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# In Search of the 'Real Shakespeare': Sándor Hevesi's *Taming of the Shrew* in 1923, Budapest

Gabriella Reuss

## Abstract

This study introduces Sándor Hevesi (1873–1939), a Hungarian translator, theatre critic, Shakespeare scholar and opera and theatre director, who played a crucial role in the Budapest theatre scene in the 1920s. His work has received less attention than it deserves, and particularly the so-called Shakespeare-cycles, i.e., Hevesi's serialised Shakespeare productions, are still neglected. The cycles/series were performed between 1922 and 1933, while Hevesi was artistic and managing director of the National Theatre. These productions resuscitated the then fading Hungarian Shakespeare cult and profoundly changed the Hungarian reception and performance of Shakespeare.

Hevesi's intention was to present both authentic *and* popular Shakespeare productions, therefore, he sought the key to 'the real Shakespeare'. The present study intends to explore what Hevesi (could have) meant by this expression, and particularly focuses on an unknown manuscript, Hevesi's own, hand-written director's copy of *the Taming of the Shrew* (1923). Through the case study of his staging of the *Shrew*, the paper reveals Hevesi's particular methods of close reading, translation, and stage direction. It concludes that Hevesi's concept of the 'real Shakespeare' was in fact a complex, experimental journey, transcending the boundaries of stage direction, dramaturgy, and scenography of the day.

## Key words

Shakespeare, Shakespeare-cycle, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Sándor Hevesi, Hungarian National Theatre Budapest, Hungarian Theatre Institute and Museum, National Széchényi Library, Gizi Bajor, Lajos Bálint, Artúr Bárdos

Sándor Hevesi (1873–1939) is one of those theatre-makers who were once deservedly famous, but at present little is known of their work. In a summary on 'Shakespeare in Hungary' in *Shakespeare Quarterly* (PÁLFFY 1978: 292), Hevesi's achievement is remotely appreciated: he is called 'an outstanding Hungarian stage director and Shakespeare scholar', who made great efforts 'to liberate the Hungarian cult of Shakespeare from its Romantic conventions and to introduce a more up-to-date style of acting Shakespeare', with the result that Hevesi's style became 'in the post-war years the standard for Shakespearean stage interpretations' (PÁLFFY 1978: 292). Even if the article cited above was published more than forty years ago in one of the most prestigious forums of Shakespeare Studies, there are hardly any English biographies of Hevesi available. Surprisingly, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* has an entry on Gizi Bajor, the actress<sup>1</sup> whom his 1923 *Taming of the Shrew* made famous but does not have an entry on Hevesi himself.

He does not fare much better in Hungarian: 83 years after his passing, only a handful of works have been exclusively devoted to his accomplishments and another handful that merely make mention of him. To remedy the situation, the University of Theatre and Film Arts (SzFE), Budapest, organised a conference in 2014 in honour of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hevesi's death. The symposium featured five talks on Hevesi's forgotten dramas (Zsolt Győrei), his stagings at the Hungarian State Opera (Mária Harangi), Hevesi and his Soviet colleague, Stanislavsky (Sebastian Cortés), his experiments with the Thália Society (Zoltán Imre), and his work with the talented actress Gizi Bajor at the National Theatre (Tamás Gajdó).<sup>2</sup>

In line with the objectives of this 2014 conference, this paper aims to cast a new look at some of Hevesi's achievements. From the 1900s onwards, Hevesi was preoccupied with the idea of the 'real' Shakespeare, that is, a production that would stage the original Shakespeare text without any truncation or rewriting. His reflections on this subject were incorporated into his early theatre reviews; one of the numerous essays he published later was entitled 'The Real Shakespeare' (1917). My study will discuss Hevesi's 1923 production of *The Taming of the Shrew* with a focus on Hevesi's quest to create his authentic Shakespeare.

The archival documents of the 1923 production of *The Taming of the Shrew* suggest that Hevesi's 'real Shakespeare' can be revealed through the following four tightly inter-related areas: the character of the female lead and the role's potential; the restoration of the subplot; the dramaturg's preparation of the text and the translation, and the director's decisions regarding performance time and space. Before setting out to discuss these aspects in detail, I briefly introduce the main stages of Hevesi's career and his manuscript (Sections 1 and 2 respectively) and finish the paper with a summary of my findings and the prospects of further research.

