

EVENTS



LIBRARY SALON

Library Salon VII – Playful Season

With the sponsorship of NKA (National Cultural Fund of Hungary), in October 2017 the National Széchényi Library released the seventh season of Library Salon, the literary and cultural history series of events, this year entitled *Playful Season*. Similarly to the previous seasons, the central topic was explored by renowned guests, and the sessions were variegated by colourful art performances. Traditionally, exhibition cases were set up displaying pieces from the collection, which were presented by our colleagues.



The opening event was based on the playful nature of language to which we invited linguist and associate professor Ágnes Veszelszki, who gave a talk on the phenomena of media and the online world. Following this, Gyula Bodrogi, bearer of the title Actor of the Nation, presented the playfulness of our language in a performance of the poems by József Romhányi, nicknamed 'Rhyme-Pourer'. At the end of the event several

manuscripts by Sándor Weöres were presented for the audience by literary historian László Boka.

The next event was the captivating lecture entitled *Translation and Delusion* by linguist, poet and literary translator Ádám Násdasy in which he dealt with the relationship between the translator and the language, and with the use of language as an opportunity to play when translating, based on János Arany's Shakespeare translations. This flow of ideas was carried on by the Teatro Company in their poetic performance called *All and All is Gold, that...*, which followed the poet's path of life. As a closure, treasures from the Manuscript Collection regarding the poet's oeuvre were presented by literary historian Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi.

The event in December brought musical topics under spotlight. The lecture held by Szilveszter Ókovács, General-Director of Hungarian State Opera – and perfectly completed by the performance of opera singer Orsolya Sáfár – dug into questions like how musical humour can be made perceptible and what acting adds to music. The mini exhibition of the event was led by culture historian Boglárka Illyés and it revolved around the manuscript of Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* found in the NSZL's Music Collection.



The first episode of the new year featured the role of games appearing in media. Tamás Vitray, who has been present



in the national media since the first years of Hungarian television, entertained the audience with funny stories about the world of television quiz shows. These games discussed by him were later embodied in the improvisation show by Grund Theatre. Lastly, Attila Sárosi, expert of periodicals from the Acquisitions and Stock Registry Department presented the first crosswords published in Hungarian press, the letter and number puzzles released by the newspapers of the Hungarian Reform Era and the most popular crossword magazines of the socialist era.

In February, the audience could enjoy an event of literary and musical dialogues by writer and poet János Lackfi and the Sebő Band, entitled *Hammer Made of Seagull Feather*. The poet provided poems and pictures, the band added music and with a little improvisation these were turned into a show through which (as worded by János Lackfi) the audience could gain an insight into an authentic 'lyrical workshop'. This time, the exhibition case displayed Albert Szenci Molnár's visual poem, included in the volume *Lusus Poetici* published in 1614. The curiosities of these special works were explored by literary historian Beatrix Visy.

We opened the first session of spring by dealing with theatre. Our guest was actor Péter Rudolf, bearer of Kossuth and Jászai Mari Award, who discussed the opportunities of acting through playing, shaping and bringing a character to life. This was followed by the astonishing performance by



pianist Misi Boros and the final part was held by Edit Rajnai, researcher of the Theatre History Collection, who presented more than one hundred-year-old photographs depicting the mimic play of early legendary Hungarian actors.

When it comes to playing, we obviously could not leave out fairy tales. Our guest for this occasion was singer and story-teller András Berecz, bearer of Kossuth Award, who entertained the audience together with cimbalom artist and Young Master of Folklore Dániel Szabó with a collection of songs, tales and anecdotes. After the show, literary historian Franciska Dede provided insight into the tale illustrations of the artists of the Workshop of Gödöllő.

The closing event of our season concentrated on sports. The guest of the event was professor and honorary doctor Lajos Mocsai, rector of the University of Physical Education whose presentation was *Healthy Play? Playful Health!*, and he was accompanied by a guest, Mercédesz Tóth (member of the Talented Youth Workshop). The skilled youngster enriched the programme by performing elements of rhythmic gymnastics. At the end of the event the audience had the chance to have a look at the social sport life of the turn of the century through selected newspapers from our collection.

