

**KÉT VILÁGHÁBORÚ KÖZÖTTI ERDÉLYI MAGYAR SZAVALÓMŰVÉSZET
(NÉHÁNY FONTOSABB SAJTÓORGÁNUM TÜKRÉBEN)**

**ARTA RECITĂRII POEZIEI MAGHIARE ÎN TRANSILVANIA INTERBELICĂ
(ÎN CONTEXTUL PRESEI MAGHIARE)**

**HUNGARIAN POETRY RECITING IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD'S
TRANSILVANIA (IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HUNGARIAN PRESS)**

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Keywords

recitation, poetry recitation, Transilvania in interwar period, poem interpretations, Helikon, Korunk movements, worker movements, reciting choirs, cultural history, arts history

INTRODUCTION

To this day we still don't have a comprehensive knowledge about the twenty years between the two world wars, a significant proportion of teens and twentysomethings do not know who Mikó Imre, Kós Károly, Szentimrei Jenő, Balázs Ferenc or Kemény János was. Only at the beginning of my research on this era did I realized how much of a blank spot this is in our history, how little knowledge we have on the social situation of Hungarians in the first decades of the minority existence, about what started in that time, events whose memories were so efficiently erased by the World War II and the communist regime, that even more than twenty years after the 1989 turning point we are still astonished by how similar our lives are today to those lived almost a hundred year ago.

The topic of my research is the art of Hungarian poetry reciting in the interwar period's Transylvania.

This raises several questions. Why the interwar period? Why Transylvanian (Hungarian)? Why poetry reciting?

Determining the timeframe of a research is always arbitrary on the one hand, on the other hand it can always be related to historical events, for example. In my case the latter, historical event related criteria prevailed, although the issue is obviously more complex. The history of poetry reciting in Hungarian was researched only by one researcher, Némethné Böhm Edit. She finished the part of her work on Transylvania around 1918-20 and she published only a brief summary about the twenties and thirties. This paper continues the research starting with the ending point indicated by Böhm Edit. In addition to the explanation above, the fact that the Transylvanian Hungarian community found itself in an entirely new situation after the Treaty of Trianon also played a major role in determining the starting point of the timeframe. Furthermore, the years following World War II are completely different from the 20's, '30's, from a social and a political point of view, thus it was clear that the timeframe of the topic should be the period between the two world wars.

By addressing the above issues, I partially answered the matter of Transylvanianism as well. However, the "Transylvanian Hungarian" wording I use in my paper calls for further

explanation. Throughout history, Transylvania always considered itself as a separate, independent unit. The transylvanianist efforts which will unfold in the twenties already surfaced at the end of the nineteenth century; moreover, an earlier history can also testify that this region has never been as much of a unitary part of Hungary as other areas have.

As a matter of fact, what does *Transylvanian* mean? The territory's independence or its belonging to the Hungarian community as a whole has always been a matter of debate.

On the one hand, the historical tradition starting the principality till present day – or, as it's reflected upon in the research field: till the manifestation of Transylvanianism – should be mentioned, which was founded on the idea that Transylvania is an independent political, economic and cultural unity. The idea is supported not only by Transylvanian politics and public discourse, but also by those from Hungary: somehow, Transylvania was always viewed differently than other regions.

On the other hand: Transylvania had always wanted to be a part of the aforementioned great nation body, on equal footing with other regions, both in public administration and in the intellectual field, as it promoted the importance of the unity within the entire Hungarian community. This idea also manifests in the two decades after World War II, when they intended for their works to serve both the Transylvanian Hungarians *and* the entire Hungarian community. Thus, the two are not exclusive but complementary; they are built on each other and feed off each other. Unfortunately, public discourse and the general public mood have never helped to achieve the longed-for unity.

The most difficult issue raised by the selected topic is the matter of the art of poetry reciting. Even though there is a growing number of professional performers (regarding reciting poetry and prose), every art treats poetry reciting as an unwelcome guest. Although this is not surprising, given that there is no consensus yet among its own artists regarding whether poetry reciting is a separate art form or not. Due to the fact that many professional actors are active in poetry reciting as well, some views are treating it as a form of acting. This is far from the case. The person who is on a stage and not on a podium has to play, to experience a role. However, the person who recites a poem must identify themselves with the entire poem, to immerse themselves into its world, possibly with multiple points of view as well; without playing a role, they need to express the differences, the nuances.