1 Gizi Bajor (1893–1951).

2 See the conference website: <https://szfe.hu/hirek/hevesi-75-konferencia/> and the proceedings published in *Theatron* (2014).

## Sándor Hevesi's career

In a nutshell, Sándor Hevesi was an erudite translator, educator, critic, dramatist, dramaturg, theatre historian, Shakespeare scholar, an influential opera and theatre director, and, between 1922 and 1933, the artistic and managing director of the Hungarian National Theatre, Budapest. Through the so-called Shakespeare-cycles, a number of Shakespearean productions performed in a row, he managed to make Shakespeare accessible and popular, thus revivifying the then fading Hungarian Shakespeare cult. His work was compared with the work of André Antoine in Paris, Otto Brahm in Berlin, J. T. Grein in London, and Stanislavsky in Moscow. A friend of Edward Gordon Craig, Max Reinhardt, Harley Granville-Barker, and G. B. Shaw, he was the first Hungarian theatre director who achieved an international reputation of the time (see REUSS 2022a).<sup>3</sup>

In order to understand how mature Hevesi's thoughts on Shakespeare, stage language, dramaturgy, and direction were by 1923, let me detail a few important moments in Hevesi's professional life, particularly his experience with theatre criticism and translation as well as dramaturgy and stage direction.

Hevesi earned his doctorate in law and philosophy and worked as the resident correspondent of a Hungarian daily, *Magyar Szemle* [Hungarian Review], from 1892 to 1906, and as a devoted translator, he translated, among others, several of Dickens's novels and all of Shaw's plays. His career in the world of theatre started with performance reviews and theoretical writings. His observations soon made him the (in)famously sharp-penned critic, whom performers, especially those famous for their pompous declamations at the National Theatre, justly feared. The young aesthete gained authority through his 1896 collection of essays, *Dráma és színpad* [Drama and Stage].

In the first two decades of the new century, Hevesi held a variety of positions as his ideas were not welcomed everywhere by performers and directors. Significantly, he spent five years with the Thália Society as its artistic director (1904–1908). Founded by György Lukács, László Bánóczy, and Marcell Benedek, the Thália Society followed the model of the European independent theatres (Freie Bühne, Berlin; Théâtre Libre, Paris; Independent Theatre Society, London) and allowed Hevesi to implement his theories in practice (SZÉKELY 1987: 86) and participate in actor training. He mounted a virtually uncut *Tempest* with volunteer acting students in 1910 and *Hamlet* in 1911.

Hevesi's experiments were aimed at liberating the stage from the illusionistic (he called it 'naturalist') scenography, which, he felt, was far from reality and truth, and triggered pathetic and theatrical declamation. He believed the painted 'naturalist' sets that imitated reality, i.e., the two-dimensional canvases, were a poor imitation of spatiality, and hindered psychologically nuanced stage acting. As authorities deliberately created a multitude of administrative difficulties to prevent the operation of the company, Hevesi was forced to work elsewhere: he directed plays and operas at

<sup>3</sup> It was during the writing of the present study that my articles entitled 'Sándor Hevesi' and 'Hungarian National Theater' were published in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Global Shakespeare* (2022).

Népszínház-Vígopera [People's Theatre-Comic Opera] (1907–1908), translated and arranged librettos, modernised revivals, and produced a successful Mozart-cycle as the head resident director at the Hungarian State Opera (1912–1914).

