



A very happy Valentine's Day to all!

A free glance, a free heart, freely spoken words, hand in hand and eye to eye – this is how love is by us: whoever kneels here, is either praying, or acting.

Katona József Hungarian poet, dramatist

Szabad tekintet, szabad szív, szabad szó, kézbe kéz és szembe szem – minálunk így szokta a szerelmes; aki itt letérdel, az vagy imádkozik, vagy ámít!

Katona József 1791-1830

Gingerbread heart/ Mézeskalács szív

Our header this February is a gingerbread heart, with a mirror, such as could be bought at fairs. A young man would get one to give to his sweetheart. See the explanation in the following song. (A "vásárfia" is a present brought from the fair.)

Mézeskalács szivet küldök Neked.
Tükör lesz a közepén, s
hogya beletekint huncut szemed,
Reád kacagok én.

Az a mézeskalács az én szívem
s az én lelkem a tükör,
az irás a szívem, neked üzen
igaz szeretetről.

Lopva adom át, ha senki se lát,
óvjad a széltől is a vásárfiát,
ajándékokat látom benne csak.
Eltörik a tükör, a szív megszakad.

/:Mézeskalács szivet küldök Neked,
tükör lesz a közepén,
hogya beletekint huncut szemed,
tudom szived enyém.:/

"Fabric of a Nation" Fund- raiser of the HCSC

Erika Papp Faber

Is there a difference between "nation" and "nationality"? This was the question highlighted by Professor Christopher Ball, speaker at the benefit dinner-dance sponsored by the Hungarian Cultural Society of Connecticut to support Hungarian students in Transylvania, Partium and Trans-Carpathia. His wife, Emese Gáll, described her folk costume, which blended in with the evening's theme.



Professor Ball and his wife Emese Gáll

"Fabric of a Nation", the fundraising dinner-dance sponsored by the Hungarian Cultural Society of Connecticut, was finally held on January 12th. (Due to weather conditions, it had to be postponed from last November 3rd.) Despite the delay, it was a resounding success, once again raising funds to provide scholarships for high school students in Transylvania, Partium and Trans-Carpathia. Held at the Stamford Italian Center, the theme focused on Hungarian folk costumes. Several colorful examples were exhibited in the hall. Perhaps the most interesting of these was one created by a Hungarian family which had emigrated to Brazil. They used the materials available to them

there, and made it as close to authentic as was possible in that far-away land.

The costume collection was assembled and presented by Ilona Somogyi, a professional Costume Designer and Design Lecturer at Yale School of Drama. (She is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Balázs Somogyi, and granddaughter of Arpád Makay, the famous Hungarian cinematographer.)

This was followed by Emese Gáll's talk, in Hungarian, dealing with folk costumes, focusing especially on the one she was wearing,

and the role such clothing plays in the national consciousness of a people. The text of both talks follows.

The Fabric of a Nation

Professor Christopher Ball and
Emese Gáll

It's a pleasure to be here tonight. I'm extremely honored to be a co-chair for this event. It's close to my heart for many reasons.

First, as an American, I believe that one of the things that makes this country great is the charity and good will of its people. To the best of my knowledge Americans give more in private charitable donations than any other nation on Earth. When we believe in something – like our cause tonight to help Hungarians in Romania and the Ukraine attend Hungarian high schools – we get together, we open our own wallets and we help. Our cause tonight is not big enough to be on the radar of any government in the world. And that's exactly why we need to be here helping. No one else will. Our contributions may not be large in terms of GDP, they may not make headline news, but make no mistake, they are HUGE in terms of the lives of the students we help. So let me thank you in advance for being here and for contributing tonight.

The second reason I'm honored to be here is that – what some of you may not know – I first “fell in love with Hungary” (technically, Historical or Greater Hungary) when I visited Transylvania and the Szekler lands. I've spent a considerable amount of time there over the years and the people there have welcomed me with open arms and open hearts and shared with me generously in more ways than I can express in words. So, to be helping the people and future generations of the people who have given so much to me over the years is simply a delight.

The theme tonight is also a very interesting one: “The Fabric of a Nation”. What on earth does that mean? At first glance it seems obvious. But if you really try to explain it, it gets murky quick. What do we even mean by “a nation”? It's a little like Aristotle said of time, “You know exactly what

it is until you try to define it”.

It makes me think back to when I first moved to Hungary in 1994, a naïve young American from Alabama with absolutely no connection at all to the country or its people. I was invited by Hungarians from Romania who lived in Budapest. One of the first questions they asked me one night – after a long and very serious introduction to homemade *pálinka* – was “Chris, what's your nationality?” ... “I'm an American.” ... “No, no, no. That's the country you're from. What is your nationality?” ... “Yes, I understand the question. I'm an American.” ... “No, no, no...” ... Well, you can imagine the rest of the conversation.

They finally got out of me that I'm half German, a quarter Irish and a quarter English. That is, a run of the mill American. I felt like they still got it wrong. I AM AN AMERICAN. But the benefit of going to Hungary in a pre-internet age, with no prior connection to Hungary or Hungarians, as a naïve American was that I was essentially a clean slate and there to learn.

For example, I couldn't understand why they were so upset that their ROMANIAN passports had in them “Nationality: Romanian” – also a long conversation as you might imagine. They wanted it changed in their *Romanian* passports to read “Nationality: *Hungarian*”. Who cares? You come from Romania. It's just a passport.... As a side note, it made more sense to me that my friend Sándor Mezei from Nagyenyed (just outside of Kolozsvár) was also unhappy that his Romanian passport showed “Name: Alexandru Mezei”, and to avoid this problem, all my new friends from the Szekler lands in Romania had names like Előd and Emese – and yes, I do mean this one here with me tonight – which have no equivalent in Romanian. But that made sense. Sándor's name is Sándor, not Alexandru. I could see why that was upsetting. It's not his name. I didn't yet understand why it was the same to him for nationality.