In addition to the distinction above, even the artists who interpret poetry do not fully agree about the wording, specifically *telling* or *reciting* a poem. As a result, in the midst of internal disputes there is not enough time and energy to fight, regardless of the point of view, for the recognition of artistic branch.

This paper intends to provide some handholds for the above questions by exploring the Transylvanian Hungarian art of poetry reciting between the two world wars, in the light of some press organs, literary societies and social relations.

I. THEORETICAL BASICS

1. The tradition of the spoken word in songs and prose

In the first chapter which outlines the theoretical background of my dissertation, I am briefly discussing the ancient roots of the tradition of the spoken word, its roots tracing back to the Hungarian prehistory and the spoken word's evolution till the XX. century. Historically, the poetry reciting (/ telling a poem - clarification of the definitions will be given later) is a relative of the oldest genres, since the art itself is about voicing texts. According to the traditions of interpretation, the classical rhetoric, the rhapsodists or reciters, later the troubadours, minnesingers, in Hungarian-speaking areas the minstrels, igrics, they can all be considered the predecessors of poetry reciters in some respects. The difference between these types of performers and poetry reciting is explained in the relevant chapter of my dissertation, these paragraphs will focus on the similarities they share, thus placing the performing genre my paper covers into a larger context, the discourse of the tradition of the spoken word.

With some freedom of interpretation, generalization, the three most important elements of reasoning in ancient rhetoric (logical persuasion - logos, the morality of the speaker - ethos, the emotional influence on the audience - pathos)¹ can be applied for later reciters as well. Logical persuasion: a credible and reliable performance style; the morality of the speaker: (good) reputation, recognition, credibility (the least tangible category); the emotional influence on the audience: the effect of the performance style, the immersive nature.

The role of pronuntiatio, or presentation style, as one of the main elements of the ancient rhetoric, consists of planning the presentation style while writing the text, thus imagining it as a whole. This is also relevant for learning and performing the poetic texts too, the only small difference being that in the latter case the presentation style must, or at least should be planned while memorizing the text, not while it's being written (since it's an already written text).

¹. Jászó, A. A. (2013). *Klasszikus magyar retorika*. Bp.: Holnap Kiadó, p. 18

2. The debate around the art form – development, evolution

Since we're talking about an art form which does not have a uniformly accepted place in the system of arts, as I mentioned at the beginning of the introduction, I considered it's important to discuss the debate which evolved around it, as well as the main stages of the evolution of poetry reciting as an art. The Hungarian art of speaking was developed in the era of embourgeoisement, as did the oratorical, theatrical speech and performance poetry.² According to Gábor Egressy, there was an urgent need in the 1860s to define the performance poetry, which had a decades long history, as an independent art form with its own specific instruments.³

Starting with the mid-1800s, there was an often expressed aspiration for it to be recognized as an independent art, not being related to acting to begin with. Both the recitation and acting were born in the spirit of national independence and language reform, with the same - mostly political – goals pursued in parallel, and thus it is obvious that neither of the two performing arts could have been developed from the other and that it is impossible to assign priority to either of them.

The recitation is actually an art form just as substantial (as it was declared by many) as poetry. However, even the reciters themselves don't consistently use the *art of reciting* term, thus recognizing the poetry reciting as an art form in the theoretical system of cultural history is still to come. Interpreting and referring to Gadamer's Text and interpretation paper in my dissertation, as well as other details of the research show that the placement of the art of reciting within the wide range of performing arts it raises more complex issues for debate than one might think at first glance. The dilemma of answering the question in a concise manner and classifying the answers provided would force the inquisitor to face significant interpreting difficulties, but one theoretical objective of this paper could aim to ease the process of placing the art of reciting within the field of arts, by means of factual justifications.

