

ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITIONS AND CHAMBER EXHIBITIONS



“As you are sitting in front of me...” – dr. Flóra Kozmutza, Mrs. Gyula Illyés was born 110 years ago

The exhibition “*As you are sitting in front of me...*”, dedicated to the memory of dr. Flóra Kozmutza, Mrs. Gyula Illyés born 110 years ago, was inaugurated on the 7th floor of National Széchényi Library on 1 September 2015.

Apart from the original documents from the NSZL General and Manuscript Collection, unpublished documents from the family legacy and the College of Special Education were exhibited to present the unselfish character of the psychologist deceased 20 years ago and her passion for helping others in her professional and private life. Only altruism explains why it was inevitable for Flóra, a student of liberal arts to choose Special Pedagogy as a vocation for life, why her colleagues called her and István Benedek “the two pages of Szondi” (playfully referring both to a poem of the same title on the medieval knight Szondi, and to psychologist Lipót Szondi), and how the words of French philosopher Guyau, “This being suffers, therefore I love him” inspired Flóra’s becoming a muse.

The exhibition presented the last love letters by Attila József to Flóra Kozmutza, the poem by Gyula Illyés from which the title of this event was borrowed, and an emotional letter of the latter. The journals of Illyés reveal why he did not allow himself include his wife’s name in any poem, and whether there was still any exception of this rule during their four decades of marriage.

The original manuscript of *Tearful*, a movingly beautiful poem by Illyés that describes his last encounter with Attila József in Siesta Sanatorium, had a special place in the exhibition.

The Attila József section included an original photograph of Attila József and a reproduction of the artworks by Melánia Szántó Dombyné inspired by the Flóra poems.

It might be lesser known that Flóra Kozmutza was the first female professor and from 1973 the director of the College of Special Education whose Damjanich Street building complex was founded by her. Our exhibition presented the achievements of Flóra Kozmutza’s professional life as well as her literary activity at Gyula Illyés’s side.

She typed his husband’s manuscripts, kept contact with editors, publishers and a wide circle of family friends including public figures. Our exhibition, based upon the NSZL collections, highlighted the correspondence between Mrs. Illyés and Márta Sárközi (Ferenc Molnár’s daughter, widow of György Sárközi and editor-publisher of the periodical *Válasz* at its new start). After her husband’s death, Mrs. Illyés dedicated herself to arranging the poet’s legacy, and the exhibition presented some of the volumes published at that time.



A photo from the Illyés family: Flóra Kozmutza, Gyula Illyés, and their daughter Mária Illyés

Mrs Illyés, the founder of Hungarian special education psychology, was author of several research publications some of which were now also exhibited. She contributed greatly to the research of the early diagnostics of intellectual disability and fought for the social inclusion of those affected.

One-time disciple of Mrs. Illyés, professor emeritus dr. Ferencné Gereben, former director of the Institute of Special Education Pedagogy and president of the Hungarian Association of Special Educators said these words at the inauguration ceremony:

“As prosaic as the biography data might seem, they prove that being a muse and a poet’s wife was just one of the aspects of Mrs Illyés’s life. She had an outstanding professional career. Whenever she accompanied her husband to travel abroad, she took the occasion to study the problems of mental disability and the service provider systems in that country to try and integrate the experience in Hungary.”

The recognition of this activity is worded by Gyula Illyés in his work [*Respect to Special Educators*]: “The profession of a special educator is to heal by education, and it is a creative work. It is characterized by the same word as mine: vocation. It means that professional knowledge is not enough, and neither is talent. You must be humane and good in character.”

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Give me a Biro – László Bíró exhibition 12 November 2015 – 6 February 2016

When the World Expo of Milan closed on 31 October 2015, some of its programs came to Budapest to add color to the cultural life of National Széchényi Library. It was indeed a useful and successful initiative to take to a broader audience the topics presented in the Hungarian Pavilion, including a unique exhibition dedicated to László Bíró.