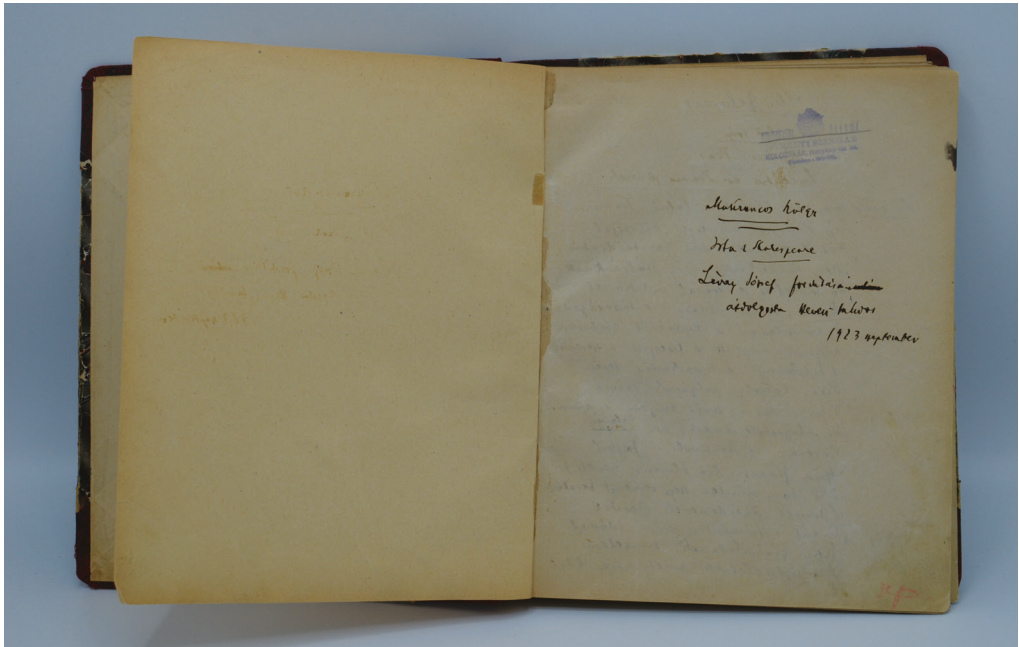
During the next decade, from 1922 to 1933, he was artistic and managing director at the National Theatre and as such he had an opportunity to regularly stage Shakespeare's plays and produce them in series. The so-called Shakespeare-cycle (*ciklus* in Hungarian) consisted of about 10–13 plays performed within a 2 to 8 week period. Spectators could buy special season tickets for the cycle and thus meet about two to four times a week, every time when a Shakespeare play was performed. Ceremonial openings, sonnet recitals, and scholarly lectures preceding the revivals contributed to the general festive atmosphere (see REUSS 2022b). The scheme that Hevesi had proposed for the National Theatre as early as June 1900 was modelled upon foreign examples, e.g., the Mozart- and Wagner-cycles in Munich and the thematic cycles in Cluj, and it aimed at increasing the visibility of Shakespeare while attracting larger crowds to the National Theatre, whose popularity had been steadily fading at the time. The initial success of the first few cycles in 1908, 1911, and 1916, proved the benefits and the profitability of Hevesi's concept. Thus, soon after he became the artistic and managing director of the National Theatre, Hevesi started to dust off the National's former Shakespeare productions, to restore them to their original text, and to set them free from the weight of both the heavy 'naturalist' sets and the declamatory acting.

Even though he spent only five years at the Thália Society, and only a decade as the artistic director at the National Theatre, through his experimental stagings, his actor training, his Shakespeare productions, as well as his writings on Shakespeare, Hevesi became vastly influential in Hungarian theatre life and culture in general. It is unfortunate that despite his successes he was forced to leave the National Theatre in the cross-fire of fabricated causes, anti-Semitic and populist attacks. He then went on to continue stage direction at a smaller playhouse, the Magyar Theatre, but eventually had to leave the theatre scene entirely and earn his living by writing concert reviews. In the hostile and depressing atmosphere of the Hungarian 1930s, he felt increasingly alienated. His health deteriorated; he died within a week of the breakout of WWII.

## Introducing Hevesi's manuscript

I came across Hevesi's 1923 *Taming of the Shrew* by chance at the Hungarian Theatre Institute and Museum (HTIM).<sup>4</sup> Although most of Hevesi's known legacy is held elsewhere, out of curiosity, I chose to look through the documents that were catalogued under his name at the Theatre Institute. I learned that out of few materials at HTIM only one volume belongs credibly to Hevesi. This volume, 62.2406, is in fact an entirely handwritten booklet with some of its pages slightly curtailed, probably at the time of

4 The Hevesi legacy and the National Theatre's documents are held by the Theatre Archive of the National Széchényi Library (NSzL). NSzL has the stage manager's promptbook of this production, M.281. It will be important to contrast this volume's text to Hevesi's own.