I continue to think about all these things on a regular basis to this day. What makes a nation a nation and what makes a person feel like part of one nation and not another? It sounds academic, but it's not really.

Let me give you some real questions to make you think: Is a person still a Hungarian – and by that I mean part of the Hungarian nation – if they don't live in Hungary? In a room of Hungarian-Americans, I think I know how many of you would answer, but I'll leave it to you to answer that for yourselves. If yes, then was Antall correct to say, in 1990, that he was the Prime Minister of 15 million people, when only 10 million lived within the borders of Hungary at the time? To pick a more recent topic, if those not living in Hungary are Hungarians, should they be allowed to hold Hungarian passports, vote, etc. ? What if they don't speak Hungarian any more... are they still Hungarians? Different Hungarians answer these questions differently. Are they still Hungarians?

These questions are alive and breathing. What's the difference between a nation and a state? These are old questions, and they aren't going away anytime soon. It goes back to Sándor's question to me in 1994.

Sándor and I became very close friends in Budapest, and then later I spent a lot of time at his home in Enyed. Sándor did many things in Enyed and Kolozsvár; among them was that he worked with a local Catholic priest to organize all sorts of activities for Hungarians to help maintain the Hungarian culture – a lot like many of the organizations we all support here in the US. Anyway, they had some young Irish guests in town for awhile. This was still before the Belfast Agreement in 1998, which seems to have brought an end to the violence and division in Northern Ireland. Sándor said he was excited to talk with them and started by peppering them with questions, similar to the way he had done with me. He was shocked and couldn't understand how they all considered themselves Irish, and yet none of them spoke Gaelic. And they couldn't understand how, he a Protestant (technically Reformed), was working together with a Catholic priest on Hungarian culture! Enough about differences.

Interestingly enough, if a total outsider enters a room with a bunch of Hungarians from around the world,



Costumes are, top row l to r: Székely; Matyó bridegroom's outfit; Matyó dress from Mezőkövesd; Bottom row l to r: Csángó man's costume from Gyimes; Woman's dress from Kalotaszeg; Woman's dress from Kalocsa;

having just this discussion, and asks „Are you all Hungarians?” Everyone replies, „Yes, of course”. So something binds the people of a nation together for sure. And we all feel it, but it's hard to define. When you look at these pieces of clothing around the room tonight, you can tell they are Hungarian even though each is unique. There is something magical about shared cultural experience that is passed down through the ages, about the people who absorb those

cultures and cultural values and carry them forward that form that common nation. It passes down through people. Through individuals who collectively make up a nation. It enriches our lives and in so many ways makes us who we are. Each person carries these invisible ties to their past and their culture. As a professor, my temptation is to talk the whole night, but I really think you are better off hearing from my wife

who is from the region we are trying to help tonight. It's in Hungarian so I'll paraphrase in English at the end...
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Jó estét és Isten hozta Önöket a Connecticuti Magyar Kulturális Társaság jótékonysági gálaestjén! Nagy kiváltság ez, hogy ismét házigazdái lehetünk ennek a csodálatos eseménynek, és idén ráadásul számomra igen kedves szervezőtémára esett a választás. Ebből a témából kiindulva, hadd mutassam be,

mit viselek ma este.

Először is a szoknya — gyönyörű házi készítésű szőttésből készült, még úgy mond békebeli darab, talán 60-70 éves lehet, jónéhány átalakítást megért, legutóbb sajátkezűleg szedtem szét és varrtam össze újra, hogy hordhassam. Édesanyám szülőfalujából, a felcsíki Csíkszenttamásról származik, ha nem is egyenesen a nagyszüleimtől, de valahonnan a szomszédból, és őrzi a felcsíki székelyek szigorú szín- és mintavilágát. Ilyet ma már nem szó senki, és mikor ránézek kicsit mindig erősebben dobog a szívem, mert számomra ez egy élő, kézzelfogható kötelék édesanyámhoz, az ő múltjához, felmenőihöz, hagyományaihoz, és egyúttal apró ablak egy olyan világba, amit még valamelyest megtapasztalhattam gyerekkoromban. Ilyenkor minden emlék, érzés ezzel a világgal kapcsolatban előtölul — emberek, házak, porták, térdig érő sáros utcák, kerek kút a sarkon, zötyögő lovasszekér, libák a patakparton, a kertből frissen kihúzott zöldhagyma és a zsíroskenyér íze, a falu illata, harangszó, és milliárdnyi egyéb, amit gyerekként magamba szívtam.

Kabátkám, vagy ahogy szülőfalujában nevezik, gyöngyös bujka, ennél sokkal újabb, talán úgy 30 éves lehet, és a Kolozsvár-környéki híres faluból, Székéről származik. Készülésekor már minőségi posztó arrafelé nehezen volt hozzáférhető, és az üveggyöngyök is már megfogyatkoztak, úgyhogy kevesebb jutott rá mint a régebbi darabokra, de azért a székely hagyományait, egyszerű szín- és mintavilágát még őrzi. Azért különleges ez a darab, mert saját felnötté válásomra emlékeztet, és pedig arra a többéves időszakra, amikor szerelembe estem a magyar népzenevel, néptáncsal és hagyományokkal, és barátaimmal együtt mohón szívtuk magunkba a sok csodát, énekeltek, roptuk a széki, felcsíki, mezőségi, gyimesi, vagy akár szatmári, dunántúli, zaborvidéki énekeket-táncokat, és melléje gyűjteni is kezdtük a ruhadarabokat, kézműves tárgyakat. Mikor ránézek fevidul a lelkem, mert mindarra a témérek szellemi és tárgyi kincsre gondolok, amit mi magyarok magunkénak mondhatunk — őrünk, továbbadunk, belőle újból és újból ihle-