3. General technical literature, researches

4. Concept clarification

A) The technical term, the origin of the technical term and the debate around it

B) The paper's terminology

To this day a comprehensive historical and analytical work for the period between the two world wars in Transylvania has not been written yet, this thesis aims to contribute to this by revealing facts, information about one of the segments of the cultural life, in order to open the

² Böhm E. (1989): *A vers szószerzői*. Bp., Múzsák Kiadó, p. 7-8. o.

³ *Magyar színháztörténet 1920–1949*. (n. d.) Editors: Bécsy Tamás and Székely György. Bp., Magyar Könyvklub Rt., p. 966.

way for further researches. In order to achieve this goal, besides presenting the general technical literature and researches concerning this topic, a comprehensive, concept clarifying chapter was needed. On the one hand, in this chapter I will shed some light about how the name of poetry interpreting and its meaning has changed throughout history, and on the other hand I am defining the terminology of this paper. The latter it's essential due to the art form's poor terminology, adding to the fact that accurate terminology use is essential in order to avoid possible misunderstandings.

5. Methodological handholds

At the end of the first chapter I discuss the methodology of the paper. The art of reciting, as I have mentioned earlier and I'm going to refer to it again in the future, is an art form that does not have its own, specific terminology, hence it does not have its own methodology. As a consequence, while researching the history of poetry reciting and the evolution of this art form I had to follow the methods of similar liberal arts disciplines. Furthermore, I also provide guiding for the spelling of the text.

II. SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LITERARY-CULTURAL GROUPS

1. Political orientations, self-organization, lobbying

A) Romanian political life (in Romania) between the two world wars; B) The Hungarian socio-political organization within minority existence

The recitation as a community event has significant social and political implications, so I felt it was necessary to know the background of the era and to explain it, in respect of the contemporaries of the era, and of course the historical researches. In the first half of the second chapter of my dissertation I discuss the general political life in Transylvania, Romania, during the researched period, underlining the factors that could have had an impact on the cultural life. In the second part of the chapter I'm addressing some segments of the Hungarian political life in the twenties and thirties, and I'm presenting their relations with the outlined literary and cultural organizations for, as a result foreshadowing the direction along which the rest of the paper is organized.

III. THE ART OF RECITING IN TRANSYLVANIA BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

1. Outlook – theatrical life in Transylvania in the 1920-30

In the third, most extensive chapter I discuss the Transylvanian history, evolution of poetry reciting between the two world wars, primarily creating a parallel between the Transylvanian and Hungarian theater, respectively performing arts in the 1920-30-ies.

In Eastern Europe, since its inception, the theater has served not only for aesthetic reasons, it cannot be considered simply a "school of morals", like it was for Western Europe. Here it was also an important form of culture in the native language, and the aesthetics and politics were closely intertwined in its case.

This was the case especially after the First World War, the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Treaty of Trianon, when the Transylvanian Hungarian community became a minority after being a majority nation, and so the theater was one of the important community spaces where the Hungarian culture could have been displayed and maintained. However, in the first ten years of the minority existence its survival has been questioned.

One of the major difficulties the theaters were confronted with at the time was that the institutional frameworks, which allowed the culture to manifest itself, have disappeared. Furthermore, the organizers of the educational and cultural life had to face not only the financial crisis, but also a cultural crisis, as the Transylvanian Hungarian culture was searching for its own identity. The second half of the 1920s saw an increasing demand for the self-organizing, which was enhanced by the 1924 press debate, in which Nyírő József and Szentimrei Jenő, among others, aimed to disclose the essential features of the Transylvanian Hungarian culture.

2. Hungarian parallel

Regarding the issue of the poetry reciting art's *raison d'être* and its theoretical considerations, in the 1920-30-ies the uncertainty and disagreement was just as significant as it was in the periods described in the theoretical chapter. That's when independent reciting nights have become regular, and their formal release, the (semi)critiques written about them were the basis for the theoretical debate mentioned earlier, in which the parties argued about the use of reciting or telling a poem.

