

# The magazine of the first advocacy association of Hungarian playwrights: The four volumes of *Színpad: Die Bühne*

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to present the four volumes of *Színpad: Die Bühne*, a bilingual magazine published by the Magyar Színpadi Szerzők Egyesülete (MSSE, Hungarian Playwrights' Association) between 1914 and 1917. The purpose of the journal was to protect the interests of playwrights and to share news and development opportunities of the theatre industry. The research relies on the sources found at the Budapest National Széchenyi Library, as well as on articles found in the Arcanum digital archive, and presents in detail the circumstances of the launching of the magazine, as well as its editorial and publishing work, and the reasons for its termination. *Színpad: Die Bühne* played a significant role in building the international relations of Hungarian playwrights, as well as in organizing the flow of information in the theatre industry.

## KEYWORDS

Hungarian playwrights' association, *Színpad: Die Bühne*, theatre industry, theatre magazine

## INTRODUCTION

As with most professions, those connected to the theatre experience constant change. As result of these changes, legal institutions, infrastructure and professional meetings (including scientific

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ones) necessary for the transfer of knowledge are created. However, there are also many platforms where people with similar professions and interests can engage in dialogue. Such platforms include, for example, advocacy associations, whose members aim to improve the financial and moral appreciation of playwrights, including the sharing and discussing of theatre-related Hungarian and international news, development opportunities, etc. with members. These can occur during regular general meetings, departmental gatherings, discussions with other associations, but also via printed media (such as books and newspapers). For this reason, in January 1904,<sup>1</sup> the Hungarian Playwrights' Association was established for the financial and moral protection of Hungarian playwrights.<sup>2</sup> The end of its operation was brought about by the socialist era, and the dissolution by the minister in 1950 put an end to almost five decades of hard work. In the first advocacy association of Hungarian playwrights the defining authors of the time (for example, Jenő Heltai, Jenő Huszka, Ferenc Molnár and Ferenc Herczeg) took office, thus, the association soon contacted and cooperated with foreign authors' associations.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the development of the association's statutes was based on French and German predecessors, however, the representatives of the Hungarian playwrights' organization also adopted many ideas from foreign associations in the areas of operation. Starting their own trade magazine and journal also fits into this category.

Between January 1914 and December 1917, the Hungarian Playwrights' Association published the magazine *Színpad: Die Bühne*. As its title indicates, it is a bilingual (Hungarian and German) trade bulletin for theatres, stage authors, theatre agencies, actors and theatre suppliers. The present study is part of a research project that explores the history of the Hungarian Playwrights' Association and focuses on the antecedents of *Színpad: Die Bühne* as well as the sources found in the National Széchenyi Library in Budapest, under the reference number H.23.527, i.e. the content of the magazine and the formation of the magazine.

It is important to note that the magazine *Színpad: Die Bühne*, launched by the Hungarian Playwrights' Association, is not the same as *Színpad*, an official publication of the same name, operating under the auspices of the Országos Színészegyesület [National Actors' Association]

<sup>1</sup>At this time, Hungary (then the Kingdom of Hungary) was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

<sup>2</sup>See Lengyel, Emese, "Chapters from the history of the Hungarian Playwrights' Association: The Hungarian Playwrights' Association from its conception until its foundation (1898–1904)." *Hungarian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1–2 (2023), p. 167–178.

<sup>3</sup>Foreign collaborations primarily emerged due to the need for creating a universal copyright law. Without the appropriate legal framework, the import and export of authors' works led to their material exploitation, which is precisely why these advocacy associations were established. Although bilateral agreements were made between certain states, a multilateral international treaty was still pending. Graham Dutfield and Uma Suthersasen emphasized in their book *Global Intellectual Property Law* that many governments resisted elevating the equal rights of foreign authors to the level of law. They also noted that the creation of an international copyright law was particularly urgent for France and Great Britain. See Dutfield, Graham, and Uma Suthersasen. *Global Intellectual Property Law*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2008, p. 26.

(its legal predecessor being the Magyar Színészkebelzet, 1871<sup>4</sup>). Since this bulletin was published between 1869 and 1890, and then “[...] from 1883, however, the *Színészek Lapja* [Actors’ Journal] took over the publication of the association’s news. In 1873, the National Actors’ Association changed its name to the Hungarian Actors’ Association. From 1878, it was listed as the Országos Magyar Színészegyesület és Nyugdíjintézet [National Hungarian Actors’ Association and Pension Institute]. The members of the association paid membership fees, which together with the pension fund formed the assets of the association. From 1890, they already had their own headquarters. In 1903, the Országos Színészegyesület Színészképző Iskolája [Actors’ Training School of the National Actors’ Association] was established. From 1939, its role was taken over by the Színművészeti és Filmművészeti Kamara [Chamber of Theatre and Film Arts].<sup>5</sup>” *Színészek Lapja* was published monthly between October 1884 and November 1938.<sup>6</sup>