tódhetünk, és amiből egy csöppnyi szerencsémre nekem is jutott. Minden egyéb, amit viselek új, van közöttük saját készítmény meg magyar kézműves termék, de nagyrészt vásárolt tömegcikk. Eklektikus viseletem fődarabjai csodálatos és egyedi módon egyszerre több világot, kort, kultúrát kötnek össze, összeszövik gyökereimet saját életutammal és annak stációival, de minden egyes darab csakis azért került a tulajdonomba, mert valami különlegeset képviselt, fontosra emlékeztetett és ezért megőriztem őket. Mindezek egy hosszú tanulási folyamat apró mozzanatait jelképezik, székely-magyar mivoltomról beszélnek, és a nemzethez való tartozásom szó szerint kézzelfogható kapcsolatai, de igazából magukban semmit sem érnek a háttérben meghúzódó milliárdnyi láthatatlan kapocs nélkül, melyekkel a lelkem kötődik a nemzethez — vér, nyelv, hagyomány, kultúra, és az ember, aki mindezt képes magában hordozni. Őseink beleszöttek lelküket életük szellemi és fizikai tárgyaiba, mi is beleszöjtük a mienket a mieinkbe, és továbbjuttatjuk utódainkba, hogy nemzetünk folytonosan újjászületve, átalakulva szövődhesék tovább mindörökké...

Ma este azokra az erdélyi és kárpátaljai fiatalokra gondolunk, akik mindezt most szívják magukba: most alakítják, erősítik kapcsolataikat és szövik egyre erősebben lelküket a nemzetbe; akik most álmodják jövőjüket, tanulnak, olvasnak, sportolnak, zenélnek, táncolnak; emellett szorgalmasan ingáznak a nagyvárosokba, vagy bentlakásban laknak messze családjuktól csak azért, hogy középiskolai tanulmányaikat magyar nyelven végezhessék; családjuk csonkák vagy sok a gyerek, szülők betegek, munkanélküliek vagy egyszerűen csak kevés a jövedelmük.

Anyagi támogatásunk jelentős segítség tanulmányaik, utazási- és bentlakási költségeik, étkezésük biztosításához, erkölcsi támogatásunktól pedig, úgy hiszem, emberi mivoltukban, magyarságukban lesznek erősebbek. Kedves barátaim, ezért kérek mindenkit, jó lélekkel adakozzon, egyenest a Connecticuti Magyar Kulturális Társaságnak, de a csendes árverésre felkínált

csodálatos tárgyakon és szolgáltatásokon keresztül is.

Végezetül Dohi Elvira, a Szatmárnémeti Református Gimnázium XII. B osztályos diákjának gyermekien ártatlan szavaival élve: „A jó Isten további áldását kérem az Önök munkájára és életére, azért mert Önök ilyen emberekre is gondolnak mint én.”

Az ösztöndíjas diákok és a szervezők nevében is köszönöm mindenkinek, hogy megtisztelt bennünket jelenlétével és támogatásával, kívánok mindenkinek további szép estét és jó mulatást!

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Emese talked about the clothes she's wearing. The skirt comes from her mother's native village in Transylvania. It is 60-70 years old and hand woven. For her, it represents the old world from which she comes. The jacket is from a famous village near Kolozsvár, from her coming of age period and a time when she fell in love with Hungarian folk music, traditions and dance and built it into her life. Everything else is from her present life. Together they form a tangible link for her as part of a nation, but in and of themselves they are worthless without the billions of invisible links that tie her soul to the nation.

To prepare for tonight, she and I both read letters from kids who have received our scholarships in the past. In her talk she told a bit about them and their situations. Most of them are underprivileged and from broken families with unemployed or sick parents. Our support goes to their clothes, food, transportation, supplies and all the other things that allow them to attend Hungarian high schools that they otherwise couldn't attend. Despite their challenges and with our support these kids travel long distances to be able to study in the Hungarian language at schools that open up their futures for them but also connect them to their own history and heritage. These kids are just now coming of age themselves. They are just now learning about the world, their cultural-national heritage and dreaming about their futures. They need our support.

I started by commenting that our cause tonight is too small for govern-

ments to care about, for large organizations to notice. And yet, it is we few who come together to help. And that help is important because it doesn't come from anywhere else.

My wife ended her talk on a note that resonates with that sentiment. In reading the many letters of thanks, she came across one that was particularly touching and gets to the heart of why we are all here. It was a letter from a young girl who lives in a remote village in Romania. Her parents are divorced, her mother is on disability, and they just have no money to support her in high school and her sister in college. With our support she has been able to attend Hungarian high-school, she studies hard and has done well. This young girl in a village in the middle of nowhere, who is otherwise forgotten by the world, received support from us, a people half the way around the world whom she's never met. She writes: "I ask for God's blessings on your work and life, precisely because you even think of people like me". It's easy to be forgotten by this large world of ours. We are all small. But each of you coming here tonight is great. You are great for not only remembering but also for reaching out and helping the small and the otherwise forgotten.

The students we are helping are the threads forming a fabric we have not yet even seen, but it is the fabric of the Hungarian nation, your nation, that will continue to connect Hungarians across geography and time for many, many more years to come.