We can hardly speak about an extensive theoretical work, the articles published in the journals (especially in the *Nyugati*) do not, or contain very little theoretical aspects. They discuss mostly the practical issues of concern, but without theoretical substantiation, these practical explanations do not are less justified too. In this age, mostly the new *Nyugati* literates wrote about reciting, including Kosztolányi Dezső, Karinthy Frigyes, Fenyő Miksa.

In this chapter, I discuss in detail the Hungarian literature, criticism, analysis, writings, the efforts to theorize it and categorization of the era.

3. Literary organizations

In parallel with (or rather together with) the political movements, the literary, cultural (public) life also began to reorganize. The two cannot be separated sharply, since the artists participating in public life were also active in politics in some way – not in the form of party and daily politics, of course. This intertwining is related to the fact that art has always had a political nature. Kántor Lajos and Kötő József wrote about Hungarian theatre performances after World War II⁴, pointing out that the theater was an important form of presentation and conservation of native culture, and the aesthetics and politics are closely intertwined in its case.

A) The role of the press in Transylvania between the two world wars

The press played a significant role in Transylvania in 1920-30-ies, a fact recognized by the people and activists (mostly the press) of those times. Fleisz János also pointed out that in the life of the Transylvanian Hungarian community, hungry for news after the borders and news circulation was closed as a result of the Treaty of Trianon, the press was forced to assume an important role⁵, though before didn't have an important role in the press life of the entire Hungarian community, given that they were located mostly in the countryside, the local papers rather affected only their own environment. In the introductory chapters of Győrffy Gábor: *Cenzúra és propaganda a kommunista Romániában*⁶ (*Censorship and propaganda in communist Romania*) book, which was published in 2009, the author briefly discusses the history of Hungarian, and within that Transylvanian press, highlighting the censorship prior its main topic. As Győrffy writes: "*In the Transylvania after the Trianon, the press relations have changed significantly. The press facing the fate of a minority has had to assume the duties of self-defense and social organization.*"⁷ However, it is quite difficult to operate in those conditions, where the censorship determined what the light of day, and what cannot.

B) Literature and politics – searching for a path in literature and arts

In the Transylvania between the two world wars, the role of literature and politics are intertwined in an interesting way. While we see that in the literature, public life and press the

⁴ Kántor–Kötő (1994) *Magyar színház Erdélyben 1919–1992*. Bucharest, Kriterion.

⁵ Fleisz J. (2005): *Az erdélyi magyar sajtó története (1890–1940)*. Pécs, Pro Pannonia. p. 86.

⁶ Győrffy Gábor (2009): *Cenzúra és propaganda a kommunista Romániában*. Kolozsvár, KOMP-PRESS.

⁷ Győrffy G.: *I. m.* p. 37. (This page number refers to the doctoral thesis that can be found in the library of the Medea Association.)

same names appear, Mikó Imre draws attention to the fact that literature and politics in Transylvania have always went separate ways.⁸ Although he considers that the dispute is completely pointless in the circumstances, he points out that the tension was created by the sense of intellectual superiority of those in the literary groupings and the political spectrum's expectations of assuming a higher (explicit) role.

Two striking examples of the intertwining of public life and literature are two defining trends of the 20's and 30's: the Transylvaniam and labor movements, as well as the literary circles revolving around them. In this part of the chapter, I discuss the development, evolution of the "Transylvanian thought" (Transylvaniam) and the literary group standing in the background, Korunk and its arts circle, as well as the reciting chorus movement, I present the works of the group A Tizenegyek, who had a striking presence in the 1920-ies, respectively the work of the group Erdélyi Fiatalok in the '30ies, with the detail required by the paper. Finally, I present the work of other movements which searched for a path between the two world wars – the work of literary societies and conglomerates.

C) The role of the reciting nights in the minority's struggle to find a path

The emergence of a growing number of reciting artists and organizing the reciting nights definitely molded the audience. On the one hand, performing on an independent stage was a novelty at the time and on the other hand, the cultural function had a striking presence within workers' movement, aiming to making the laborers aware of and love the demanding literature. We can't know exactly how voluntary was participating at these events, of course, but it is a fact that, according to the press, the halls were filled every night, which had a positive contribution to the public cultural legacy. Furthermore, it is also a fact that there really was a great enthusiasm, because the number of reciting choirs kept growing, and even if it might not be a large number in Romania as it was in Hungary, for example (where, incidentally, it was a relatively centralized system), their impact and their importance is indisputable.