## THE ROLE OF DR. SÁNDOR MARTON THEATRE AGENT IN THE LAUNCHING OF THE MAGAZINE

In the life of literary and artistic cooperations and associations in Hungary at the time, the launch of their own magazine or its plan was far from unprecedented. At the same time, the Hungarian Playwrights’ Association was only able to implement this plan ten years after their establishment. The monthly publication took a break from the July 1914 to the December 1914 issue, and then was published continuously until 1917. Among other facts, the content of the first issue appears in *Pesti Hírlap*, alongside some general information about the magazine (publication frequency, date, subscription fee, contents of the first issue): “under the title *Színpad*, as issued and edited by Dr Sándor Marton, on the 15th of every month, a new, album-shaped magazine is published, in Hungarian and German, as a trade bulletin for theatres, authors, actors, agencies and theatre suppliers. Even the first issue can convince anyone of its quality rather advantageously; it contains an article by Ferenc Molnár, Dr Jenő Janovics, along with the December calendar of Budapest and rural theatres, news about new Hungarian plays, a list of foreign performances of Hungarian plays and many other fascinating data. Editorial and

<sup>4</sup>The establishment of the association was a significant moment in the process of Hungarian actors becoming professionals, as emphasized by Katalin Ágnes Bartha in her theatre history work. She further explained that the task of the National Actors’ Association was “to develop and enforce the operational rules for provincial theatre performances. The organization of the actors’ ‘market’ became increasingly challenging, as the number of individuals grew in the field. The *Magyar Színészet Évkönyve* [Hungarian Theatre Yearbook] for the year 1873 compiled and published a list of 25 theatre companies (including the Pest National Theatre and the Cluj National Theatre), along with their staff lists. When counted, this amounted to 850 actors in the Hungarian theatre job market: 479 men and 371 women. The number includes not only actors and actresses but also choristers, dancers, dramatic and singing actors, as well as prompters, conductors, painters, wardrobe supervisors, and treasurers, who also performed in smaller companies (except for the prompter and conductor). The larger companies also employed extra roles such as non-speaking characters and extras. (However, the market survey at the time did not include many actors without contracts.)” Bartha, Katalin Ágnes. “Színházi professzió és presztízis Kolozsváron a 19. század utolsó harmadában” [The theatre profession and its prestige in Cluj at the last third of the 19th century]. *Erdélyi Múzeum*, vol. 77, no. 3, 2015, p. 46–78 (p. 59).

<sup>5</sup>Székely, György, ed. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon* [Hungarian Theatre Art Encyclopaedia]. Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994, p. 576.

<sup>6</sup>Székely 757.

publishing office at 1 Bécsi Street, District 4. The subscription price of the magazine, which is extremely useful for those interested and is also tastefully presented, is 10 kroner for the whole year and 5 kroner for six months.<sup>7</sup> The editor and issuer was Sándor Marton, and the publisher was the Association.

The history of the magazine is intertwined clearly with the persona of Sándor Marton, “the world manager of Hungarian drama.”<sup>8</sup> The name of Sándor Marton, lawyer, theatre agent and publisher, already sounded familiar in the theatre industry when *Színpad* was launched. “Copyright by Alexander Marton...” was the inscription of all works that belonged to the Marton Sándor Színpadi Kiadó [Sándor Marton Theatre Publisher] from 1910 onwards. The Marton publishing house operated in three areas: publishing, selling copyrights of stage works and offering legal representation of playwrights.<sup>9</sup> However, taking a close look at the history of the trade press in Hungary, especially the music trade press, the name of Sándor Marton also appears in the history<sup>10</sup> of the *Zenekereskedelmi Közlöny* [Music Trade Gazette].<sup>11</sup> The first issue of the music bulletin was published in March 1911,<sup>12</sup> and the last on July 1, 1914.<sup>13</sup> and its purpose was nothing more than the protection of interests, as music historian János Ferenc

<sup>7</sup>n.a. (“Színpad”). *Pesti Hírlap*, vol. 36, no. 16, January 18, 1914, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>The author of the interview published in *Új Kelet* in 1926 used this expression about Sándor Marton. See: n.a. “Beszélgetés a magyar dráma világ-managerjével – Dr. Marton Sándor nyilatkozik a magyar színpadi termékek világsikeréről és az európai színházi viszonyokról.” [“A Conversation with the world manager of Hungarian Drama – Dr Sándor Marton discusses the global success of Hungarian stage products and European theatrical conditions.”] *Új Kelet*, vol. 9, no. 287, December 28, 1926, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>Szekely 494.

<sup>10</sup>Nonetheless, *Magyar Zenészek Lapja* existed between 1897 and 1902. Later, Magyar Cigányzenészek Országos Szövetsége and Magyar Czigányzenészek Egyesülete also launched their own professional journal titled *Magyar Zenészek Lapja* (*Cigányzenészek Közlönye*) [*Hungarian Musicians’ Journal* (*The Journal of Gypsy Musicians*)]. For more on the association’s activities, the Hungarian Gypsy musicians’ interest protection organization, and the professional journals, see Tamás Hajnáczy’s two source publications: Hajnáczy, Tamás. *Magyar Cigányzenészek Országos Egyesülete: Cigányzenészek harca a két világháború közötti Magyarországon* [*Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ National Association: The Struggle of Gypsy Musicians in Hungary between the Two World Wars*]. Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 2019; Hajnáczy, Tamás. *Magyar Czigányzenészek Egyesülete: Cigányzenészek mozgalma a boldog békeidők Magyarországnán* [*Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ Association: The movement of Gypsy musicians in Hungary at the fin-de-siècle*]. Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 2020.