You can donate tonight to the Hungarian Cultural Society of CT or through the silent auction. So, please join us and help. And may God indeed bless you all.

Thank you.

Professor Christopher Ball is Associate Professor of Economics, István Széchenyi Chair in International Economics at Quinnipiac University.

Emese Gáll was born in Transylvania and is the wife of Christopher Ball.

Napraforgók/Sunflowers

:Bitskey Ella

You've got to catch them when they're small, is Ottilia Varga's firm belief. For this reason, she has set up a folk dance group for young children, teaching them the dances, songs and games that are part of their Hungarian heritage. And she is organizing a folk dance and folk song camp in March, for which she expects participants from all over. Check out her website in the articles below.

Különös kis virágok ezek a sarasotai napraforgók. Nemcsak évelők, de állandóan nőnek, és ahol megjelennek, örömet, gondtalan perceket-órákat szereznek mindenkinek. A legfiatalabb, alig két éves, az egyre bővülő „család” pedig a nyáron ünnepelte létezésének első éves fordulóját. Napraforgók – kik is ezek a különös teremtmények?

A családjával együtt Philadelphiából Sarasotába került Varga Ottilia a népművészet: a zene, tánc, ének, játék, festés hivatásos művelője. Az élénk szemű Otti csodálkozva látta, milyen sok fiatal magyar család él Sarasotában, és minden dícséretes kezdeményezés ellenére milyen hiányos a gyermekek magyarságismerete. A tettekéss Otti elhatározta, hogy Kodály Zoltán gondolataira alapozva megteremti a Napraforgó Táncegyüttest. Mert – amint Kodály mondta – a kultúra nem magától értetődően örökölheto. Őseink öröksége gyorsan elenyészhet, ha az egymást követő nemzedékek nem teszik magukévá. Otti meghirdette a tervét, és szorongva, reménykedve várta a jelentkezőket. Elképzeltük az örömet, amikor megjelent az első kis érdeklődő. Aztán a második. Megtört a jég! Beszédes adatok: a I. éves jubileumi műsoron a legfiatalabb korosztályban, a tizenhét hónaposától a háromévesig 11, a négy- és hétévesek csoportjában 15 napraforgó szerepelt. (Több család szabadságon volt.) A szereplők között kedves volt látni az áldott állapotban lévő édesanyját, a kezét erősen fogó pöttöm naprafor-

gójával.

A nagy sikerű, rendkívül gazdag jubileumi műsort a Sarasotához közeli, venicei Petőfi Klub hatalmas termében rendezték meg. És miközben a színpadon a napraforgók táncoltak, énekeltek, népi játékokat mutattak be, a Klub gondoskodott a publikum fizikai jólétéről. Csak egyetlen bökkenő volt: mivel ekkora tömegre nem számíthatnak, hamar elfogyott a remek széke-lykáposzta és a frissen sült lángos. A Napraforgók kétórás műsorukat teljesen önköltségesen állították színpadra, semmiféle anyagi hozzájárulást nem kaptak. A híres Életfa Zenekar kiadásaihoz a veniceiek járultak hozzá. A közönség soraiban feltűntek a csinos, magyaros ruhájú mamák, nagymamák, és a fiatal generáció tagjai. Ezeket, akárcsak a szereplők ruháit, otthon varrták. „Bolti árú” nem volt közöttük! És megelevenedett a régi falusi világ, amelyben a gyermekek az utánpótlás, a megfigyelés által szívják magukba a régi szokásokat, énekeket, táncokat. (A világörökségben népdalkincsünk kétszáz ezerrel szerepel, Ottiliának van miből válogatnia...)

Egy évvel ezelőtt, a sarasotai Kossuth Klub decemberi műsorán láthattuk először a Napraforgókat. És mi lehetne méltóbb produkció idén is, a karácsonyt váró időszakban, mint éppen a gyermekek megjelenése, hála a Klub agilis vezetője, Kisvarsányi Éva és a Napraforgók lelke, Ottilia összefogásának.

A legközelebbi nagy összejövetelt a tavaszi iskolai szünet alatt, a 2013. március 9. és 14. között megrendezendő első (!) floridai Népzene és Néptánc-tábor jelenti. Címe:

www.sarasotafolkdancecamp.org.

Csaba testvér egyik mondását (mintha) a sarasotai Napraforgók ihlették volna: „Milyen pici a hópehely, de ha sok van belőle, egy egész sípályát kitesz. Benünk, egyszerű, civil emberekben hihetetlen erő van, csak mernünk kell álmodni és összefogni...”

Megjelent a ÉLETÜNK c. müncheni havi lap 2012. decemberi számában.

Bitskey Ella a Szabad Európa Rádióknak (Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty) volt munkatársa, most Sarasotában él. A Magyar News Online külső munkatársa.



Sunflowers

These Sarasota sunflowers are curious little plants. They are not only perennials, but they are constantly growing, and where they appear, they bring joy, carefree minutes and even hours to everyone. The youngest is barely two years old, and the constantly widening „family” celebrated the first anniversary of its existence this past summer. Sunflowers - just who are these curious creatures?

Ottília Varga, who moved with her family from Philadelphia to Sarasota, is a professional practitioner of folk art – music, dance, song, games, painting. Vivacious Otti was amazed to see how many young Hungarian families live in Sarasota, but despite numerous praiseworthy initiatives, how inadequate the children’s knowledge of their cultural heritage is. Based on the ideas of Zoltán Kodály, energetic Otti decided to establish the Sunflowers Hungarian Folk Dance Ensemble (*Napraforgó Táncegyüttes*). For – as Kodály said – culture is not inherited as a matter of course. The heritage of our ancestors may easily disappear if the generations that follow each other do not make it their own.