4. The journals and societies discussed - presenting the source material

In the fourth part of the third major chapter I'm presenting the voluminous source material in a systematic approach, by discussing separately the journals I researched and used as the most fundamental source (*Az ellenzék, Ellenzés, Erdélyi Helikon, Erdélyi Irodalmi Szemle, Keleti Újság, Napkelet, Pásztorút, Vasárnap, Vasárnapi Újság*, respectively a few issues of some smaller journals), the literary societies which served as a scene for the literary life (Erdélyi Irodalmi

⁸ Mikó I. (1941): *Huszonkét év*. Budapest, Stúdió. p. 164-165.

Társaság, Erdélyi Magyar Írói Rend, Helikon writers' community, Kemény Zsigmond (Literary) Society, respectively smaller associations, societies), and finally the equally significant legacy resources, which I researched in the archive of manuscripts of Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum (Petőfi Museum of Literature) (Budapest) és a Szabédi Emlékház (Szabédi Memorial House) (Kolozsvár).

5. The evolution (development) of the Transylvanian art of reciting

Based on the historical and geo-political framework and the topic of my dissertation, I had to separate the Hungarian art of reciting evolving in Romania from Hungary's. I do not do this because the Transylvanian art of reciting would be completely independent, and therefore not part of the whole Hungarian poetry reciting. I do this because the specific historical changes defined its evolution beyond what normally affected the performing arts in Europe in those decades.

The two previous subsections allow two assumptions to be made: 1. the recitation is a relative of acting, but is not one and the same genre, thus it may be of interest for an audience; 2. In accordance with the trends in Europe and Hungary, the reciting nights also flourished in the 1920-30-ies in Transylvania. Of course, both findings raise more questions and assumptions. Why is that the poetry reciting is such an important aspect of the cultural life in the twenties? To what extent has to do the history of Transylvanian poetry reciting with that of the motherland? This is the outline for this subsection, revealing the contents of the later chapters as well.

6. The art of reciting in Transylvania between the two world wars

I discuss the performers, the events, celebrations in eight subsections with regards to the art of reciting. I am drawing attention especially to those reciters, whose life's work is known in detail, thus I give insights on Adorjáné Weress Margit, Tessitori Nóra, Brassai Viktor and György Dénes, as well as the evolution (development) of the laborers' reciting choirs, the laborers' matinees. The dissertation also presents those actors and amateur performers whose names appear in the contemporary press, highlighting separately the most important ones. To this day we know a significant number of performing actors from that age, some of them even organized independently reciting nights. There were more amateur poetry tellers, who are the focus of my research, but the number of those we still know today is much smaller. The prominent parts of the Hungarian poetry reciting art are the poetry reciting competitions, the reason why I will also present the competitions of the 1920-30-ies in a subsection. I also discuss the literary nights linked to the literary journals and societies, since quite often they have

provided the space for poetry performers. Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I mention those nights, performances, events that also included reciting, which do not fall into the previous categories, but I considered it is important to record their existence.

Half (458) of all literary performances between 1915 and 1940 (458) were reciting nights, 38% of them did not include recitation and we have no information on the rest 12% on this matter. These numbers do not include the independently organized performing nights, which, being added to those of the performers discussed in the separate chapters, add up to 87. If we add the independent nights to the number of programs (so we can talk about a total of 545 performances), the number of special events including poems add up to 315, that being 57% of the total nights and matinees. Evidently, I did not impose the yes - no - do not know categories upon the independent nights, since it is clear that there was poetry in the performance. The high proportion of nights without recitation proves that I also included the nights of the two the largest societies, EIT and the KZST, in my research, and on most of them did not include reciting. Including the events of the societies was necessary because this is where literary life began in the early 20s, and later it will continue to be organized around them, thus they cannot be left out, despite the fact that these events hardly covered poetry reciting.

