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# B U D A P E S T ' S

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## THE PANTRIES OF BUDAPEST

TOURING THE MARKET HALLS



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**On the cover:**  
Cover photo: The Great Market Hall  
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# The pantries of Budapest

Walking among delicious and healthy goods in a lively, exciting and spectacular location is one of the most enjoyable ways to pass the time in a metropolis. The world of Budapest's market halls is a special experience because it brings together two eras: it evokes the past, but at the same time it is very lively and filled with the pleasures of the present.

Founded at the turn of the previous century, the capital's network of market halls has proven to be a long-term investment due to their thoughtful installation, good transportation links and the spatial organisation of the buildings, thereby serving the city well to this day.



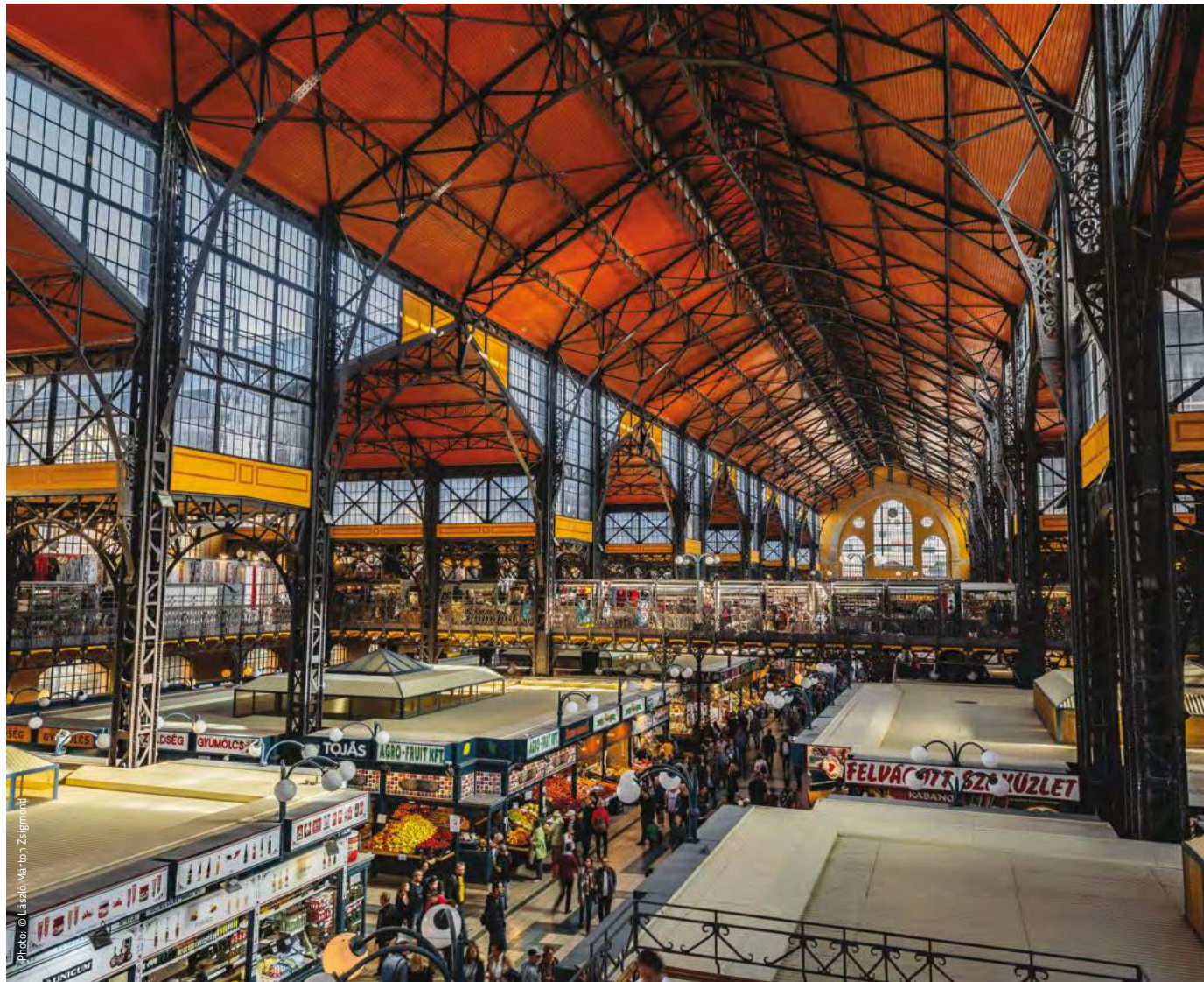
The new role of the market hall  
at Batthyány Square



# A COLOURFUL MENU

## Market halls in Budapest

Text: Eszter Götz



The atmosphere of these buildings remains unmistakably unique today, so much so that the newer markets that lined up after them, although they reflect their own eras in terms of their architectural styles, often recall the atmosphere that belongs to the first indoor markets that opened between 1897 and 1903. In that first period, Budapest consisted of 10 districts, eight of which were given their own market halls, seemingly at once, all of which followed the same concept: the city administration was primarily mindful of building the new halls near the more densely populated areas, mostly on the sites of the former open-air marketplaces and with good transportation links. It was also important that renowned architects be the ones to design them in the historicist style fashionable at the time, but with up-to-date structures. Thanks to this careful planning, they have not become outdated even after 120 years.

### THE PANTRIES OF BUDAPEST



Budapest's first and still largest market, the **GREAT MARKET HALL** (also known as the Central Market Hall) was built in the immediate vicinity of the Danube. A few months after the conclusion of the millennium celebrations, on 15 February 1897, at the same time as four other halls, it opened its doors on the border between downtown and Ferencváros (Districts V and IX respectively), at the Pest bridgehead of the Franz Joseph Bridge (now known as the Liberty Bridge), next to where the main customs house for goods transported on the river (now Corvinus University) stood. The building has become one of the most beautiful examples of Hungarian historicist architecture. Its designer, Samu Pecz, a firm neo-Gothic adherent, was a well-known professor at the Technical University opposite the river in Buda. With a huge, airy light steel structure, it contains 10,000 square meters of space spread over two levels. On its outside, a bright terracotta brick façade rises above its stone plinths, a wide arcade runs along the ground floor, and its main entrance, decorated with a gable, is framed by a wide arch. At the top are arched windows, vegetable ornamentation, fine-rhythmed rows of arcades, pyramidal towers and glazed tondos, with the roof decorated with colourful Zsolnay ceramics. In its first decades, fresh goods were unloaded from their own railway track, and a tunnel connected it to the Danube quay to get the vegetables, fruits and meat to the buyers as soon as possible. The market even had its own fenced poultry yard. After opening, the market hall published its own newspaper, the *Market Hall Bulletin* twice a week, which informed the public in detail about prices and new items.

Today, it is a beautifully renovated historic building, with larger shops in its spacious basement, and a wide variety of wares on the ground floor and mezzanine, seeing a lot of traffic six days a week. One of the first trips by tourists to Budapest usually leads here, where they can experience the flavours and atmosphere of the city.

That same day (15 February 1897) the **RÁKÓCZI SQUARE HALL** overlooking the Grand Boulevard (Nagykörút) was also dedicated. The previous decade had witnessed the construction of the Grand Boulevard, which encompasses the interior of Pest and is modelled on the Vienna Ringstrasse, as a result of which numerous hotels and residential buildings were built, thus ensuring that there was a huge demand for fast and fresh food. The building, designed by Győző Czigler, is about half the size of the Great Market Hall, and in the early days the transporters of goods were able to drive horse-drawn carriages through its wide, arched gates. Warehouses were constructed in the cellar, and on the ground floor taverns opened next to the stalls, while at the top there were apartments for rent, which produced a secure source of income for the hall. By the 1930s, traffic had fallen so significantly that there were suggestions of converting it into a swimming complex, but it continued as a market hall for decades to come. The structure completely burned down in 1988 but was beautifully rebuilt to serve its original purpose. In 2013, with the construction of the new underground line, a metro station was built on the square, with an appearance that is absolutely contemporary, yet in harmony with its surroundings: the visible concrete-glass composition creat-

First among the firsts: the Great Market Hall inside and out





Photo: © László Márton Zsigmond

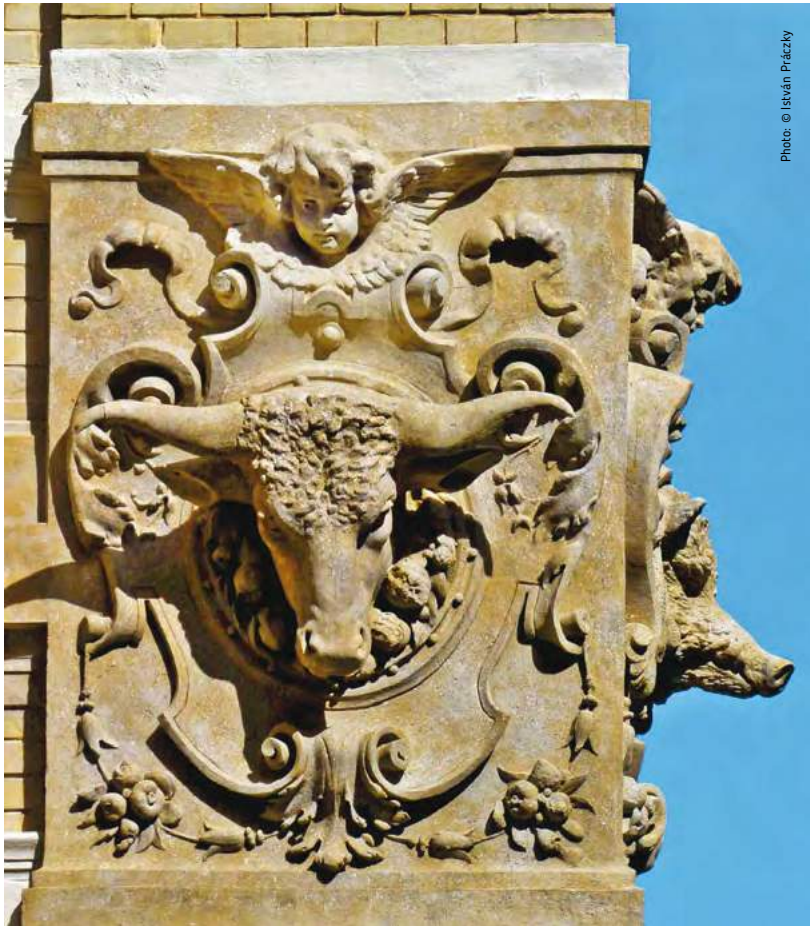


Photo: © István Práczky

ed order in the square, thus making the hall even more visible, thereby making its multi-nave, symmetrical brick structure all the more dignified. The hall sometimes functions as a cultural space. For example, the non-profit Mind Space organisation has hosted several community breakfasts here. The young people who belong to this team focus on promoting a liveable city: through creative ideas they try to bring residents and their environment together. For the 2020 Budapest Spring Festival, Astor Piazzolla's music will be heard between the market hall's beams. *(For more information, please see page 36.)* Market Hall No. 3 was opened in the middle of the densely populated Jewish Quarter of Pest, at **KLAUZÁL SQUARE**, on the site of a theatre destroyed in a fire. It was designed by architects from the capital's engineering office, József Kommer and Pál Klunzinger, and this structure was adjoined to an apartment building. The market hall had more than 300 stalls, including a kosher grocery store. Its spectacular metal support assembly was beautifully renewed as part of its reconstruction in 2015, when a glass roof was placed above the courtyard and a softly arched mezzanine level was added, which connects to the ground floor via escalators and elevators. What makes this market hall special is that it is open until 10 pm seven days a week, making it a fashionable community centre in this attractive district filled with entertainment venues.

## THE PANTRIES OF BUDAPEST

The **HUNYADI SQUARE MARKET HALL** in District VI is one of the smallest markets in Budapest and features an intimate atmosphere, for although it is popular with locals, it remains to be discovered en masse by tourists. The market's history is connected to the Opera House, since the market for this part of the city originally operated at Hermina Square on the location of today's Hungarian State Opera, from where it was moved to nearby Hunyadi Square in the mid-1870s when construction began. The architect Győző Czigler decided to create a slightly simpler, more rational design here compared to the market halls being built at the same time. The façade is dominated by yellow-toned bricks, and there is no arcade, featuring instead smaller ornamentation, such as stone carvings depicting ox, pig and cow heads on corners and wall pillars, three-piece glass windows that close in the top arch, balconies that jut out and an ornate coronation ledge that gives the exterior its unique appearance. The interior is decorated with the same brick cover as the exterior and a visible roof structure. The market hall was completely renovated a few years ago, and after a long time it regained its original beauty. In front of the building there are stalls for a farmer's market, and behind them, in the middle of the square stands a small music pavilion with a romantic atmosphere that was erected in connection with the renovation works.

Győző Czigler also designed the **HOLD STREET MARKET HALL**, which was also completed at the same time. As elsewhere, city tradition decid-

ed where to locate it: engineers wanted to place it on Széchenyi Square, but the locals were used to the open-air market that had been on Hold Street for some time, so the Budapest Public Works Council nodded in favour of the latter. The hall was built on two plots, and like the other market buildings it had a triple-naved layout, with a narrow mezzanine on the upper level. At the front a gate opened onto Hold Street, while at the back one opened onto Vadász Street, and since the location was not spacious enough, the carriages carrying the goods could only travel in one direction, so that the words "Entrance" and "Exit" are placed above the gates. The structure was nicely restored before the turn of the millennium, when it was renamed the Downtown Market, but since the area transformed into a banking quarter, market traffic in the classical sense declined, and it has since become known as a cosy place to eat.

The "little sister" of the Great Market Hall was built in 1902 on the Danube's bank in Buda, located opposite parliament at **BATTHYÁNY SQUARE** (formerly Bomba Square), on the site of a demolished row of Baroque houses. It was also built of brick, and its structure was very similar to that of the Great Market Hall, but with much more modest dimensions owing to its location in less densely populated Buda. The steel-structured roof was made in the Schlick Ironworks, with vendors on the ground floor and a large flower market in the side mezzanines. Despite the amazing panorama and being easily accessible, it did not see

Top left:  
the Rákóczi Square  
Market Hall

Bottom left:  
An ornamented column  
belonging to the renovated  
Hunyadi Square Market Hall



The Klauzál Square  
Market Hall



as much traffic as its counterparts in Pest, which was perhaps due to the fact that there was no market in this area before. An upstairs level was built in the 1970s with shops. Soon after the turn of the millennium, it was renovated, but would no longer function as a market: a large supermarket moved into the ground floor, and the arcades in front of the main façade, where local farmers sold their produces, were closed.

Újbuda developed in the 1930s and was given a new market hall on the traditional site of its open-air market in 1977 on **FEHÉRVÁRI ROAD**. The original building was a pyramid-shaped block made of concrete panels, with open terraces extending in all directions. The market became popular and quickly outgrew the building so that the vendors were soon selling their wares on the sidewalk, meaning that it had to be quickly expanded. The new market was completed in 2008 so that now the pyramid structure was topped with a covered hall featuring a polished white concrete exterior opened with giant glass panes and a large metal roof structure. The tight stairs were replaced with escalators, as light enters through ribbon windows. With this conversion a modern building was born, while also retaining the advantages of the old Budapest market halls: clear, bright, serene and cosy.

Some stalls had already established themselves in the 1940s in Buda near Széll Kálmán Square on the corner of **FÉNY STREET**, but it was only in 1953 that it grew into an outdoor market. The market received a building in 1997, thus making it one of Budapest's contemporary architectural landmarks. Under a sweeping glass roof the ar-

chitect Ferenc Cságoly assembled a three-storey complex connected by bridges, staircases, ramps and escalators, which, on the whole, evokes the light movement of a bird. The spaces are protected on the side from the streets by perforated metal panels and thanks to the airy structures there is no sense of overcrowding. The brilliant installation on this irregular plot ending at a sharp angle has created exciting spatial connections and views. At the bottom there are shops, while on the top two floors there are market stalls and counters. On the top floor there are meat, fish and cheese shops, and a simple yet very cosy little café in the corner. The market's ground floor has direct access to the Mammut Shopping Centre.