Otti (a former member of the Kurázsí Folk Dance Ensemble of Kecskemét. Ed.) announced her plan, and hopefully awaited applicants. We can imagine her joy when the first little interested one appeared. Then the second. The ice had been broken! Facts tell the story: at the first anniversary program, there were 11 in the youngest age group, ranging from 18 months to three years; and 15 Sunflowers participated in the four- to seven-year old group. (Several families were on vacation.) It was sweet to see, among the performers, a pregnant mom with her tiny Sunflower tightly holding on to her hand.

The very successful and extraordinarily rich anniversary program was presented in the huge hall of the Venice Petőfi Club. And while the Sunflowers danced, sang, and presented folk games on stage, the Club took care of the audience’s physical well-being. There was only one hitch: since they

could not expect such a huge crowd, the wonderful *székelykásosza* and the freshly baked *lángos* soon ran out.

The Sunflowers staged their two-hour program entirely out of their pocket, having received no financial support of any kind. The Venice Hungarian community contributed to the expenses of the famous *Életfa* Band.

The Hungarian dresses of the mothers, grandmothers and members of the young generation were conspicuous among the audience. They were sewn at home, as were the costumes of the performers. Nothing was „store bought”! And the old village world came alive, in which children absorbed the old customs, songs and dances through observation and imitation. (In World Heritage terms, our treasury of folksongs numbers 200,000, so Ottília has plenty to choose from.)

We saw the Sunflowers for the first time as part of the Sarasota Kossuth Club’s December program last year. And what would be more suitable again this year, in this season awaiting Christmas, than the performance of precisely the children, thanks to the cooperation of Éva Kisvarsányi, the tireless leader of the Club, and the prime mover of the Sunflowers, Ottília Varga.

The next great get-together will be the

first (!) Florida Folk Music and Folk-dance Camp, to be held between March 9th and 14th, 2013, during school break. For more information, check out

www.sarasotafolkdancecamp.org. It would almost seem that Brother Csaba (the Franciscan who has set up orphanages in Transylvania, caring for over 2,000 young people in numerous home settings. Ed.) was inspired by the Sarasota Sunflowers: “How small a snowflake is, but if there are many of them, they make up a whole ski slope. There is unbelievable power in us, simple lay people; we have only to dare dream and join hands...”

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[Napraforgók/Sunflowers](#)



Invitation

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Virágénekek – "Flower Songs"

Erika Papp Faber

The late Middle Ages considered love as a vulgar, if not a downright sinful topic. Love songs were considered indecent, to be violently condemned and extirpated.

These efforts were so successful that few of them have come down to us through the centuries. But love songs per se could not be eradicated. And so the "flower songs" of former times metamorphosed into more modern sentimental folk poetry mentioning flowers and birds. Petőfi often made use of flower terms in declaring his love to his sweetheart, as in the enclosed poem.

In the 15th century, *virágénekek* – "flower songs" – were truly confined to those in which the author referred to his sweetheart as a flower. But since these flower metaphors were love related, all love songs, whether referring to flowers

or not, came to be called "flower songs". Love songs were considered lewd and bawdy, sung in taverns by people of ill repute. Both Protestant and Catholic preachers condemned them in the harshest terms. Even listening to these songs was named among activities punishable by such heavy sentences as tearing out the offender's tongue, stoning or scourging him or her, or making the guilty party wear a crown of onions before driving him/her out of the community. Not to mention the ecclesiastical punishment of public shaming. Those who composed and circulated these songs were no better than well-poisoning criminals!

While it is true that many love songs were of this type, there were also others, less lewd and vulgar, such as "farewell songs", which bemoaned the parting of lovers. With time, the lewd elements were toned down, and whether sung or written in verse, became an acceptable art form.

For Valentine's Day, what would be more appropriate than a love poem by

perhaps the greatest Hungarian lyric poet? Although Petőfi does not call his sweetheart a rosebush until the fourth verse, this poem may safely be called a "flower song".



Száz alakba...

Petőfi Sándor

Száz alakba öltözik szerelmem,
Száz alakban képzeld tégedet.
Majd sziget vagy s vívó szenvedélyem
Mint szilaj folyam fut körülöd.

Máskor ismét, édes kedvesem, hogy
Szentegyház vagy, én azt gondolom,
És szerelmem mint repkény húzódik
Fölfelé a szentegyház-falon.

Néha gazdag útas vagy s szerelmem
Mint az útonálló megrohan,
Néha meg mint jámbor alamizsnás
Lép elédbe alázatosan.

Majd a Kárpát vagy, s én ott a felhő,
S mennydörgéssel ostromlom szived.
Majd meg rózsalomb vagy, s én körülöd
Csalogányként zengek éneket.

Im, szerelmem ekkép változik, de
Soha nem szünik meg, mindig él,
S nem gyöngül, ha néha szelidebb is ...
Gyakran csendes a folyó, de mély!

My Love

Sándor Petőfi

A hundred forms my love at times doth take,
And in a hundred shapes appears to me;
Sometimes an isle around which billows break,
The seas – my passions that encircle thee.

And then again, sweet love, thou art a shrine;
So that I think my love luxuriant falls,
Like leafy bowers, verdant and benign,
Around the church's consecrated walls.

Sometimes thou art a traveler, rich and great,
And, like a brigand, on thee breaks my love;
Again it meets thee in a beggar's state
And, suppliant, asks thee for the alms thereof.

Or thou art as the high Carpathian hills,
And I the thunderous cloud that shakes thy heart;
Or thou the rosebush round whose fragrance thrills
The nightingale, whereof I play the part.