The explanation for the 12% of nights we have little information is that in many cases the contemporary journals did not provide a detailed program in advance or after the performance. In this case, we can determine if the program included poetry reciting by using two types of information. The first would be the identity of the organizer. In other words, it is likely that there was poetry reciting, if the night or matinee was organized by an institution or an organization, which usually includes reciters in their activity (e.g. school, theater, the *Napkelet*, etc.). The second information which can give us a clue about any reciters performing is the theme of the event. So if, for example, an event was celebrating the memory of Ady- or Arany János, there is a strong chance that the performance included reciting artists. However, even the existence of these facts does not prove with a certainty of 100% that reciting artists were present, so it's unfounded from a scientific theoretical point of view, while in this case they were still included in the most adequate category, the *do not know* category.

7. Additions for the cultural history of the era - the benefits of further research

Reading the press of the era, more specific, the articles, news, reports, reviews and critiques related to poetry reciting, the researcher conducting the analysis could stumble upon some really interesting cultural and historical data - beyond the previously-referenced ones. For example, we learn that in 1915 the March 15th celebration, which of course included reciting

performed by the students Fejér Manó and Sübek István, was opened with the Hungarian national anthem and the Turkish one.⁹ The reason for this is currently unknown to me, as it falls outside the strict field of research, but it is interesting to mention – a later, more extensive research might shed light on the reason for performing the Turkish national anthem.

However, the press of the years between the two world wars, even if with some limitations (because of the censorship) can serve as a source for the better understanding of how the censorship operates.

For example, who would have thought today that Ullmann Sándor, the cultural committee secretary in Nagyvárad, went to prison for two months in 1924 just for reciting (a part of) a poem by Ady? In this subsection of this thesis I am trying to nuance the image of the era with curiosities, interesting facts that not closely related to the research, but are surfacing as a result of it.

IV. THE PERFORMING NIGHTS, PERFORMERS, MOST POPULAR POETS IN THE TWENTY YEARS BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS – FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of my research was to map out the evolution, development of the Hungarian poetry reciting art in Transylvania, from a previous point to a completely unknown point, based on historical, social, socio-demographic, literary and theatre history aspects. The result of the research is a number of extensive databases which store and classify the reciters, the literary nights, the authors whose work was performed between the two world wars, respectively the detailed performances of the reciting artists which were discussed in a separate section.

At the beginning of my research, one fundamental hypothesis that I made stated that in the era between the two world wars, the first time when the Hungarian population of the region found itself in a minority position, the number and the role of reciters and reciting nights was still significant, besides the fact that this the poetry performances, the literary nights started to flourish in other parts of Europe, respectively in the entire Hungarian speaking area. I can definitely support this statement thanks to the research done in the last few years, but which is still far from being completed.

The above reasoning is supported on the one hand by the fact that the important reciting artists whose activity I studied and I discussed it in detail in a separate subsection (A. Weress Margit, Brassai Viktor, György Dénes, Tessitori Nóra), according to the previously disclosed sources, were never or almost never performing at the same events, and they did not go together

⁹ *Ellenzék* 1915. márc. 5. Déli kiadás (Noon edition)

on a tour. They didn't performed together despite the fact that, for example, Tessitori, Weress and György, they all recited poems from Helikon and Kaláka authors, or that Tessitori and Brassai both performed on laborers' events, or that Weress Margit was the one who attended the most Reményik- and Áprily nights. The data described above suggests that there was a demand for a greater number of nights, and the continued presence of poetry reciters also shows that the interest did not weaken over the years.

On the other hand, the great number of reciters and reciting nights generated by the minority existence, besides the reasoning described above, it is also supported by the results of the research regarding literary nights, which shows that since 1920 there was an increasing tendency for the willingness to organize the nights, and in 1922, the first active year there was a spectacularly sharp increase. For the latter, however, we must not overlook the obvious fact that the number of poetry and literary programs increased so abruptly in 1922 due to the Petőfi centenary.

In this chapter I provide detailed evidence to support the appropriateness of the hypothesis I made above, respectively I analyze the performing nights using the databases compiled based on the news found in the researched journals, which annexed to the thesis. In separate sections I discuss the literary nights and activity of the researched journals, I examine the results based on socio-demographic aspects (the distribution of poetry reciters by occupations, gender, age, and (today's) popularity), and I did not ignore the ideological engagement, social impact, poets and the relationship between their performers.