A lumberyard operated for a long time at **LEHEL SQUARE** alongside Váci Road, but it was transformed into a marketplace in the early 1900s. The site was a fairly unhealthy place near the railway, at the foot of the Ferdinand Bridge, and the customers who came here were not the middle classes of Pest, but the heavy industry workers from Angyalföld in District XIII. This situation only changed around the turn of the millennium. In 2002, the new hall was ceremoniously opened, which was designed by the architect László Rajk and gained international fame. Rajk created a special work of postmodernist architecture here: he transformed the hall into a symbol of the barges that brought goods to the old markets, with striking colours, shapes, playful architectural references, and at the same time a very rational composition of the space's structure. The glass roof and large-scale steel structure evokes the turn-of-the-century halls, but the huge, colourful

One of the city's architectural curiosities is the Lehel Square Market Hall designed by the architect László Rajk



## THE PANTRIES OF BUDAPEST

### Károly Kamermayer, the father of Budapest's market halls

Today only a tiny square downtown preserves his name. Since he is not counted among the great figures of Hungarian history, city residents know little about him, although Budapest owes most of its public works and service institutions to him.

The scion of a wealthy bourgeois family, Károly Kamermayer was the son of a factory manager in Pest. He studied law, but left university at the start of the 1848 Revolution and joined the army fighting for independence. Kamermayer fought in many victorious battles, eventually re-enrolling at university in Pest following the Hungarian defeat. After graduating, he entered into the service of the city of Buda, and as a talented and highly educated official, Kamermayer's career soared after 1860. From 1867, as a councillor for the city of Pest, he undertook a series of public health measures, and initiated the construction of the public slaughterhouse. When Óbuda, Buda and Pest merged in 1873 to become Budapest, Kamermayer was unanimously voted mayor at the first assembly.

Kamermayer always envisioned matters on a global city scale. He made several study trips across Europe, looking for solutions to the problems posed by urban architecture and operations. On his return, Kamermayer utilised his newfound experiences well, and it was due to him that the water and sewer network was built in the late 19th century, which still supplies the city a century and a half later, despite Budapest multiplying in size. From 1873 he managed the city without interruption for 18 years. Kamermayer reorganised its administration, established the system of district councils, and achieved major infrastructural improvements, such as the road network, garbage removal, the construction of major bridges spanning the Danube, the development of public transport, as well as great cultural investments, such as the Opera House, the Vígszínház Comedy Theatre and the Műcsarnok Hall of Art. By exploiting

the city's thermal water resources, he built urban baths and swimming complexes.

Budapest's population doubled in the two decades following the city's unification, and outdoor markets increasingly experienced difficulties in supplying food to the rapidly developing city. Kamermayer had already proposed the construction of flea markets in the early 1880s and, following the French example, he precisely outlined which transportation hubs should have one built. He also stressed that these future market halls should not appear as separate buildings, such as the very first market of this kind, the Les Halles in Paris, but should be built on the site of the former markets, among the rows of houses, next to the most densely populated blocks. This wise blending of organic urban development and conscious urban planning transformed Budapest's market halls into dignified public buildings in harmony with the city.

Kamermayer resigned from his position in 1891 owing to illness. As such in 1897 he could only participate as an esteemed guest at the inauguration ceremony of the first market in Pest, the Grand Market Hall at Fővám Square. In the years that followed, similar institutions opened in each district, but Károly Kamermayer did not live to see these. He is buried in the Kerepesi Cemetery, and a bust of the mayor was erected over the grave, and on its plinth sits a beautiful bronze figure of a woman wearing a crown, gazing into the distance. ●



Photo © István Prácky

columns of the façade, vegetation planted into the concrete crags, porthole windows and the tilting "mast" attached to the "ship" all refer to a detail from Budapest's history, while the street-like décor of the interior preserves the memory of the once-open market. The bright colours and shapes have created an exciting world that no one passes by indifferently.

In the 19th century Újpest was a relaxing destination for the aristocrats of Pest, but from the mid-20th century it became one of the citadels of socialist heavy industry. For a long time an outdoor market operated on the city's main square behind its art nouveau town hall. In 2018 the UP or rather the **ÚJPEST MARKET HALL AND CULTURAL EVENTS CENTRE** was built, which ended up not only as a place for shopping, but also became a real community space, with a larger the-

atre upstairs and a smaller indoor amphitheatre, library and open terrace, vendor stalls and smaller shops on the ground floor with two parking levels below ground. It is unique in part due to its mixed functions, and in part due to its completely translucent glass façade, which is decorated with colourful LED lights that shine in the evening, which spectacularly reveals the market's interior to the street. An elevated walkway from the theatre hall to the square will soon be completed, beneath which an outdoor stage will also be built.

**BÉKÁSMEGYER** at the northern end of Buda was once a quiet village, next to which, in the 1970s, the socialist tower housing development rage planted a huge number of panel residential blocks. The local market, which has operated here since the early 1980s and has long been in poor condition, was given a new building in 2019. The clutter of



smaller pavilions next to the old steel-framed aluminium-clad structure evoked the romance of an Oriental bazaar. In its place was erected a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century transcription of a medieval marketplace with a singly-storey central hall surrounded by arcades to link together smaller and larger stores. The terracotta-coloured ground-floor is surrounded by a light-toned row of exposed concrete columns, the monotony of which is broken by the large glass surfaces behind the arcade on the south side, and on the east side there are separate shops behind the arcade. It was formed from a simple, sensible architectural idea that freely allows the hectic life of the market to prevail. Built according to the plans of Alfréd Peschka, the building will soon be expanded through further developments into a community space.

**PESTERZSÉBET** was an independent city for a long time. The city's centre developed in the 1920s with a church dedicated to its namesake and next to it, on the site of the former marketplace on what is now Tátra Square, a market hall of impressive size was built. József Vermes's designs drew up a

**ECSERI FLEA MARKET**, which despite its name is not located on Ecseri Road, but on Nagykörösi Road near the M5 motorway south of Pest. Legends circulate in the city about the vendors who are perfectly knowledgeable about art, and of the many sales that occur here that frequently go into the millions of forints. From 1890 the Józsefváros (District VIII) flea market, known citywide as the Tangó, operated at Teleki Square. The writer Géza Beremény used his grandfather as the inspiration for the character of the Second-hand King, who became internationally famous through his film *Eldorado*. But in 1949, at the beginning of the one-party state, the flea market was moved to Ecseri Road because of its "socialism defying spirit", and was later pushed further out to the former garbage dump on Nagykörösi Road, citing urban planning reasons. However, it kept its name, and the city still knows it as the Ecseri, which is even how tourist maps refer to it. It is open seven days a week, but it is best to visit on Saturdays. At that time second-hand vendors flood the place and huge crowds



Photo: © Eszter Gordon

more modern version of the multi-naved, mezzanined structures of Budapest's historical market halls, according to the art deco style that became fashionable between the two world wars. The architect probably transformed the hall's nearly finished façade to feature cascading steps due to the experiences he gained at the Paris World's Fair. This brought the latest style to the market hall of a small town next to Budapest. Colourful market tents line up in front of the dignified building today, creating a pleasant urban space for this part of the city, which has been part of Budapest since 1950, but which still preserves its small-town milieu. One of Budapest's most well-known markets is the

fill its indoor and outdoor areas, as everything from a Stalin Statue to a knight's armour, from fountains to precious paintings are available. The market formerly specialised in second-hand clothing, household goods and technical items, but today it is the number one purchasing point for art dealers, where the seller is perfectly aware of the value of his wares, but still agrees to a lengthy haggling process, and the goods do not infrequently change hands for a quarter of the original asking price. The place itself resembles a market on the edge of the village, and in fact it consists of a simple row of booths with worn tables, but its atmosphere is so characteristic, that once you come here you will never forget it.

## THE PANTRIES OF BUDAPEST



In the early 20th century, Budapest created a new urban category when the ruin pubs began to appear. Szimpla Kert ("Simple Garden") opened in the middle of the Jewish Quarter on Kazinczy Street in the courtyard of a derelict building. As a "cultural reception space" for alternative life with cosy design elements, concerts and cultural programmes, it soon became internationally so famous that *Lonely Planet* readers voted it the third best bar in the world in 2011. Since 2012 the **SZIMPLA FARMERS' MARKET** has operated here, a splendid and cosy spot for specialty homemade goods, where you can find a wide selection of cheeses, honey, spices, mushrooms, vegetables, fruits, and syrups from the best organic farms. The Sunday market experience is accompanied by live music and includes community cooking, which you can join and they also serve breakfast in the shop offering organic products. Visitors can also listen to free coffee or wine classes, talk to farmers selling their own produce, and there are also children's programmes. Donations for civic initiatives are collected in the Community Saucepan collection pot. Today, the Szimpla Farmer's Market represents the direct link between the big city and the countryside that the outdoor markets did 100 years ago.

A similar idea led to the creation of the **PANCS-GASZTROPLACC** farmers' market in the roofed courtyard of a beer garden in Tüszoltó Street, which is now entirely aimed at environmentally and health-conscious audiences. On Sundays, it awaits visitors who want chemical-free ingredients, homemade jams and cheeses, vegan dishes, and generally healthy, quality products together

with a farmers' market and fundraising community cooking. The farmers' market located in the courtyard of the ruin pub is a much calmer and quieter place than at Szimpla Kert, but the romantic atmosphere of the abandoned industrial courtyard is so strong that it became one of the city's favourite new places in just a few weeks. The farmers sell their goods themselves, you can sample everything, and they are happy to talk about organic farming with customers.

World wars here, a socialist economy there, Budapest's market halls have survived every crisis the 20th century threw at them, and are enjoying another golden era in the present. Within them beats the history of the city and its prevailing mood, ready to captivate those who enter.

The "Tangó" as it appears today

The Szimpla Market



Photo: © MiteComm.com



## At Budapest's Gate: Ráckeve

The morning hours of Wednesday or Saturday are the best times to arrive to this city called the capital of Csepel Island, because that is when the boat markets are held throughout the year along the riverbank. The city's name derives from a time when local producers sold their wares from punts and customers also mainly arrived by water.

Those happy to kayak or canoe on the Danube still come to shore here so that they can get home-made delicacies, from cheese and meat products to jams and vegetables grown in small gardens, although these days the merchants transport their wares by car to the Szegedi Kis István Promenade. You can also find live animals, flowers and seasonal seedlings for sale and books, or decorations found in an attic or acquired through an inheritance are also available.

A market on the shore amongst trees





# A BOAT MARKET ON THE SHORE

Wedding gifts for queens

Text: Zsuzsa Mátraházi • Photos: Eszter Gordon



Visitors can travel by car from Budapest roughly 50 kilometres south and then cross the Árpád Bridge, which is an important span over the Soroksár branch of the Danube.

Those arriving from the capital via the H6 suburban train will at first see the Savoy Chateau, which is closely linked to Ráckeve's history. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Csepel Island became a wedding gift for the queen-consort.

## AT BUDAPEST'S GATE: RÁCKEVE

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Serbs fleeing from the Turks (the old Hungarian word for Serb is Rác) settled here, who had left the town of Keve located on the Lower Danube, which is how Ráckeve received its name.

One of the most important local monuments is the church built by the Serbs in 1487, which is an Orthodox Church and happens to be the only Gothic and Byzantine-style church richly decorated with frescoes in the country. The church was spared by the fires that damaged the city, but according to legend it also took a miracle for it to survive to this day. The Turks occu-

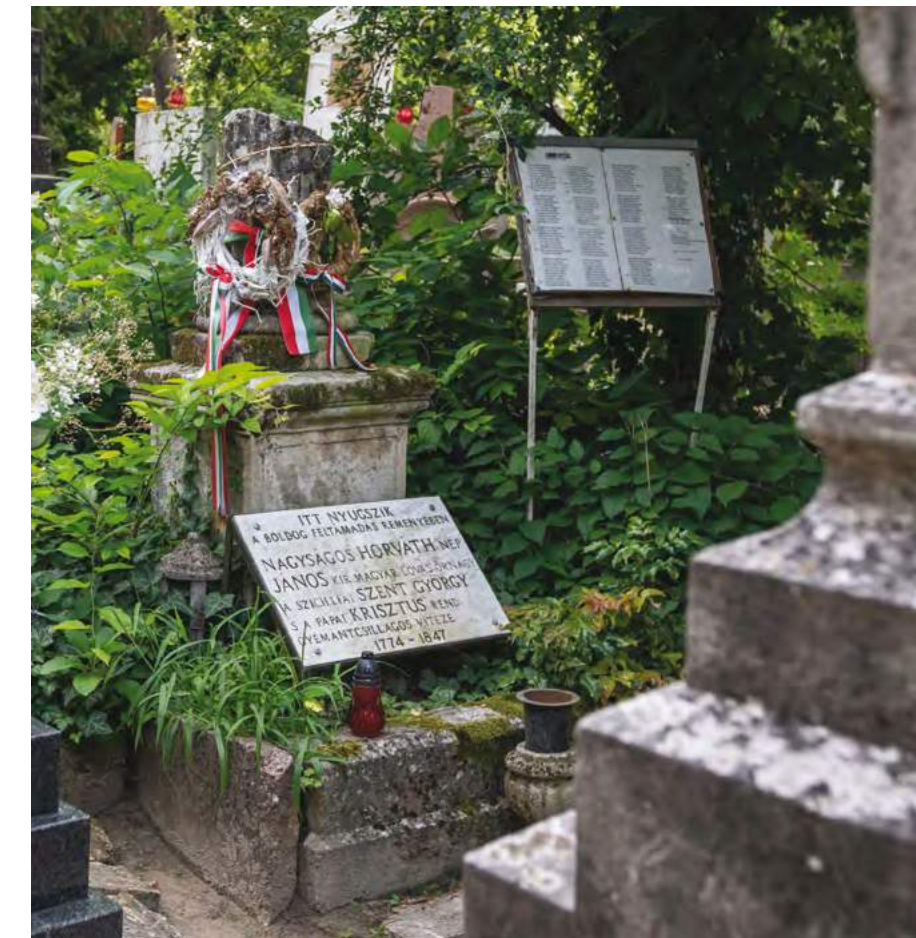


pying Hungary, just as they had with other churches, wanted to destroy it. A janissary struck his weapon into one of the icons, and according to legend he died immediately as soon as he departed the vandalised building. As a result, his companions avoided the church out of fear.

The 150 years of Turkish occupation in Hungary ended with a campaign led by the brilliant commander Eugene of Savoy. The French-born prince lost favour in the court of Louis XIV of France at the age of 20, after which he offered his services to Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I. Savoy played a significant role in consolidating the great power position of the Austrians and in liberating the Kingdom of Hungary from under Turkish domination, so that it would become part of the Habsburg Empire.

The small-physiquest Savoy lived for 73 years. He

remained a bachelor throughout his life and devoted his free time to the arts and sciences. In the year after his victory in the Battle of Zenta in 1697, Savoy purchased Csepel Island for 15,000 forints, and in Ráckeve he built a copy of the Vaux-le-Vicomte Chateau in France with the eminent architect Johann Lukas von Hildebrand, although Savoy never visited this baroque palace with Italian and French influences. The dome was originally covered with shingles, which were later replaced by copper plating. The terrace guardrail is decorated with



mythological figures, and the central one probably depicts Savoy himself. Above the guardrail his ducal crest can be found.

Savoy died in 1736, and the building came into the possession of the crown, and later the state, but it was treated like an unwanted stepchild. The complex was used as a storage facility and later a granary. In the 1970s, when renovation works commenced, it nearly collapsed. In the absence of the original plans, they inferred what they could from the remaining elements and from similar structures dating to that era. Protected trees grow in the inner courtyard. In the 2010s, a hotel and restaurant, and even an architectural-fine arts house operated in the building, but today it can only be seen from outside the fence. Since it became the property of the Hungarian National Asset Management company, it has remained closed.

Left: The Savoy Chateau

Right: The grave of the man on whom János Vitéz was modelled





## MILLING WHEAT ON THE WATER

The Árpád Bridge at Ráckeve was inaugurated in 1897. In its place a wooden bridge once stood that could be disassembled, the predecessor of which was a rope bridge reinforced by stakes, called a “flying bridge”, where ferrymen pulled the barge from one shore to the other.

The current iron arch bridge was designed by Szilárd Zielinski. During World War II, the retreating Hungarian troops blew it up. After this the Soviet soldiers constructed a narrow pontoon bridge that facilitated pedestrian traffic across the Danube until the reconstruction of the bridge in 1948-49, which used parts of the likewise bombed Tisza Railway Bridge in Szeged. A disused neo-Baroque toll house stands on the city-side of the bridge, and on the other side you can see the only statue of Grand Prince Árpád located in the countryside. A fire tower was built in 1901 on the site of the old town hall, and is part of the new town hall, which has fancy, art nouveau decorations. The 40-metre tall tower serves as a lookout point and can be climbed with an attendant. (In light of winter weather conditions, the lookout is open seasonally from early April to the second weekend of October.) In the old days guards warmed themselves next to a stove and had to ring a little bell every quarter hour to signal their vigilance. In the event of a fire, a red flag was pointed in the direction where something was burning.

