

# Greetings to the Reader

Mór Jókai, one of the most prolific and versatile writers in Hungarian literature, was born two hundred years ago. Joining in the Jókai 200 commemorative year celebrations, this special issue of the University of Theatre and Film Arts' periodical, *Urania*, examines the great figure of Romanticism, who was a novelist and playwright, a public figure and a devoted fan of theatre, from the perspectives of theatre, film and linguistics.

Jókai was also one of the media workers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, contributing to the shaping of public taste and the image of national culture as a journalist, editor, and theatre critic.

In his study, *Márton Kakas at the theatre*, **Tamás Gajdó** evokes Jókai's journalistic alter ego, who commented on the operation of the National Theatre in the columns of the *Vasárnapi Ujság* and later the *Üstökös* in an ironic yet thought-provoking tone. Gajdó shows that there is more than just joking behind these letters; rather, Jókai made observations about the day-to-day reality of Hungarian theatre, problems of the repertoire, and issues related to educating the audience that are still valid today.

The playwright Jókai also resonated with the intellectual currents of his time through his interest in the Hungarian Conquest and the nation's past. **Géza Balázs's** essay on Jókai's drama about the Hungarian conquest, *Levente*, considers the work, which was written for the millennium, to be an experiment in poetic theatre, focusing on questions of Hungarian origin myths and historical identity. The study does not only follow the story of the play, but also explores what *Levente* might mean today: a kind of symbolic linguistic-visionary theatre that speaks of national remembrance through Jókai's archaic use of language.

**Csaba Galántai's** study explores the history of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century adaptations of Jókai's novels, examining the circumstances and reception of Sándor Hevesi's premieres at the Magyar Theatre. The stagings of *Kárpáthy Zoltán* (Zoltán Kárpáthy), *Az új földesúr* (The New Landlord) or *A kőszívű ember fiai* (*The Baron's Sons*) were not only a literary success, but these plays also created a bridge between Hungarian Romanticism and modern theatre through Hevesi's dramaturgy.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century image of Jókai is closely linked to the world of fashion and visibility. **Csilla Kollár**'s study *Jókai and national fashion* explores the relationship between clothing during the Reform Era, national identity, and film adaptations. The costume descriptions in Jókai's works are chronicles of the history of Hungarian bourgeois fashion. The study shows how Jókai's aesthetics lived on in the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century through the costume designs of the film adaptation of *A kőszívű ember fiai*.

In the "Case Study" section of the journal, we publish **Balázs Lázár**'s article, which reveals the story behind the first stage version of *A kőszívű ember fiai*. The study revisits a forgotten chapter in the history of theatre by showing how Jókai's play ended up on the stage of the Budai Nyári Színkör instead of the National Theatre. Through careful analysis of the sources, the author sheds light not only on the dramaturgical specifics of the stage adaptation, but also on the functioning of the cultural institutional system of the time.

**Zoltán Bódi**'s study draws attention to issues of language and national identity in Mór Jókai's play *Olympi verseny* (Olympic Competition). Written for the fiftieth anniversary of the National Theatre, this occasional work redefines the role of the Hungarian theatre through an allegorical debate between Past and Present. Bódi's analysis shows, through the layers of vocabulary, rhetoric and symbolism, how Jókai's image of the nation is constructed and how the cultural identity of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is linguistically shaped.

The "Exhibition" section of this issue contains a review by **Beáta Huber and Erika Zsuzsanna Kiss** of the Jókai exhibition titled "*I too had a life on the boards*" at the OSZMI (National Theatre History Museum and Institute), which visually evokes the writer's oeuvre, the era in which he was active, and the legend around which two centuries of Hungarian culture have been built.

Finally, the journal presents the new publications released in the fall under the auspices of SZFE (Hungarian University of Theatre and Film Arts).

The articles in this issue are inspired by different eras and approaches, yet they share a common question: what are theatre, film, language, and national culture doing today with Jókai's legacy? Please enjoy this selection—a tribute and a reinterpretation, a recollection of the past and a reflection on the present.

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