V. SUMMARY, OVERVIEW

Walter Gyula wrote in 1924¹⁰ that the real, social life of a poem begins with its printing, however, the direct, living link between the poem and the audience can be made only through the performances. *"This directness, this trait that breaths living force, human warmth, compassion, empathy, can really link the poetry with the performing arts."*¹¹ The performance changes the virtuality of the poem into reality, compared to the poetry, which is (only) reproduced by the creative arts, the performing arts, according to the author. According to him, the performer should not be above the poem, but they should subject themselves to it (Gadamer thought), the poetry and performing arts should be each other's friends. *"The true performer is a reciter and actor at the same time"*¹² - writes Walter, which just highlights the intermediate nature of the poetry reciting, namely

¹⁰ Walter Gyula: *Költészet és előadóművészet. Pásztorújsz* series X., issues 5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

that creates a third, specific something using the oratorical speech and the acting's character shaping.

The writings cited from the years after 1920, as well as the examples mentioned in different chapters of my research and dissertation seem to prove the hypothesis, according to which the number of reciting nights, the commemorative programs poetry, increased in the years following World War I. The shorter-longer published reports about these events, the occasional reviews, descriptions prove that there was a need for some kind of critical voice. However, the inaccuracy of the reviews, their statements which were close to dilettantism do not stand out for today's reader only because nowadays we have different requirements for critique writing, but because there wasn't a standard criteria system, as there isn't today either, which would allow to review, interpret the performing nights, the poetry performing artists. So everyone draws from where it moves more at home: the literate from the criticism of literature, theater scholar from the theater criticism, placing the focus on the poem's thought composition or on the performance style. Walter's article it's also remarkable because he underlines the independent nature of the performing art even if he emphasizes that it's *only* an art of reproduction, but he expects more from the performer, not (just) acting. This approach allowed Transylvania's most popular reciting artist, Tessitori Nóra, to become a remarkable poetry performer as an amateur, no one asking from her acting experience. Furthermore, it is also thanks to this approach that we often encounter names of poetry reciting artists on the pages of the journals, even if only a small proportion of them appear more than once, or are people we still know today. Two other special performers of the era were teachers Weress Margit and György Dénes, who stood on the podium (exclusively for the last seven years) from the teacher's desk, where they returned later, but they never gave up on poetry reciting. Brassai Viktor's agitating temperament turned to poetry writing at first, then to reciting it. In addition, many people in Transylvania became reciters from actors, occasionally or semiprofessionally, such as Poór Lili or Táray Ferenc, to mention only the best known.

We have little (or irrelevant) information on how these artists recited. After all, the *wonderful, simply noble, excellent, stylistic presentation* are all meaningless attributes that tell the author's and the audience's feelings (this is important for the social aspect), but they are worthless for the artistic analysis. However, the criticizing attempts are remarkable, because they praise or take into account the expression of certain ideas in the most adequate way, sometimes highlighting as positive something that is unusual perhaps, but it is appropriate in that case. Some of the writings are expecting knowledge without a book, while, if someone does not read, then they

perform without a text¹³ and they consider playing instead of performing the poem is wrong. These are characteristics that are close to the theorization of reciting, although they are generally found in practical advices giving book, research. It is obvious that in the era between the two world wars it was important that this form of art (regardless if it is recognized an independent or not), would evolve in the best possible way, while still focusing on the intention of educating people. What can be related to the latter and to the always popular nature of poetry reciting is the great number of news about the events of local groups, small societies, associations, where we can read the names of poetry reciters who have never attend other events of the particular society. The large number of those engaged in reciting proves there is an interest for this art form, but the incomplete or inaccurate reports leaves us in doubts regarding the quality. Due to lack of data, I can focus solely on today's practices: great quantities usually go to the expense of quality, and the *excellent* reciters of small villages might not perform very well in front of a large audience, in front of, between artists.

