál Horváth. (*"Curtain at Eight / Dérnyé Voltam Kanadában" - Sándor Kertész, founder of the Art Theatre was born 100 years ago*)

Enthusiastic and critical about our work, Kathy Kertész-Millard, the daughter of the theatre founder-director-actor's daughter, an actress herself, did not only inspire us but also provided the family's invaluable donations when at the beginning of December she came back from Canada to visit Hungary.

The Kertész exhibition was realized under very dif-

ficult circumstances. Originally, it was planned to be offered to a wide audience in a theatre hall with lots of installation. However, because 2011 was the starting year of major reshuffles in the Budapest theatre world, rather than using the József Attila Theater, falling behind Kertész's birthday in the summer, eventually the exhibition was launched on 17th October in the catalogue corridor of the Collection of Theatre History and in some reading room cases. The seemingly accidental location, however, did not affect the material negatively. Thanks to the professionalism of my colleagues, who managed to combine their own vision with the visitors' perspective, the careful but unorthodox arrangement of theatre bills, letters, photos and excerpts from reviews and confessions in the display cases revealed even more exciting connections than what we had first envisaged.

Not much later, on 9th November we had the opening of another "mini chamber exhibition," related to the annual memorial session of the Dance Science Working Research Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Remembering Karola Szalay, we introduced our selection under the title *Art and Science – Body and Soul*. The doctoral work of the outstanding dancer and actress,

who was born 100 and died 10 years ago, was evaluated by László Beke, the Director at the Research Institute for Art History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The documents in the cases (photos, costume and scenery designs and letters) inform us not only of Karola Szalay's major roles, professional and private relationships and her scientific paper, but hopefully also of the age of high quality and the burgeoning trends of a modern dance theatre in the Opera House's ballet troupe. They also tell us of Karola Szalay's later period, when among other things, she was acting as a ballet master at the Milan Scala. We hope that the few lines of introduction, the numerous photographs and designs by Tivadar Márk, Gusztáv Oláh and Zoltán Fülöp will create deserved interest in the artist who has left behind a remarkable oeuvre. In addition to these, the Collection of Theatre History has provided documents for exhibitions outside NSZL: for example, for the commemoration of the birth of the independent Hungarian company of the Nagyvárad theatre (today: Oradea) and the 111 years of the building's life; for the large Liszt exhibition in the Musicology Institute's Museum of Music History; for the jubilee display called *Theatre and*



Karola Szalay in the 1935 production of *The Wooden Prince* at the Hungarian Opera House; Zoltán Fülöp's scenery design for Bartók's dance pantomime

Magic, which started at the National Theatre Festival at Pécs and remembered the greatest Hungarian magician Rodolfó, and the comic actress Manyi Kiss; as well as supplying the material for the event centred around the publisher Gusztáv Heckenast.

The Collection of Theatre History, the most significant collection of theatre-related documents in Hungary regards it as its mission to process as fully as possible and present to the theatre-loving and library-going public and to interested theatre professionals in the most enjoyable manner the precious design pages, photographs, manuscripts, scripts, papers, playbills and other small prints, as well as full personal bequests we receive and institutional fond. For this undertaking, expertise, experience, talent, dedication, ambition and readiness to work hard are all given. The staff of the thematic collection, turning 62 years old in 2011, are keen to show researchers, readers and exhibition visitors round the gems of a collection destined to preserve and pass on the wonders of the theatre. Behind the scenes, you should always see our colleagues and their invaluable contributions.

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