On clear days the Velence and Buda Hills – as well as Százhalombatta – are just as clearly visible from up there, as is the church of Kiskunlacháza. Fortunate visitors will get to see the district called Pokolhegy

(“Hell Hill”) in the colours one would expect to find in Hell itself. In order to see this spectacle, it must be a windy day so that the dust in the sky contributes to a red sunset. Another legend says that at the time of the Mongol invasion, a woman predicted that whoever remained there would suffer as if they were in Hell. Some of the inhabitants fled, but those who did not listen to the prophecy were massacred by the Mongols. The reconstructed and functioning ship mill, which is not far from the Ráckeve bridge, takes us centuries back in time. The Serbs who settled here formed a thriving market town, and one of the best-functioning guilds belonged to the millers. The ship mills turned by the Danube’s current ground half of the Great Plain’s grain. The building that looks like a house based on its roof structure uses 40 anchors. These structures were retired with the proliferation of steam mills and the reduction in the water’s power. Descendants of the millers of Ráckeve established a foundation in December 2007 to guard the memory of the ancient craft. Using old drawings and parts lying about, they finished building a functioning copy of the last ship mill in 2010, which is open to visitors. (Milling can be viewed in person on Sundays.)

## A POET, PAINTER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

A literary legend is also attached to Ráckeve. The acclaimed poet of the 1848 Revolution, Sándor Petőfi, based the main character of his romantic narrative poem *János Vitéz* (“John the Valiant”, which had music written for it by Pongrác Kacsóh) on the Hussar captain János Horváth Nepomuki, who was from

## AT BUDAPEST’S GATE: RÁCKEVE

Ráckeve. János was an orphan, and when Emperor Francis I was in need of soldiers in his war against the Jacobins during the French Revolution, he decreed that Ráckeve would have to produce three fully-equipped hussars. The tailors’ guild recommended János, who had to take up 12 years of service for the city, but he so fell in love with being a soldier that he enlisted for an additional decade. His story also contains an unrequited love, for Juliska Piringer was the inspiration for Iluska. The graves of both Horváth and the imaginary János Vitéz are looked after in the local cemetery, and the documents of their history are available in the Árpád Museum.

The Church of St. John the Baptist was built in the second half of the 18th century, and has a total of 640 square meters of wall secco (similar to frescoes but applied to a dry surface) created by the Munkácsy Prize-winning painter László Patay. The city picture gallery named after this Komárno-born transplant to Ráckeve awaits visitors at the bridgehead of the Árpád Bridge. The Patay House can also be visited through prior arrangement (Telephone: +36-24-424-053).

Ráckeve and Szigetbecse border each other, which is where the Budapest-born world-famous photographer André Kertész spent the most significant portion of his childhood. Two years after the death of the artist, who had lived in the United States since 1937, his memorial museum opened in 1987. Fans of his work come from far and wide to see the 120 photographs and personal objects donated to Szigetbecse.

During the summer, guests can swim at the Szigetbecse beach. But they can also go on an island tour. South of Ráckeve’s centre, speedboats run from a small port to the island of Senki. This fish-shaped island, also known as the Round Reef, was first occupied by people in the first half of the previous century, after the construction of the Tassi sluice eliminated water level fluctuations. The closed micro-environment and its unspoiled wildlife attracts people tired of the hustle and bustle of the city.



The more distant, two-kilometre-long Angelic Island is lined with sedge and reed, and only the docks betray a human presence. The nature reserve is a popular residence for coots, grebes, little crakes, swans, black-headed gulls, wild ducks, frogs, water snakes, otters and turtles. Migratory birds also gladly choose temporary shelter here, as 15 types of bird species can be observed in their natural habitat. It is no wonder, then, that King Matthias, who sailed to this island, said: “This is an angelic place.”

For those who prefer comfort over the wild and are planning a longer stay, you will find high quality four-star hotels in and around the city, as well as AquaLand, which is open year-round and offers a thermal and adventure bath.

The grinding apparatus of the renovated ship mill





# Cultural Quarter

What is an annual tradition today was hardly the case 40 years ago. The Moiseyev Ballet with its grand productions, Paul Robeson's resonant voice and the airy ballerina Maya Plisetskaya's performance once represented the "Eastern stream" in the parade of stars in Budapest.

In 1980, facing an unstable economic situation, two enterprising professionals invented the Budapest Spring Festival. From 1981 the event series has invited an astonishing multitude of musicians, theatres and dancers to Budapest, and presented never-before-seen works in museums. Rejuvenated in appearance, the Budapest Spring Festival honours tradition with its content, and for its 40th anniversary awaits domestic and international audiences. Budapest becomes a festival town in April, but in addition to festival programmes, the city's museums attract visitors with prestigious exhibitions grounded in international links.

The NoGravity Dance Company: *Aria*  
"In essence it is trick theatre"





# THE DREAM OF THE FOUNDERS

## A discerning display of creators and creations

The Budapest Spring Festival has enjoyed quite an impressive history in the four decades since it was launched, becoming one of the most highly ranked cultural celebrations in Europe. Planned in 1980 and first hosted in 1981, it is worth discussing the circumstances of how this festival came to be.



1980 and 1981 were important and exciting years. Following a week of space travel in 1980, the first (and to date only) Hungarian astronaut, Bertalan Farkas, returned to Earth. John Lennon was murdered by Marc David Chapman. The international literary world lost the French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, while the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz received the Nobel Prize in Literature. Hungarian Television launched a cultural programme called Studio '80 and Sugár, the first western-style shopping centre in Hungary, opened its doors at Örs Vezér Square.

1981 – one could say – was the year of assassination attempts, against American President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II, fortunately neither of which succeeded. The

American thrash metal band Metallica and Hungarian new wave band KFT formed. In this year Elias Canetti won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Economic performance in Czechoslovakia deteriorated, while a ticketing system for many consumer products was introduced in Romania. The Hungarian economy faced a serious crisis in terms of making payments, which the authorities covered up. At the same time, the country wished to show the world its better side: the 1982 decree that liberalised travel for Hungarians was already being prepared, so that citizens could visit the West each year without an invitation letter.

Under these circumstances, two registered tourism professionals, Márton Lengyel and Imre Kiss, dreamed up the Budapest Spring Festival in 1980. Their economic goal was to boost late-winter and early-spring hotel traffic, which had previously been written off as a dead season. The Bartók centenary provided the inspiration for the first festival's programme in 1981. Additionally, the appearance of Hungarian artists visiting home for the first time after a long absence abroad, as well as guest appearances by international cultural stars to Budapest provided the basis for the Spring Festival. Even the first series of events made the founders' dreams come true: the drawing power of



Márton Lengyel



the wide assortment of arts, the discerning presentation of creators and creations, the invitation of world stars and the search for young talents made Budapest a popular destination for cultural tourism. Between 1981 and 1990, the festival was owned by the National Tourism Office, and was organised by the Tourism Propaganda and Publishing Company. Of roughly the same age and at their creative peaks, Márton Lengyel was concerned with tourism and Imre Kiss with cultural management. Following his studies in foreign trade, Lengyel became involved with tourism around 1968. He enjoyed a significant career in this sector, becoming recognised as a researcher, higher education lecturer, and the founder of an institution. “It was a unique opportunity with little time for preparation,” he recalled of the Spring Festival’s founding. “We knew that the event would be a success if we could entice correspondents from leading Western media outlets to Budapest. The



Imre Kiss

first festivals, which presented a diverse cross-section of Hungarian culture, and which managed to lure home famous artists such as György Cziffra, Amerigo Tot and Victor Vasarely, were a great success.” As he told one of his colleagues: “The Budapest Spring Festival will still be going strong long after we’re gone.” Lengyel was correct, for he passed away in 2015.

Kiss, who died in 2012, led the National Philharmonic until 1991 and served as executive director and acting director-general of the Hungarian State Opera from 1996 to 2001. From 2001 to 2003 he was the managing director of the Vígsház Comedy Theatre. In the meantime, he took a quick “private course” in Vienna from Musikverein’s famous artistic director, Thomas Angyan, who was originally from Lake Balaton and known as Tamás Ángyán. In October 2003, Kiss was appointed CEO of the newly created

The first festival was centred around the works of Béla Bartók

Left: János Ferencsik conducting the Hungarian State Philharmonic Orchestra

The Wooden Prince – Gábor Keveházi



Palace of Arts (today known as Műpa Budapest) and held this post until March 2011, when he stepped down due to his deteriorating health. In recognition of his achievements, Kiss was awarded a knighthood in the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de France in the autumn of 2010. For his artistic value-creating activities, he received the Prima Primissima Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011. The International Society for the Performing Arts (an organisation of the world’s most prestigious performing arts institutions and key figures) also awarded him a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2010. Kiss was presented with the award following these words: “...there will be art in the world, and masterpieces and cathartic performances will be born so long as we have artistic managers such as Imre Kiss. I believe we would not want to live in a world where there is no art.” ●



# “I CONSIDER MYSELF A CRAFTSMAN”

Texts: Rita Szentgyörgyi • Photos: NoGravity Dance Company

One of the highlights of the anniversary festival this year will be the production of *Aria* by the NoGravity Company, which will feature dancers, acrobats, musicians and singers. The ethereally beautiful music of Pergolesi, Riccardo Broschi, Monteverdi and Vivaldi combined with circus productions, three-dimensional choreography, airborne dancers and the elegance of the costumes brings the magical and sophisticated theatre of the Baroque era back to the stage. The founder, spiritual father and polymath creative force of the Rome-based company, Emiliano Pellisari, creates unique total art performances using proprietary theatrical machines and choreographic techniques that seem immune to the effects of gravity.



You've had an eclectic career, you've written plays, scripts, won literary awards, and dipped your toes into the film industry. Currently you're a choreographer, director, and set designer for the productions by NoGravity. Where does this versatility come from?

It's both a curse and a blessing that I do so much at once. Sometimes I feel like I'm possessed by a demon, and I can't resist temptation. Writing was an obvious start for me, in part because my father was a journalist. A cost-effective way of expressing ourselves is to put our thoughts on paper. Theatre allowed me to realise the words that I wrote down. Some of my works won awards, but at the same time I didn't have the money to support myself. That's how film came into the picture, especially production organisation, purely to provide me with a liveable income. To tell you the truth, one opportunity brought another.

**What ideas did you have when you launched the NoGravity Company?**

Like all of the activities in my life, it just suddenly popped into my mind. The boundlessness of imagination, the products of fantasy, which is how I realised that it was my job to redefine the great traditions of Renaissance and Baroque theatre. My wife has been my partner in this from

the start as the troupe's choreographer. Stage sets, visions and magical effects appeared in my imagination. Over time, I understood that in order to implement these internal images and vertical paintings, I needed to create certain effects and choreographic inventions. That is how a very exciting research project spanning many years began, which commenced with the study of 17th century mechanical inventions and continued with their implementation. That is why I created a workshop in my own house, or rather a studio, where I began to develop theatre machines.

**You consider yourself to be a visual arts craftsman. Is that modesty?**

There are too many so-called art-inclined intellectuals in the world who think they're artists without having any talent. I consider myself a craftsman in the sense that I have never lost my sense of reality; I didn't want to belong to any insular circle. I believe it would be a good idea to take a step back and look back into the past, to follow the example of the great masters who created masterpieces but still considered themselves craftsmen.

## CULTURAL QUARTER

**Did you choose the bold idea of flying your dancers up in the air as acrobats as a means for creating illusions?**

I would call the “elimination” of gravity vertical painting, which was essentially born from the need to create live images. Since the Renaissance, Italy has had a long tradition of stage techniques that have fascinated the audience of royal and princely courts. Nowadays, the joy of astonishment is often lacking in visual works, be it theatre, opera or film. I have also studied modern, contemporary art, but I have not discovered much joy from it. In Renaissance and Baroque theatre, I found my own world and language, which was the most beautiful and creative era in Italy and universal cultural history. I wanted to smuggle back the completeness of the visual effects and the art of illusion.

**Many people are curious about the stage tricks and mechanical effects used to create the illusion of levitation.**

There are a host of perspective effects ranging from the rope and pulley systems in the space beneath the stage to the lifts mounted on the coulisses, mirrors, lighting and wind machines.

**The most well-known production by the NoGravity troupe is – as one French critic called it – the “suffering and passion trilogy” based on Dante's Divine Comedy. Bach, Mozart and Bernstein's music were incorporated into this 21<sup>st</sup> century acrobatic spectacle.**

As an Italian, this Dante fantasy performance is proudly part of my identity. It's a unique enterprise, and I can tell you without being modest that NoGravity has made its mark on the world. We're still touring the world with it from the United States to China. This was our first performance, packed with optical illusions, effects, and painting-like choreography that



## Calling Card



The Rome-born multi-genre artist, choreographer, director, set designer and producer Emiliano Pellisari initially studied philosophy. Following his father's death, he was forced to abandon his studies and worked as a carpenter, plumber and electrician. He

also gained theatrical and cinematic experience as a playwright, production manager, and screenwriter. Pellisari's interest in Renaissance and Baroque theatre led to the design of the techniques used by NoGravity. In 2005, he presented his first solo production, the Daimon Project, for which he recruited dancers from among his artist friends in Rome. In 2008, Pellisari met the dancer and choreographer Mariana Porceddu, together with whom he founded the NoGravity Company. The emblematic trademark of this 20-person troupe of dancers, acrobats and musicians is the Divine Comedy trilogy, with which they have toured the world for 10 years.

became our trademark over time. The creative process lasted five years from 2006 to 2011. In addition to the original four-and-a-half-hour version, a one-and-a-half-hour version was also created.

**What was the starting point or guideline for your latest production *Aria*, which pays tribute to the magnificence of Baroque music?**

I wanted to create a genuine Baroque performance with musicians who are active participants in the performance. We imagined an imposing, astounding, simultaneously humorous and poetic world together with *Aria*'s designer, Nóra Bujdosó, who fashioned dazzling and sophisticated costumes for this graceful, airy musical and visual journey. And last but not least, I intend to address young people, to show them that that which is old is not necessarily outdated or boring. ●

16 April 2020., 7:00 pm  
National Dance Theatre



# “IN ESSENCE, NOGRAVITY IS TRICK THEATRE”

From minimalist experimental motion theatre to main stage productions with grotesque, grandiose visual elements, the Hungarian set and costume designer Nóra Bujdosó scores the visual worlds of many prose and musical genres. Nóra Bujdosó also created the concept design for the Italian NoGrativity Dance Company's multidisciplinary visual theatre performance of *Aria* based on Baroque music. The performance will be presented within the framework of the Budapest Spring Festival as a part of the Zsabó Festival.



**How did you come into contact with Emiliano Pellisari's company?**

I won a scholarship to study set design at Rome's Accademia di Belle Arti, and I simultaneously worked in Hungarian theatres as a set and costume designer. Thanks to Paolo Ferruzzi (my instructor and the head of the design department), I had the opportunity to participate in several cultural and artistic events in Rome. A defining experience for me was the opportunity to collaborate with the Turin-based Marcido Marcidorjs e Famosa Mimosa company at the Teatro Arvalia in Rome for their performance of *Nei lago dei leoni*.

Ferruzzi referred me to Emiliano Pellisari, the founder of the NoGravity Dance Company, which specialises in visual dance theatre. At first, the troupe worked only with the human body, with the dancers using their bodies to create visual compositions. Over time, they wanted to add visual elements to expand their repertoire. For the performance of *Paradiso* from their Dante trilogy, they looked for a costume designer, and I had to design and fashion an angel wing. I successfully applied for the assignment by designing an illuminated angel wing with special effects, which I made together with the designer Tóbiás Terebessy (a member of the Medence Group). I've always loved unconventional solutions and material choices. It was almost a sculptural task to construct this wing, made

of membrane-like nylons and mesh materials, which due to the light was even more transparent, veil-like, floating and airy. Emiliano liked my special vision, so we continued our collaboration when he invited me on their tour of Italy. In Assisi, I made visual notes for his old performances to expand the spectacle. This was followed by an invitation to design visuals and costumes for *Aria*, for which I prepared concept designs.

**What were the challenges of creating the visual design and costumes for *Aria*, as well as a set in which tricks are used to avoid the effects of gravity?**

It's a very special task, since NoGravity is essentially a trick theatre. We experimented with visual illusions, optical illusions and strange spatial experiences. A wide variety of visual planes are stacked vertically and horizontally. For example, a drapery cannot “reveal” an effect. I was able to take inspirational ideas for the visual elements from the choreography used by Emiliano and his choreographer, Mariana Porceddu. Instead of garments on a human body, the costumes are actually visual elements organised around the human body. They also expand into a decorative element, but a decorative element can also function as a costume. The interaction between this was a really exciting task for me. Separated from the Baroque's detailed style, the visuality of the performance is timeless, the line-up of the costumes is stylised; only in the silhouette is there a reference to Baroque motifs. Emiliano Pellisari is a self-taught theatre maker who originally studied philosophy, and has a penchant for fine art, a clear form and a philosophical approach.