**Fig. 1:** Hevesi's inscription on the inner cover. Hevesi's manuscript of *Makrancos hölgy* [The Taming of the Shrew], 1923. Unpublished manuscript, 62.2406. Photo by Gabriella Reuss. Courtesy of the Hungarian Theatre Institute and Museum, Budapest.

binding: the pencilled page numbers at the top are sometimes cut off. The dark ink as well as the handwriting inside and on the inner cover seem to be attributable to Hevesi himself, as the leading theatre historiographers of HTIM, Mirella Csiszár and Tamás Gajdó verified. The inner cover has the following inscription:

Makrancos hölgy  
 Írta Shakespeare  
 Lévay József fordítását után  
 átdolgozta Hevesi Sándor.  
 1923 szeptember<sup>5</sup> (see Fig. 1)

Notably, the play begins with the first scene in Padua, leaving out Shakespeare's Introduction entirely.

5 The Taming of the Shrew

Written by Shakespeare

after József Lévay's translation

revised by Sándor Hevesi

September 1923 (Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from Hungarian are mine.)

Equipped with the above information, I turned to the National Theatre's performance records, an old handwritten database<sup>6</sup>, housed at the Theatre Archive of the National Széchenyi Library. The relevant volume of the National Theatre's performance records is both a valuable document in itself and a key tool in identifying a performance, then locating the playbill and the reviews. A series of large handwritten folios, this show log contains every performance of every Shakespearean play with all the names of the performers, devoting individual columns to each character, since 1837. Although the National Theatre's legendary Shakespeare-cycles are still almost entirely uncharted, we know from the show log and from the city's theatre programs in contemporary dailies that Hevesi staged the *Shrew* within the third Shakespeare-cycle of the National Theatre in 1916, and that the production was revived a few times in 1920 and then in June 1923. For the period immediately after September 1923 – the date of the inscription above – the show log has two occasions, 3 and 19 November.<sup>7</sup> The show log has no columns for the characters of the Induction until 1926, thus, it may be assumed that Hevesi's manuscript that lacks the frame was used on these two occasions. A further aspect of identification is provided by some of the players' names: on these dates the young Gizi Bajor was cast in the title role, the reviews were full of praise for her.<sup>8</sup>

Inside Hevesi's booklet we find black pencilled instructions on the margins and on the page facing the dark inked text, as well as systematic indications of music in red that usually accompanied the scene changes, and also some references to the often funny sound effects. All this suggests that Hevesi was aiming for a rich audio-visual experience, and that he managed to provide quite an intense, humorous, and action-packed production, one in which all gestures, fights, and screams had to be perfectly nuanced and timed. A production like this requires a lot of rehearsal and precise cooperation from both actors and crew. The close reading of such a precisely choreographed director's copy makes it evident that Hevesi had a clear vision of what the performance should be like, and that he invested a lot of energy into its realisation. It appears that he spent a considerable amount of time working with a company that was still relatively new to him, especially because his actors were not used to rehearsing so much and so intensively. His methods were modern, largely unusual, and for some, even unpopular.

The fact that Hevesi wrote the text in longhand led my research in two directions: one was to read and compare Lévy's translation to Hevesi's playtext<sup>9</sup> and the other was to explore if the act of writing the playtext benefited him in practical terms. The key

6 It is traditionally called *előadáskataszter* or simply *kataszter*, a Hungarian equivalent of the English *cadastre*, an official register of the quantity, value, and ownership of real estate. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century name suggests, it has to do with performance statistics for the repertory rather than show reports in the contemporary sense. Here I thought best to use *show log*, following the actor, director, and Shakespeare scholar Ronan Paterson's thoughtful suggestion, for which I am very thankful.

7 The *Shrew* was performed later on 21 January 1924, within the season's third Shakespeare-cycle (17. 1.–3. 3. 1924). The cast was slightly different: Katharine's role was taken by Ilona N. Tasnády.

8 For more on the actress, see Section 'The Director's Reading'.

9 For more on the translation, see Section 'The Dramaturg's Choices: Text and Translation'.

to the latter question is in the reminiscences of Lajos Bálint,<sup>10</sup> Hevesi's long-time colleague: Bálint jokingly shares the somewhat humorous anecdote about a strange habit of Hevesi, namely, that he manually copied every play he directed (BÁLINT 1964: 72) before the rehearsals would begin, and that he managed all this in a highly intensive span of just a few hours. As a consequence, he knew all his texts by heart, better or at least earlier than his actors. His translations and/or his meticulous revisions of earlier translations were perhaps not so poetic, Bálint adds (BÁLINT 1964: 73), but always 'made for the actor's lips' (BÁLINT 1964: 74). The handwritten text in the Theatre Institute fully supports the idea that memorising the text through copying must have given Hevesi complete freedom at the rehearsals, which enabled him to fully focus on directing the nuanced gestures and moves of the characters.