But who in fact was László Bíró? Why is his name still unknown to Hungarians, although his most important invention is there in all the drawers and bags of the world?

László Bíró was a real genius of technology history. Born in 1899 and originally named László József



Mrs. Gyula Illyés, 1939. Family legacy

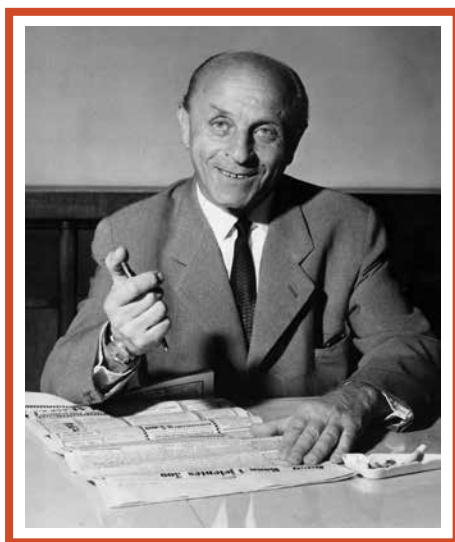
Schweiger, he had more than twenty patents, including the ballpoint pen (biropen), that made his name immortal in his lifetime. Urban legend has it that Bíró, a journalist, on one day observed a ball falling into a puddle of water and leaving a stripe when rolled on. Then he noticed at work that the paint used by the printing press is denser than ink, and it does not smudge the paper. It might have been a combination of these observations that led Bíró to create the ballpoint pen in the 1930s, putting a small ball into the pen that conducted a denser form of ink to the bottom. The movement of the pen kept the ball rolling, and the ink left a trace on the paper. The idea was so genial that Bíró patented it in Budapest in the spring of 1938. However, as in that very year the first anti-Jewish law was enacted, Bíró had to emigrate from Hungary to Argentina (although he and his wife had converted to the Evangelical Church in August). He stayed in Argentina for the rest of his life, for nearly fifty years, and died there in 1985. His birthday, the 29th of September, is the Inventors’ Day in Argentina, and all

the children in that country know his name.

Sándor Rácz and Mária Ráczné Kernya called in the office of the Hungarian organizing committee of Expo 2015 with the idea that Bíró, a lesser known figure of the history of inventions in Hungary, should have a commemorative exhibition in the pavilion. The organizers welcomed the idea, and the László Bíró exhibition was open first in Milan, and then in National Széchényi Library.

The Rácz couple's relation to László Bíró is simple: they are the owners of the Viktoria-R shop of fine pens. Sándor Rácz himself prepared the posters presenting the most important moments of Bíró's life. Some unique objects displayed on the exhibition belong to Mr Rácz's private collection, like a ball-pen of the first ones made according to Bíró's patent at the end of the 1930s.

The posters presented the landmarks of Bíró's life and inventions, including two more world successes: the automatic transmission and the roll-on deodorant. Both changed fundamentally the industry they belong to.



László Bíró with his ballpoint-pen

The objects at the exhibition included original documents related to Bíró as well as pens, especially luxury ones. The artistic pens of the *Montegrappa* and *Tibaldi* brands symbolize how an object of everyday use like a ballpoint-pen can become a piece of art if



László Bíró's personal documents

designed with good taste, manufactured with luxury techniques and displayed accordingly. Pens inspired by *Sophia Loren*, *Salvador Dalí* or *Ayrton Senna* are luxury gifts worldwide, and those who are lucky enough to have them may hold several millions of forints in their hand. The Tibaldi collection boasts a pen with the portrait of István Széchenyi, Montegrappa has decorated one of his precious items with the portrait of László Bíró.

National Széchényi Library, as a keeper of the memory of the outstanding figures of technology as well as book and culture history, was delighted to present this exhibition foreseen to travel to many cities more.