<sup>11</sup>“The heading of the journal testifies to ambitious plans: the Magyar Zeneműkiadók és Kereskedők Országos Egyesülete [The National Association of Hungarian Music Publishers and Merchants, Budapest], the Société Générale Internationale de l’Édition Phonographique et Cinématographique [The General International Society for Phonographic and Cinematographic Publishing, Paris], the Anstalt für Mechanisch-Musikalische Rechte [The Institute for Mechanical Musical Rights, Berlin], and the Budapesti Szerzőjog Értékesítési Központ [The Budapest Copyright Sales Center] all advertised themselves as official organs. This list expanded in May 1913 with the Magyar Szövegírók, Zeneszerzők és Zeneműkiadók Szövetkezete [Hungarian Lyricists, Composers, and Music Publishers’ Cooperative], and briefly, in the fall of 1913, with the Magyar Hangszerkészítő Mesterek Országos Szövetsége [National Association of Hungarian Musical Instrument Makers]. It is evident that it could attract interest from many types of musical professionals. The journal covered several music-related subjects – sheet music, instruments, audio and audiovisual documents, and musical theatre – with a focus on commercial, legal, technical, and historical aspects.” Szabó, Ferenc János. “A korai magyar hanglemez-sajtó” [“The early Hungarian phonograph press”]. In *Médiatörténeti Tanulmányok 2020*, edited by Tibor Kleszenitz and Vince Paál, Budapest: Médiatudományi Intézet, 2020, p. 36–37.

<sup>12</sup>Szabó 36.

<sup>13</sup>Szabó 54.

Szabó pointed out. “From the beginning, the journal employed two editors: the editor-in-chief Dr Sándor Marton was a lawyer, theatre publisher and agent. A composer known under the pseudonym Náci Sas worked alongside him in a managing editorial position. Based on the signed articles, it is partly clear and partly possible to assume that, due to his profession, Marton was primarily responsible for legal and theatre-related topics, while Náci Sas was responsible for content beyond that,” summarizes the music historian the editorial operations of the *Zenekersekedelmi Közlöny*. Knowing this, it can be stated that Sándor Marton continued the work he started in the music magazine in *Színpad*, besides holding the position of secretary general of the Hungarian Playwrights’ Association, while he also was a prosecutor of the Association for fifteen years (he worked as a lawyer in the trials of many authors), as well as being the prosecutor of the Újságkiadók Szövetsége [Association of Newspaper Publishers].<sup>14</sup> It is due to Sándor Marton, among others, that the Vígszínház in Budapest was able to enjoy many successes abroad from the 1910s, as “[i]n January 1914, for instance, Molnár’s plays were performed on the stages of the following cities: *A testőr* [*The Bodyguard*] (Brünn, Wien), *Liliom* (Baden, Czernowitz, Düsseldorf, Hamburg), *Az ördög* [*The Devil*] (Innsbruck, Wien, Wiener-Neustadt), *A farkas* [*The Wolf*] (Wien). In the same month, among the in-house authors of Víg, Imre Földes’s play *Halló* was played in Hamburg, Jenő Heltai’s *A masamód* [*The Milliner*] in Bielitz, Menyhért Lengyel and Lajos Bíró’s *A cárnő* [*The Tsarina*] in Freiburg, Gablonz, Giessen, Munich, St. Pölten and Wien. Besides all, Menyhért Lengyel’s *Tájfún* [*Typhoon*] toured in the USA”<sup>15</sup> – remarked historian Gyöngyi Heltai, further emphasizing that *Színpad: Die Bühne*, edited and published by Sándor Marton, contributed greatly to the foundation of the theatre’s international relations system.<sup>16</sup>

The press article of *Magyar Hírlap*, in which the author asked Sándor Marton, then sixty years old about the publisher’s thirty-year operation, is worth mentioning. According to Marton, he realized that it is not only the seller who has to get paid for authors’ works, as he claims: “I could say [as he begins his recollections] that at that time I started dealing with theatre publishing at the unanimous request of all Hungarian authors. The writers were not satisfied with the publishers, who made a fortune themselves, but only gave the writers a pittance. During those years, a nice old gentleman was busy giving young writers ten-to-twenty-forint advances for their upcoming plays. His name is not important, he has since died. This man was very angry with writers who demanded royalties from him after their plays. He also died as a child of an alien world who cannot understand the spirit of the new age. He could not comprehend that a writer also needs money, besides fame.”<sup>17</sup> To give an example, Marton’s first release was Count

<sup>14</sup>Székely 494.