To my knowledge, ensemble acting (especially at the National Theatre!) was not evident at the time, so I was more than content when I found a passage by Bálint which accounted for the then not too significant rehearsals.

Until then, the director's task here, beyond the choice of scenery and costumes, had largely consisted of giving instructions on the positioning of actors, stage business, in other words, simple technical needs. The rest was up to the actor. A leading actor would have considered it a serious insult, an affront to his authority, if the director had made other demands. Questions of style, pace, rhythm could not arise. Actors were, in fact, educated in and representatives of a single style. Thus, a performance was largely composed of melodious, pathetic vocal gymnastics. (BÁLINT 1964: 51)

From the colleague's observation it can be gathered that it was a heroic effort on Hevesi's part to produce a nuanced performance from such a starting point.

One periodical, *Magyar Színpad* [Hungarian Stage], probably made a service to Hevesi and his players when it published an article 'A színház munkája' [The Work of the Theatre] during the second, late November Shakespeare-cycle. It is quite telling that spectators in 1923 needed to be informed about what the rehearsal process comprised and be reminded of respecting backstage work. They were asked to 'consider their judgement' in this light about what they saw on the stage (J.F. 1923: 1). The article went to great lengths to illuminate for spectators that 'the real learning of a role takes place in rehearsal, when a scene is rehearsed three, four or even more times' (J.F. 1923: 1), and furthermore, that the director's job is more complicated than they would think, given that he 'has to deal not only with the actors, but also with the lighting master, the stage manager, the prop master, the head tailor, and anyone else who contributes in any way to the staging of the play' (J.F. 1923: 1). Clearly, what we may perceive as novelty in Hevesi's work, as the manuscript testifies, was new for his audiences as well, and due to Hevesi's novel approach, audiences needed to change their habits of spectating.

10 Lajos Bálint (1886–1974) was a dramaturg, translator, literary editor, theatre artistic secretary, dramatist, and co-founder of the experimental Thália Society with Hevesi.



## The director's reading: Bajor and the autonomous Renaissance/New Woman

Apart from Hevesi's intensive interest in Shakespeare, another reason which I think induced Hevesi to create a new *Shrew* after the ones in 1916, 1920, and June 1923, was finding and then casting a young actress, Gizi Bajor in the title role. Her acting must have inspired him a lot and, without her, Hevesi's interpretation could not have succeeded. A long-time researcher of Bajor's extraordinary life and career Tamás Gajdó characterised the actress as the Hungarian Eleonore Duse:

Bajor came to the forefront in the 1917–1918 season; Sándor Hevesi built his repertoire around her from 1922. In classical and modern drama, comedies and even farces, she gave unparalleled performances. She studied, edited, and constructed her roles in detail. With her exceptional elocution, mimicry, humour, and versatility, she created characters of the most contradictory nature – even in the same performance. Gizi Bajor's acting talents were often compared to those of Eleonore Duse. (GAJDÓ 2018)

In fact, Erzsébet Paulay's Katherine in Hevesi's earlier revivals of the play was far from being a flop; however, as soon as Hevesi saw Bajor's acting, he withdrew Paulay from the title role and exchanged her for Bajor. He recognised the actress's talent and believed in it,<sup>11</sup> and this belief manifested in his decision to crown the season's first Shakespeare-cycle with Bajor's *Shrew* (3. 11. 1923) and, as if he had foreseen Bajor's loud success in the role, he chose to open the next Shakespeare-cycle (19. 11. 1923) with the *Shrew* and Bajor's vibrant characterisation in it as well.

The character of the shrew was indeed excellently handled in Gizi Bajor's interpretation. The greatest difficulty with this character is that she has to be charming and lovable even where she really fits the name of Wild Kat. Gizi Bajor is lovely and graceful again today, and her diction is inventive and subtle as always. (VILÁG 1923: 249)

Bajor was ideal for Hevesi's concept, and the role of Katherine rocketed her to stardom (so much so that soon other actresses, e.g., Ilona N. Tasnády, were fighting for the role). As the fierce competition between the female performers testifies, in Hevesi's reading, the role became a unique opportunity to showcase the actress's humour, talent, and sex appeal.