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”Memories of my life” – An exhibition to mark 100 years since the death of Károly Goldmark

Károly (Karl) Goldmark (1830–1915) born in Keszthely and brought up in Németerkeresztúr reached the peak of his career when he was already living in Vienna. It was there that he composed six operas, including *The Queen of Sheba* that brought him world fame, *Violin Concerto* still popular today, and *Symphony No. 1* known for the elder generations by its subtitle *Rustic Wedding Symphony*. But Goldmark never denied his Hungarian roots, as he wrote in his memoir at the age of 80:

I have been living in Vienna for sixty-two years, my self-education in arts and knowledge was nurtured by German cultural sources, and I do consider myself German in this sense. However, nothing could extinguish my strong and deeply rooted feelings towards my homeland. One must have a dry and ossified heart not to cherish the land where his cradle rocked and not to remember the sweet childhood memories. In this sense I still cling to my homeland.

It is also due to the composer’s strong bond to Hungary that after his death his legacy was purchased by the Hungarian Government and the rich material is now kept in the Music Collection of National Széchényi Library. When it comes to Goldmark’s compositions, the most valuable part of the collection is of the manuscripts that include the originals of almost the entire life-work. They are not only the most authentic forms of the compositions, but (together with the remaining sketch books) also shed light on Goldmark’s working method. There are also other types of documents in the legacy: family photos, official documents (school certificates and reports), certificates of honor to celebrate the old composer, several letters by Goldmark or addressed to him, and posters and program sheets of the concerts that had special importance for him.

Our centenary exhibition in the catalogue area and the reader’s room of the Music Collection between 8 December 2015 and 5 March 2016 displayed the most interesting documents of the Goldmark legacy, following the thread of the composer’s memoir

Memories of my Life published after his death. This manuscript also belongs to the collection, and it is worth knowing that when Goldmark wrote it, he often refreshed his memory by looking at these very documents. He also mentions them in the description of the related event.

The exhibition paid tribute to the former director of department of the Music Collection, István Kecskeméti PhD. (1920–1999) who personally worked on the elaboration of the Goldmark legacy. He translated Goldmark’s memoir into Hungarian from the original manuscript, and published it in 1980. The second edition of the memoir was brought out in 2017.

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A portrait of Károly Goldmark, 1908

“He offered his treasures to the nation” – Gyula Todoreshzku was born 150 years ago

In August 2016, we celebrated 150 years of the birth of Dr. Gyula Todoreshzku (1966-1919), Director of Honor of our library and one of its most significant donators. His collection of 3000 volumes is kept in NSZL since 1920. We organized an exhibition on this occasion, with new results of research and more than 100 items displayed from the unique collection of the remarkable collector. It was a long-due task, as we had not had any similar exhibitions before.



Gyula Todoreshzku and Aranka Horváth

After graduating from the Budapest University of Law, Gyula Todoreshzku started his career as an attorney, but later his passion for collecting books turned into a real vocation. There were precious items already in the first catalogue of his collection (1883), but according to his own words, it was not until 1905 that he started to work at full steam to build up his library with

purchasing 270 titles of the famous József Ágoston collection. Todoreshzku dedicated himself particularly to find the rare or unknown works of the *Old Hungarian Library* and the books missing even from the Károly Szabó bibliography. When Todoreshzku died in 1919, his library had 635 Hungarian language books, 535 foreign language books printed in Hungary and 81 books by Hungarian authors published abroad before 1711, including 222 unknown items for bibliography. There were also 44 incunabula, 26 manuscripts, 83 Romanian, Serbian and Ruthenian works in Cyrillic, 884 Hungarian prints from the 18th century and several rare foreign prints from the 16-19th centuries, as well as significant auxiliary libraries. It can be said that it is a collection of outstanding significance to the present day.