<sup>15</sup>Heltai, Gyöngyi. “A nemzetközi kapcsolatrendszer válsághatás-csökkentő szerepe. A budapesti Vígszínház példája (1920–1932)” [“The role of the international network in crisis impact mitigation. The example of the Budapest Vígszínház (1920–1932)”]. *Kultúra és Közösség*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2016, p. 35–46 (p. 36).

<sup>16</sup>Heltai 36.

<sup>17</sup>n.a. “A magyar színpadi szerzők világsikereiről beszél a jubiláns Marton Sándor” [“Jubilant Sándor Marton on the global successes of Hungarian playwrights”]. *Magyar Hírlap*, vol. 41, no. 286, December 16, 1931, p. 5.

Ivó Vojnovich's play, titled *Napraforgós hölgy* [*The Sunflower Lady*],<sup>18</sup> and then he did business with the rights of operetta author Viktor Jacobi's work *Szibill* [*Sybil*], which was also successful abroad.<sup>19</sup> Marton revealed himself what his success meant in numbers: "I staged a total of 600 plays on domestic stages and 120 abroad. These 120 plays created the prestige of Hungarian stage literature abroad. 400 of the 600 domestic pieces were booked after the theme was presented, thus, I bought the 'product' itself right away."<sup>20</sup>

## ON THE "BILINGUALITY" AND CONTENTS OF *SZÍNPAD: DIE BÜHNE*

At the National Széchenyi Library in Budapest, under the reference number H.23.527, all issues from 1914 to 1915 can be found, as well as a few issues from the 1916 volume III, and issues 5–12 (combined) from the 1917 volume. However, issues 1–4 from the latter volume are missing. The page cover was designed by painter and graphic artist Géza Faragó (1877–1928),<sup>21</sup> on which we can see a theatre performance scene, in front of a black and white background, with different colouring for each issue.<sup>22</sup> Faragó created posters and theatre sets in Art Nouveau style, but his caricatures were also well-known. He studied in Paris, but also visited Szolnok and Kecskemét (HU). He probably made the cover of *Színpad: Die Bühne*, because, from 1910 to 1915, he worked as a scenographer at the Király Theatre in Budapest and then at the Capital Operetta Theatre. Thus, MSSE, which was, of course, interested in theatre, and Marton Sándor as a publisher, asked him to complete this task.<sup>23</sup>

The almost complete material appearing in A/4 format gives one the opportunity to deal with the content of *Színpad: Die Bühne* more than tangentially. The subscription fee was 10 kroner for the whole year and 5 kroner pro rata for half a year. Part of the income came from subscription costs and another part from advertising costs, which ensured the operation. The extent to which MSSE contributed to the expenditure, however, is unknown. At the same time, as the editors put it, the issues of *Színpad: Die Bühne* were provided free of charge to "those

<sup>18</sup>Sándor Marton recalled the circumstances of the first publication as follows: "At that time, I was the secretary of the Playwrights' Association and, as a lawyer, I handled disputes for writers. It was then that I came up with the idea of publishing plays. The first play that I published and brought to the stage was *Napraforgós hölgy* by Count Ivó Vojnovich. The play was a great success, and from that point on, writers approached me with their plays, shared their themes with me, and I encouraged them to work on them." n.a. p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>n.a. p. 5. For more on his work, see: n.a. "Meghalt dr. Marton Sándor, az ismert magyar színpadi kiadó" ["Dr Sándor Marton, the famous Hungarian stage publisher, has passed away"]. *Erdélyi Hírlap*, vol. 22, no. 6000, August 9, 1938, p. 8; n.a. "Egy 'nagykövet' halálára" ["On the death of an 'ambassador'"]. *Az Est*, vol. 29, no. 178, August 9, 1938, p. 6; n.a. "Marton Sándor dr. éles ítéletét igazolta" ["Dr Sándor Marton's sharp judgement was proven right"]. *Az Újság*, vol. 14, no. 178, August 19, 1938, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>n.h., p. 5.

<sup>21</sup>Éber, László, ed. *Művészeti Lexikon I. A–K. [Art Encyclopedia Vol 1, A–K]*. Budapest: Győző Andor Kiadása, 1935, p. 305.

<sup>22</sup>Volume I: issue 1 – light green cover; issue 2 – purple cover; issue 3 – mustard cover; issue 4 – pastel pink cover; issue 5 – red cover; issue 6 – dark blue cover; issue 7 – dark green cover; issues 8–12 – red cover; Volume II: issues 1–3 – light green cover; issues 4–8 – purple cover; issues 9–12 – dark green cover; Volume III: issues 1–2 – cover missing (based on the pattern, light green cover); issues 3–4 – purple cover; Volume IV: issues 5–12 – purple cover.

<sup>23</sup>Unfortunately, there is now no written documentation regarding the exact circumstances of the request.

interested,” i.e. to theatres and publishers. All of this was a sustainable construction until the 6th and 7th issues, because the costs were accumulated with the free copies, which the editors called “demonstration issues.” Eventually, an announcement entitled “We will stop the demonstrations”<sup>24</sup> was published in issues 8–12 of vol. I, and the magazin was henceforth only available to those who paid the subscription fee.