For Hevesi, the story was not about Katherine's oppression and enslavement, but on the contrary, about her winning the love and respect of the man of her choice forever. Hevesi disliked the Hungarian title of the play, *Makrancos hölgy*, as it means

<sup>11</sup> She then proved to be a major talent – for further details on the professional relationship between the most talented director and the most talented actress of the interwar years see Tamás Gajdó's article 'A Nemzetin/a nemzeteten innen és túl... Hevesi Sándor és Bajor Gizi' [Within the Nation/the National and Beyond... Sándor Hevesi and Gizi Bajor] (GAJDÓ 2022).

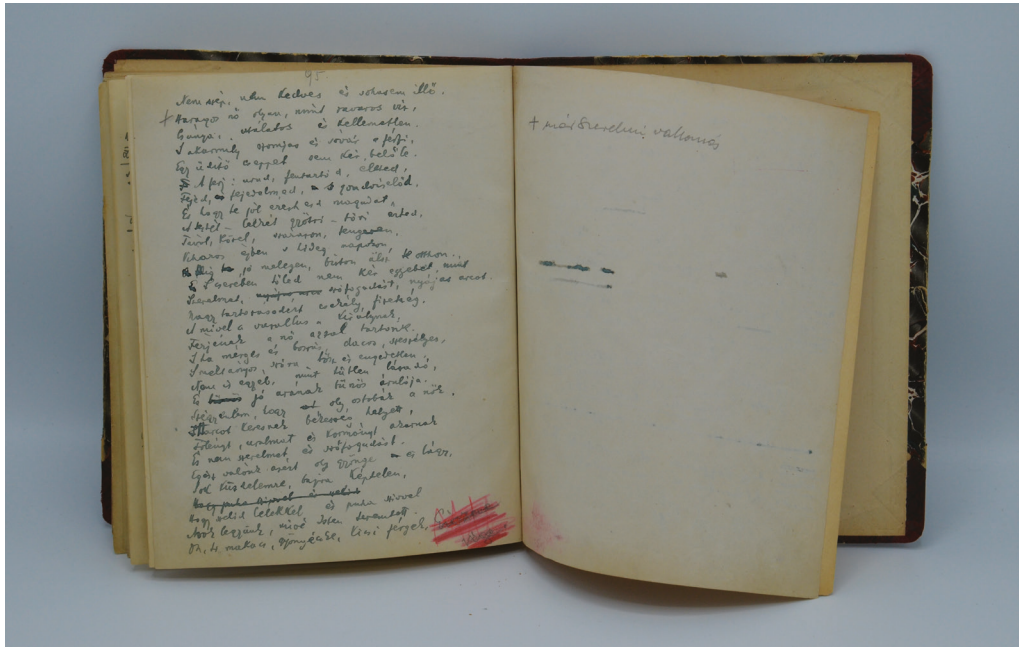
'Stubborn/Disobedient Lady', and the adjective 'makrancos' is also used as 'unruly' for a horse (PIKLI 2010). 'What a dodgy and bad title, which we only tolerate out of habit!' he fumed (HEVESI 1916: 205). In the same manner, he indignantly rejected Garrick's three-act farce, *Katherine and Petruchio*, calling it 'sheer animal taming' (HEVESI 1917: 7).

According to Hevesi, Shakespeare was particularly great in voicing the generational problems that resulted from the clash between the Renaissance values, including women's autonomy, and the values inherited from the earlier generations. Hevesi believed that the struggle between parents and their children is a leitmotif in Shakespeare, and that daughters' fight for their choices is justified and (only) part of this larger conflict (HEVESI 1909: 41). In his view both *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew* feature such daughters and such justified fights: Portia's father left an oppressive will that was meant to control the daughter's choice of a husband even when he is no longer alive, and Baptista's plan to marry Katherine off as soon as possible to whomever he chooses is just as disregardful of his daughter's autonomy.

