

# OPEN DAYS, MEMORIAL DAYS

## NIGHT OF MUSEUMS



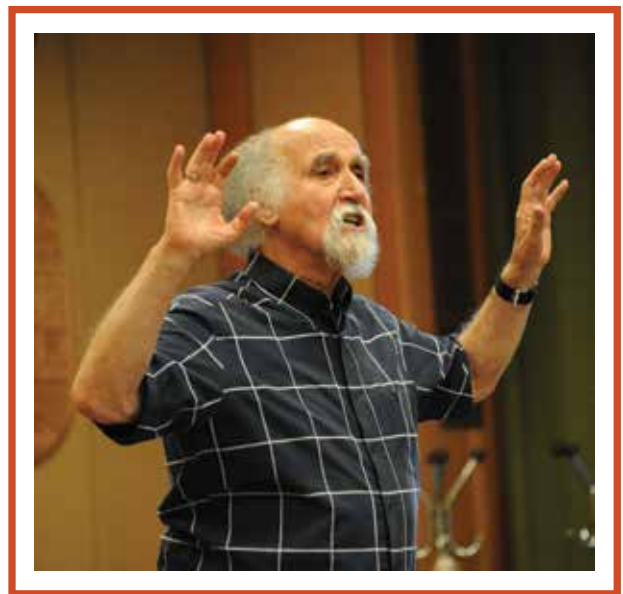
### Night of Museums 2015

In 2015, our library organized its programs around the theme of humor, with the title *Humor Cubed*. Our reason to do so was that in the spring of 2015, we had an exhibition with this same title in the lobby of the Collection of Posters and Small Prints. “I do not joke in matters of humor”, humorist Frigyes Karinthy used to say, and indeed, the making and function mechanism of this apparently “light” genre is more complex than we would assume. Therefore, the curators of the exhibition organized the documents into three categories: the first was of the documents funny at the time of their publication, that still make the readers and viewers laugh. The second included items that were made with a serious purpose, but now are rather hilarious. And the third group was made up by items that were meant to be funny at their time, but now only make us laugh because of the contrast between intent and result.

In the theatre show held in the Ceremonial Hall of our library, two great contemporary figures of Hungarian humor entertained the audience: *Humoralist* György Sándor and actor István Mikó. The *Humoralist* is an outstanding and must-know character of the Hungarian scene with a unique individual style. His humor is only comparable to Géza Hofi’s, but unlike Hofi, György Sándor targets intellectual audiences interested and well-versed in arts. His humor sometimes does not make us laugh, it is rather sad. Many of his puns are paraphrases or remind us of famous quotes, his monologues originate from transcripts of theatre plays. His performances are remarkable pieces of prose and poetry. György Sándor in the show of the Night of Museums, [*The University of Not Knowing, or my Selected Improvisations*] held up a crooked mirror to the audience that rewarded him and his decades-long career of intellectual humor with a loud applause.

István Mikó, together with his charming partner, Anikó Szabó, performed a great comedy show with the title [*Gastronomy Pleasures*]. It was a selection of the works

of Gyula Krúdy, Andor Gábor and György Szilágyi, that relied on the talent of the actors rather than the scene or the accessories. The audience that filled the room laughed with tears!



Caricature is the visual form of humor. To present it, we exhibited the caricatures of Henrik Major in the lobby of the Manuscript Collection. Major excelled with his drawings as early as his childhood and published the first caricature at the age of 19 in the satirical magazine *Fidibusz*. His sketches of only a couple of lines marked a completely new trend for the Hungarian artists of the genre. Henrik Major, due to his sense of humor, straightforwardness, and no text or just a pair of lines added to his drawings, became the most popular young artist in the Hungarian press. He signed his works as “Major” or “Sicu” and was employed by all the satirical magazines and many prestigious newspapers. After World War I, he moved abroad, but kept sending his works to the contemporaneous Hungarian periodicals. His drawings, always of high artistic level, became part of the urban mass culture. Major set several records: he obtained fame as the artist to portray most monarchs,

statesmen, public figures and celebrities, and his speed was also legendary, as it did not take him more than 4 minutes to draw a picture.