Before the contents of the paper, it is worth exploring the bilingual nature of the paper, more precisely why the publisher chose German in addition to Hungarian. Several reasons for this are to be noted, as 1) German has long been the dominant medium of press and theatre culture in Hungary;<sup>25</sup> and 2) it is a paper established in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy,<sup>26</sup> which prioritizes the promotion of international relations between authors and authors’ associations. Moreover, with bilingualism, the publisher was able to promote the latter. However, there is no information about how much this contributed to the goal.

The introduction for the 29-page debut issue published on January 15, 1914 was written by the editor and publisher, Sándor Marton. (1) First of all, he remarks on the relationships and forms of information flow of his domestic playwright businesses, which he also listed as reasons for starting the paper. In essence, he stated that the lack of a domestic trade press (since until then only the daily press dealt with news of the theatre industry) makes the situation of “producers and intermediaries” more difficult.<sup>27</sup> (2) He also claims that the bulletin, published in Hungarian and German, is intended not only for domestic professionals, but also for foreigners, who can thus get real pictures of the plays in Hungary. According to him, this is also necessary because foreign countries “[...] look with ever-increasing interest in our stage productions, and out of the literature of all European languages, ours now expects the most and follows our productions with the most vigilant attention. The German text of our paper serves to satisfy this interest, which is important to us both spiritually and materially, and which is intended to save the director and the man on the rail abroad from groping in the dark, from following news that

<sup>24</sup>“Since the production costs of our magazine were already high, the expense was significantly increased by the fact that we sent the issues free of charge to interested parties throughout the past year – with this issue, we will cease the distribution of these demonstrative sample copies. Future issues will only be sent to those who submit the subscription fees.” n.a. “A mutatványszámokat beszüntetjük” [“We will stop the demonstrations”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 8–12, January 15, 1915, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>In Pest–Buda (Budapest after the 1873 unification of the cities), German-language newspapers played an essential role in cultural mediation, as seen in Rózsa, Mária, “Pesti német nyelvű lapok a kultúráközvetítés szolgálatában a reformkorban és az 1850-es években” [“German-language newspapers of Pest in the service of cultural mediation during the reform era and in the 1850s”]. In *Irodalomtörténeti Füzetek*, vol. 173, Budapest, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia – Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont – Irodalomtudományi Intézet, 2023; Muth, Ágota Gizella, “*Iris* – Német nyelvű irodalmi almanach a magyar reformkorban” [“*Iris* – A German-language literary almanac in the Hungarian reform era”]. *Magyar Könyvszemle*, vol. 116, no. 2, 2000, pp. 145–161.

<sup>26</sup>The demands for press freedom and the abolition of censorship were also part of the 1848 revolution and war of independence. However, the 1867 Compromise, which created the Austro-Hungarian Empire, placed the press laws on new grounds. Negotiations between the Austrian and Hungarian sides began in the 1860s and concluded in February 1867. The issue of press freedom (which also addressed the situation of national publications as well as newspapers) was considered one of the most difficult questions by both negotiating parties. Ultimately, the Hungarian side succeeded in enforcing a more favourable law than previous ones. Révész T., Mihály. “A sajtószabadság ‘örömünnepe’ 1867 Magyarországon” [“The ‘demonstration of joy’ of free press in Hungary in 1867”]. In *Medias Res*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2017, p. 92–104 (p. 96–99).

<sup>27</sup>Marton, Sándor. “Beköszöntő” [“Greetings”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 15, 1914, p. 1.