Like in the previous season, our events were recorded this time as well, therefore those who could not attend have the opportunity to watch them retrospectively. The events of the 7th season of Literary Salon are available on the NSZL's YouTube channel.

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Playtime, Halves, Overtime Library Salon Extras in the Playful Season



Playing is sometimes hard to break off. The seventh, so called *Playful Season* of Literary Salon was prolonged with extra events owing to our successful tender. As the diversified meaning of 'play' and the thousand-year-long 'activity' of homo ludens allows for an infinite number of approaches, we did not repress our playful nature and the only rule of the game was that the topics had to relate to contemporary literature. Therefore, we had widened the playfield, this interdisciplinary and artistic spaces, by adding four more events.

Under the title *Play and Comics*, a roundtable talk was organized on 31 May in connection to the ongoing exhibition *Comics as Narrative*. The talk featured the curators of the exhibition, Anikó Ágnes Patonai, Rita Szűts-Novák, comics researcher Eszter Szép and comics critic Antal Bayer and they were being asked by literary historian Bianka Zsigó about the comics adaptation of literary works and contemporary comics.

Our most extraordinary event entitled *Enrolling Rumini!* was scheduled to International Children's Day. This event took place on 4 June and school-children visiting our library could choose two out of three special subjects. This day of literature of natural sciences not only brought the well-known characters from Judit Berg's novels and the sciences together, but it also let us present some curiosities and rare

pieces from the library's collection. The biology class was held by Csilla Bíró covering the animals of the Rumini novels and the characteristics of animal species while old engravings and meticulously illustrated books were also presented. Betti Varga held a natural sciences class in an especially active manner. Natural phenomena were evoked through various dynamic group activities. A geography class took place in the Map Collection room, coordinated by Beatrix Visy, where the participants could create the maps of the locations of Rumini's newest adventures. In this way, after examining and describing the locations of the Rumini adventures, its islands, maps and naval tools, new worlds could be born on the children's maps. After this, the children could take a look at two rare treasures of the NSZL from 1621: Europe's nautical chart and Hessel Gerritsz's hand-drawn nautical chart of the Indian Ocean. The most significant attraction, however, was the 'form master's class' held by writer Judit Berg in the Ceremonial Hall. The participants were instantly enchanted by her openness, delightful stories, honest confessions and her questions awakening the attending children's curiosity. The list of the questions addressed to the writer seemed to be never-ending similarly to those of the children's and their books to be dedicated. However, the anguish of queuing was made easier by food and refreshments served to the little sailors.

On 13 September the programme *Our Illustrious Hands* took place. The discussion centred around the recent and contemporary position of children's book illustration and it was carried out by experts of the field: Emőke Varga, college professor, long-time researcher of the text-image relation and the visual world of Hungarian children's books; Nikolett Szekeres, literary historian, leading member of the Hungarian Children's Book Forum (HUBBY), discussed the





publishing and visual trends; András Dániel, author of the successful *Kufli* series and several other works, joined the discussion not only as an illustrator but as a writer. The talk was led by Beatrix Visy and it touched upon the standards of children's book publishing, the tawdry publication around the regime change, the transformation of the relation towards visual aspects and the unity of text and image. In order to represent ourselves as well, a mini exhibition was prepared for this event including works of Hungarian contemporary artist like Katalin Szegedi, András Baranyai (b), Mari Takács, László Herbszt, Jacqueline Molnár, Sarolta Sulyovszky and Tibor Kárpáti. Illustrator Írisz Agócs was creating illustrations 'live' to the poem *Szörnyszomszéd* [Monster Neighbour] by Judit Ágnes Kiss using aquarelle technique. Through the pictures gaining shape in the presence of the audience, we could track down the evoking scenes and imaginary figures

novels, short stories. During the talk the answers and possible solutions to the question concerning the connection between screen adaptation and contemporary literature were examined through a particular work by Kossuth Award Winner writer Ádám Bodor, director Péter Gothár and aesthete Gábor Gelencsér. They discussed how a sentence from a literary work can be transformed into an utterance on screen and what can be made of the literary text in the visual aspect of the film. During the conversation short clips from Péter Gothár's movie *A részleg* (*The Section*) (1995) were shown, which was inspired by the world depicted in Ádám Bodor's *The Sinistra Zone*. The host of the programme was László Boka who closed the successful season and commended the next season, entitled *Streams of Memory*.