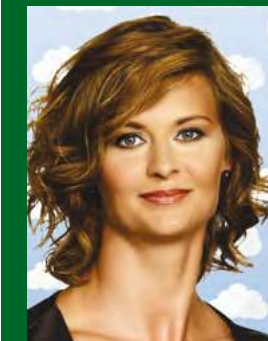
**You work in a variety of genres. What areas take precedence?**

I have tried all sorts of genres (performance, experimental motion theatre, visual dance theatre, visual theatre, prose, opera, operetta, musical, fire circus, puppet and fairy tale play, sci-fi, commercial, visual concerts, variety shows ... etc.) and I found a professional challenge in each of them. I usually plan according to a director's requests, but I also make designs and concepts simply for the joy of it. I debuted on the Ódry Stage of the University of Theatre and Film Arts as a costume designer in 2005 in a performance of Aristotle's *Lysistrata*, directed by Tamás Jordan. That's where I met Ádám Horgas, who choreographed the performance – with whom I've collaborated ever since. We are currently preparing a performance of George Orwell's *1984* at the National Theatre of Szeged. I worked with Péter Gothár at the Katona József Theatre, in the Vígsház Comedy



Theatre on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and on Gyula Fekete's opera *Excelsior!*, which had its world premiere at the Budapest Spring Festival in 2011. I've been working together with Pál Göttinger for years, most recently on Puccini's opera *Gianni Schicchi*. We are preparing to perform Vilmos Vajdai's staging of *Jövedelmező állás* at the Divadlo pod Palmovkou in Prague. I always look for opportunities to experiment, cross boundaries, to have a more extreme perspective. I've experimented with light suits, water costumes, origami costume design, and pop-up sets. It was a liberating experience, for example, when I designed the set and costumes for the fairy tale *Palacsintás király* in Kaposvár. I came up with every stage element as if the fairy tale were set in a kitchen. We created the forest with enlarged spoons, and made chairs from bent forks, the stock on the market square was a large egg-slicer, the wizard's spaceship was a tea ball strainer, and the costumes contained all kinds of kitchen utensils.

## Calling Card



Nóra Bujdosó graduated from the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts with a degree in visual design in 2007, where she received the Best of Diploma and MAOE visual design awards. (The head of the department was Judit Csanádi, and Bujdosó's diploma advisors were the costume designer Edit Szűcs and set designer Zolt Khell.) As a professional fellow at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan, she collaborated on bringing Boito's opera *Mefistofele* to the stage under the guidance of the Italian set designer Gastone Mariani. Bujdosó worked as a visual designer at the Hungarian State Television from 2007 to 2009. In 2009 she spent an academic quarter at the Hungarian Academy of Rome as a fellow at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma, and completed a course in set and costume design under the guidance of Paolo Ferruzzi and Francesco Zito. In 2013 Bujdosó won the “Hungarian Designer of the Year” award from the Hungarian Association of Visual Designers. She is constantly busy working in Hungarian and international theatres, circuses, advertising productions and television.

For Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi and Tóbiás Terebessy's experimental dance performance titled *Öreg tó* presented at the MU Theatre, we experimented with audio-visual sensors and interactions between light and colour. We projected different colour temperatures onto the different costumes (themselves consisting of textiles with different colour temperatures), so that the resulting light interferences modified the interpretable range of colours. I have designed illuminated costumes several times, such as for Vilmos Vajdai's comedy *Szerencsés flótás*, Adam Horgas's performance of *A padlás*, *Csongor és Tünde*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Dénes Gulyás's opera staging of *Don Giovanni*, where the colour of the dresses worn by the opera singers constantly changed according to the respective dramaturgical and psychodynamic points of Mozart's music. The sci-fi musical *Álomotázó*, directed by Tamás Juronics, was an exciting task because of its grandiosity. The costumes in front of a 1,200-square-metre LED wall provided the opportunity for excessive grotesque design, origami-inspired lines and inflatable costume design. For the members of the Rippel Brothers who feature in this performance and enter with a flight-mimicking apparatus, I later created UV-print-fluorescent costumes for their acrobatic performance of *Tűzcirkusz* at the Capital Circus of Budapest. For the Hungarian version of *The Masked Singer*, we also produced special design elements for the costumes and masks using a variety of technologies (for example, laser cutting, 3D printing, LED lighting that can be programmed per pixel). I am constantly interested in innovative things and modern technologies; an important feature of the approach to innovation is the interdisciplinary approach, and I therefore also consider it important to experiment with different scientific, artistic and other border areas in the context of visual design.



# MUSIC FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE ARCHIVES

## A modern world premiere with a Hungarian twist

Text: **Timea Papp** • Photo: **Libor Svacek** – [box@fotosvacek.cz](mailto:box@fotosvacek.cz)

The wonderful burgundy letters are easy to see on the copy of Antonio Draghi's score: *Gli aborti della fretta* – *The Damned Hurry*. The most exciting aspect of the work is its word premier on 18 November 1681 in Ödenburg, that is Sopron, where the National Assembly had relocated owing to the outbreak of plague in Pozsony (today Bratislava). That was the diet where Prince Pál Esterházy, the composer of *Harmonia Caelestis*, was elected Palatine of Hungary.



The Czech musicologist, harpsichordist and conductor Ondřej Macek discovered Antonio Draghi's "Hungarian" composition while conducting research at the Austrian National Library in Vienna. The score, which survived in its entirety and did not require significant reconstruction, was hidden in the part of the music collection that contains operas, oratorios, cantatas and other works created in the court of Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705). The work is without an overture, which was a common feature at that time

because composers could easily borrow an existing symphony to function as a prelude.

The reign of Leopold I cannot be described as politically successful, but it can be said of him that he was a serious art collector and consumer of culture. In Vienna, festive celebrations, birthdays and name days of the large Habsburg family and, of course, protocol events, from weddings to banquets to visiting foreign guests followed one after the other. Compositions were written for each of these occasions, which were ornately per-

### CULTURAL QUARTER

formed with rich sets, lavish costumes, and often accompanied by fireworks in the magnificent parks. While Leopold only enjoyed the fine arts as a collector, he was actively engaged with music for he was an illustrious composer himself. "His pieces can also be found in this very valuable material. Although I have not yet played or conducted Leopold's works myself, there are several excellent recordings available of them," explains Ondřej Macek, who places the era into a cultural context with extraordinary enthusiasm.

This serenata by Antonio Draghi, who was appointed court composer in 1668, is a chamber work close to the opera and the cantata. The work's protagonist is an allegorical figure, the



made Italian opera popular with the Viennese. The libretto was written by Niccolò Minato, who arrived to Vienna from Venice in 1669 and wrote about 170 librettos as a court poet, most notably in the genre of *opera seria* and *festa teatrale*, being an outstanding figure in the genre of courtly spectacles.

Unfortunately, no details other than the time and place of the premiere are available, but it is likely that this was the second dramatic Italian work to premiere in Hungary. It was at this time that the opera arrived from Italy to Central Europe, where there were no local composers. Interestingly, the first one – an *introduzione di ballo* – was also composed by Draghi. *L'albero del ramo d'oro* ("The Golden-Branched Tree") was performed three days earlier, on 15 November, also in Sopron, to celebrate Leopold's name day.

"What was the stage like? Who performed *The Damned Hurry*? We do not have any specifics on this, only our suspicions. Serenatas carry drama, but let's not think about operatic grandeur. This genre does not require a large performing apparatus for either the singers or the orchestra, nor does it require a serious background in terms of sets or theatre-technology, so they could even perform it where the royal entourage was staying, such as in a larger room of a chateau or a city palace, where spatial theatricality was already a given due to architectural training or the decoration of the walls. These are exciting questions, and it would be worth researching in Hungarian archives. Perhaps clues could be found in aristocrats' letters, diaries and other documents," the music historian-musician suggests as possible new avenues of research.

"There is no doubt that this era has unavoidable works, stable repertoire pieces, and almost hits. How many times a year is Bach's *St John Passion* part of the programme? A thousand? This is not by accident, of course, since it is one of the most wonderful and best written works of music in the world. And there's Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, which is also a fantastic creation whose popularity is justified. But there are also plenty of pieces to explore or rediscover – it is enough just to think about how the Vivaldi renaissance only occurred in the second half of the 20th century – the Baroque repository is virtually inexhaustible," says Macek, pointing out the names that, for the time being, are only familiar to music historians or the truly dedicated.

11 April 2020, 7:30 pm

Kiscelli Church Ruin

### Bio in brief

Ondřej Macek founded the Hof-Musici old music group in 1991 and has led it ever since. Their repertoire includes not only Baroque standards, but also rarely played pieces and real curiosities, owing to the conductor's research ambitions as well as their close cooperation with Český Krumlov Castle and the Baroque Theatre Foundation. They regularly perform in the castle theatre, which is a rare functioning Baroque theatre. Rehearsals for the performance at the Kiscelli Museum on 11 April are taking place in Prague, after which they will return briefly to Český Krumlov, from where they will arrive to Budapest with a spectacular costume collection.

"Hurry". Perhaps this is the case, Macek opines, because the composer had to work quickly, and there is also a textual reference to the fact that the Hurry left Pannonia in the direction of Austria.

The work was performed in Sopron on 18 November in honour of the birthday of Ferdinand III's third wife, Eleonora Gonzaga. The Princess of Mantua and her stepson Leopold I had a very good relationship, owing to the fact that Eleonora was also a great music lover, and Leopold was the person who



# “WHEN I PLAY LISZT I FEEL AS IF I’VE ARRIVED HOME”

A Viennese evening with Gábor Farkas

Text: Máté Ur



Photo: © Zsófia Raffay

Gábor Farkas will perform at the Liszt Academy of Music on 15 April. The artist feels that he is primarily thought of as a player of Liszt’s music, and Farkas would like to break out of this “pigeonhole” without overlooking Liszt’s romantic repertoire. This concert will be an excellent occasion to do so.

## CULTURAL QUARTER

Gábor Farkas has lived and worked in Japan for several years as a professor at the Tokyo College of Music, but in addition to teaching, he remains a dedicated performer who regularly returns home to play on Hungarian stages. In 2018, he had the honour of introducing Steinway’s newest instrument – the Spirio – in Budapest, and in the autumn he performed a large-scale Chopin concert for a Hungarian audience, which consisted of selections from his latest album. Speaking about the recording, he said: “Liszt, Schumann and Chopin are the most

outstanding figures from the romantic era, who were colleagues, friends, and artists who inspired one another, and those who are closest to me artistically. My first solo album contained Liszt pieces, later followed by Schumann. I think it was obvious what music I had to draw upon for this occasion.” This will not be the first time that we can see and hear Farkas at the Budapest Spring Festival, for his solo concerts have practically become a tradition. And by browsing the programme for this year’s performance, there is indeed a clear divergence from the masterpieces of romantic piano literature in the strict sense, which is reinforced not only by the evening’s title, but also by the artist himself, because, as he says, “I would like to focus more and more on the so-called Viennese repertoire, and the show is a foreshadowing of this longer-term plan”. And how will the approach to this new repertoire from Haydn to Mozart and Beethoven to Schubert manifest itself? Gábor Farkas, as an expert interpreter of Schumann, will perform *Carnival Scenes* from Vienna in which the sound – enriched with romantic poetic content typical for the composer – is forced into a uniquely traditional sonata form. This is complemented by Four Impromptus from Schubert, and these pieces are also evidence of the pushing of customary boundaries. In name and in mood Liszt’s transcription of Schubert’s other composition, *Soirées*

de Vienne also fits the programme. “Besides the fact that it has to be multifaceted, and because life is short and the piano literature so vast, romance will always be cherished in my heart,” Gábor Farkas says to explain Liszt’s presence, adding that he cannot leave him out, “Because if I play Liszt, then I really feel as if I’ve arrived home”. The diverse concert will reach its climax with a performance of Grünfeld-Strauss: *Soirée de Vienne – concert paraphrase, Op. 56*, which will take the audience to the end of the 19th century.

Gábor Farkas revealed that although he has yet to play the programme as it is assembled, the individual pieces are not entirely unfamiliar to him. Knowing him, we know that he tries to prepare for each concert as soon as possible, and this precision also characterises his teaching. In 2017 Farkas had the honour of being chosen by the piano manufacturer Steinway as an ambassador for their instruments. “Among the multitude of modern pianos, the Steinway is the instrument on which virtually any composer’s works can be played, and as a Steinway artist, it is my duty to place these instruments at the fore, but of course there are rare exceptions when you have to choose a different one in a concert hall for a given performance,” says Gábor Farkas, who also does not rule out experimentally playing Graf or Walter pianos as part of the new direction he is taking. ●



The piano virtuosos of the era, among them Chopin and Liszt, depicted in this copper engraving from *Revue et Gazette Musicale* published in Paris in 1842 (Nicolas Eustache Maurin)



# CHAMBER MUSIC IS THE SOURCE

Text: Anna Tóth



Photo: © Zsófia Raffay

**Ernő Kállai won a competition for the first time at the age of 12, which was followed by admission to the Liszt Academy of Music's School for Exceptional Young Talents. He studied under Itzhak Perlman and at Juilliard in New York, and debuted with the New York Philharmonic at the age of 25.**

**How lost did you, Ernő Kállai (the grandson of the Kossuth Prize-winning clarinetist Ernő Kállai Kis and son of the Gypsy first violinist Ernő Kállai Kis) feel when you moved to New York at a very young age and suddenly became a student at Juilliard?**

I didn't feel lost, because I had already been there for a summer course before that at the age of

17, and then regularly returned as a part of the Perlman Music Program. So by the time I began my studies at Juilliard, I was familiar with America, had friends, and knew some musicians. Nevertheless, the first few months were not easy, it was a different world than the one at home, but I fell in love with it and had a really good time. It was a sensational experience.

## CULTURAL QUARTER

### Do you ever go back?

Not very often. I returned to New York after a long time away last season with the Hungarian State Opera, and had the chance to meet up with my old master.

**How can you coordinate your responsibilities? You are first violinist for the Kállai String Quartet and concertmaster for the Hungarian State Opera. You also play as a soloist and in other chamber formations. Orchestral and solo performances are so different.**

They're different, but they're closer than they appear to be. Between orchestral and solo performances there is chamber music and, in my view, this is the source from which both of them feed. I sit in the orchestra as I do in the quartet, and I hold myself to chamber rules as a soloist: how to pay attention to each other, how to play together, or if there's a piano or orchestra supporting me. Chamber music teaches you how to play music. That's why I like to be able to do all three genres. I feel at home in all of them.

**Of the operas you have performed or know, which are your favourites?**

I love Puccini very much, no matter which opera it is, and *Bluebeard's Castle* by Bartók is one of my favourites. It's an experience to be part of this music. And Mozart! You can never become bored with *The Magic Flute*; I notice something new in it every time I play it.

**If you were asked to put together the programme for a sonata evening any way your heart desires, what pieces would you pick?**

The defining principle would obviously be who my favourite composer is, what my favourite work is, and this changes from time to time. Honestly, I never consider whether the pieces fit or don't fit together. It tends to be the other way around: when I see the entire programme, then I begin to see links between them and recognise where they come together. What I would very much like to play is the sonata by Richard Strauss that I love; I've never stood on a podium and performed it, but I'd love to. Then there is Enescu's *sonata in A-minor*, composed in a Romanian Gypsy style, which the author scored in astonishing detail, marking each tone and vibrato change. And if we follow all the instructions in the sheet music, it sounds like an improvisation. As can be said of the Liszt rhapsodies. If I were asked to assemble the programme for a concert of sonatas, I'd definitely put it together from rarely or infrequently performed works. I'd love to spend some time with them... But I really like Mozart's sonatas, especially the later "great ones." And I can say the same about works by Beethoven and Brahms.

**No Brahms works will be performed for the sonata evening in the Vigadó Concert Hall on 16 April together with János Balázs, but you will perform Beethoven and Schumann.**

We definitely had to make room for Beethoven in the show. They entrusted us with deciding whether or not we wished to add another composer or if we were going to do a purely Beethoven programme. János Balázs and I decided on the Schumann work together. I've played with him for many

years, we began performing in a chamber formation back in a preparatory course at Liszt Academy. We've played all three pieces before. The *Kreutzer Sonata* is one of the most virtuosic and famous sonatas by Beethoven, which we certainly didn't want to leave out. The sonata by Schumann is not new to us either, and although it's been quite a few years since the last time we played it, we love it, so that's why we chose it as well. Both of our personalities can be seen on the stage through the work being performed. Consequently, each performance is a little different: the more time passes between them, the greater the change.