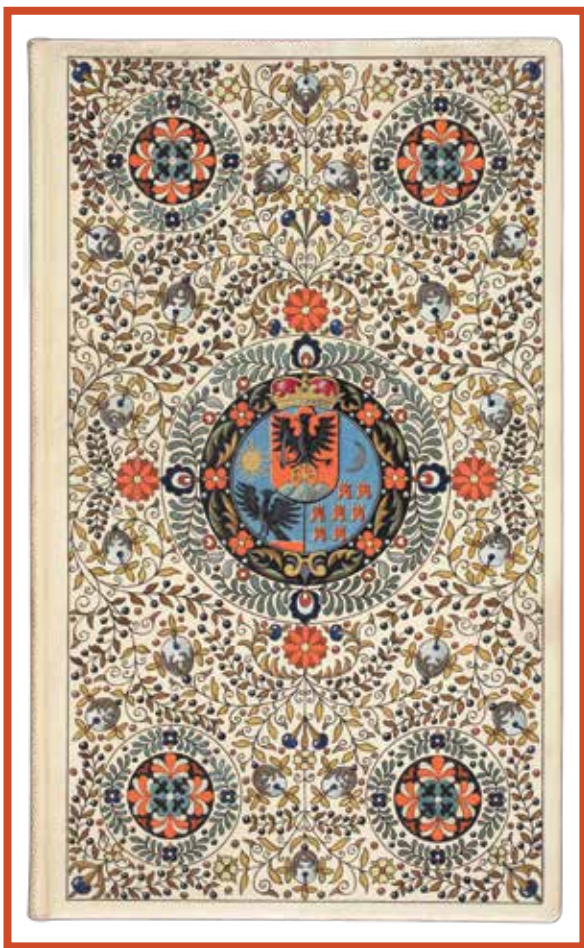
The main purpose of our exhibition was to offer a glimpse into this rich library and its history. There is no room here to list all the selected items, but we can mention some old prints that have only one copy remained, like the fragment of *A lélek könyve [The Book of the Soul]* by Péter Melius Juhász (Debrecen, 1562–1563) and the famous *Szakáts mesterségnek könyvetskéje [Little Book of the Art of Cooking]* by Miklós Tótfalusi Kis (Kolozsvár, 1695). Visitors could also see some rare calendars full of notes added by their 17th century owners, and books with interesting comments like a copy of István Székely's *Chronica ez vilagnac yeles dolgairól [Chronicle of the Illustrious Deeds of this World]* (Krakow, 1559) whose one-time readers wrote cutting remarks of religious debate on the margins.

Another remarkable part of the exhibition was the Cyrillic section set up with the help of the head of the Romanian Department of ELTE, Levente Nagy. It included a Romanian language *New Testament* (1648) and a *Psalter* (1651) both printed in Gyulafehérvár, and the 'Todoreshzku-fragment' from the second half of the 16th century that was the first print in Latin letters and Hungarian spelling in Romanian (soaked out of the binding board of a 15th century volume by Gyula Todoreshzku himself.)

Apart from the contents, the items of the Todoreshzku-Horváth Library also boast a characteristic visual design, due to the owners' effort to counterbalance the poor typographical layout of the old prints with decorous binding. The craftsmen who prepared the bindings of silver coinage, painted parchment, velvet with vitreous enamel and several leather types, were

the most prestigious masters of their time. The identification of the works of Álmos Jaschik, József Galamb, Ferenc Heibling and Richard Zutt is a recent result of research. Todoreszku aimed at obtaining copies both beautiful and complete, therefore, on some occasions, he borrowed copies of the same print from abroad to help completing the scanty books with facsimile pages of similar paper. The exhibition included some examples of this no longer used method.

The people who contributed to the collection were also paid tribute. Gyula Todoreszku's letters and postcards evoked his childhood and steps on his career as a collector. His publications and parts of his famous watermark collection added more details to his portrait.



