

Modernity and Politics Theatre and Fascism – Italy and Europe

Results of the research proposed:

Italian culture during Fascism, unlike abroad, has been very little studied in Hungary. Starting from the results and the new approaches of recent studies, I have focused on an emblematic moment of Italian theatre and culture, the Convegno Volta on the Dramatic art of 1934, an important event of the newly founded Royal Academy, the institution created by Mussolini as part of his cultural policy. Luckily enough I have been able to study besides the proceedings of the meeting quite a few of the practically unknown documents, and I have digitized a few thousands of them, so that I could carry on my research also at home. The documents are giving a better insight into the problems of the theatre of those days, and the role of the different groups of people involved in it, the complex relationship between intellectuals (academicians like Pirandello, Bontempelli, Marinetti) and the political power – in many cases Galeazzo Ciano or Mussolini himself. The Royal Academy quite often acts as a show-case, to demonstrate the greatness of Italian science and culture – as some of the most outstanding representatives of international culture take part in the Volta meeting. It is also interesting to see, what men of theatre in Italy want to gain from the international experience: to prove the importance of state subsidy for the theatre, which, unlike Italy many European countries practice. In order to obtain state subsidies, they want to demonstrate the importance of the theatre in the culture of a country. The documents also reflect the delicate questions of views and of games of power within the Italian theatre.

In Italy there is a debate on the crises of the theatre: on the primacy between theatre and cinema in culture, and on the primacy of groups within the theatre: the fight among actors, dramatists, critics, and the directors yet to come. The other main question is whether they should create – as Mussolini has stated it in a discourse, the theatre for the masses and thus theatre would gain more importance, or it should remain within the previous spaces and in the original context. Another interesting aspect of the meeting, again better seen from the documents as from the proceedings published, is the question of the choice and participation of the foreign guests. Their answers and their participation or not, in a way represent a generation of intellectuals gradually leaving their position. The documents and the proceedings also contribute to see better how intellectuals involved with the organization, each of them, of course, following a route of their own, moved on the borders between the illusion of the autonomy, to be separate from politics, or to be part of the system, otherwise they feel outside reality. On the whole they move among privileges, compromises and sometimes obstacles and fights.

Besides the one in 1934 I have also considered other Volta meetings, especially the on Europe in 1932 (the tenth anniversary of Mussolini's getting into power) and on Arts in 1936. These international events also offer a chance to study certain aspects of Italian culture in an international context. I have seen not only the influences of European theatre on Italian theatre, but also the other way round. I have paid a special attention to the close contacts between Hungarian and Italian culture, particularly in the field of theatre in the period I studied. During my Sabbatical term, I also had the opportunity to exchange ideas with other scholars, also to present the results of my work so far and I could verify the interest towards the studies I was carrying on. The outcome of this work could also contribute to see modernism in relationship to Fascism, in a field of research not fully exploited so far.

I am carrying out my research plan when writing my book, which I will finish as originally planned – in a year’s time. I am following an interdisciplinary approach (literature, performing arts, theatrical organization: directors, companies, great actors, the way of staging, of acting, the relationship between theatre and other artistic expressions, like film, fine arts, architecture, press) as proposed in my plan.

Research Institutes I have attended:

Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Irodalomtudományi Intézet
(Institute of Literature of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences)

Foreign Institutions:

Università degli Studi di Bologna, Dipartimento della Musica e dello Spettacolo

Università degli Studi di Firenze

Università degli Studi di Padova

Libraries

Országos Széchényi Könyvtár

Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtára

Biblioteca del DAMS dell’Università degli Studi di Bologna

Biblioteca del Burcardo, Roma

Biblioteca Nazionale, Firenze

Archives:

Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Kézirattár

Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Színháztörténeti Tár

Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtára és Kézirattára

Archivio di Stato, Roma,

Istituto di Studi Pirandelliani, Roma

Archivio dell’Accademia dei Lincei,

Biblioteca e Museo dell’Attore, Genova

International meetings attended:

-28th-30th May 2010 Montreal, Canadian Association for Italian Studies, international meeting, paper: *Teatro e fascismo*,

-9th-10th September 2010, University Adam Mickiewicz, Poznan, paper: *Margit Gáspár, a Hungarian Writer and Marinetti*, EAM (European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies)

-23rd-24th September 2010, *Places of memory and memory of places*, introduction as president of section, *TU SE’ LO MIO MAESTRO E’ L MIO AUTORE*, University of Edinburgh

-5th-9th December 2010, Agrigento, Centro Internazionale di Studi Pirandelliani, *Quel che il teatro deve a Pirandello* meeting, paper: *Pirandello e la scena internazionale: il Convegno Volta sul teatro drammatico del 1934*

-15th April 2011, Université de Toulouse, *La ricezione pirandelliana sulla stampa ungherese*, paper, meeting *L'editoria teatrale*
- (after the Sabbatical Year on the topic of the research) 23th-27th June 2011, Venice: Canadian Association for Italian Studies, international meeting, paper: *La letteratura in 'feluca'*

International meeting organized:

25th October 2010. Budapest, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, „*La fede in una libera Italia*” – *La diplomazia italiana e l'Ungheria*, paper: *Memoriali sulla Diplomazia Italiana di Budapest. Carlo de Ferrariis Salzano, Antonio Widmar e altri*

Publications

Pirandello e la scena internazionale: il Convegno Volta sul teatro drammatico del 1934, Quel che il teatro deve a Pirandello, a cura di Enzo Lauro, Metauro Edizioni, Pesaro 2010, pp. 193-203.

„*Le favole gaie*” di Molnár – *Pirandello sul drammaturgo ungherese*, "Nuova Corvina", N° 22, 2010, pp. 106-112.

'Il paese della Cuccagna' ovvero autori magiari e il pubblico nostrano fra le due guerre

http://www.retidedalus.it/Archivi/2010/novembre/METICCIA/2_ungheria.htm

Cultura e politica fra le due guerre: un tramite fra l'Italia e l'Ungheria. Ignazio Balla,

<http://italogramma.elte.hu/>

In print:

Marinetti's Visits to Budapest, 1931, 1932 and 1933: Archival Documents and the Memoirs of Margit Gáspár, in *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, Volume 1 (2011), Ed. by Günter Berghaus, De Gruyter, Berlin 2011

Bontempelli e i teatri di masse, <http://www2.unibo.it/boll900/>

Találkozások a kortárs olasz színházzal, „Alföld”, 2011/9, pp. 36-52.

Parabola és mítosz a modern olasz drámában, in *A perifériáról a centrum*, ed. by Gilbert Edit, Pécsi Egyetem