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Hydrographies and Streams of Memory – Library Salon VIII



The eighth season of Library Salon entitled *Streams of Memory* began to flow around the entire Carpathian Basin in November 2018. The events focusing on the relationship between memory and our waters also embraced several fields of art and related disciplines. On the one hand, they were connected to our cultural memory related to our waters, hydrography, watersheds, and regions bordered by bodies of waters, since water itself (the river, the stream) can be understood as a symbol of the layers, flow and drifts of memory. Hungary's hydrography also transforms all those monuments, branches of arts, works of art and disciplines into a cultural water network, some junctions and areas of which we were able to present in the series of six events.

On 8 November 2018, at the first event, writer Lajos Ambrus and literary historian Károly Alexa discussed the literary monuments of Lake Balaton – Füred, Badacsony, Szigliget, Sümeg – and the writers and poets connected to Lake Balaton. During the evening, the long list started from Károly Kisfaludy, through Berzsenyi, Jókai, Lőrinc Szabó, to Péter Hajnóczy. We evoked poets and writers who were inspired by the landscape of Lake Balaton and the many stories and legends connected to this region. Literary historian Dede Franciska, the host of the evening, presented selected items from the library's collection entitled *Balaton Papers*. The audience could also enjoy a fragment from the silent film from 1918 based on Mór Jókai's novel, *The Man with the Golden Touch*, accompanied by piano improvisations by composer Ferenc Darvas.

The second event of the eighth season was held on 13 December. During the evening we recalled various 'Memories of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca)' connected to the Szamos River. Our guest was Andrea Tompa, writer and theatre expert, whose highly successful novels bring to life the troubled history of Kolozsvár in the 20th century. Literary historians Imre József Balázs and László Boka had a discussion with the author of many popular novels like *A Hóhér háza. Történetek az aranykorból* [The Hangman's House. Stories from the Golden Age], *Fejtől s lábtól. Kettő orvos Erdélyben* [Head to Toe. Two Doctors in Transylvania], as well as *Omerta*. The main themes and questions of the evening resulted in a profound conversation. The participants touched upon how a city or a region appears in the intertwined or even diverging fates of people. Is it possible to discuss its history, fate, memory during the time of the monarchy, between the

two world wars, and then during the communist dictatorships other than in segments? Is there a continuity of memory between a fictional story and genuine people and events? The evening was enriched by the performance of Csilla Albert and Áron Dimény, actors of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj, who recited from Tompa's novel *Omerta. Hallgatások könyve* [Omerta. Book of Silences], the story of which takes place in and around the suburbs of Kolozsvár in the 1950s. László Boka, the host of the evening, presented a selection of legendary journals once published in Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca

On 24 January 2019, the third event of the series invited the participants to the Danube and the Szigetcsúcs. We chose this region because in Kisoroszi, located in the Danube Bend, at the northern tip of Szentendre Island, more and more writers had settled starting from the 1960s, in weekend houses or sometimes as permanent residents. One of the firsts was Miklós Mészöly, who always had close ties to the Danube, as he was born in Szekszárd and then lived in Kisoroszi for decades. Péter Nádas, Vilmos Csaplár for a while, then Péter Balassa and Endre Kukorely also bought or rented a house there. Kisoroszi had also become a kind of literary and political pilgrimage site, as many writers, especially younger ones, regularly visited the masters working there – including our lecturers, writer László Márton and Endre Szkárosi, poet, literary historian and university professor.

The conversation centred around Mészöly and Polcz as a married couple, as they had been spending the period from spring to autumn in Kisoroszi for decades, and they formed the centre of literary life. And also because the 'place' – be that hometown, permanent residence or the location of recurring visits – had always played a central role in Mészöly's writing and public thinking.

As the main attraction of the evening, actress Andrea Bozó and theatre director László Bagossy read excerpts from the correspondence entitled *A bilincs a szabadság legyen* [Let the Handcuffs be Freedom], and then we played an excerpt entitled *Two and a Half Minutes about Kisoroszi* from Miklós Mészöly's life interview, which had never been screened before. Then discussion about the work and life of Miklós Mészöly and Alaine Polcz led by writer László Márton and poet and literary historian Endre Szkárosi followed, recalling

their personal memories too. At the mini exhibition, we presented some special pieces related to the topic from the Mészöly legacy preserved in the Petőfi Literary Museum and from the collection of the NSZL.