Painted parchment binding – made by Viktor Akantisz

The display case dedicated to Todoreszku's wife and colleague Aranka Horváth included the donation letter of the widow from 1920 in which, according to her late

husband's will, she left their common collection to the national library. We exhibited also the documents related to the acquisition of the *Kálmáncsehi Breviary*, the most beautiful codex of King Matthias's workshop in Buda, realized with the price of Aranka Horváth's jewelry left to the library and sold as indicated in her last will.

The exhibition displayed items of the life-work of Todoreszku's partner in taking care of the books, Viktor Akantisz, who was a book binder, a restorer, an illustrator, a writer and a translator. This section of the exhibition included a salacious novel, the first catalogue of the Todoreszku-collection, a chess manual, a translated novel, and pictures and book bindings to illustrate his mastery of crafts. Akantisz's person is all the more important as he was one of the first book restorers at the national library.

We hope that this brief summary reveals the importance of the rich and impressive donation of Mr and Mrs Todoreszku to the national library, even if another great collection turned the attention away from it too early and for a long time.

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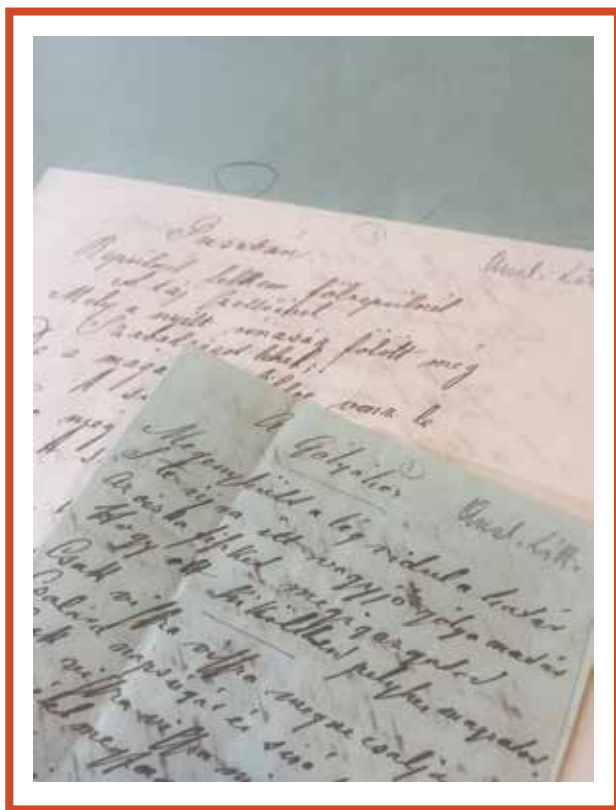
”The song might not have been forgotten yet” – An exhibition for the bicentenary of the birth of Mihály Tompa

Although 2017 was the János Arany Memorial Year, National Széchényi Library commemorated also the bicentenary of another great poet of the 19th century, Mihály Tompa. The exhibition was proposed by Comp-Rend Ltd. and realized with the contribution of Petőfi Literary Museum, the Sárbogárd Diocese of the Reformed Church and the library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Our first undertaking was the exploration and research of related material in the collections of NSZL. We learnt that there are several documents of Tompa not only in the General Collection, but also in each of our Special Collections, mainly among the Manuscripts. Our primary goal was to use these rich resources to present as much as possible of the treasures of National Széchényi Library. And although only a

fraction of the documents found their way into the display cases, the exhibition that started out as a chamber exhibition, finally grew into one of the largest and richest exhibitions of the recent years on the 7th floor.

The exhibition was based upon the following concepts: We wanted to offer an overall picture of the entire oeuvre of Mihály Tompa, avoiding referring to him as the less recognized member of the famous literary triumvirate with Petőfi and Arany (nevertheless, the exhibition made several references to the coinciding Arany-exhibition). At the same time, we intended to draw up the contemporaneous context of Tompa's poetry, as his appearance was a decisive moment of the 1840s, a most interesting period of Hungarian literary history. We presented with the same preciseness the other periods of Tompa's career in the thematic vitrines placed among the chronologic ones. And with a collection of manuscripts from our library, we presented the personal relations and events of Tompa's private life, never disconnected from literature.