has accidentally reached or been delivered to the foreign daily press and is often distorted.”<sup>28</sup> They also tried to use their own means to create dialogue, and the call for issue 2 proves this. The call was titled “A Színpad postaszekrénye” [“The mailbox of Színpad”], stating that the publishing office, as they put it, would take over the addressing of letters written to Hungarian artists from foreigners as a courtesy.<sup>29</sup> (3) The fact that both the MSSE and Sándor Marton advocated for a bilingual magazine is also not without precedent: the works of Hungarian authors were sold abroad, especially in German-speaking countries. With the establishment and development of Hungarian theatre agencies, even more Hungarian authors and their works were recognized internationally. The editors of the magazine wanted to talk about these businesses within an organized framework, which, in addition to informing the profession about current transactions and presentations, proves to be valuable data for the preparation of future reports (and comparisons). (4) Due to the disorganized theatrical conditions of the time – in this regard, Sándor Marton stated that it was hardly possible for the playwrights to get an insight into the programme of theatres situated in the countryside “[...] difficult, indeed, for agencies, and impossible for playwrights [...]”<sup>30</sup> With all that, the flow of information between authors, agencies and theatres could begin within an organized framework, on the exclusive commission of MSSE. After the introduction, Ferenc Molnár’s essay titled “Mozi és színház” [“Cinema and theatre”],<sup>31</sup> and director of the Cluj-Napoca theatre at the time, Jenő Janovics’s “A mai dráma” [“Drama today”]<sup>32</sup> appeared. After these, page 9 contains a one-quarter and a two-quarter advertisement in German, followed by a 3-page review of the piece<sup>33</sup> accompanied by a press review. The magazine published the December 1913 programme<sup>34</sup> of Budapest theatres in tabular format, then, on the next page, it listed the new Hungarian plays (page 20), and even the foreign performances of Hungarian plays on two pages (pages 21–22). The mixed news also got two pages (pages 23–24), on which there are also news of tenders, new play contracts from the capital’s theatres and reviews of professional news from abroad, and then Hungarian films also got a separate news block (page 25). On the last four pages (pages 26–29), the new trade bulletin published news: advertisements of theatre agencies (advertisements in Hungarian and German of Sándor Marton’s publishing house), advertisements of sellers dealing in service and product sales (e.g. reprography offices or factories producing artificial flowers, leaves and palm trees), however, here it is worth noting that each of these was linked to theatre enterprises (the text of the advertisement contained which theatre’s supplier is the given store, etc.). It is also significant that Sándor Marton and the MSSE referred to the theatre bulletin in question as a truly indispensable magazine from its beginnings. On page 3 of the 1st issue, the following framed invitation can be read: “The single theatre trade bulletin. The only one suitable for

<sup>28</sup>Marton 1.

<sup>29</sup>Sz.n. “A Színpad postaszekrénye” [“The mailbox of Színpad”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 2, February 15, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup>Marton 1.

<sup>31</sup>Molnár, Ferenc. “Mozi és színház” [“Cinema and theatre”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 15, 1914, p. 3–6.

<sup>32</sup>Janovics, Jenő. “A mai dráma” [“Drama today”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 15, 1914, pp. 6–8.

<sup>33</sup>*Színpad: Die Bühne* authors reviewed *Az egyszeri királyfi* [The Once-Upon-a-Time Prince, 1913]; *A híresek* [The Famous Ones]; *Aladár nem számár* [Aladár is Not an Ass]; *Nemtudomka* [The Little Ignoramus].

<sup>34</sup>n.a. “Budapesti színházak játékkrendje 1913. decemberében” [“The December 1913 programme of Budapest theatres”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 15, 1914, p. 14–19.

theatrical advertising.<sup>35</sup> Sándor Marton also positioned himself with this as an unavoidable theatre businessman.

In addition to the business aspect of theatre, texts dealing with the contemporary situation of theatre art were also accepted. The very first example of this is an article in the 2nd issue of the volume I discussing the issue of theatre hierarchy. László Márkus called attention to the changing position of the theatre director under the title “*Apró válságok*” [“*Small crises*”]. In his opinion, the fact that the star cult won on the stages led to the aesthetic deterioration of stage literature and theatre performances. László Márkus noted that “[t]oday’s theatre belongs to the popular actor, and the popular actor, this strange hybrid made up of the usurer and the artist, is a cruel tyrant to both the poor director and the playwright.”<sup>36</sup> From the 3rd issue onwards, this was replaced by a series of articles<sup>37</sup> presenting stages of the Hungarian countryside, or at least the editorial preface<sup>38</sup> of the issue promised this, however, the essay<sup>39</sup> that appeared in the 4th issue already discussed the ideal purpose of the theatre, and the one in the 5th was about the success of the operetta *After the girl* in London.<sup>40</sup> The theatre season ended, so the 6th and 7th issues were only published in half-length without an essay. In July 1914, the editors did not prepare another issue due to the outbreak of World War I, so issues 8–12 of volume I of 1914 were consolidated issues published in January 1915. From the editor’s letter to the readers, it becomes evident that the data required for editing (programmes, foreign charts, etc.) were only partially available to *Színpad: Die Bühne*.<sup>41</sup>

Returning to the 2nd issue of 1914, after the essay, there were presentations of new Hungarian plays and their reviews<sup>42</sup> (pages 5–9), and then, in the same tabular form as in the previous issue, the January 1914 schedule of Budapest theatres (pages 10–11) and the schedule of Hungarian rural theatres (pages 12–13) were presented. Compiling the schedule of rural theatres in the following issues became difficult due to a lack of information – this can be inferred from the letter addressed to rural theatre directors in the 4th issue, which reveals that the names of those who do not send their programs to the trade bulletin will be published in the next issue. However, no law obliged the managers of the rural theatres to do so, yet the editors of the MSSE and the trade journal operating under its auspices did not leave the lack of a program list unaddressed. This was justified by the fact that the Hungarian Playwrights’ Association and the newsletter are meant to serve the interests of the authors and that the authors do have the

<sup>35</sup>Janovics, Jenő. “Egyetlen színházi szakközlöny...” [The single theatre trade bulletin...]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 15, 1914, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup>Márkus, László. “Apró válságok” [“Small crises”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 2, February 15, 1914, p. 2–4.