On 28 March 2019, we arrived at the southern part of the Danube's riverbed inhabited by Hungarians, and the evening entitled *At the Danube – Sand and Water, Images of the Vajdaság (Vojvodina)* was organized with the participation of Ottó Tolnai and Katalin Ladik. The Danube is a river flowing across borders. It connects, transports, treasures and driftwood 'chatter on its surface' or 'remain utterly silent'. At the same time, the great river divides and separates time and space, cultures, communities, past and present. Thus, during the evening, we tried to catch the 'memory of the water' in the act. Two creators, boundless in knowledge, sensitivity and genres, made 'confessions' to the audience about the past and present of border existence, minority existence and art coming to the surface from waters and layers of driftwood: Ottó Tolnai, poet and writer and, Katalin Ladik, poet, performer and actress. Both of them are connected with several ties to Géza Csáth, the 'orphan', a writer and doctor born in Szabadka (Subotica), who had a tragic fate, and in whose short stories the dreamlike landscape of Bácska (Bačka) comes to life. From the collection of the National Széchényi Library, we showed the audience a particularly beautiful Art Nouveau volume of Géza Csáth's *Délutáni álmom* [Afternoon Dream]. The evening was hosted this time by literary historian and critic Visy Beatrix. After her conversation with Ottó Tolnai, Katalin Ladik performed from her poems (of sounds) connected to water, river and the Danube.

The title of our event on 11 April was *Consciousness Streams on the Tözsér-Árpád Continent*, and our guests were Árpád Tözsér, poet, literary historian and literary translator from Felvidék (Upper Hungary), and Tamás Korpa, poet. The event held on the Day of Hungarian Poetry sought to examine the lyrical geography of Tözsér constantly taking a new shape, the essence of which was summarized in the poet's diary entry of 4 December 1993: 'I do not feel that I am looking outwards, but that the world is looking inwards, at me, and that those things that I have once experienced gaze back at me'. What role does the geography of world culture play in this basic statement of thought and perception, this time primarily its great rivers (Styx, Lethe, Eridanos) and the specific rivers and mountains of the homeland like Garam (Hron), Rima (Rimava), Sajó (Slaná), Vág (Váh) and the Carpathians? Does Gömörország (Gemer) have an emblematic river, and what does the Danube mean in Pozsony (Bratislava)?

During the evening, fragments were read by Éva Veronika Kalapos from the works of Árpád Tözsér, as well as from the



works of Sándor Petőfi, Andrej Sládkovič and Mihály Tompa. The other prominent guest of the event was Katalin Szvorák, a folksinger and performer who gave an insight into the masterpieces of Palóc folklore.

The central items of the mini exhibition selected from the treasures of the national library were Árpád Tözsér's volumes *Genezis* [Genesis], originally published in 1979 and then re-published in 2006.

The closing event of the Library Salon's season entitled *Streams of Memory* took place on 30 May 2019, having Krisztián Grecsó, writer, poet, editor, and Róbert Hrutka musician and composer as guests. *The Stories of the Tisza and the Körös* were told and sang by the poet.

The poems and prose of Krisztián Grecsó are interwoven with the memory of the Tisza and Körös regions, which record the stories of the previous and present generations, their relation to time that is changing or standing still. During the evening, the author read from these texts, including his recently published novel *Vera*. We could also witness the exciting dialogue between music and literature: our guests performed songs written by Róbert Hrutka, inspired by personal and collective memory and literary texts.

The central artefact of the items selected for of the mini exhibition from the treasures of our library was the manuscript of Sándor Petőfi's *The Tisza* from 1847, which was examined and presented by literary historian Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi.

For those who followed the waterlines we offered, the events of the 'Hydrography of the Carpathian Basin' could really illustrate the relationship of our contemporary authors to the past, present, homeland, and literature as the hydrographic map of memory preserved in volumes, texts, songs and performances.

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