Poems of Mihály Tompa: *Pusztán* [On the Puszta] and *A gólyához* [To the Stork], (An. Lit. 6219 NSZL Manuscript Collection)

The first of the 17 display cases showed the books and papers related to Tompa's student years in Sárospatak,

and his debut in literary life, while on the wall behind, you could see memories of his work as assistant teacher in Sárbogárd, some maps of landed properties, and supplements in color of contemporaneous newspapers. The next display case presented letters of the era. The third and fourth vitrines presented Tompa's literary and private life in 1846–47, two decisive years related mainly to the city of Pest (the items displayed were a letter about “a certain Julcsa Szendrey”, the first and second edition of *Popular Tales and Histories*, and an excerpt of *Vasárnapi Újság*, that remembered the famous poetry contest). In this part of the exhibition you could see a copy of a map of Budapest made in 1837, and an original oil painting of Mihály Tompa by an unknown artist, borrowed for this exhibition from the Petőfi Literary Museum. The fifth display case presented a most valuable treasure of the exhibition, the eighth decorative edition of Tompa's *Flower Tales*, illustrated by Irma Demeczky Volf with a silk binding that took almost three months for our colleagues to restore. The sixth vitrine was the first of the thematic ones, dedicated to the revolution of 1848, Mihály Tompa's activity in the freedom fight as a battlefield preacher, and his marriage with Emília Soldos. The seventh display case included illustrations from the Petőfi Literary Museum, a portrait of Tompa by Miklós Barabás, and the original manuscripts of the poems *To the stork* and *On the Puszta*, closely related to the documents from the General Collection exhibited in the ninth case and dated from the early 1850s. These manuscripts were presented together with treasures as the original photographs of Mihály Tompa and Emília Soldos from the NSZL Manuscript Collection, and a decorated memory book of Júlia Rádely with an inscription of Mihály Tompa. The tenth vitrine presented a selection of the characteristic newspapers of the 1850s, calendars enriched with Tompa's poems, and issues of the periodicals *Divatcsarnok* and *Délibáb*. The next two vitrines were once again thematic ones with documents related to the poet's vocation as a Protestant clergyman: texts, letters, death certificates, teachings and funeral sermons were presented here that contributed significantly to the church literature and now belong partly to the Collection of Small Prints. Poems to the 100th anniversary of the birth of Kazinczy and the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Reformed Church's College in Sárospatak (*Remembering Ferenc Kazinczy*, *Remembering Zsuzsánna Lórántfi*), were exhibited in the

thirteenth vitrine, together with the decorative editions of Tompa's works from that period. On the wall behind, you could see Frigyes König's oil painting of Mihály Tompa, borrowed from the Petőfi Literary Museum. The next display case presented the manuscript of the famous quotation "If you change your home country, change your heart as well", together with some letters to Gábor Egressy, and documents related to theatre and amateur plays. Vitrine 15. was already dedicated to the afterlife of Tompa's works and their translations. On the wall, two death notices were placed: a false and the real one, both published by the periodical *A Hon Esti Lapja* (edited by Mór Jókai). In the next vitrine another relic could be seen: the famous *Black Book* with one hundred anecdotes from the Manuscript Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

In the last display case we presented the decorative editions of the *Complete Works* of Tompa, arranged for the press by the poet's friends, together with musical pieces composed to his poems, and a copy made by actress Mari Jászai of the poem *Three Cranes*. The last items of the exhibition were the copies of two maps made in 1864 of Hungary and Transylvania, from our Map Collection.

Based upon visitor feedback, the exhibition was worthy of the memory of Mihály Tompa, as celebrated him in a comprehensive way, with a rich material partly borrowed but mostly belonging to the collections of National Széchényi Library.

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Authenticated photographs of Mihály Tompa and his wife, (An. Lit. 6221, NSZL Manuscript Collection)