<sup>37</sup>Bellai, József. “Temesvár színészete” [“Acting in Temesvár”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 3 March 15, 1914, p. 2–3.

<sup>38</sup>n.a. “Magyar vidéki színpadok” [“Stages of the Hungarian countryside”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 3, March 15, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Kaysslerm, Frigyes. “A színház ideális célja” [“The ideal aims of theatre”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 3, March 15, 1914, p. 1–2.; Wlassics, Gyula. “A vidéki színészet jövőjéről” [“On the future of acting in the countryside”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 3, March 15, 1914, p. 4–5.

<sup>40</sup>Szechenyi, József. “Londoni levél – A színházak körül” [“A letter from London – On theatres”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, 1, vol. 1, no. 5, May 15, 1914, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup>n.a. “Olvasóinkhoz!” [“Readers!”] *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 8–12, January 15, 1915, p. 2–4.

<sup>42</sup>*Színpad: Die Bühne* authors reviewed *Matyó lakodalom* [Matyó Wedding], *Az ezredes* [The Colonel], *A kölcsönkért kastély* [The Borrowed Castle], *A tündérlaki lányok* [Tündérlak Maidens].

right to know exactly where their work is presented onstage, and they also reminded the directors that they have a contractual obligation to send the scripts and programmes to the agencies.<sup>43</sup> After these bits, the foreign performances of Hungarian plays were summarized in this issue as well (pages 16–17), alongside news about new Hungarian plays also given in the form of a short news (page 18). Just like foreign performances of Hungarian plays (page 19), foreign theatre and Hungarian film news (page 23) and advertisements were also accepted. On the miscellaneous news page<sup>44</sup> (page 20), the editors published the press coverage of the first issue of *Színpad*. The *Pesti Hírlap*, the *Neues Pester Journal* and the *Budapester Tagblatt* press organizations were particularly involved. *Pesti Hírlap* stated that the trade magazine fulfilled its objective and its first issue will convince readers of this. *Neues Pester Journal* also wrote positively about the first issue, claiming that “the paper will surely soon become an indispensable trade magazine for theatres and spectators.”<sup>45</sup>

The essay section<sup>46</sup> continued in volume II, issue 1, and the editors kept the usual sections. Issues 1–3 covered the period from January to March 1915, while issues 9–12, available in the Széchenyi Library archive, were also combined, covering the period from September to December 1915. The latter already omitted the permanent essay section, only theatrical novelties and their reviews, programme plans submitted by the theatres, mixed news and advertisements were included in the paper published in December. The content diversity of *Színpad: Die Bühne* waned by 1915, i.e. in volume II. There were also no essays in volume III, issues 3–4, while it also became clear that initially, the mixed ads were reduced to only three Sándor Marton Publishing ads, i.e. the income from the ads was lost. This can also be traced in the existing volume IV, consolidated issues 5–12, printed by the publisher in December 1917. Although an editorial statement<sup>47</sup> on theatre censorship was published in connection with specific cases, the issue consisted mainly of compilations and announcements of theatre programmes. This time, there are only two ads: one advertises the J. Krausz and Co. printing house (*Színpad: Die Bühne* was printed here), and the other is an ad for Sándor Marton Publishing.<sup>48</sup> There is no specific information about what ultimately led to the demise of *Színpad: Die Bühne*. At the same time, it can be guessed that the unsustainable business model may have caused the termination. The creation of the subscriber circle by sending the “demonstration copies” was not started on time, only after the issue was long overdue, when the editors realized the additional costs caused by the free copies. In addition, the decrease in advertising also weakened the income side, while due to the outbreak of the war, *Színpad: Die Bühne* was not only struggling with financial problems, but also with a lack of information and a great deal of uncertainty.

<sup>43</sup>n.a. “A vidéki szinigazgató urak figyelmébe” [“To the attention of the theatre directors of the countryside”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 4, April 15, 1914, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup>n.a. “Vegyes” [“Miscellaneous”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 1, no. 2, February 15, 1914, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>Relle, Pál. “Az új ‘Magyar Színház’” [“The new ‘Hungarian theatre’”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 2, no. 1–3, March 15, 1915, p. 1–4.

<sup>47</sup>n.a. “Néhány szó a színpadi cenzúráról” [“A few words on stage censorship”]. *Színpad: Die Bühne*, vol. 4, no. 5–12, December 15, 1917, p. 1–2.

<sup>48</sup>p. 5–12.