**If prestigious invitations such as this arrive, which focus on works that you have already performed together, can you predict how many rehearsals you will need?**

I can't answer that, since the rehearsals aren't even of the same length. I'm sure that one rehearsal isn't enough, and I can also say that 25 aren't needed either. As a rule, a performance should not reveal a lack of rehearsing. You need to be able to prepare perfectly in the time that is available.

**If you look ahead in your professional calendar, what performances do you see?**

In late March and early April we will play with my string quartet at the Budapest Quartet Weekend in Nádor Hall. This year will be a Shostakovich year. All of Shostakovich's string quartets will be performed by the participating formations, and we will play the composer's earliest and latest quartet pieces. This is a whole new task for us, because we have never dealt with Shostakovich's works before. Then we will go to Portugal, where in addition to the late Shostakovich quartet pieces, we will play a Beethoven piece and, of course, a Hungarian string quartet by Leo Weiner.

**What other performances are on the horizon?**

We have just received a new invitation: in the autumn, the Bartók World Competition will be held at the Liszt Academy, which is advertised to composers, and we will participate in the presentation of the finalists with our string quartet. We will perform one of the works that will receive a prize. As a soloist, I will perform at a relatively new festival in France over the summer.

**Tell me something about your violin.**

At the moment I'm lucky to have two violins. I've been playing on the Testore for five or six years, I know it well, it's grown close to me, and I love it very much. This is thanks to the Summa Artium Foundation, who lent me the instrument. This season, the Opera House bought a Nemessányi violin and I was chosen to be the one to use it, so that I can decide which violin I'm going to play. Itzhak Perlman cleverly solved his dilemma from a similar situation: he had a Stradivarius and a Guarneri Del Gesù. He played one for six months, then played the other for the next six. And he always felt like he had a new violin. Now this opportunity has arisen for me as well.

**Which one are you going to play at the Vigadó?**

I'm still thinking about it, but I don't want to reveal which one. Let it be a surprise.



# RUSSIAN PICTURES IN FRENCH FRAMES

## Marcell Szabó's recital at the Pesti Vigadó

Text: **Máté Ur**

Junior Prima Prize-winning pianist Marcell Szabó will perform a solo concert at the Pesti Vigadó concert hall on 4 April, where French pieces will take centre stage alongside Russian works. In addition to his competition results, Szabó, who is in his early 30s, has also garnered the attention of Hungarian and international audiences as a festival organiser.



Photo © Misi Kondella

### CULTURAL QUARTER

Budapest has hosted a thematic festival drawing on the inexhaustible treasure trove of Russian classical music for many years. Marcell Szabó dreamt up a festival according to his own interests, which means that he expanded his repertoire not only according to his own needs, but also those of his audience, with a special emphasis placed on those who will attend this festival of Russian music. However, Szabó does not fall into the trap of focusing on a single composer or musical culture at the expense of everything else. What reveals this is that the programme at the Pesti Vigadó concert hall as part of the Budapest Spring Festival will also feature French works in addition to those by Russian composers, because as he says: “For me, mingling the French and Russian programmes has been an idea for a long time. These works complement each other as counterpoints. The Russian works represent a deep, masculine and passionate tone, while the French works evoke these same basic feelings but with a gentler approach.” In regards to the programme’s selection of works, Szabó explained that “if I’m given a fully free hand, then I like to have some kind of link between the works within a section, whether it’s the author, the tone, or, where appropriate, some kind of national character. The selection of compositions and determining their order at a concert is quite sensitive and essential in order to make the player and the audience feel comfortable.”

In addition to highlighting the interconnected moods in many ways, the main role will be played by visuality and the sometimes stimulating and at other times calming dialogue between the fine arts and music. Two works by Debussy will be performed that Szabó already knows very well. That most noble national tradition, the impressionist reinterpretation of good French taste and elegance appears in the composition of the first volume of *Images*, while the works in *Children’s Corner*, written for the composer’s beloved child, suggests jazz motifs that were unusual in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Seizing the occasion, Marcell Szabó will also perform *Pictures at an Exhibition* which is new to him, and is the work by Mussorgsky that was inspired by Victor Hartmann’s paintings. The slightly robust, longer pieces will be performed at the Pesti Vigadó, where Marcell Szabó has performed only once before, but as he says, “the room is well suited for these more serious works with defined contours, which, of course, is influenced by the acoustics created by the ever-changing audience. But at the same time,” he adds, “a performer, especially when it comes to solo concerts, knows and even has a duty to pay attention to this.”

And how does a solo concert differ in his plans compared to a chamber or orchestral concert? “There

is no ranking,” the young artist says, “especially at present, since I will play a Grieg chamber concert on a date close to the recital – as well as Prokofiev’s *Piano Concerto No. 3*,” he adds. “But I feel the most liberated in a chamber formation. A symphonic concert acts as like a burst of energy, not to mention the sense of independence that I can only feel during a solo concert.” ●

Programme: Debussy: *Images*, Volume I, Volume L.110; Debussy: *Children’s Corner*, L. 113, Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*



### Bio in brief

Marcell Szabó graduated from the Liszt Academy of Music in 2012 as a student of György Nádor and András Kemenes. The Junior Prima Prize winner and Annie Fischer Scholarship-winning performer has enjoyed success at numerous international competitions in recent years, winning 1<sup>st</sup> place and two special prizes (one by the orchestra and one as best contemporary music performer) at the 2014 International Béla Bartók Piano Competition in Szeged, 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the International Piano Competition Delia Steinberg (Madrid), and 1<sup>st</sup> place and a special prize at the Île-de-France International Piano Competition. Szabó relaunched the Russian Music Festival in 2018, for which he is the artistic director. He has recently performed concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Wiener Konzerthaus, the Birmingham Town Hall, Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie and the Musikfestspiele in Dresden.



# A FIERY TANGO AT THE RÁKÓCZI SQUARE MARKET HALL

Text: Rita Szentgyörgyi



Astor Piazzolla  
in 1968

Photo: © Gianni Mesichelli

*Máriak városa* (“City of Marys”) is a boundary-stretching artistic enterprise that will be staged at a unique location as part of the Budapest Spring Festival. The famous opera singer Erika Miklósa, the musician, television host and director Péter Novák, and the experimental contemporary dance choreographer Dorottya Ujszászi have assembled a work that will engage all of the senses at the Rákóczi Square Market Hall, following in the footsteps of Astor Piazzolla’s tango opera *María de Buenos Aires*.

## CULTURAL QUARTER

In addition to the seven-member chamber orchestra Barefoot Musicians, a narrator (Péter Novák) and a chameleon-like actor, Csaba Debreczeny, will join the performance for its serious prose sections. The scenic world will be created by the dancers, who will use the tools of a physical theatre to create the milieu of the story.

This 1968 masterpiece by the Argentine tango king Astor Piazzolla brings to life the story of Mary, a prostitute lost in the big city who is innocent in her sensuality. With *María de Buenos Aires*, Piazzolla revolutionised the tango genre by adding jazz and classical elements to the music. Budapest Spring Festival audiences already had the opportunity to encounter this work in 2004, as the second piece of a seven-part thematic mini-festival at the Thália Theatre.

Instead of a Latin environment, *Máriak városa* is a melodrama situated in a cosmopolitan environment surrounded by the hustle and bustle of market life. Enriched with internal monologues, the different stations of a woman’s life are brought to life from childhood to youth, maturity to death. This is not the first time that Piazzolla’s music has been performed by Erika Miklósa, who in the performance takes on a role that involves singing, dancing and prose. “I have a very strong attachment to it, for it was a new musical world for me when I first began working with it, and sang “Yo soy María” from the tango opera on my album *Otherwise*,” she recalled. “For years I wondered how this piece could be reworked, removed from its Buenos Aires surroundings and transposed closer to our lives and thought processes. I’m glad that I waited and left time for it, because in the meantime I’ve gained a lot of new experiences, and momentum as a woman and mother. I turned to Péter Novák with my idea, together with whom we came to the conclusion that we would select a few songs from the original work, put other Piazzolla songs in it, and string together the turning points and stages of a woman’s life into a dramaturgical thread. The Rákóczi Square Market Hall was an ideal choice for the performance, since the public spaces of District VIII are linked to the themes found in Piazzolla’s opera such as prostitution and violence. Either way, we were looking for a realistic environment where many people pass through and the spectators also feel much more at home. Today, I am brave and honest enough to – through the story in *Máriak városa* – speak about the feelings that women usually dare not speak about, such as feelings of humiliation, the problems of becoming a woman, facing aging, the fear of death, and keeping a family together.” ●

Erika Miklósa



Photo: © László Enmer



# THE PEACE-MAKING AND INNOVATIVE PHARAOH

## Amenhotep II and his era in the Museum of Fine Arts

Text: Györgyi Orbán • Photos: Museum of Fine Arts Budapest

Thutmose III left a great empire to his son, Amenhotep II, who stewarded his inheritance well. The child of the “great royal wife” Merytre-Hatshepsut, he did not expand but nonetheless preserved the Nile Valley kingdom that stretched from the eastern half of the Mediterranean to what is now Sudan, ruling for 20 years.



### CULTURAL QUARTER

A special Egyptian exhibition titled *Amenhotep II and his Time - the Discovery of the Pharaoh's Tomb* will be on display from 17 April to 26 July at the Museum of Fine Arts. The exhibition will reveal this sensational discovery by the French archaeologist Victor Loret, and will be centred on a scale reconstruction of the pharaoh's burial chamber found in the Valley of the Kings, which has been constructed in the temporary exhibition space on the ground floor. Visitors can also learn about the history of this great archaeological discovery by perusing the original excavation documentation. The first incarnation of this temporary exhibition opened in Milan in 2017 at the MUDEC Museum of Cultures titled *Egitto. La straordinaria scoperta del faraone Amenofi II* under the professional direction of the Department of Egyptology of the University of Milan. The university possesses a large collection of Egyptian archive materials and it is where Victor Loret's legacy is preserved. In Milan, an exact copy was created of the tomb excavated in the Valley of the Kings. The Budapest exhibition, with a similar concept to that in Milan, presents the era of the ancient Egyptian monarch and the discovery of his tomb with a completely new collection of artworks. Along the imaginary line running between Vienna and Moscow, Hungary has the most important Egypt collection in East Central Europe, said the Egyptologist Éva Liptay to *Budapest's Finest*, who is the head of the Museum's Egyptian Collection and co-curator of the exhibition. Several pieces of the king's tomb are from Cairo, and several objects arrived from London and Brussels, including a stela fragment from the Lucien Viola private collection, but important relics are also guarded in Debrecen. It was from this collection that a rare preserved pharaoh's coffin arrived. An illustrated death certificate on papyrus arrived from a private collection in Budapest, which is also a unique object in Europe.

The monumental tomb of Amenhotep II, which is more than four metres in height, has an area of almost 135 m<sup>2</sup>, and a life-size copy can be seen by visitors in the ground-floor temporary exhibition hall. The walls are decorated with “talking” images and the columns are covered with 3-D photos. Special scenes decorating it arouse admiration: such as the ruler accompanying the Sun God on his journey into the night where at the end of the journey, they are both reborn. Those who step inside can really feel as if they are in the pharaoh's tomb. In front of the tomb, objects from the New Kingdom era are displayed, such as the two-horse chariots from the Levant. This was when the Egyptians discovered the horse and carriage, because up to that time the Nile was their primary transport route and they used boats on the river and donkeys on the shore. Also displayed are the amulets, jewellery, and dishes found in the tomb inscribed with Amenhotep's name, along with one of the most beautiful portraits of the pharaoh, which is 40 centimetres in size and is on loan from Copenhagen. The double statue depicting Amenhotep II in front of the Baboon God is on loan from Vienna. A copy of

his red quartz coffin, which today stands empty in the Valley of the Kings, can also be seen in the exhibition.

Éva Liptay revealed that tomb visitors can read documentation on its excavation from the University of Milan's archives. Also on display will be portraits of Amenhotep II, important men from his court, objects, and written materials. Another part will present everyday objects from the era: dishes, jewellery, furniture, linen fragments, beauty accessories such as hairbrushes, and period footwear. The next part will inform visitors about the burial habits of dignitaries, and will include objects found in the tombs as well as amulets.

Visitors can become acquainted with New Kingdom Egypt, the era of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, and the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, in which Amenhotep II ruled between 1420 and 1400. His father, Thutmose III left him a great empire. Thutmose III had conquered the eastern Mediterranean, the coastline of the Levant, and in the south, he ventured deep into Nubia (today Sudan) in the Nile Valley. He made Egypt not only into a political great power, but the empire became the most important trade link between Sub-Saharan Africa, the Aegean Sea, Mesopotamia, and the Levant. Amenhotep II marched with his army to these areas following his father's death, but did not fight to conquer any more. He consolidated the domestic political situation against rebellions, overhauled the administration, and built an open, inclusive and prosperous empire, which is what can be said of his two decades of rule. His father prepared him so that his son had secured his future power as a child, and in the palace nursery he was surrounded by a supportive ring of royal princes, nurses and educators. Amenhotep was thus surrounded by a close group of friends before he ascended

to the throne. Visitors can see objects such as a carriage, arrows and stelae belonging to the pharaoh's circle of friends as well as Thutmose III's 3-4 other sons.

It was an archaeological sensation when the French archaeologist Victor Loret found the tomb of Amenhotep II in 1898, which was found unscathed and uncharacteristically located on the eastern side of the Valley of the Kings in a separate burial chamber. Additionally, Loret found three and nine mummies each in the two side chambers. This was also a big event because in 1881 the first royal tombs from the New Kingdom were discovered in Thebes, but without mummies, because in 900 BC cemetery officials removed the bodies from the sarcophagi to hide them from grave robbers. Thanks to the work of curator Éva Liptay, contemporary Hungarian newspaper accounts, drawings and photos of the discovery will further enrich the exhibition. Professor Patrizia Piacentini, Head of the Department of Egyptology at the University of Milan, is the Italian curator for the Budapest exhibition, which has received a Hungarian-English catalogue with the cover featuring the portrait of Amenhotep on loan from Copenhagen. The catalogue features writings from major international researchers of Egyptology.





# FORGET REVOLUTIONS, GO TO NATURE

Text: Györgyi Orbán • Reproductions: MNG.hu

An exhibition on the artistry of the English Pre-Raphaelites will be hosted for the first time in Hungary with works on loan from the collection of the Tate Britain in London, which will also explore the impact that these masters had on Hungarian artists. The exhibition, titled “Desired Beauty – Pre-Raphaelite Masterpieces from the Tate Collection” will await visitors at the Hungarian National Gallery from 10 April to 30 August.



Carol Jacobi, an expert on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood formed in 1848, called their works Victorian avant-garde. The seven young men, including the three defining personalities of John Everett Millais, **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** and **John William Waterhouse** rejected the scientific and industrial revolution of the Victoria Era and the European revolutions. The idea was to move beyond the boredom of academicism, and they found their method for expression in the paintings of the 15th century, before the Renaissance and the art of Raphael. The Brotherhood idealised the Middle Ages and tried to resurrect the early naive art, which is why they did not sign their own names to the paintings, and used the initials P.R.B. (Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood) as their signature. The public did not warm to them in Protestant England because of their religious themes, but when the critic John Ruskin wrote positively of them, it proved to be their breakthrough. Ruskin

encouraged the artists to see nature the same way as the famous landscape painter William Turner had, that is to see the fine details in nature, and to go to nature and work within it. With this they can be considered as precursors to the impressionists. The movement, which lasted for almost 100 years, has undergone various phases. As the Hungarian co-curator Edit Plesznivy described it to Budapest's Finest: the work of the London group has a serious historical arc and had a big influence on Italian, French and Hungarian fine art and literature at the end of the 19th century.

Ninety works of art have arrived from London's Tate Britain consisting of outstanding Pre-Raphaelite pieces and a series of sketches for each work. The English curator compiled the exhibition's materials based on the themes of medieval art, the relationship between literature and fine art, and the importance of female beauty and nature.