Thus my love varies, but doth never cease;
It still remains imperishably sure;
Its strength abides, but with a greater peace;
Oft calm, and yet with depths that will endure.



In-house Birthday Celebration

Olga Vallay Szokolay, Zsuzsa Lengyel, standing Karolina Szabó

Not all members were able to attend the Olga's birthday celebration at the January Editorial Board meeting. But the photos turned out so well, we wanted to share them with you.

Isten éltesen Olga! Happy Birthday!

JÓKAI MÓR

Olga Vallay Szokolay

JÓKAI MÓR, the celebrated Hungarian writer and politician, came from a modestly well-to-do Protestant noble family in Komárom. His lawyer father was a patron of literature and an amateur poet. He was the family's youngest of five children (two died in infancy). His birthday is coming up on the 18th of February, and I fondly think of him as one of the most influential persons of my life

His birthday is coming up on the 18th of February, and I fondly think of him as one of the most influential persons of my life. The fact that I'm vaguely related to him via one of my great-grandmothers has nothing to do with it. But at age 13, the start of one's most formative years, I read one of Jókai's novels, "The New Squire" (*Az Új Földesúr*), the story of a retired Austrian baron, Ankerschmidt, who bought an estate in Hungary and moved there with his two teenage daughters. The younger one, Eliz, was described as "... of the most fortunate temperament that quickly forgets bad impressions and savors good ones for a long time." It was then that I decided I wanted to be like that myself. And have been working on

it ever since...

Our hero, the writer Jókai, was born in Komárom, Hungary – now Slovakia – on February 18, 1825, as *ásvai Jókay Móricz*. In his early 20's, the writer Tóth Lőrincz addressed a letter to him as to Mr. Jókay Mór. Annoyed, he replied to the sender as to Mr. Tóth Lőr. However, his close friend, the poet Petőfi Sándor, liked the ring of the new name and persuaded him to use it. In 1848, right after the March 15th revolution, he changed the "y" at the end of his last name – typically associated with nobility – to a plain "i", thus going into immortality as *Jókai Mór*.

The youngest child of his parents, he was nervously timid, fragile and had a vivid imagination. He was ailing with his lungs – a propensity surfacing in periodic bouts throughout his whole life – and lived a protected childhood with few, if any, pals, preferring to play bizarre games alone. In school, he excelled in all subjects. He showed talent in both the arts and literature. At age 9, two of his brief rhymes were published and by age 17 he received a gold prize with one of his many short stories. During his studies at Pápa, he met the young poet, Petrovics Sándor (who later rose to world fame as Petőfi): the loud, unkempt, blunt, vagabond actor was in striking contrast with the polished,



Jókai Mór and his wife Laborfalvi Róza



1872. évi fénykép után.
JÓKAI ELSŐ NEJÉVEL, LABORFALVY RÓZÁVAL
EGYÜTT MENYEGEZŐJÜKKOR.

quiet, elegant, well-mannered Jókay. The two, however, became close friends for a few years and helped make history together.

Móricz studied law at Kecskemét where he started to flourish mentally as well as physically. That is where he wrote his first play, "Jewish Boy" (*Zsidó Fiú*), in 1842, which received honorary mention from the Academy. Upon finishing his studies, he worked at law offices in Komárom and Pest, passed the bar exams in 1846, but after winning one case, he bade farewell to the legal profession. He wrote his first novel, "Weekdays" (*Hétköznapiok*), and started to write in various magazines with increasing success.

After Petőfi married and moved to Pest with his bride, Júlia, Jókay moved in with them toward the end of 1847. It was here that the three of them planned and chatted evenings, sipping tea. The men were frequent guests at the Pilvax Café (still open), the cauldron of the March 15, 1848 Revolution: a turning point in the country's history as well as in Jókay's life.

That famous day, after the 12-point proclamation was read, printed, after Petőfi recited his immortal "National Song" (*Nemzeti Dal*), after the imprisoned poet Táncsics was freed, the

crowds gathered at the National Theater for a free performance of the historic play *"Bánk Bán"*. The performance was interrupted by the intoxicated crowd demanding the Marseillaise, then thundering the refrains of the National Song and, after vain attempts of the revolutionary poets to soothe the throng, Jókai decided to give it a try. In his muddy and wet gear (it had rained all day), he hopped on center stage where he found a stunningly gorgeous actress in the role of Queen Gertrudis, who pinned her own red-white-green rosette on him. Thus adorned he blushed, spoke to the ecstatic audience, calmed them down and they peacefully left. But Jókai was smitten for life.

The celebrated, completely beautiful actress was the 31-year old Laborfalvi Róza (laborfalvi Benke Judit). By then the 23-year old Jókai – his name now ending in "i" – was very popular himself. The public loved him. But the news of his courting an older actress who had an illegitimate teenage daughter scandalized the readers and, mostly, his family and friends. When, against all their protests, he married Róza in August, his widowed mother disowned him and the revolutionary non-conformist, Petőfi, broke off their friendship.

Over the years the couple lived a roller-coaster life of riches and poverty. When they had money, they spent it. Jókai had a limited sense of reality: he lived somewhat in a dream world where monetary values were obscure. He was a generous tipper, charitable donor and he indiscriminately co-signed vouchers to anyone just for the asking. This generosity landed him in repeated fiscal trouble. Yet he managed to have a villa built on the Svábhegy in the Buda hills and an equally bucolic and restful one at Balatonfüred. Their marriage seemed unscathed and perfect to the point that, in 1850, his mother reconciled with her daughter-in-law. Unfortunately, Petőfi died before they could have made peace.

