

Foreword, Project Proposal

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The position of a Hungarian professor at Indiana University, Bloomington, has been established in 1980, and it is now named after the founder, the exquisite historian, György Ránki. The mandate of the Ránki professors is for one academic year, and their tasks include organizing an international conference that is related to their own field of research and also facilitates the visibility of Hungarian culture. In the 2016-17 academic year, the position was filled by the writer of these lines. The mandate coincided with the centenary of the most important journal of the Hungarian avant-garde, *MA* ('Today'), so it came naturally for the conference to be titled "MA/Today – 100 Years After: The Impact of the Hungarian Avant-Garde". We invited scholars in a wide variety of artistic fields (architecture, photography, fine arts, theatre, music, dance, performing arts, literature) to examine the direct and indirect impact of MA, with special emphasis on those Hungarian artists who have really managed to pursue an international career.

The conference and its presentations were specially dedicated to the memory of Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (1943–2016), former Ránki Chair and tenured professor at Indiana University.

The present issue of *Theatron* contains the presentations of the conference held at Bloomington, April 14-15, 2017. Special thanks to Karen Sue Niggle for her tireless efforts in organizing the conference; to Jessie Labov for proofreading the non-native contributors' texts; and to Ágnes Major for checking and fixing the bibliographies.

The first issue of *MA* (Today), the outstanding periodical of Lajos Kassák, appeared on November 15, 1916. This journal, the most important institution of Hungarian avant-garde, that soon became internationally ack-

nnowledged, lived through the second half of the war, a democratic revolution, the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and long years of exile; also the transition from Expressionism to Constructivism through a period of Dadaism. Together with its short-lived pre-decessor, *A Tett* (The Deed), it was banned in three different political systems: in the belligerent Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the Commune, then in post-war, irredentist Hungary. Still, it managed to survive for ten years, that makes it almost unique among avant-garde periodicals. During its existence a part of Hungarian culture became a syn-chronous participant and an honoured contributor of the latest developments of European culture.

But MA wasn't just a monthly magazine. It published more than thirty individual books (poetry volumes, essays, albums); organized ten exhibitions and more than twenty soirees and matinees, propagating avant-garde music, visual and performative arts. This is what makes it a worthy starting point and central subject of this academic year's Hungarian Chair Conference. It gives opportunity to invite literary scholars, musicologists, art historians and other academics who would examine the Hungarian and Central-European contribution to the international avant-garde (including the oeuvres of such artists as Béla Bartók, László Moholy-Nagy, Marcel Breuer or Rudolf Laban); and especially the intermediary role that the Vienna Kassák group played between West and East (setting the example of several Central-European groups and periodicals), as well as between the diverse branches of art. Hopefully, the conference will be able to give an authentic picture of this unique equilibrium between receptivity and originality.