I believe the literary societies' explosive emergence after the World War II it's understandable, because they had to create new literature, culture from nothing, to get used to the fact that they need to attach the *Transylvanian Hungarian* attribute to every movement. At the same time, even the intelligentsia considered it its task to inform, educate citizens, or the *people* - as intellectual and political trends in the '20 -30-ies definitely was drawn to civil extremism. However, we cannot draw such a sharp dividing line, not regarding journals, societies or performers. There were differences of views, which also manifests in the places where an author or a performer would publish/perform, but there are just a few public persons who absolutely refused to participate. Due to the strong political stance, Ascher Oszkár's typology for reciters cannot be used in practice, not even in Hungary. This is especially true in Transylvania, as they had to focus in all aspects of the cultural life on preserving the Hungarian literature and being able for it to reach the audience, all in the changed context. The journals and the nights had an incredibly large role in this, and I do not mean only those authors who worked in Transylvania, and communicated with their readers through these channels, but also the (now) modern Hungarian literature and its representatives, such as Ady, Babits, Juhász Gyula, Szép Ernő, who had to be introduced to people. In order to do so, the performing nights helped the most, since the audience already got an interpretation there, from a reciting artist's mouth, who was familiar to them and considered to be authentic. Tessitori can be considered Ady's Transylvanian "ambassador", his repertoire also features almost the entire Nyugati and Petőfi too, and regarding performance style, the former most likely reinterpreted the latter as well. In addition, if

¹³ Cf. the 'paper rioters' group in Kosztolányi's division.

we consider the Sekler ballads, which were featured almost every night, we can see right away that we can't clearly assign them to one side or the other. There were also overlaps between the authors of the journals, or the two sides were united through one person, so to speak - Benedek Elek joined the radical bourgeois writers group at the main editorial office of *Vasárnap*, where the people-national received him with great indignation, even if he believed to be his side up until that point. Szentimrei was a member of the staff of *Korunk* and *Erdélyi Helikon*, however, he could not strike a balance between the two.

So, if there were fundamental differences in views, these were smoothed, merged within the literary trends, since the precious literature had to be promoted and beloved in contrast with the shoddy dilettantism.

A few major reciting artists or actors who also organized reciting nights in that era tried to find the best way to continue to operate in the new context, according to their own conviction, and this is where founding the literary societies played a major role. In my thesis I wanted to offer a general, but a wider picture of the artistic movements two decades after World War I general, being curious about how the performers among the already known or presumed to be known performers were perceived, and who else was also involved in reciting. To my surprise, I came across only on a couple of announcements or news report about the performances of the reciting artists, and in comparison, as I expected, I found many celebrations in the columns of the periodicals columns which included one or more recitations, sometimes performed by known performers (occasionally, just those who were popular at the time - we know this from the articles), and other times by local amateur artists. In addition, the journals discussed and / or the societies that were operating them generally held performing nights on a monthly basis, where they introduced themselves with their own writings and their guests from different art forms with their acts.

I consider my research to fill a gap and I unique in its kind, but the research of the Transylvanian reciting art's history is still far from over. I can imagine a deeper research on this era, extending to local newspapers, which could significantly enrich the following databases and the knowledge we have of the performers compiled in those. As I mentioned at the beginning of my paper, the potential discovery of sound recordings would most likely modify, complete, or, where appropriate, overwrite the results of the present research.

Furthermore, I plan to continue my research, getting chronologically closer to our era. We know so little about many outstanding Transylvanian reciting artists, like Jancsó Adrienne, Illyés Kinga or Banner Zoltán.

My long-term plans concluding a general theoretical and methodological work, which could facilitate the birth of similar researches, and could contribute to the professional and wide range recognition and historical embedment as a genre of the reciting art.

VI. APPENDIX

I included an extensive Appendix in the thesis, which contains the databases compiled during my research, as well as the newspaper articles, interviews I considered to be more relevant and weren't republished in monographs, papers or study collections so far, according to the following system. I hope that this surely incomplete, but the most detailed data set available yet can serve as a basis for new researches and that it facilitates the better understanding of the facts, findings mentioned in this paper.

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