

RESEARCHERS' NIGHT



2018, 2019



It has become a tradition for the past years that the national library takes part in the event called Researchers' Night, organized countrywide on the third Friday of September. In the past years, we aimed at presenting the work of different collections and workshops and organizing events, some of which were linked to the current exhibition(s).

In September 2018, the audience could get to know the colourful work and research regarding old texts, codices and books through a mini exhibition accompanied by a mini conference. In their brief presentations, the four lecturers tried to address questions like what message the centuries-old surviving pages of volumes convey to the experts and to the wider public, what can we find out about their history, how they became part of the national library's collection and how they can be further preserved and kept for the next generations. In the first lecture, Judit Lauf – regarding a recently discovered old text – talked about whether old texts can be still found today and whether the identity of those monks, who wrote the early Hungarian text fragment that was found among the lines of an early Pauline missal in a decorated bound made in Buda, can be revealed. The colleague of the Székely National Museum delivered a lecture about a volume that adventurously survived the Second World War and was transferred back to the Székely National Museum after having been restored by the experts of the national library. Professor of the Eötvös Loránd Science University, Farkas Gábor Kiss elaborated on the Csereyné codex that perished at the middle of the past century, and

on the poems it included, its authors and scribes, addressing the question what we could learn about how historical songs were sung and who they were sung by in the 16th century. Finally, head of the Restoration and Bindery Department of the NSZL, Marianne Érdi presented the restoration process of the *Chronica* through displaying photographs of the different steps, phases, while the audience could compare its condition before and after the restoration.

The next year, two of the Special Collections, the Manuscript Collection and the Theatre History Collection made their debut during this event. In relation to the Ady anniversary, two of our lecturers displayed numerous relics, approaching the oeuvre from different perspectives, while the staff members of the Theatre History Collection let the audience gain an insight into the collection's work and research by presenting various types of documents in interesting lectures. A few days prior to the event – due to its sad relevance – the programme was expanded with a mini exhibition set up by the colleagues of the Photo Collection to pay homage to the recently deceased film director and cinematographer Sándor Sára.

As a commemoration of the 100th death anniversary of poet Endre Ady, literary historian Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi held a lecture entitled *From My Rushing Train I Glance Out Tremblingly* about the life and career of the poet and important stages of his inner travels presenting some original pieces and digital copies of the Ady legacy (postcards, notes, photographs, or the handwritten CV of the poet). Literary historian Beatrix Visy focused on the photographs taken of Ady, the captured moments and the frozen locations. She discussed contemporaneous photography and Ady's habits of getting photographed. Finally, the audience could take part in an interactive game, they could also take a 'selfie' with Ady and they could have a picture taken of themselves in one of the famous poses of Ady's and Babits' mutual photographs. The colleagues of the Theatre History Collection presented their researches via independent presentations, which altogether exemplified not only the colourful duty of the experts and researchers but also the unique richness of the collection. Their programme was