In 1917, the year when *Színpad: Die Bühne* was published for the last time, Zsolt Harsányi discusses at length the differences between the procurement of foreign and Hungarian plays in his *Színházi Élet* [*Theatre Life*] series entitled “*Utazás a sűgőlyukon túl*” [“*Journey beyond the prompt box*”]. His writing is an excellent impression of the functioning of the agencies found in the theatre industry of the time, which is why it is worth including it in the chapter discussing the work of Sándor Marton: “for a theatre company, as for any business enterprise, one of the most difficult and crucial factors is the procurement of raw materials. The raw material of the theatre is the written play, which must be turned into a beautifully exhibited, advertised, well-acted performance, and a paid play is not always offered,”<sup>49</sup> remarks Zsolt Harsányi, also emphasizing that the directors can easily obtain the play from the Hungarian writer, because the director himself is familiar with the writers’ society, and “[...] through personal contact, he always knows what is being prepared on the famed writing desk.”<sup>50</sup> He believes that, even with competing private theatres, it is easier for a theatre to acquire Hungarian plays than foreign plays. “It takes a whole pile of letters, newspaper articles, telegrams, sample contracts and so on to create such a deal. The stage director must not lose his attention for a moment. They must constantly be on the lookout for, e.g. what a fascinating piece is being made. They have various aids for this alertness,” continues Harsányi. He listed several possibilities for “spotting,”<sup>51</sup> such as (1) the theatre and literary sections of foreign newspapers (e.g. Austrian, British, Italian and French papers); (2) theatre journals;<sup>52</sup> (3) theatre weeklies; (4) recommendations from Hungarian agents; (5) recommendations from foreign theatre agencies and agents.<sup>53</sup>

The latter is also extremely important in terms of the fate of foreign plays in Hungary: there was a large agency that operated with a separate representative in each major theatre centre, “[...] and most of them also have their own newspaper, which reports on the success of the plays under their management. (There is already a Hungarian magazine of this kind: the magazine *A színpad* of Dr Sándor Marton’s agency, which is published with Hungarian and German texts.) Most writers book their plays with an agency, which then advertises and places them in theatres. The contact is purely commercial; here, too, there are business enemies and staunch business friends. Friendships are sealed with far-reaching contracts.”<sup>54</sup> In February 1917,

<sup>49</sup>Harsányi, Zsolt. “Utazás a sűgőlyukon túl VII.” [“Journey beyond the prompt box VII”]. *Színházi Élet*, vol. 6, no. 9, February 25, 1917, p. 27–28.

<sup>50</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>“As soon as any interesting play draft appears, the theater director in Pest already takes action via telegram to secure the play—at least with an option to purchase it,” remarked Zsolt Harsányi. (27)

<sup>53</sup>“In the director’s place and on his behalf, Hungarian agents also pay special attention. Eventually, foreign major agencies also tend to alert the director to a good buying opportunity. Among the British and American companies, the most famous theater agents are Savage, Klaw, and Erlanger. In Germany, Ahn and Simrock, Felix Bioch’s heirs (whose leader, the famous Slivinsky, passed away recently), and the Munich-based Drei Masken-Verlag are the most notable. In Austria, the most important theater agents are Eibenschütz and the Hungarian Vilmos Karcag, who also own theatres in Vienna, as well as O. F. Eirich, Herzmansky, and more recently, Max Pfeffer. The largest and wealthiest Italian company is the Rikordi and Sonzogno firm. For French authors, the best agency at their disposal is their own association, which, under the business name *Société des auteurs dramatiques*, expertly handles its members’ interests. The very old Paris-based Choudens company also works with French operettas, and for instance, was the publisher of Planquett.” (*ibid.*)

<sup>54</sup>*ibid.*

Zsolt Harsányi could not have known that Sándor Marton's magazine would be such a success on the Hungarian market, yet it seems that the theatre magazine was able to connect to an international trend. The fact that the financial appreciation of Hungarian playwrights gradually improved was partly due to the work of the Hungarian Playwrights' Association. The financial esteem of foreign playwrights in Hungary had already developed differently, by 1917 Hungarian authors earned more (although it is still a question whether they earned enough) for each play back home than their foreign colleagues. None other than Harsányi drew attention to this fact at the end of the newspaper article, noting that "[i]t is also interesting to mention that the theatres in Budapest pay much less to foreign authors than to Hungarian ones, and it is known that Hungarian authors receive a tenth of the gross income as a fee. The Hungarian theatre director pays foreign authors 4–7 percent for prose plays and 6–8 percent for musical plays. In general, we are already at the point where the earnings of Hungarian authors abroad are many times greater than what foreigners earn on Hungarian stages. And at this point, it is impossible not to shout an enthusiastic hooray out to the Hungarian playwrights."<sup>55</sup>

## SUMMARY

*Színpad: Die Bühne*, a bilingual paper with its four editions, was a pioneer of the magazines owned by Hungarian advocacy associations. The articles published in the magazine serve as proof of the efforts made by the Hungarian Playwrights' Association to establish and maintain the international author relations system. These articles and essays also provide information on how theatre agencies and especially Dr Sándor Marton's agency could cooperate with the association between 1914 and 1917. Month by month, professionals of the theatre industry received news about domestic and international conditions (for example, legal regulations, play sales and shows). However, after the launch and initial operation of the magazine, *Színpad: Die Bühne* stopped working and the magazine was terminated. The Hungarian Playwrights' Association did not launch another magazine and did not continue the magazine *Színpad: Die Bühne*, and there is no information about whether there were officials in the organization who were ambitious about relaunching it either.

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<sup>55</sup>*ibid.*

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