

Greetings to the Reader

Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, one of the early masters of Hungarian dramatic writing and a courageously innovative creator, was honoured by the University of Theatre and Film Arts with a series of events on the occasion of his 250th birthday in November 2023. In addition to a unique, artistically inspired commemoration, our aim was to showcase the creative and artistic achievements of our university. We organised the celebration in Debrecen, Csokonai's hometown, using the inspiration and tools of our faculty and students.

The conference, titled "*Kincsek negédes csűre*" ("*Sweet Barn of Treasures*"), embraced both an academic and an artistic-creative approach, and featured lecturers and guest speakers from the university, offering a more complete understanding of Csokonai's oeuvre and legacy. In this issue, we have edited a collection of publications based on these lectures and the stage works presented during the celebrations.

Géza Balázs's study *Csokonai's Dramatic Language – Dorottya or the Triumph of the Ladies at the Carnival* presents, based on this comic epic, the numerous explanations the poet included in footnotes, making the language of the plays difficult, mostly only understandable in the given period. All this yields a wealth of cultural history references, which the poet regularly explains in his notes, while others are for us, the posterity, to discover. The author's analysis of *Dorottya* provides some examples of this.

Tamás Gajdó's study *The Awakening of Mihály Vitéz – On the Premieres of the Plays of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz between 1911–1948* states that Csokonai's plays were only discovered by theatre-makers at the beginning of the 20th century. The first comedy to be staged was *The Widow of Mr Karnyó and the Two Rascals* in 1911 at a matinee of the literary journal *Nyugat*. In addition to discussing the performance, the paper shows how the trajectory of the Debrecen writer's plays continued in Hungary between the two world wars.

András Timár's essay *Revival of A' özvegy Karnyóné (The Widow of Mr Karnyó) – A Survey of József Ruszt's Interpretation of Csokonai* explores the topicality of the director's reading of Csokonai through the (re)construction of the production performed at the University Stage in 1965. The focus of the work is on the extent to which life on stage can be a determinant of the freedom movement

of the language of theatre; and how the Universitas Ensemble's performance worked with a form language that circumvented the realistic-naturalistic canon of the time, and how the performance became one of the company's greatest successes.

Ferenc Veress's study, *The Pantheon Concept from the Renaissance to Romanticism – Reflections on the Background of Statues of Csokonai by Ferenczy and Izsó* analyses the tribute that brought about the rise of the cult of famous people through the examples of ornate tombs and statues of the period. According to the author, István Ferenczy's bust of Csokonai, which the sculptor intended for an imaginary national pantheon, and Miklós Izsó's full-figure statue of Csokonai commissioned by the Debrecen Memorial Garden Committee fit into the humanist tradition.

Zsolt Antal's essay, *Csokonai and Education – The Harmony of Science, Art and Life-Sustaining Human Relationships*, presents the poet's views on education and his work as a teacher. As an educator, Csokonai attached great importance to nature-centredness, a curriculum tailored to the needs of pupils, community organisation based on group dynamics, the transmission of values, and the harmony of science, art and life-sustaining human relationships.

In 1817, Ferenc Kölcsey criticised the lyrical oeuvre of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz in a harsh critique. In his defence of the poet, Zsolt Győrei points out the one-sidedness and under-argued nature of the criticism in the context of literary history, as a kind of counter-review, as well as in the context of fiction. "I intended this counter-review to be both a literary work and a work on literature, a poetic polemic and an evocation of what we still perceive a brilliant and lively spirit – but above all, a homage, a professional tribute to the much admired, beloved and equally playful poet-genius."

The final event of the Csokonai festival, organised by our university, was the production of *Tempefői*, adapted and staged by our students. The original play was written by Csokonai when he was barely twenty years old and was a student at the Reformed College in Debrecen. Perhaps that is why the spirit of *Tempefői* was such a "good fit" for them, writes Attila Szabó in his review of the play, titled "There are an overwhelming number of books here...".

Zsolt Antal
Editor-in-Chief