Meanwhile Jókai wrote his books, short stories and articles with demonic speed. Thus he was indisputably one of the most prolific writers, meticu-

lously devoted to his work. His critics claimed that although his story-telling was spellbinding, his characters were often lacking in depth, and historic facts were so interwoven with his lively imagination that uncovering reality could be problematic.

Nevertheless his genuine train of thought, images, colors, ideas, turns are Nature's freshest gifts to world literature. His soul is that of his whole nation: his tales form, evolve and conclude the way it suits and soothes the people's soul – thus critique could not break his unparalleled magic.

From 1848 on, he was also very active in politics. From 1861 to his death, he was affiliated with three different parties and served as a Member of Parliament, representing different regions of the Country, until 1896. Conquering the timid, quiet nature of his early youth, Jókai became a very effective speaker, exuding wit and great humor. Being typically influenced by the last person he had talked to, his political ideas were not original but his charismatic style always disarmed his audience. Although, with his revolutionary background, he was on the liberal side of the political spectrum, around the time of the Treaty between Hungary and Austria (the Compromise of 1867), he became rather favored by the Emperor's court, especially by the Empress/Queen Elizabeth who, having been tutored in Hungarian, read and enjoyed his novels with great interest. By then, Jókai's books were being translated into several languages and became popular internationally.

Preceding his wife's death in 1886, the childless couple officially adopted her granddaughter, Róza III, a talented fine arts student who later married Feszty Árpád, the world-renowned painter (Feszty cyclorama at Ópusztaszer). Their loving, cheerful household, with a lively little girl, was Jókai's happy home in his golden years until – lo and behold – his second marriage. But, meanwhile, in 1893, some entrepreneur decided to honor the 50th anniversary of the Academy's rewarding Móricz's first play, the "Jewish Boy", by publishing his complete works in 100 volumes in a deluxe binding. The idea spread like wildfire: the city of Buda-

pest (by now Buda and Pest were united) bestowed on Jókai the keys of the City and the whole country suddenly embraced the idea of celebrating their beloved son's successful career. The preparations took a whole year. After intricate protocol and political arguments, the day of the celebration was set for January 6, 1894, taking place at the Vigadó, the city's gigantic concert hall. The whole government, all members of the Parliament, the Academy, representatives of all counties and cities, senators and aristocrats were present. The 69-year old honoree, clad in black velvet Hungarian attire, gracefully accepted the written greetings from the royal family as well as the never-ending celebratory speeches.

It would take volumes to list the success of the ensuing opera ball and the lavish presents showered upon him. This golden jubilee with the Muse could easily be the crowning event of his life, followed only by his 1897 appointment to the Senate, by the King. Nonetheless, in all this limelight, the writer had been missing his beloved wife who, in her more advanced years, was more like a mother to him. But it was too early to light candles in his twilight years. His interest was again turned to the theater and to lovely actresses. Among huge public consternation, the papers officially reported the 74-year old Jókai's marriage with the 20-year old beautiful actress, Grósz Bella. The Fesztys anxiously tried to protect him from disaster but failed and, unfortunately, the old man ultimately turned against them. In a way, the Jókais lived happily ever after, as far as he was concerned. They traveled together and lived in luxury. Bella seemed to genuinely care for him and was by his side to his last hour. On their return trip from Nice, he became ill, and in a few days his illness turned into pneumonia. He was still interested in the calling cards of his numerous visitors, like a child among his toys. Well-wishers included a telephone call from the King. But on May 5th, 1904, the greatest Hungarian story-teller of the 19th century said "I want to sleep." And he closed his blue eyes forever.

Those Mohács Devils

Here is a folk tale that explains how the colorful end-of-winter custom of “busójárás” originated in Mohács. (In Hungary, the end of February is considered the end of winter.)



Summary of a folk tale

Following the catastrophic 1526 Battle of Mohács, the people of the town took refuge on an island in the Danube and in neighboring woods. There, according to a folk tale, a mysterious stranger appeared, telling them to prepare for a battle by which they would drive out the Turks. The time would come when a powerful storm arose, and a young rider dressed in gold would give the signal for the battle to begin. Having delivered his message, the stranger disappeared. The people were poor, and trees were their only resource. So they used them first to make boats for crossing the Danube. Then they set about making wooden helmets, representing animals and devils' faces. They even applied rams' horns to these helmets, and painted them red. In addition, they made wooden noise-makers and clubs.

Time passed. Then, one stormy night, the foretold young rider appeared, giving the signal. The people of Mohács all put on their helmets, and crossed the river, unnoticed in the raging storm. The storm abated, and they made use of their noise-makers. When the Turks caught sight of them, they were convinced they were being attacked by devils, and ran, too scared even to look back. Ever since then, the people of Mohács remember this victory at the end of winter by donning those scary masks and making lots of noise. We know this custom today as "busójárás."

Mohácsi ördögök

Mohácsi népmonda alapján 1526. augusztus 29-én Mohácsnál nemcsak az ütközet veszett el, hanem az ország is. A törökök Mohácscon is elfoglalták a gazdátlan házakat, s berendezkedtek a városban. Az emberek a Duna szigetének mocsaras nádasaiba, erdőibe bujdosztak előlük.

Elkeseredve ültek nádból vert kunyhóik előtt. Egy este, amikor a tűz mellett némán bámultak a fekete éjszakába, a sötétből egy nagyon öreg ember lépett eléjük, s így szólt:

- Ne keseregjete! Sorsotok jobbra fordul! Készüljete a nagy leszámolásra. Nektek kell kiűzni a törököket! Nagy dörgés, villámlás támad, s megjelenik egy aranyos ruhába öltözött ifjú lovas. Ő vezet benneteket a döntő ütközetre. Készítséte a fegyvereiket.