Plesznivy explained that the Hungarian materials can be seen in a separate space with a total of 60 works. For the first section, they selected works from the English Pre-Raphaelite collection of the Museum of Fine Arts. As far as Hungarian artists are concerned, they were strongly influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, as were the forerunners of art nouveau. This can be seen in the works of the painters and applied artists of the Gödöllő Artist Colony, especially their leader, **Aladár Körösfői-Kriesch**. Consequently, several works from Gödöllő are included in the exhibition. The early works of the painter **Lajos**

**Gulácsy** from around 1906 reflect the worldview of the Pre-Raphaelites. He spent much of his creative period in Italy, attracted to medieval Italian art, and through the Italian influences in his works themes such as musicality and the richness of plant motifs can be seen in his style. Additionally, works by József Rippl-Rónai and Károly Ferenczy show the effects of this late, Pre-Raphaelite era, Plesznivy added. Two catalogues were assembled: one in English and Hungarian for the Tate Britain materials, and another smaller catalogue also in two languages for the Hungarian works.







# City Guide

The staff at *Budapest's Finest* discover an exciting new or renovated location in the city on a quarterly basis, such as, for example, Twentysix located on Király Street. This former design building has become a green and relaxing oasis within the nightlife quarter.

In the City Park the House of the Hungarian Millennium, which was originally built as an art hall or exhibition space, was reborn. Following the discovery that it was too small for its intended purpose, the building was repurposed into offices, thus dividing its elegant spaces.

The structure has now been restored and expanded with fine materials and faithful ideas, all within its original walls.

A good knife is an essential part of any household, and a penknife can even be a work of art, as one of this issue's articles reveals. The internationally famous chef duo consisting of Tamás Széll and Szabina Szulló relocated their Stand25 bistro from Pest to Buda, where it has remained just as popular as it was in the market hall on Hold Street.



The renovated and recently opened House of the Hungarian Millennium in the City Park



# A JEWELLERY BOX IN THE CITY PARK

## The House of the Hungarian Millennium

Text: **Eszter Götz** • Photos: **Makroler Kft. / Tamás Dernovics**

**For a long time one of the oldest and most beautiful buildings in the City Park stood in a state of disrepair without any purpose. People walking in the park would wonder at its fragmented ceramic ornaments, the fragile grace of its ground-floor neo-Renaissance pavilion, and saw within it a small but perfect reflection of the beauty of a lost era – and then continued on their way.**

Originally designed as the Hall of Art for the fine arts section of the national exhibition in 1885, the structure was based on the plans of the young architect Ferenc Pfaff, who soon became a recognised specialist in railway stations at the turn of the century. The building combined the calm proportions of Renaissance architecture with the Hungarian tastes of the previous turn of the century. It preceded the arrival of Hungarian art nouveau a decade later with its clinker-brick façades, embossed portraits of Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci under its colourful ledge, shell-lined ornamental fountains, a charming ensemble of figures from the myths of various ancient cultures (fauns, Egyptian and Greek female figures, Persian winged lions) as well as a balustrade that runs along the pavilion's roof.

The pavilion soon proved to be too small, and its role was taken over by the more spacious Műcsarnok Hall of Art built on Heroes' Square in 1896. At that time, the Budapest Museum of Local History opened here, with the entrance decorated with statues from the former German Theatre of Pest, but the cramped halls were not suited for this either, so the building was closed in the 1930s. It has been rebuilt several times over the years, and although it has lost a significant part of its original ornamentation, and saw its stucco and generous interiors truncated, the building's structure survived all the storms of history. The building has functioned as a sculptor's workshop, the office of the artists' association, and as a venue for events and photo exhibitions. In the 1990s, the building was



renamed in memory of the assassinated Swedish politician Olof Palme, but a worthy function was still not found for it.

Thanks to a careful reconstruction that lasted several years, the building was finally returned to its original splendour in the fall of 2019. The sections added later were removed, the building's exterior contours were restored, and the walled-in ornamentation and recesses were revealed. The glazed ceramic elements made to order at the Zsolnay factory in Pécs in 1885 were restored locally to minimise having to move them. The replacement of the missing parts



was aided by the factory's former design books, and the repair of the remaining but damaged elements was undertaken by dozens of restorers. It is a miracle that most of the ceramics remained intact, for the Zsolnay factory was only to later experiment with its world-class innovation, the frost-tolerant pyrogranite, so that the building in the City Park was still decorated with glazed majolica ornaments. Unfortunately, the allegorical statues on the crown ledge in the middle of the façade were not found, but even without them the renovation can be considered to be authentic.

Inside, a series of spacious, transparent spaces were created that did not follow the original spatial layout exactly, but the overall effect is similar. The wide, three-nave hall, pierced by spacious semi-circular openings, has skylights along the entire length, flooding the halls with daylight. A staircase befitting of dignitaries leads



to the entrance, from which we reach the central part above the two wings, where the space opens on two sides: an exhibition space in one wing and a restaurant-café in the other, the latter with a cosy outdoor terrace opening onto the park. A small podium stage was also created in the café, as the space's design elements decorate the room: lace-like golden partitions, enormously magnified ceramic dishes – contemporary transcriptions of Zsolnay dishes – as well as dark green stained wood panelling and geometric patterns on the walls. A spectacular copper spiral staircase takes us from the lobby to the semi-basement, which although contemporary, noticeably relates to the Zsolnay ornaments that make the house special: it has the same oriental interior glow as the Zsolnay eosin glaze. On the lower floor visitors will find a cloakroom and a lecture and a screening room each, where everything is grey, black or white; there are no colours, indicating that this addition from the present does not wish to compete with the splendour of the original building.

Today, the House of the Hungarian Millennium is an exhibition space, hospitality establishment and events centre. Its first exhibition brings to life the eras of the City Park through many exciting installations, including a city-history film projected onto the pages of a huge pop-up book, a replica of one of the Millennium Underground Railway's wood panelled carriages from the era, a copy of the Archangel Gabriel statue at the top of the column in Heroes' Square (with which visitors can take selfies), and an interactive table featuring the spices used in the nearby Gundel restaurant, through which visitors can discover the lives of the Hungarian researchers of the Orient from the past.

The turn-of-the-century experience is complemented by flavours and scents: the restaurant features a reimagining of old recipes, and in front of the entrance is a newly installed romantic rose garden, centred on an imposing majolica fountain composed according to the original drawings found in the Zsolnay design book. Those who rest here among the roses will forget the everyday noise of the big city, and immerse themselves into the slower, leisurely and refined world of the turn of the century, discovering one of the most beautiful, romantic corners of their great-grandparents' Budapest along the way.



# ON TWO WHEELS AND BETWEEN TWO GOALS

Prestigious sporting events in Budapest

Text: Adrián Szász



9-11 May and then the 16th, 20th, 24th and 28th of June. Seven days in late spring and early summer when the sporting world will focus on the Hungarian capital. In May, one of the world's largest cycling races, the Giro d'Italia, will have its *Grande Partenza* ("Grand Start") in Budapest, as Hungary will host the first three stages of the competition out of the 21 in total. More than a month later, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) will launch its 16th European Championship, which this time will not be hosted by one country, but by a major city from 12 different nations, including Budapest in the brand new Puskás Aréna. Moreover, it is certain that the World Champions France and European Champions Portugal will also play two group matches here, as the draw assigned these two world-class teams to Group F, which Budapest is hosting.



## MAGIC ON THE PITCH

As in fantastic: world-class international footballers such as Antoine Griezmann, Kylian Mbappé and Cristiano Ronaldo will compete on the pitch in Budapest, just to name perhaps the three greatest players who will be here. Germany, another giant in the sport, will join the French and Portuguese in Group F, but will play their matches on home soil at Munich's Allianz Arena, while the fourth team in the group may even be Hungary, if the team succeeds in the qualifiers in late March. Were that to occur, then there would be an even bigger football festival in Budapest in the second half of June, because Hungarian fanatics can fill not only the stadium, but also the streets of the city with a magical atmosphere, if they have a team to cheer for.

But first some facts before the opening whistle: following the three group matches (to be held on the 16th, 20th and 24th), there will also be a round of 16 match on the 28th in Budapest, where, depending on the group results, England, the Netherlands or Spain can play, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

For the record, the other cities hosting Euro 2020 are Copenhagen (Denmark), Bucharest (Romania), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Dublin (Ireland), Bilbao (Spain), Glasgow (Scotland), London (England), Munich (Germany), Rome (Italy), Baku (Azerbaijan) and St. Petersburg (Russia). Azerbaijan, Denmark, Ireland, Hungary, Russia, Romania and Scotland have never hosted a European Championship before, nor was Bilbao a host during the 1964 European Championship held in Spain.

## THE GRAND START AND TWO MORE DAYS

Football fans will not be the only ones enjoying themselves in Budapest, for as we mentioned in the introduction, cycling enthusiasts will have their own spectacular event a month earlier. On 9 May the competitors in the Giro d'Italia will start from Heroes' Square, then cycle along Andrásy Avenue and – passing by St. Stephen's Basilica – will head towards Buda, crossing the Danube via the Margaret Bridge to the first day's finish line in the Castle District. Budapest's iconic locations will provide spectacular backdrops on opening day. "This will be a short 9 1/2-kilometre time trial, most of which takes place on flat terrain, with only the last kilometre and a half containing a slight 4 percent incline," said Mauro Vegni, the Italian director of the Giro, who also spoke about the second stage on 10 May and the third stage on 11 May.

The second day will also start from Heroes' Square, but the race will really commence at Budapest's city limit on Route 11 towards the Pilis Mountains and the Danube Bend. Heading through Szentendre, Esztergom and Pannonhalma, the cyclists will travel 193 kilometres to the city of Győr, passing by Esztergom Basilica and Pannonhalma Archabbey along the way. "There will be a much more serious incline before the finish on this day," Vegni added, and so that we get the full picture, he continues with the third day, which will star the "Hungarian Sea": Lake Balaton. Starting from Székesfehérvár, the most beautiful landscapes of the Balaton Highlands (Veszprém, Tihany, Káli Basin, Hévíz)





Photo: © Fabio Ferrari/LaPresse

will be on the route to the final destination of the Hungarian stages, Nagykanizsa. This day will total 197 kilometres. And if, as a foreigner, you learn to pronounce the names of all the Hungarian cities concerned correctly, you may even win a special prize. We must add that Vegni has been steadfast in trying to accomplish this tongue-twisting challenge. “At the end of the Hungarian stages you can expect to see an exciting sprint,” he predicted.

## THOUSANDS ALONG THE ROAD, MILLIONS IN FRONT OF THE TV

Last year the Giro d’Italia started from Jerusalem (and from Dublin and Amsterdam in earlier years), as 810 million people watched via television, and

300,000 to 400,000 people cheered the cyclists on from the roadside every day. A similar mood is expected this year with Hungary’s attractions providing the backdrop, and the country will host special events in the days leading up to the race. This will also increase cycling’s popularity, and it can also spur further development in the transportation culture in the region, from which everyone who visits Budapest will benefit in the long term. Paolo Bellino, director of RCS Sport, which organises the Giro, added that not only can Hungary attract the world’s attention, but that a new generation of Hungarian cyclists can also attract the attention of the world. After all, there is a good chance that more Hungarian competitors will be racing with the teams, and they can of course expect extra motivation and encouragement from enthusiastic Hungarian supporters.

“The contestants will use a specially designed virtual reality system to study and memorise the Hungarian stages, which are approximately 400 kilometres long,” two-time Giro d’Italia winner Ivan Basso revealed, who arrived in Hungary months before the competition and cycled one of the events leading up to 2020 Grande Partenza as a celebrity guest. This event itself has already attracted huge interest, and they are saying that the team presentations before the Grande Partenza (on 7 May at Heroes’ Square) promises to be a great show. Therefore, it will be worth spending every possible moment of the few days in Hungary close to the racers, after which the Giro d’Italia will continue in Sicily, where the teams will fly to. But in the meantime, many people in the Hungarian capital are still lifting their bikes above their heads, as the Statue of Liberty on Gellért Hill does in the official logo for the Hungarian stages.

## The Giro in pictures

A temporary exhibition at the Budapest History Museum – Castle Museum ties in with the start of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Giro d’Italia, as the more than 110-year history of the competition will be presented primarily through archive photos and objects related to the competition. The exhibition also draws on influential personalities such as three-time Giro winner Gino Bartali (1914-2000), who smuggled documents in the seat tube of his bicycle from Assisi to Florence during the Second World War for fleeing Jews. The section devoted to the Giro’s history is based on a selection of items from the collection of the Museo del Ciclismo in Madonna del Ghisallo. In addition to objects from the Italian collection, such as Eddy “the Cannibal” Merckx’s bicycle or the pink jerseys from previous Giro races, the exhibition will also feature items from Hungarian collectors and public collections, as well as from the museum’s own collection of objects and stories related to the history of Hungarian bicycle sports. Personal memories, legends and stories associated with the Giro will play an important role in the exhibition, such as the story of the iconic figure from the 1924 competition, Alfonsina Strada (1981-1959), who is to date the only female competitor to cycle in the race. For more information, please visit: [btm.hu/en/](http://btm.hu/en/)

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### Giro: a final push and a rapid relocation



On the closing day of the last Hungarian stage, all of the Giro d’Italia teams will fly to Sicily from Sármellék Airport located 35 kilometres from Nagykanizsa, to continue the race in Italy the next morning. After a dinner scheduled in the security zone at the airport, two charter planes will take the teams – about 600 people – and a cargo plane will carry their equipment. Some staff members will already be awaiting them in Sicily. It will be a strenuous pace, but with the final stage in the western half of Hungary, Austrian, Slovakian, Slovenian and Croatian supporters, who are expected to cheer their competitors on, can also easily access the Giro’s Hungarian locations



### Women’s handball: the continent's strongest clubs will arrive

The European Handball Federation (EHF) announced last year that – as has been the case since 2013 – the women’s handball Champions League semi-finals will also be held in Budapest, at the László Papp Budapest Sports Arena on 9-10 May. The Hungarian Győr ETO KC team is a regular in the finals (having won the previous three titles and four of the previous six), and is filled with world-class players.

### Touring cars with the defending Hungarian champion, and trucks



The 2020 World Touring Car Championship (WTCR) season begins on 5 April in Marrakesh, Morocco, and ends on 13 December in Sepang, Malaysia. The second race in the series will take place on the weekend of 25-26 April near Budapest at the Hungaroring racetrack. Last year, Norbert Michelisz of Hungary won the drivers’ championship and is looking forward to this season as the defending champion. At the same time and same place heavyweight vehicles will also compete with each other: the FIA European Truck Racing Championship (ETRC) will arrive to Hungary for the sixth time, once again promising a breath-taking spectacle.

### The city of aquatic sporting events in 2020 as well



Since 2017, Budapest’s Duna Aréna has become one of the preferred venues for world championships in aquatic sports. Hungary’s new world-class complex was inaugurated with the phenomenal FINA World Aquatics Championships held that year, and major events were held here earlier in January 2020: the European Championships for women and men’s water polo, which doubled as Olympic qualifiers. For the next event swimmers will arrive between 10-17 May for the European Aquatics Championships, followed by divers from 18-24 May and synchronised swimmers between 20 and 24 May. Held in parallel with the synchronised swimming events, the open water swimming competition will take place at Lake Lupa in nearby Budakalász.



# SHARP JEWELLERY TO LAST A LIFETIME

Text: Adrián Szász • Photos: Mátyás Misetics



**“The Rolls Royce of knives”. These are the words used to describe the works by Tibor Szankovits, winner of the Master of Folk Art Prize and his son, the folk applied artist Örs Szankovits. It is no wonder that even Jimmy Carter, the 39th president of the United States, bought a knife when he visited Hungary in the 1990s from these knife-making masters who live and work in Szentendre, which is less than half an hour’s drive north of Budapest. In fact, the following day, Carter’s wife returned with an entire delegation to the popular craftsmen to purchase additional pieces. Other celebrities also regularly visit the House of Knives, which opens from a pedestrian street, and is where Tibor and Örs continue their family tradition that began in the 1800s.**

One of the hallmarks of Szankovits knives is that their blades and handles feature primarily Hungarian motifs. A mounted archer, a pipe-smoking shepherd, a young bride pouring wine, Hungarian dog breeds and buildings or tools characteristic of the past such as a thatched house, a well pole, or a pot-holding tree branch can all be seen as decorations on each specimen. And there is also the most common motif: a rooster that has frequently appeared as a logo on the blade of Szankovits knives since the 1980s, so that they are often referred to as rooster knives by people looking for these unique cutting tools. These miniature decorations a few millimetres in size are engraved with a needle file even thinner than a needle. These delicately chiselled visual elements are inspired by the personal experiences the knifemiths had as children and as adults. And, of course, from family tradition, which has now nearly trans-

formed the art of knife-making into that of making jewellery. “It’s a wonderful feeling when someone comes to us unexpectedly and shows us a knife made by our grandfather or great-grandfather that still works,” says Örs, who loves his vocation, which is an amalgamation of being a knifemith, a polisher, an artist and an ethnographic researcher all in one. Within the family, it all began with their maternal great-grandfather. In the 19th century, Master Börcsök was a smith and knife maker in Szeged. His name is associated with the design of the so-called seal knife, a knife which stood upright if its handle was placed on a table, and if the base of its handle was dipped in wax, then letters and documents could be authenticated with the initials engraved into it. Men carried it as a prestige piece; the fact that the knife was a status symbol in Hungary and around the world meant that it would be the



first to sell out at fairs. “The remaining approximately dozen Hungarian types still radiate elegance and harmony,” Örs reveals about this peculiarity.