The purpose of the exhibition was to present Major's versatility as a caricaturist. It focused on his main work *The Panopticon of Henrik Major* published in 1913, that includes the portraits of leading figures of the literary life of that time, and offer a true mirror of Major's art.

Not only the Manuscript Collection, but other departments, too, set up salons related to the theme of humor. The Collection of Old Prints exhibited the works of Galenus, Petronius, Bonfini and Galeotto Marzio. The Music Collection offered a selection of old recordings with the title *The Beginnings of the Cabaret of Pest* and exhibited music sheets of cabaret songs in their lobby. In the chamber exhibition of the Collection of Theatre History of the title *The Cabaret 100 Years Ago, Hacsek and Sajó*, visitors could see popular comedy sketches and participate in a quiz-game of theatre history humor in Hungarian and English. In the reading rooms of the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, there was an exhibition of old periodicals *From Borsszem Jankó to Ludas Matyi*, as well as a selection of the photographs of József Tóth entitled "Child games of master Füles".

The traditional flashlight-tours to the library's dark stores turned into Caricature-Tours this night.

Perhaps the most famous and colorful guest of this evening, conductor and pianist Tamás Vásáry started his performance at 10 PM and offered his audience an unforgettable musical conversation. Tamás Vásáry

has been presenting his *Beyond the Music...* show for years at the Hungarian Academy of Music, focusing each time on the oeuvre of a different composer. This was the genre he chose for this Night of Museums as well. With his plays and talks he gained the love of the audience...

Although not related directly to humor, two more events are worthy to mention here from the Night of Museums of 2015. Both took place in the Relics Space next to our library's main entrance. The exhibition *The Royal Library – Secrets of the 35 Corvinas in Facsimiles, Images, Texts and Films* paid tribute to the *Bibliotheca Corvina* or *Bibliotheca Augusta* of the Hungarian King Matthias (1458–1490), the first Renaissance royal library in Transalpine Europe. Its richness and beauty served as a representation of the ruler's legitimate power. The exhibition displayed the facsimiles of all the 35 items of the royal library identified as properties of the king, that belong to the collections of National Széchényi Library.



And let's remember the award ceremony of the *Illuminate Your Initials* competition of National Széchényi Library, launched at the beginning of 2015 for elementary school students. The participants were asked to prepare their own manuscript pages for a new codex entitled *A Message to King Matthias*, after studying thoroughly the Corvinas and their decoration. They had to follow the rules of codex illumination and use their own techniques (drawing, ink, tempera, montage, photo montage etc.) to tell a story related to King Matthias. At the ceremony, the management of NSZL awarded the most beautiful works of this contest.

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## Night of Museums 2016

Our library offered quite a few programs related to the theme of the Night of Museums in 2016: *Heroes, Explorers, Innovators*. Our visitors could see the pencil-drawn heroes of Zichy (in the albums illustrated by the artist), the Heroes' gallery of theater history, maps of Hussar officer János Lipszky, and the drawings and photographs made by 'forced explorers' Pál Rosti and Károly László in Mexico. A chamber exhibition paid tribute to Miklós Zrínyi, a "Discover the Library" quiz game entertained the guests, there was a textile exhibition of Noémi Szeredi Ambrus "*Telltale textiles – textile tales*", and a real book auction on an imaginary Treasure Island. We offered several guided tours as well as literary and musical performances.

A highlight of the Night of Museums was the Móric Benyovszky memorial evening, jointly organized with the Committee of the 2016 Benyovszky Memorial Year and the Benyovszky Association.

The relation between Móric Benyovszky and National Széchényi Library dates back to 2004, when on the proposal of the Benyovszky Association, the 1772-1776 Madagascar journals of Benyovszky were published as a fine facsimile edition by NSZL and Kossuth Publishing House. The book included the

original text handwritten by Benyovszky in French, its transcription in modern French, and the Hungarian translation. An excellent preface and afterword was added by professor Vilmos Voigt. The volume was received well: it won the Beautiful Hungarian Book 2004 award both in the category of bibliophile and special publications, and earned recognition on the Frankfurt International Book Fair.