Aztán az öreg jövendőmondó, ahogy jött, úgy eltűnt. De milyen fegyvereket készíthettek volna?

A szigeten sok volt a vastag törzsű fa. Legelőbb tehát csónakot készítettek, hogy legyen mivel átkelniük a Dunán. De faragtak maguknak furcsa sisakot is fából. Állatfejeket és ördögpoáfákat ábrázoltak. Az álarcok hátsó részét birka-bundával borították, s homlokrészükbe kosszarvakat erősítettek. S hogy még ijesztőbbé tegyék, vörössel festették meg a fehér fűzfát. Ezután félelmetes zaj keltésére kereplőket csináltak, s a fűzfa kérgéből kürtöket. Fegyverül pedig a keményebb fából buzogányokat készítettek.

A várva várt jelek sokáig nem mutatkoztak.

Egy éjszaka azonban rettenetes vihar tört ki. Tépte, szaggatta a fákat, a villámok minden élő elvakítottak.

S ekkor hirtelen közöttük termelt az aranyos ruhájú ifjú. Intett a kardjával, hogy itt a leszámolás órája. Mindenki magára öltötte állatbőről készült ruházatát, fejére húzta sisakját, kezébe vette buzogányát s rohant a partra, be a csónakba, át a túlsó partra.

A viharos éjszaka minden törököt házba kergetett. Nem vették észre, hogy milyen veszedelem fenyegeti őket.

Amikor a magyarok partot értek, elült a vihar, a mennydörgés. De most kezdődött az előbbinél is félelmetesebb zsvaj, lárma. Pergett a sok kereplő, búgtak a kürtök, ütötték a kolompokat.

Amint a felriadt törökök kitekintettek, azt hitték, az ördögök rohanták meg őket, s fejvesztetten menekültek. Egymást kaszabolva futottak s még hátra sem mertek nézni. A világ valamennyi kincséért sem vállalkoztak arra, hogy az ördögöktől megszállt városba valaha is visszatérjenek.

Amikor a télnek vége, s a természet halála után várják a mindent éltető tavaszt, a mohácsiak még ma is magukra öltik álarcukat. Kezükbé veszik kereplőiket, megfujják a kürtöket – emlékeznek erre a régi győzelemre. xxxxxxx

Taken from: Ezer esztendő – Millenniumi olvasókönyv. Dinasztia kiadó. Budapest, 2000.

It's a Small World!

Don't let the name of a club fool you!

My girlfriend, Mary McL. and I planned to go to Portugal on vacation, in 1970. In preparation, we signed up for a Portuguese language course offered by the Brazilian Trade Bureau in New York. We learned some basics, and hoped they would suffice for the three weeks we would spend on the Iberian Peninsula. On arrival in Lisbon, we fell in love with the capital, with the countryside, with the friendly (but not OVER-friendly) people – we loved everything about Portugal.

When we returned to New York, some friends suggested we join the American-Portuguese Society. We did. Imagine my surprise when I learned that the President of the American-Portuguese Society was not Portuguese, but – you guessed it – a Hungarian: the Baron Francis B. Bessenyei!

Szerelmes levél - Love Letter

February is the month of lovers, so a recipe for a love letter seems appropriate. This one comes from my Grandmother's handwritten cookbook. If you wish, you may fold the dough over the filling in the form of an envelope, to make it into the shape of a real letter.



This recipe, as the others in

Grandma's cookbook, is by our modern standards rather vague in giving directions. But then, in her time (she was born in the latter part of the 19th century), everybody knew how warm a "hot oven", for example, had to be. Although they didn't have modern kitchen thermostats and other gadgets, they were still able to produce delicious creations. Isn't it amazing?

Tészta:

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28 dkg liszt 14 dkg porcukor

21 dkg vaj 14 dkg hámozott őrölt mandula

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A Sampler of Hungarian Poetry

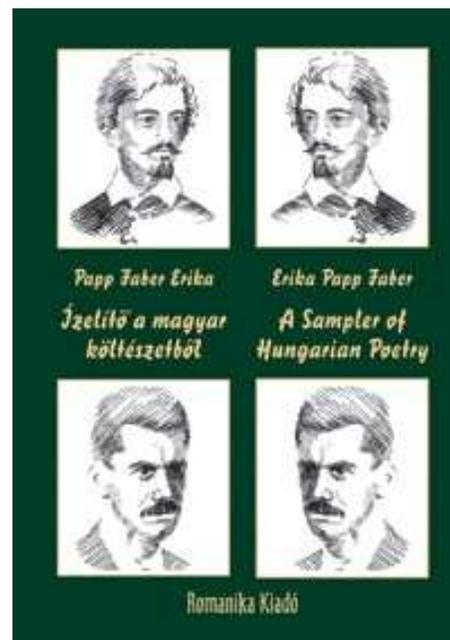
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Did you know ...

...that even words can win beauty contests? Guess what has been found to be the most beautiful Hungarian word?

The winner of the Hungarian Word Beauty Contest is "szerelem" (i.e. "love")??? Or that the runner-up is "szeretet" (affection, charity)?* Today's meaning of the word "szerelmes" is "in love". Its secondary – and historic use – is "dear, well-beloved". It was in this sense that the

word "szerelmes barátim" ("beloved friends") was used in the first extant Hungarian document, the "Halotti beszéd", a funeral oration dating back to 1200.

*There are different lists of the most beautiful Hungarian words, compiled by different people at different times, but for this February issue of Magyar News Online, we prefer to use this pair of winners.