“Sometimes I have a good idea at night, and then I go to the workshop to plan and work,” says the father Tibor Szankovits, who is of Serbian descent, and who could not be kept away from the forge even as a small child. It was a twist of fate that he fell in love with the daughter of the knife-maker Master Börcsök. His father-in-law taught him the necessary skills for his later vocation, which Tibor then passed on to his son. Örs has visited the workshop since he was nine years old, although, as they tell it, public life was not a topic of discussion at the family dinner table, but rather it was knives. What has always been typical of the Szankovitses is that they never cease training themselves and learn from each other. It is no wonder then that Tibor was awarded the Pro Cultura Prize, among the more than 20 prizes the family has already received. Their works are designed to last a lifetime.

“We develop in a way that also preserves traditions,” Örs remarks as a kind of ars poetica. “We always enrich the world of our knives, meeting the expectations of the era, but we use the tools and methods of our ancestors. From small to huge, we can make the same model in any size, but we work on custom orders, and don’t mass produce knives. We create the model that the customer personally chooses, although it is also said that the knife chooses a master for himself. Among knives the preparation of penknives is particularly difficult because every hundredth of a millimetre counts. The slightest deviation cannot be allowed, otherwise the structure will not close. We prepare them so that they are not only objects, but also companions in our everyday lives.”

This attitude can hardly be mastered in school – it takes decades of professional love. The Szankovitses know from their



American customers that in the United States families who carry on the same craft for many generations are admired, and that history leaves its mark on their work.

“The knives are pre-planned on paper,” says Tibor. “We also make metal models of the giant penknives, and then I work on the motif for weeks or months, which I bake into the material in a concentrated moment. It can easily burn, break or crack, meaning that it’s a delicate process. We work with deer antlers, cow leg bones, buffalo horns, mammoth bones, desert ironwood, silver and steel. I’m happy that the workshop increasingly interests my five-year-old grandson Hunor.”

Knife collectors who admire the latest knives and penknives visit monthly or even weekly, because the House of Knives is not merely for shopping, and there are bonds that cannot be cut even with a good knife.



# AT HOME WITH EACH OTHER

## Budapest100: The weekend of open doors

Text: Adrián Szász

**“Every house is interesting,” say the organisers of the Budapest100 celebration, who in 2020 will invite us for the 10th time into buildings in Budapest to learn about their history and inhabitants. The initiative, which was launched in 2011, was originally intended to provide a weekend of festive attention to the city’s century-old buildings, but events have since taken several turns.**

After 2014, finding houses was more difficult, since compared to the momentum of the turn of the century, fewer buildings that survived into the present were built during the era of the First World War, which is why the last few Budapest100 events, although they were still successful, did not introduce neighbourhoods that were exactly a hundred years old. In 2020, 9-10 May will be the two days when many buildings open their doors free of charge to anyone. The concept is, suffice to say, extraordinary.

### THE WHOLE CITY WILL BE HOSTS

What has remained unchanged year after year is that Budapest100 draws attention to the everyday values of the Hungarian capital, and brings residents, neighbours and generations closer together. The program was initiated in 2011 by the Open Society Archives and the KÉK – Contemporary Architecture Centre to introduce houses from their basements to their attics to Budapest residents, thereby contributing to the development of new communities. “What happened next can be told by the residents – we help keep the spirit of the city alive,” organisers say. The Budapest100 events are assisted by volunteers in cooperation with building residents and representatives from participating institutions. All programmes are free for visitors, but some require registering in advance.

Following the themes of recent years, such as the Grand Boulevard in 2016, the embankments in 2017, the squares of Budapest in 2018 and Bauhaus buildings in 2019, this year the organisers would literally like to put the entire city into motion. Consequently, for the 10th anniversary of the event, they appealed to local housing communities to let anyone show them where they live or work. All this regardless of the age, style or location of the building. This means that in 2020 participants will be able to admire even more beautiful roof terraces, cosy staircases, interior courtyards, exciting cellars and attics, and speak to the owners and tenants about their lives. As usual, cultural programmes will also be organised for certain venues, such as guided building tours, historical retrospectives, architectural presentations, spontaneous concerts and exhibitions.

### BUILDING COMMUNITIES

“Once again there are many locations in the city centre that will be open, but residential communities from Kőbánya and Pasarét also registered,” says project manager Tímea Szőke,



Photo: © Gergely Schöff

who together with János Klaniczay oversees the organisational work. “Drawing from an even more diverse palette, we will hear first-hand from the inhabitants why their home is interesting and what stories they know from the history of that building. There are many possible aspects: situation, architecture, famous people

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who lived or currently live there, and so on. The programmes can also cover a wide range of activities from shared breakfasts to a long-time resident simply coming out into the hallway and talking to visitors about their life. Plus, you can go to parts of the buildings where you normally can’t. The gates are usually open from 10 am to 6 pm, and the goal is not quantity, but quality. Even over two days, you can’t visit 50 buildings – my colleague tried last year and maybe made it to 38 – so we don’t open hundreds.”

The event is organised by a team of 10-15 people who brainstorm together to come up with the best schedule. That is how they came up with the idea that this year they would not look for buildings, but would await volunteers, for over its nine years the programme has become quite popular, and more and more communities wanted to join. According to Tímea, this is great feedback in itself, but she also likes to share her favourite success story from last year: “Volunteers count visitors, which is how we know that more than 4,000 people turned up at one of the popular Margit Boulevard houses over the weekend. When the gate closed on Sunday, the residential community demanded that the ‘tour guides’ tell them the same stories that they had told the visitors. During the tour, they realised that there was a communal space in the building that had not been used up until then, so they immediately began organising to get permission to use it. Then they visited another building that had been designed by the same pair of architects. This shows what we are striving for: to think together about our environment and who we live with side by side. Because as a community, we’re stronger than we are individually.”

### INSPIRATION AND A GOOD EXAMPLE

Budapest100 also has international ties: the organisers drew inspiration from the work of the Open House network that operates in European metropolises, drawing on the experiences gained in London, Barcelona and Rome. However, while in those cities the initiative is limited to architectural tours, the aforementioned community formation is also an important consideration in Budapest. Therefore, the human factor is also essential, and not only the unique architectural style, innovative solutions or even the characteristics of Bauhaus. The project is a member and even a model for a large international cooperative project, the “Come in!” competition. In light of this, similar events in newer countries such as Finland, Croatia, Italy, Spain and Poland will be organised to follow the example of Budapest100.

Obviously, an initiative such as this needs to adapt to local characteristics to be successful. The organisers have already placed a well-functioning recipe for success on the table in Budapest – how it is worth talking about where we live so that it also helps urban development. The event – just like the gates in the buildings – is open to foreign guests as well: the Budapest100 programme will be available in English, most of the volunteers speak several languages (and some of them are from abroad themselves) while the local features of the event are preserved. Local stories absolutely will remain, because they can transform a group of strangers into a cheerful community.

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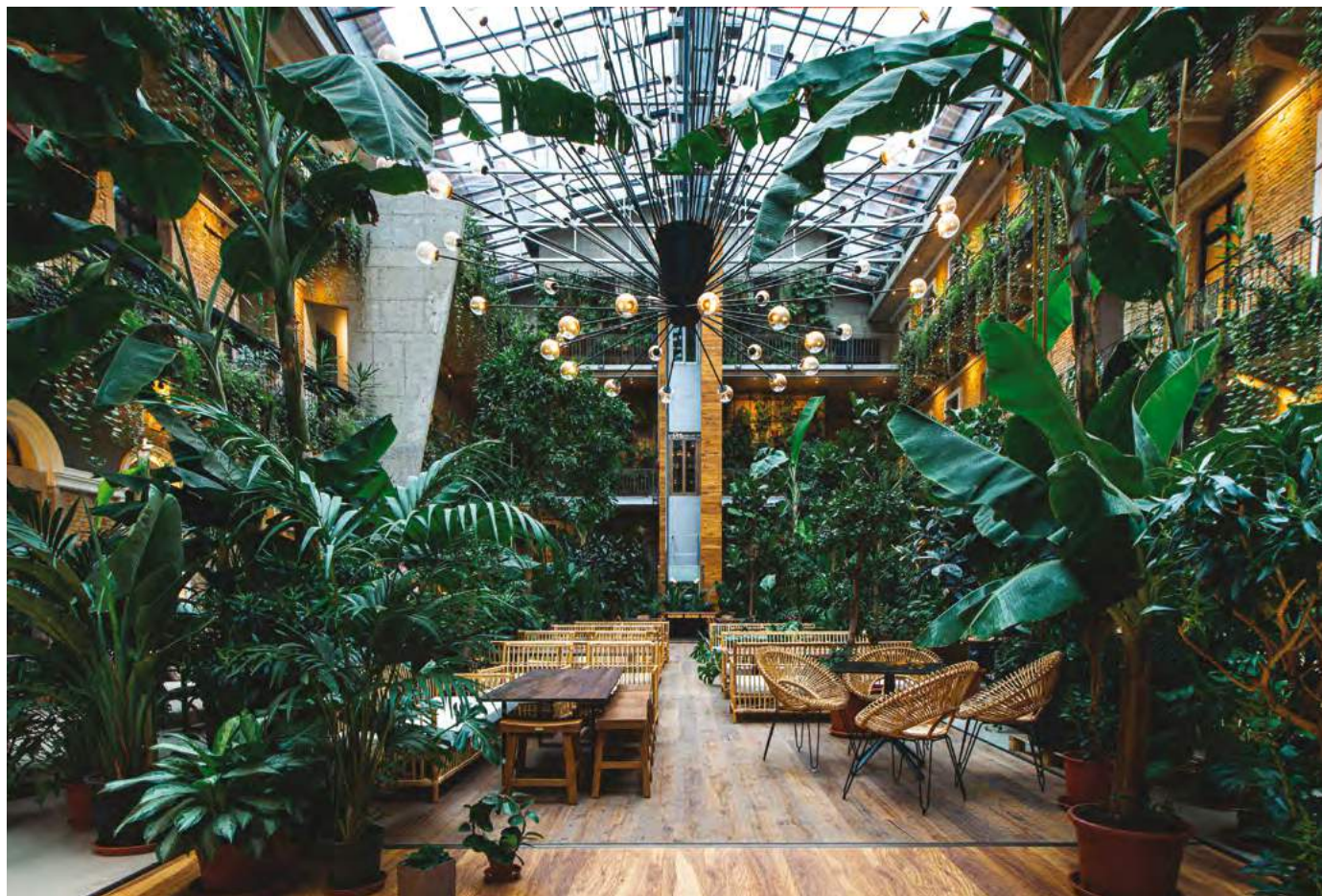


# TWENTYSIX

## Slow living in the middle of the city

Text: **Eszter Götz** • Photos: **Ádám Horváth**

Budapest's relentless drive for experimentation has once again produced a surprise: in the middle of the party district, at 26 Király Street, gastronomy, nature and community life all come together. Opened in the winter of 2019, Twentysix's name refers not only to its address, but also to the constant temperature of 26 degrees inside. Twenty-six degrees Celsius is the ideal temperature for the hundreds of Mediterranean plants inside – begonias, exotic palm species, banana trees and thousands of other sprawling greens – with which they have populated the three-storey vast inner courtyard topped with a glass roof.



Twentysix has perhaps become Budapest's greenest garden, a real oasis where it is summer every day of the year. When entering from the busy street, the first thing visitors notice is that no one inside is in a rush. It is as if we are not even in the city, but in a huge, lush garden: at the base of the plants, guests soak up the delicate, humid, oxygen-rich air, and slow down, releasing the tension of the hustle and bustle. Above the garden is a single gigantic chandelier and – in addition to the raw brick walls and all-encompassing green – it is the only real design element.

Another special feature of the place is only revealed slowly by walking around and mapping out every detail. The own-

ers have created a multifunctional establishment that is truly unique: they combined a night bar, a gourmet restaurant and an environmentally conscious produce shop with a yoga studio and an apartment studio events room. On the level above, HubHub's community office is located, and the second and third floors contain the soundproofed rooms of the four-star Stories Hotel. Thus, everything lives and pulsates together, from morning to evening, with the sight of the common area and inner garden visible from everywhere, to provide visitors with constant momentum.

The idea the owners had was already confirmed in the first days, as guests were happy to replace a throbbing party at-



mosphere with the serene, homely feel of “slow-living.” The restaurant, which can be reached directly from the street through a separate entrance, becomes part of the green courtyard inside, along with the smell of locally baked breads and oriental spices. The shop is part of the restaurant, with a selection of wines and colourful pastas along with simple steel-framed wooden shelves lined with environmentally conscious home decor products by the Danish company Bloomingville, as well as unique fragrances by a Hungarian designer. During

the day, the courtyard welcomes the restaurant's guests, and in the evening it acts as an elegant but far from exclusive cocktail bar. The yoga studio, which can be visited from morning to evening, is located further back in the courtyard with its large windows, and the enclosed function room in the rear features sophisticated design between its bookshelves. This space is freely convertible and suitable for events, private dinners, or even for larger workshops or communal cooking.

The courtyard also offers more intimate spaces, and in the evenings guests can sit next to any plant in the cocktail bar without being encouraged to order one round after another. The place is at once exciting and calm, attractive and relaxed, where even charity receives a role. One of the special cocktails is called “Plant a Tree”: the guest who orders this contributes to the planting of a sapling in their name, and can even request that a photo be sent to them from time to time of the “adopted” tree.

Twentysix has brought a new genre to the very diverse hospitality palette in Budapest. And as is the case with the best innovations, this was something we desperately needed, although we did not realise it before: embedded in an intense natural environment, a complex blend of slow-living, community-based activities, gastronomy, social relaxation, and slow-motion, composed in an imaginative and delicious way. ●



# “MY GOAL IS TO PERFECT THE SHAPES”

## Sándor Lakatos and the slow fashion

Text: Anikó Magócsi • Photos: Dávid Ajkai

As a small child he fell asleep to the sound of his grandmother's sewing machine, and his life has been accompanied by a love of clothes ever since. For the most part Sándor Lakatos makes custom-tailored outfits for men, which are characterised primarily by elegance, quality needlework and a futuristic style. His items have been shown in Vogue Italia, and he has toured showrooms from Australia to New York, and London to Dubai. Recently, Lakatos has returned to the basics: he welcomes customers in his workshop constructed in his apartment, and does everything himself from the first meeting to the final stitches.



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Founded in 2005, the key to the brand for Sandor Lakatos Menswear is the designer himself, who was practically born into the garment industry. “I was born in Tatabánya, and my family's sewing shop operates there to this day. Our store, however, was located here in Ó Street, which is why I've got an attachment to this area, and why I've built my workshop apartment here. Of all the adults surrounding me, my grandmother was the most defining figure, as she started the family business, and in the evenings she even worked at home – I fell asleep to the sounds of her sewing machine. There were always materials at home. I tailored singlets and t-shirts for myself, which I then sewed by hand,” says Sándor. As he got older, during school holidays he went to the family sewing shop to learn, and a few years later he began designing for himself. After a while due to the amount of positive feedback his clothes received, and because so many of his friends asked him to design for them, he soon launched his own brand. Not long after, Sándor's minimalist, sometimes futuristic, black-and-white men's outfits were featured in Hungarian and foreign magazines, at fashion shows and in showrooms, so that word of these designs reached Madonna's stylist, who ordered a jacket for the singer. However, the concept remained the same from the start: personality and uniqueness. “I would like to inspire myself constantly. The primary focus is to always do better, to be more precise with the tailoring patterns year after year. Technological solutions concern me particularly, with my brain ticking on them almost 24 hours a day. I tend to not look at collections by other fashion houses. The most important thing is that in my clothes, in the solutions, that it's what comes out of me. I'm inspired, for example, in fabric stores, and some textiles can give you serious ammunition for imagining a new piece. I also have my own materials, the strong geometric designs of which I then print onto the textiles. There is nothing more original than making my own material, cutting the pattern and sewing the dress myself. My goal is to perfect the shapes.”