The Benyovszky Association had been founded some years earlier to keep the memory of Móric Benyovszky alive. Its members are academics, researchers, public figures, artists and people who cherish the traveler's memory within and outside the Hungarian borders: Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, France, USA and Madagascar. The purpose of the Association is to emphasize what can be learnt from the life of Benyovszky, a hero whose experience and knowledge of the four continents is much more extended than that of most of his critics.

But who in fact was Móric Benyovszky? He was one of the most famous adventurers of the Hungarian history, a world traveler, a sailor, a soldier, and the first European ruler on the islands of the Indian Ocean. Although in the past centuries there were uncertainties regarding his date of birth and activities, related research has by now corrected the



Noémi Szeredi Ambrus's exhibition: *Telltale textiles – textile tales*



Portrait of Mór Benyovszky

inaccuracies and it can be stated that he was born on 20 September 1741.

The controversial but widely admired life-work of the Europe-famous world traveler who only lived 45 years is regarded as a remarkable part of 18<sup>th</sup> century history. Slovaks consider him their own, Poles look at him as their national hero. Benyovszky was a registered entrepreneur of the French royal house, and his proclamation as well as his chess problems have been preserved in Russian collections. However, this man of the world was first and foremost Hungarian, as proved by academic research and his own notes.

The Mór Benyovszky Memorial Committee was set up in October 2015 under the patronage of Géza Szöcs and Péter Hoppál, and the associate presidency of György G. Németh. The year 2016 marks the 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth and the 230<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Benyovszky. On the memorial evening of the Night of Museums, words of greeting were delivered by the consul of honor of Madagascar, Randrianasolo Lalarison Richard, then the president of the Benyovszky Association, György G. Németh held a lecture and presented the documentary film *In the Footsteps of Benyovszky Around the World*. At the end, Tibor Nagy

Magnus performed the songs of the future *Benyovszky musical*, and unplugged authentic Madagascar tunes were played by Rivelis Tahinasoa from Madagascar.

The program of the Benyovszky Memorial Year in NSZL continued on 26 September with the international Benyovszky conference and exhibition. The event was attended by the ambassadors of the countries of importance in Benyovszky's life, and the descendants of his family living in Hungary and the USA.

After the conference, excerpts of the new Hungarian musical based upon Mór Jókai's Benyovszky-biography were staged for the first time in the gala evening at Pesti Vigadó. *Benyovszky, Lover of Freedom* is a musical created by the well-known and prestigious trio of Tibor Nagy, Iván Bradányi and Zsolt Pozsgay, and its official first performance is foreseen to take place in Magyar Színház in 2017.

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## The Golden Fund of NSZL, upholder of values – Night of Museums 2017

Following our practice of the previous years, the national library also in 2017 joined the nation-wide event of the Night of Museums, and opened its doors to the visitors until 2 o'clock in the morning, offering a wide range of activities. Apart from the traditional programs we have each year, there were special ones related to our current exhibitions and Memorial Years.

The bicentenary of János Arany in 2017 was commemorated also in the Night of Museums. Special guided tours were held on this occasion at the grand exhibition *"Others only get their laurels leaf by leaf..." – Treasures, Cults, Reception History* with curator Zsuzsanna Rózsafalvi, literary historian László Szörényi, Director of Research László Boka, poet Krisztina Rita Molnár, and the founder of the Kaláka band, Dániel Gryllus. Visitors taking part in these unique guided tours could learn not only about the objects exhibited, but also the guides' personal relation to János Arany (for instance, Dániel Gryllus played his favorite poem *Family Circle* on a zither placed in the middle of the exhibition space). But János Arany inspired much more activities this night. A slide show entitled *Golden Slides* was presented for children and grown-ups from the collection of Ferenc Bíró. A recorded lecture of Mátyás Stróbl explained Alajos Stróbl's statues of János Arany, under the title *"A man on this earth will settle for less, if he is able to hold back his wishes"*. And walking on the corridors, you could meet surprising figures, as Dániel Molnár's costume fantasies evoked the characters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reminding us of János Arany's Shakespeare translation and the date of 24 June. Scary visitors might have even seen the ghost of Hamlet's father lurking behind a corner. And those seeking adventure and thrill were invited to a *Night in Helsingor* game in search of Shakespeare's heroes; playing and investigating, or doing a playful investigation, they had to find the correct answer to a row of questions.