The Székely Chronicle before restoration

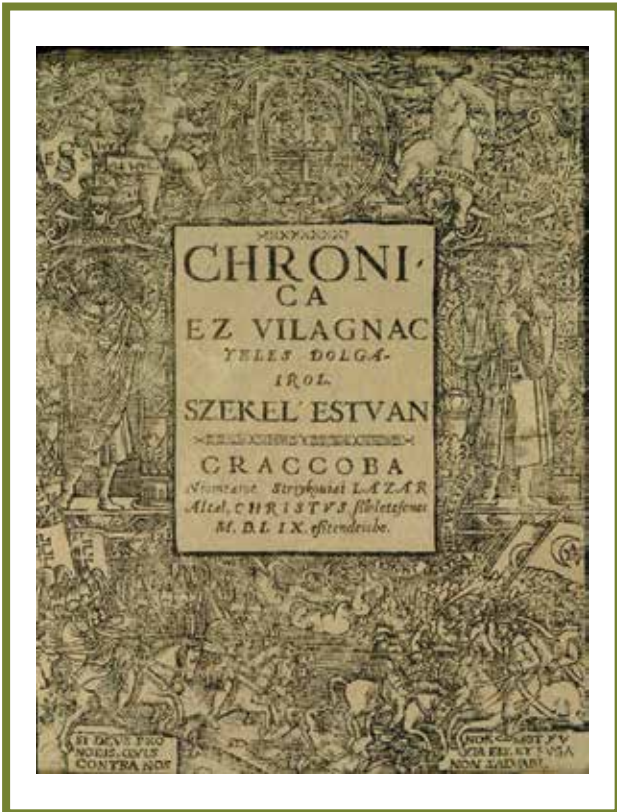
launched by the introduction of their temporary exhibition that provided insight into the entertainment industry of the Rákosi Era. The world of socialist revues was evoked by different types of document or their copies. In her lecture entitled *Róza Laborfalvi Went on a Holiday*, Edit Rajnai unveiled some inside information about the everyday life of the theatre in the 19th century. Based on the judiciary records of the National Theatre between 1841 and 1843, she tried to explore how many days of leave had the actors had, what the fine was in case they did not know their part or left the scene earlier, what the figurants' role was and who was responsible in case the stage collapsed. Domokos Dániel Kis introduced the plans of scenery designed for Zoltán Kodály's and Béla Bartók's dramas; he tried to provide a glimpse of what the contemporaneous audience could see at the beginning of the 20th century by presenting visual and costume designs, photographs, playbills and other small prints, moreover, contemporaneous descriptions, critical reviews and reports. Ágnes Bessenyei prepared to present another type of document, the playscripts. The playscripts of the National Theatre and its legal predecessor, the Magyar Theatre are peerless treasures, as each copy is unique, the majority of them being handwritten and bearing different notes (from authors, directors, actors or prompters). The lecture brought not only examples, but also touched upon the challenges of cataloguing these unique items. Beyond the overall presentation of the Theatre History Collection, Ildikó Sirató aimed at answering question like how does the memory of theatre history work and how documents of literary history can be processed and categorized. The

colleagues of the Photo Collection commemorated Sándor Sára director and cinematographer and holder of the Artist of the Nation Award, who had died a couple of days before this event. The exhibition displayed stills of the films directed or cinematographed by him, various photo albums, excerpts from footages and documentary about him, these belonging to the Photo Collection. A guided tour on the Researchers' Night was held by Réka Sárközy.

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The Székely Chronicle Returns Home



István Székely's chronicle on the world's significant deeds has been preserved in numerous copies. The note that has emerged during the book's restoration reports about the tragedy of the Székely National Museum's treasures in Zalaegerszeg and the survival of this copy. In the dawn of 28–29 March 1945, 52 chests containing the collection of the museum of Sepsiszentgyörgy were destroyed or lost after an air strike while being stored in a train that got stuck at Zalaegerszeg train station. Multiple decisions that later turned out to be catastrophic led to the decay of the unique treasures of the Székely National Museum. Considering the military conditions, in 1944 the National Inspectorate of Public Collections had already ordered that the artefacts of highest value to be transferred to the Appony castle in Tolna County (Sándor Apponyi's former residence in Lengyel, which had housed the renowned library until 1925). However, the material evacuated on 2 September – due to the circumstances changing in the meantime – arrived at

Keszthely after an evasion partly to Lengyel and to Kolozsvár. During Christmas, the treasures could have still been found in the museum of Keszthely, and in January 1945 the valuable load was transferred to Zalaegerszeg where it suffered a disastrous assault in spring. The amazing load contained documents such as the manuscripts of Péter Apor, Péter Bod, József Benkő and Mihály Cserei, and also Bálint Balassi's Machiavelli book with Rimay's inscription at the beginning of it, the book which the poet had sent from the Jesuit College of Braunsberg to János Rimay in 1591. In addition, many Transylvanian families' (Szent-Iványi, Dálnoki Gál, Csíkszentmártoni Szabó) archives, numerous diplomas from the Zsigmond, the Hunyadi, and the Jagiellonian Eras and rare coins (from the Árpád and the Anjou Eras and Transylvania), pictures, paintings and photographs were destroyed or lost. The emergence of the Székely chronicle is gratifying from multiple points of view. This is the first intact book found 70 years later that belonged to the material believed to had been completely vanished. Moreover, once the Székely copy did contain not only Péter Giróthi's 16th century copies that included the poem about the widowed Transylvanian Ilona Horváth and one version of Bálint Balassi's poem, but also the complete Csereyné codex, meaning the adaptation of the Jászón Saga by Sebestyén Lantos and the historical songs of György Enyedi, András Szegedi, György Pesti. It is due to a fortunate serendipity that railwayman János Kis Böndi found the severely damaged book and donated it to the national museum somewhat after 1945.

After more than seven decades of careful treasuring and conservation carried out by the NSZL, in the autumn of 2019, the volume was ceremoniously returned to its rightful owner, the Székely National Museum.



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