Although Sándor usually designs a collection each year, he has also made women's clothes, but his main focus will always be custom-tailored menswear. Timelessness is also a major factor with respect to these. “I have a jacket I made six or seven years ago, but if I had made it 15 years ago, it would still be the same. He believes in slow fashion: we should purchase higher quality clothing less frequently. If you buy or make a dress with this type of attitude, not only will you enjoy yourself in a nice top or jacket, but you will also protect the environment. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to me that the pieces I design for my



customers will still be taken out of the closet for years to come as one of their favourite items.” Of course, seeing the more futuristic pieces, the question arises – to what extent can Sándor resonate as a designer with the needs of individual customers. “I have to look at someone's personality. I like contrasts, I like black and white colours, but you don't have to dress everyone in this. You look at someone and you see blue on them, because it suits them. When someone arrives to my workshop, we will select the most suitable patterns, cut and lines together. After that, I usually sew the dress. I believe that you need to make time for it, that you cannot rush things. It's important that every detail be made with the maximum amount of attention. For me, the most defining moment is when I give the customer the finished piece and see how much it suits him, how happy he is, and how happily he wears it for years.” ●

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# FASHION QUEEN BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

## A Rotschild in Váci Street

Text: Eszter Götz • Photos: Hungarian National Museum

Klára Rotschild's downtown salon was an era-defining concept in 20th century Budapest. Not only did the chatter of women in Pest suddenly drop to a whisper as they walked past its shop windows at 12 Váci Street, but it was also widely known in Europe's eastern half, the "socialist camp", as the privileged figures in power came here to order designs copied from the collections of Paris fashion houses.



A new exhibition about the salon and its legendary leader is now open until the end of April in the National Museum's rejuvenated park, inside the neoclassical villa that was formerly the Gardener's House. Additionally, some original Rotschild evening and bridal dresses are also on display in the museum's ground floor Rotunda. Marshal Tito's wife wore Rotschild dresses at diplomatic receptions, as did the wife of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, as well as Farah

Diba Pahlavi, the legendarily beautiful wife of the Persian Shah who had a keen eye for fashion. The Különlegességi Női Ruhaszalon ("Specialty Women's Clothing Salon") led by Klára Rotschild was an island of bourgeois taste, and true to its name, it was a special place, since in the 1960s and 1970s it brought the air of Parisian elegance to Budapest: sophisticated taste, worldly style, and the triumph of handmade finery over the greyness of socialist garments.

Klára Rotschild's whole life was special, as if she was not subject to the rules of the era. Her father and mother were also tailors, and as a child the family fashion salon also served as an apartment. Rotschild only completed six grades, was unable to sew, nor did she speak other languages, but she had a brilliant talent for recognising quality and building relationships. Her husband came from a notable family of textile dealers and died in Auschwitz, as did several other members of the Rotschild family, which was of Jewish descent. However, even after the introduction of the Jewish laws, Rotschild still designed gowns for the wedding of Regent Miklós Horthy's son and survived the war in her Budapest apartment, reopening her fashion salon a month after the guns went silent.



Photo: Gyula Kovács / MTI

### CITY GUIDE

Neither the dark 1950s nor the "soft dictatorship" that followed could dissuade her from the direction she had chosen for herself. Rotschild was not educated, but she was outstandingly good at genteel fashion and etiquette, so the working-class elite of the new system had something to learn from this determined woman. In her salon, all the seamstresses and embroiderers received exceptional care from her, for which she demanded hard work and total dedication in return – for sometimes a complete collection had to be made in two days. She also only worked with models who possessed striking beauty and intelligence. Rotschild needed the support of those in power, since only the state could finance her two annual professional trips to Paris each year. In return, illegal shipments were occasionally made via her luggage, and although she never had to give reports as an agent, her salon was probably bugged with listening devices. In addition to her place in fashion history, this theme is also explored in the exhibition. The exhibition materials divided across three rooms – original attire, photographs, and enjoyable descriptions of the customers and makers of each item – explore the fashion designer's life and reveal the everyday operations of the salon and workshop. In addition to the garments, the original sofa from the Rotschild salon is on display, on which the wife of Hungarian First



Secretary János Kádár and Jovanka Broz Tito, the "Jackie Kennedy of the East", sat together as part of an elegant tea party that showcased the dresses that Rotschild drew and made from her recollections of the latest Paris fashion shows – expensively at home, but at a ridiculously low price compared to the Parisian salons. Her classic tastes still permitted true novelties on occasion, such as the wedding dress ordered by a country pastor's daughter in 1962, featuring a miniskirt with the hemline high above the knee. And all this at a time when French fashion was still only coming around to the idea of the soon-to-be popular miniskirt. Rotschild also designed pieces decorated with Hungarian embroidery, which were bought by wealthy Hungarian emigrant families, or later in the 1970s, by Hungarian pop singers preparing for western tours.

The Rotschild salon spectacularly displayed the two-faced world of socialism, the world where some were "more equal than others". It was from there that the style of the "fashionable woman from Pest" was launched in the mid-1960s, which significantly aided Kádár in his consolidation of power following the 1956 Revolution. The exhibition evokes the aura of this unique world, Klára Rotschild's circle, and the artists and politicians from that era through the attire on display, archive photos and films made at former fashion shows, as well as the fragrances used at the salon. With today's perspective, the exhibition reveals a true female success story, and the power of dedication and talent that can overcome all circumstances.

● A day dress made from bourette silk, circa 1970, which belonged to the psychiatrist Dr. Zsuzsa Péchy, a regular customer of the salon. From a private collection.



Photo: © mm.hu



# STAND25 MOVED OVER TO BUDA

New location – same values

Text: **Szonja Somogyi** • Photos: **Tamás Bujnovszky**

If a restaurant relocates from the hustle and bustle of downtown, from the market hall in Hold Street teeming with tourists to a calmer, less hectic part of the city beneath Buda Castle, that reveals no small amount of courage. But the confidence that the operators of Stand25 possess – not by accident – is plenty. Tamás Széll, an exceptional figure in the Hungarian culinary world and his partner Szabina Szulló combined the experiences of their collaborative work, their love of quality cuisine and their desire for a more relaxed dining experience in this bistro, which moved from Pest to Buda at the end of 2019.



Stand25 belongs to the team that operates the Michelin-Starred fine dining establishment on the Pest side known as Stand, and received a Bib Gourmand award from the Michelin Guide a year after opening at its original site.

Ibolya Csahók, the restaurant's manager-owner, told *Budapest's Finest* that despite the many advantages of the Hold Street Market, they decided to leave this central location primarily to increase the comfort of their guests. Consequently, they no longer have to accommodate to the market's opening hours, nor the environment of the marketplace that is hot in summer and cold in winter. The new location had also previously been a restaurant, which recently received a fresh interior that the "new residents" did not want to ruin. However, the open kitchen at the shorter end of the L-shaped room was further expanded and brought to the fore to emphasise one of the pillars of the bistro's mindset: informality and being laid-

back. The bar was placed at the room's far wall, above which a function room for 15 people was built. The atmosphere is primarily defined by a mix of deep, natural colours and airy industrial elements.

Due to the move, the clientele changed somewhat: there are slightly fewer foreign guests, as now it is mainly Hungarians who visit the restaurant. Ibolya revealed that many people tell her that they had previously tried the bistro at the market. Due to the improved surroundings, they visit the Buda restaurant to taste the wonderful dishes produced in Tamás's kitchen.

"Although the location changed, the basic concept remained intact: we did not change our underlying principle, nor the two or three-course menus (or their prices), but the number of meals on offer was increased. During the day we previously had 10 dishes on the menu, but now we offer 22. We have more upgrade options, and for din-





Photo: © Árpád Pintér

## Bio in brief: Tamás Széll and Szabina Szulló

The Onyx restaurant was one of the first restaurants in Hungary to receive a Michelin Star in 2011 owing to its kitchen led by this duo. Tamás Széll was the first Hungarian chef to reach the finals of the Bocuse d'Or chef competition: in 2013 he placed 10th in Lyon, and after winning the European finals in 2016, he placed 4th in Lyon 2017. Following this, Tamás set out to realise his dream with his culinary partner Szabina. At first, they opened Stand25 in a market hall offering "comfort food" and traditional Hungarian dishes, to be followed by the Stand Restaurant, which opened in the summer of 2018 in an elegant setting close to Andrassy Avenue in Pest.

ner the whole menu is à la carte. This new larger space is what gave us the opportunity to achieve the latter," Ibolya explained. In the kitchen overseen by Tamás Széll, the dishes prepared are fundamentally those in which traditional Hungarian flavours appear in a slightly more rustic form. "This is also good because you can sit down for dinner with the entire family, as everyone can find something for themselves. After all, what a restaurant has to offer can often be divisive, but here everyone from Grandma to the youngest member can find something to their liking," she continued. Ibolya pointed out that the menu will never be completely reimaged at Stand25.

Only 3-4 dishes have changed since they opened in November, mainly the result of seasonality or demand. The big hit from the Christmas period, the Fisherman's Soup, was replaced with a Jókai Bean Soup, and instead of the duck leg, they now offer stuffed cabbage.

"We didn't make a new menu as most of our dishes are a special favourite among our guests. Many people return to eat our layered potatoes, goulash soup, Somlói sponge cake, our cottage cheese dumplings and pancakes. There are at least 8-10 dishes that we won't remove from the menu. But there are also five to six dishes that change from time to time," Ibolya said.

The ingredients are obtained from Hungarian suppliers and producers as much as possible, just as they are for the Michelin-Starred Stand Restaurant in Pest. The chicken, for example, comes from Bereg, the deer comes from Öreglak, but the other ingredients are also sourced from domestic farms to the Stand25 table.

Tamás Széll and Szabina Szulló describe Stand25 as a "kitchen of joy", in which there is only one rule: no compromises in quality or ingredients. Consequently, they created an unfettered Hungarian kitchen in a bistro with a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

## CITY GUIDE

# FROM LUMBERYARDS TO THE BAUHAUS

## Zoltán Bolla: *Újlipótváros építészete 1861–1945*

An excellent new urban history book has been published about Újlipótváros (southern District XIII), which is famous for its modern architecture. The book draws on a wealth of materials: it introduces approximately 700 buildings through 1,200 photographs from the present and the past, architectural blueprints, and beautiful interior photographs of the magnificent staircases located in these residential buildings. This huge collection of materials is a unique treasure trove. In contrast to other monographs on urban history, *Újlipótváros építészete 1861–1945* is exciting not only for those who look upon architectural art with an understanding eye, but also for those interested in the specialities found in Pest.

The author, Zoltán Bolla, took most of the 1,200 photographs himself, which are simple images of façades and stairwells photographed with the intent of making it easy for the reader to recognise the houses, so that they can easily identify what they saw. Additionally, Bolla selected high-quality archive materials and original blueprints – often of particular photographic history significance – that are relatively rarely seen but which possess important details. A table summarises the different phases of the early incorporation of this part of the city and the origins of its inhabitants, while its expansion is shown through successive maps for each decade, and at the end of the volume there are statistics on the annual number



of residential buildings built here between 1881 and 1944. The montage on the cover, which was compiled from the plaques of the architects who worked in Újlipótváros, is a particularly nice touch.

The inventory, which is a significant part of the book, presents a total of 700 houses in detail, introduced by street, in alphabetical order, along with a strict framework for the descriptions that in addition to the images and mandatory data, include the builder's name and a short definition of the style used. Thus, Újlipótváros is revealed to the reader from street to street and house to house. The introduction makes certain that there is a point of reference for all of this.

Bolla's enjoyable writing style combined with contemporary press illustrations gives us a picture of this neighbourhood filled with lumber yards that were later supplanted by power generators and slums, the Great Beer Hall that once stood on the site of today's Vígsház Comedy Theatre, as well as exciting details about the lives of the German, Jewish, Armenian and Greek entrepreneurs, mill owners and property speculators who once resided here, as well as the architects who designed typically neoclassical, art deco and Bauhaus houses, not to mention the world of streetwalkers and the destitute – everything that the district has accumulated and preserved since the 1860s to the present.

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Photo: opera.hu

## Bizet: Les pêcheurs de perles

Performance by The St. Petersburg Chamber Opera

28 March 2020, 7:00 pm

Eiffel Art Studios  
– Bánffy Stage

Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles* (The Pearl Fishers) does not even begin to approach the popularity of the the composer's other opera, *Carmen*. But it was this opera that was the starting point of the French composer's career. The famous Russian troupe will perform the play in French at the newly opened Eiffel Art Studios. The spectacle plays a key role in their productions, despite the relatively small size of their own theatre stage, with LED walls, graphics and animations, but they also bring with themselves the high level of singing quality expected in Russian culture.

## A Venetian Story | The Automaton

Photos of Paolo Ventura

Until 7 June 2020

Műcsarnok Hall of Art

Regarding his project, Ventura reveals: "Each photo was taken in an imaginary Venice, of which I built a model in miniature. The only part of the story that happened in reality was the Nazis and the Italian police entering the ghetto of Venice in December 1943." The Automaton takes place in Venice during World War II, at a time when the Nazis entered Northern Italy to stop their former allies from abandoning them. It is based on a story that Paolo Ventura heard in his childhood from his father, a children's book writer. The protagonist is an elderly Jewish watchmaker, who tried to survive in the ghetto of Venice in 1943, during what was perhaps the darkest period of Nazi occupation in Italian history.

Curator: Klára Szarka



Photo: www.mucsarnok.hu



Photo: © Simon van Boxel

## László Fenyő & the Borodin Quartet

20 March 2020, 7:30 pm

Liszt Academy, Grand Hall

The cellist László Fenyő, a professor at the Karlsruhe University of Music, is a regular guest of the Four by Four Plus One series: in March he will appear as a guest of the Borodin Quartet in a performance of Franz Schubert's perennial favourite *String Quintet in C major*. Considered a benchmark of excellence in global string quartet culture, the quartet (founded in 1945) are one of the most accomplished representatives of the Russian string tradition. The first piece on the programme is the *String Quartet No. 2* by Alexander Porfirievich Borodin, after whom the chamber ensemble was named.



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# LEGENDA CITY CRUISES

TIMETABLE	SIGHTSEEING CRUISES								CANDLELIT DINNER CRUISES
01.01.2020. - 12.31.2020.	DUNA BELLA - DAYTIME CRUISES				DANUBE LEGEND - EVENING CRUISES				
Jan - Feb	11:00	12:30	14:00	15:30	17:00	18:00	18:30	19:30	19:00
March	10:15 <sup>+</sup> 11:00 <sup>+</sup> 11:45 <sup>+</sup> 12:30 <sup>+</sup> 13:15 <sup>+</sup> 14:00 <sup>+</sup> 14:45 <sup>+</sup> 15:30 <sup>+</sup> 16:15 <sup>+</sup> 17:00					18:30 19:15 19:30 20:15 20:30 21:00			19:45
April	10:15 <sup>+</sup> 11:00 <sup>+</sup> 11:45 <sup>+</sup> 12:30 <sup>+</sup> 13:15 <sup>+</sup> 14:00 <sup>+</sup> 14:45 <sup>+</sup> 15:30 <sup>+</sup> 16:15 <sup>+</sup> 17:00 <sup>+</sup> 17:45 <sup>+</sup> 18:30					19:30 20:15 20:30 21:00 21:30 21:45			19:45
May - Aug	10:15 <sup>+</sup> 11:00 <sup>+</sup> 11:45 <sup>+</sup> 12:30 <sup>+</sup> 13:15 <sup>+</sup> 14:00 <sup>+</sup> 14:45 <sup>+</sup> 15:30 <sup>+</sup> 16:15 <sup>+</sup> 17:00 <sup>+</sup> 17:45 <sup>+</sup> 18:30					20:15 20:30 21:00 21:30 21:45 22:15			19:45
Sept	10:15 <sup>+</sup> 11:00 <sup>+</sup> 11:45 <sup>+</sup> 12:30 <sup>+</sup> 13:15 <sup>+</sup> 14:00 <sup>+</sup> 14:45 <sup>+</sup> 15:30 <sup>+</sup> 16:15 <sup>+</sup> 17:00 <sup>+</sup> 17:45 <sup>+</sup> 18:30					19:30 20:15 20:30 21:00 21:30 21:45			19:45
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Nov - Dec	11:00	12:30	14:00	15:30	17:00 <sup>**</sup>	18:00 <sup>**</sup>	18:30 <sup>**</sup>	19:30 <sup>**</sup> 20:00 <sup>**</sup>	19:00 <sup>**</sup>

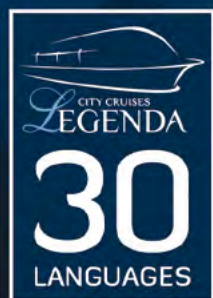
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