In Hevesi's interpretation Shakespeare's Katherine is not only a lively, loud, straightforward Renaissance girl, she is also the embodiment of the 'modern woman', 'her nerves are so fierce, playful, so hot and fiery' (BALASSA 1926: 21). Unfortunately, there is no extant programme flyer from 1923 (most probably, there was none); nonetheless, as the status of women was a constant theme in Hevesi's essays, we may rely on the constancy of his opinion and quote from the booklet that accompanied the theatre's 1926 cycle. The flyer's relevant plot summary emphasised that Katherine and Petruchio fall in love at first sight, desperately longing for being loved, caressed, and respected by the other. Through the occasionally harsh fight, they learn to adjust to (and not break) one another – this seemed a radically modern idea in the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> Referring to the inner changes that both members of the couple experience, Hevesi remarked in the interview that *Magyar Színpad* [Hungarian Stage] timed for the day of the première, that 'as much as it [the play] has the Renaissance irrepressibility and exultant gaiety, it contains a great deal of spirituality' (MAGYAR SZÍNPAD 1923a: 1). Perhaps it would be tempting to interpret the expression 'a great deal of spirituality' in Hevesi's Hungarian sentence as 'a great deal of psychology', but I would rather adhere to a literal translation, as both Hungarian terms were available to him. In either case, his reading treated the two characters as equal partners.

His *Shrew* staged the witty, sexy, autonomous woman and the smart, humorous man who adores her, and the story of their mutual conquest (see Fig. 2) – a completely new idea at the time about Shakespeare's play. The production, being played at the National Theatre, not only spread but also promoted and reinforced the idea of the New Woman of the Roaring Twenties and highly resonated with contemporary cultural tendencies. The flyer testifies that the creators pointed at Shakespeare as the source of this interpretation:

12 The most recent novelisation of Shakespeare's *Shrew* for teenagers, *Makrancos Kata – Rómeó és Júlia. Regényes Shakespeare* [The Taming of the Shrew – Romeo and Juliet. Novelised Shakespeare] by Dóra Gimesi and Viktória Jeli (2021) interprets the play with the same emphasis.



**Fig. 2:** Pencilled stage instruction (left) added to a point in Katherine's monologue (right) indicated by + which reads 'already a confession of love'. Hevesi's manuscript *Makrancos hölgy* [The Taming of the Shrew], 1923. Unpublished manuscript, 62.2406. Photo by Gabriella Reuss. Courtesy of the Hungarian Theatre Institute and Museum, Budapest.

All the while, it seems as if only the woman is undergoing a spiritual change, as if only the momentum and passion of the woman's impulse was broken by the man's wilfulness, however, Shakespeare has written something else here: how the *man is also drawn* to the woman and how the roughness of their two souls must be polished together. (BALASSA 1926: 21; emphasis mine)

The audience apparently understood the message, as Petruchio's breaking the woman's will or being victoriously macho at her expense is nowhere mentioned in the reviews. Instead, what they did mention was the finely tuned playful humour of the production: 'With his Petruchio, Ferenc Kiss once again justifies the expectations that have been placed on his ever-expanding and unfolding talents. He is a true Renaissance adventurer, wholesome, good-humoured, sensual, and lovable' (VILÁG 1923: 249).

To appreciate Hevesi's efforts, the editor of *Magyar Színpad* [Hungarian Stage] called the production a "symphonie grotesque" of the British poet's [Shakespeare's. – G.R.] genius', and continued with the praise by saying that Hevesi 'completes the first Shakespeare-cycle that was great even by foreign standards', and 'restores the original noble style of the comedy, indeed returning to the real Shakespeare'

(*MAGYAR SZÍNPAD* 1923a: 1). From the editors' references to the equal relationship and the tingling fights of the lovers, it is clear that the production appealed to spectators from all walks of life. Through Bajor's and Kiss's impulsive and exceptional acting the representation of the New Woman and her playful Renaissance man won the heart of the audience.

## The choice by the Shakespeare scholar: the restoration of the entire plot

On Hungarian stages, the *Shrew* had been performed without the subplot in Garrick's adaptation of 1756, as *Catharine and Petruchio*; and it was Hevesi, in September 1923, who first restored the subplot. Undoubtedly, Hevesi was determined to retain Shakespeare's words and tried to understand the subplot's significance. In his essay titled 'The Real Shakespeare' (1917), the famous actor and self-appointed apostle of Shakespeare, David Garrick is called 'the most incompetent adaptor', for 'degrading Shakespeare's play into a rude and primitive farce', 'a mere animal-taming story' by deleting its secondary plot (HEVESI 1917: 7). He argued that this kind of procedure destroyed the very essence of Shakespearean dramatic structure.

