

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SALVAGE MISSION



Following restoration by the NSZL staff, on 22nd May 2011 the documentation of the time capsule, placed there on 15th October 1900 at the time of laying the foundation stone, returned to the newly renovated building of the Nagyvárad theatre (today: Oradea). The documents in a fine casket were handed over on the closing day of the Festum Varadinum week of celebrations. Subsequently, they were displayed in a chamber exhibition. The leader of the salvage mission, NSZL Director of Research and Academic Affairs László Boka handed over the 110-year old salvaged pieces to deputy mayor Rozália Bíró in a ceremony, but as he emphasized, symbolically he was offering them to the Nagyvárad public, to civil society, thereby meeting the wishes of the theatre's founding fathers.

As reported in earlier NSZL press releases, the cylinder lined with lead foil, found during the restoration of the theatre building in the late summer of 2010, contained five rather tatty paper documents and a parchment charter, bound by a red-white-green thread and stamped with wax. As the insulation of the casket got damaged over the decades, the sheets were soaked, moldy and stuck together when they were found. In addition to the list of the financial and spiritual creators of the theatre, this is where on the inauguration day they had placed the 25-page minutes of the city's ceremonial assembly meeting, the most remarkable document in the find. As it transpires, besides recording the events and quoting the former mayor József Bulyovszky's words, it also includes two speeches verbatim: one by Géza Hoványi, the director of the Theatrical Commission, and the other by Ödön Rádl, the president of the Szigligeti Society. The former summarizes the background to constructing the new edifice, recalling the several decades of efforts going back to the early days of stage productions in Bihar County, or in other words, "*the nearly one hundred years of fighting with words and the pen for building a theatre*," the cultural significance of this special day, the role of the national theatre in cherishing national culture, as the Hungarian theatre is "*a tool of developing the national idea and the national language*".

The documents recovered from the foyer of the theatre building were taken to the NSZL restoration workshop in late August of 2010. Thanks to the dedicated work of special restorer Zsuzsanna Tóth, gradually the documents came back to life. Their letter-perfect transcript has been completed: the chunks missing from the original manuscript were supplied with the help of the version published in the *Nagyvárad* daily at the time. (The transcribing was done by Eszter Deák and Endre Attila Csobán.) The parchment charter has also been restored. From the documents thus obtained, digital copies were made using a special photo technique, as well as a so-

called fine copy was produced for the owner. Naturally, the NSZL Collection of Theatre History also received a facsimile of the documents in the capsule, ensuring that this landmark in Hungarian cultural history can be studied inside Hungary as well. The return ceremony of the restored pieces in May was attended by Romanian cultural minister Hunor Kelemen. As part of the events, a roundtable discussion was held with László Boka and Zsuzsanna Tóth from our library, deputy mayor Rozália Bíró representing Nagyvárad, local historian Béla Nagy and actor Vilmos Meleg. It was in the course of this discussion that the parties decided to publish a jubilee volume introducing the history and content of the documents with rich photo supplements, and to organise a chamber exhibition of NSZL's theatre history treasures concerning theatre in Nagyvárad and the history of the Szigligeti Theatre.

On the occasion of the 111th anniversary of opening the Szigligeti Theatre, on 15th October 2011, the precious documents were placed in the limelight again. This is when the volume *New Temple – Old Altar. The Chronicle of the Nagyvárad Szigligeti Theatre's Keystone (1900–2011)* was launched in the upper foyer of the theatre. The book about the documents and related issues was written by local historian and the Nagyvárad Hungarian company's former literary secretary Béla Nagy, literary historian and NSZL Director of Research László Boka and specialized restorer Zsuzsanna Tóth.

It was in the course of the same celebrations that Katalin Czvikker, managing director of the Szigligeti Company handed over this year's awards in the Hungarian theatre which has regained its independence after 55 years. The fact that two of our colleagues were among the awardees is a form of expressing gratitude to the whole of our institution. The chamber exhibition giving a glimpse of the 200 years of theatre in Várad was opened in the afternoon in a small room behind the upper box, and the ribbon was cut by Rozália Bíró and László Boka. The display elements were selected by Edit Rajnai, a colleague in the Collection of Theatre History, and as László Boka explained in his opening address, they give you the ocean in a drop: mostly through old playbills, scripts, photos and other relics from the times before the stone theatre and from the period of Károly Somogyi, the first director of the first permanent theatre. The photos recalled such classic stars as Emília Márkus, Sári Fedák, Mari Jászai, Lujza Blaha, Gyula Gózon, Gyula Kabos, Margit Dayka and Ilka Pálmay.

Following the memorable restoration of the Apocodex in 2010, this time again our devoted specialists' salvage mission met with success and acknowledgement, serving our Hungarian culture and boosting our library's prestige.

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