Apart from János Arany, our library paid tribute also to Mihály Tompa, another great Hungarian poet born 200 years ago. Several guided tours of the current Tompa exhibition were held in the 7<sup>th</sup> floor catalogue space.

Visitors were also invited to the guided tours of the national library's grand exhibition *Hungarian Sound*

*Film Posters 1931–1944*. The tours led by curator Dávid Fekete, film historian Márton Kurutz and librarian Ágnes Kopcsay revealed secrets of the golden age of Hungarian sound film and the exhibited contemporaneous posters. The exhibition displayed small and large color posters, a motion-picture camera from the early 1930s in the center of the gallery, and several other objects. The historical era was evoked by the concert of the 30 years old Hot Jazz Band with musical pieces from the famous movies of Katalin Karády, Gyula Kabos and Pál Jávor.

And music was not over yet. The Budapest Chamber Orchestra, formed by the musicians of the State Opera Theatre, played Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, much to the audience's pleasure.

Colleagues at the library's Special Collections and workshops prepared their own activities for the Night of Museums. The Collection of Posters and Small Prints, apart from the film posters at the grand exhibition, also presented the contents of their *Spoiled for Choice* selection of prints. The Map Collection staff organized various lectures, including *The Golden Fund of our Maps* on the maps of the collection of Count



Ferenc Széchenyi, and *Our Treasures of the History of Astronomy* on the history of constellations. Visitors could participate in workshops where they learnt how to prepare globes and tried their knowledge in quiz games. The Collection of Theatre History and the Music Collection also had a lot in store for visitors in the mood to play. While in one corner of their common reading room a quiz play of the relation between János Arany and theatre took place, in the booths of the other corner, lovers of animation films like *Pom Pom's Tales*, *Mirr-Murr the Cat*, and *Frakk, Terror of the Cats*, could try and recognize the tunes composed by Zsolt Pethő deceased a year ago. The Library Science Library prepared real surprises of literary history for the interested audience: manuscripts, including a recently discovered one of Endre Ady were presented this night. Guests interested in the electronic manuscript collection and the disk shelf, could get a glimpse into the secrets of the digitizing work of the library within the program *From the Shelves into the Cloud*.

Traditional library walks have always been very popular among our visitors, and this applies especially to the walks held once a year in the Night of Museums, with the title *Adventure Tour in the Dark Library Stores*. On these occasions, visitors looking for adventure discover the library by flashlight that illuminates not only the shelves but also some interesting items of literature and press history. The tour leaders this year guided the groups through some episodes of the history of periodicals from the 1500s to the present day.

Another thrilling experience was the auction "*The vault is open, whose bid is the best?*" that took place for the fifth time now. Bidding was open for old and new publications offered on a friendly price by staff members and friends of the library, including children's books, popular literature, newspapers, maps, posters and items of surprise.

And we had of course our usual workshops of craft. Restorer, museum guide and toy maker colleagues invited our guests from late evening until midnight to prepare János Arany minibooks and booklets, and put together small and large puzzles with Corvina motifs. On this day, as accustomed in the Night of Museums, we gave 50 % discount of the yearly library use for each new registration. Between the events, visitors could taste Fragola ice creams, Hungarian monkey bread and the wines of the Jackfall Wine Manufacture.

The activities of National Széchenyi Library for the Night of Museums were designed in the hope that our guests would have a great experience and come back to us later as regular library users.

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