Reflecting upon the expression of time in Shakespeare's plays, Hevesi came to an interesting conclusion: he thought it had passed quite unnoticed so far and called it a 'Shakespearean paradox'. He opined that 'on the stage for which Shakespeare worked, the drama could only be properly and artistically constructed if the poet used several plots and several scenes at once' (HEVESI 1917: 24). As Hevesi argued, Shakespeare's technique of alternating the scenes of several plotlines help express the passing of time. 'The main plot is regularly interrupted but its scenes reconnect again to a flow (not with a curtain, but with new scenes).' The example Hevesi brings to illustrate his idea is the 33 scene changes in *Antony and Cleopatra* (HEVESI 1917: 24). He claimed that 'it could not be supposed that Shakespeare, who had a great understanding of the stagecraft (better than any of his contemporaries), would have used two or even three tales or short stories, or even whole plays of music, for a drama without need or sense' (HEVESI 1917: 24).

According to Hevesi, the double plot in Shakespeare's *Shrew* spectacularly represents the manner of construction that is so typical of Shakespeare. He added that relegating the subplot into the background, as it had happened in the earlier Hungarian playbooks of the comedy, involves the loss of the subplot's 'illuminative, supportive, contrastive functions'. Without the subplot, it was incomprehensible 'why Hortensio was always lurking on the stage' around Katharine and Petruchio; hence the play became 'tedious and uninteresting', 'not only for the audience but for the actors themselves' (*MAGYAR SZÍNPAD* 1923a: 1).

When asked in an interview about the particularities of the 3 November 1923 production, Hevesi proudly discussed the restoration of the subplot, this time, addressing the

wider readership of the periodical, not from the perspective of a Shakespeare scholar but from that of a spectator:

Now that we have included the parts that were thrown out, it all makes sense, and humour replaces the blurriness. [...] In our production today, as the text is performed cleanly and without meaning-destroying mutilations, I think that not only does the story of Katharine's taming seem lively and refreshing, but also the intriguing sub-plot of Bianca's marriage is fresh and interesting. Before, this sub-plot was lacklustre; today, I believe, it will be clear and comprehensible to the audience. (*MAGYAR SZÍNPAD* 1923a: 1)

The next day, the restorative move was cheered and welcomed in unison – perhaps due to Hevesi's careful casting of first-rate performers to introduce the new roles. The following praise in the periodical *Világ* [Light/World] was only one among many whose lines sensibly conveyed the audience's festive enthusiasm: 'The lovely Bianca of Erzi Ághy, Jenő Horváth's amusing Grumio, Uray, Sugár, Ráday, and Gyula Fehér were all part of the new hit of the National Theatre, which the enthusiastic audience gave the actors and director plenty of credit for' (*VILÁG* 1923: 249).

In the last paragraph of the interview quoted previously we find a few sentences which are a real gem: Hevesi speaks in line with the great 19<sup>th</sup> century English restorers of Shakespeare, such as Macready or Poel,<sup>13</sup> and by doing so, he effectively constructs, in parallel with the English one, the Hungarian narrative of a Shakespeare restoration:

I think that with today's revival we are answering the wishful thinking of the great Ferenc Salamon, who in one of his essays in the 1850s, when Shakespeare was performed in a very distorted way, asked: 'Why can't Shakespeare's plays be performed as he wrote them?' I think we can answer that, without pretension, that it is now possible. (*MAGYAR SZÍNPAD* 1923a: 1)

Fortunately and quite notably, Hevesi's restored versions, like Macready's and unlike Poel's (*GLICK* 1964: 16) were wholeheartedly understood and supported by much of the contemporary media. For instance, here is a review from a simple low-brow journal, *Világ* [Light/World], from the day after the première:

The National Theatre's second Shakespeare cycle ended today with a revival of *The Taming of the Shrew*, now fully adapted in style to the National Theatre and Sándor Hevesi's new Shakespearean performance format. The production, which ran without the familiar prelude but otherwise with Shakespeare's complete text, was given a *fresh tempo* by the director with *fast-paced changes*. Many new ideas and a confidently playful construction of the points of the Shakespearean text helped the new characters to succeed. (*VILÁG* 1923: 249; emphasis mine)

13 William Charles Macready (1793–1873) and William Poel (1852–1934) were influential 19<sup>th</sup> century London-based actor-managers. They were interested in the actability of the Shakespearean texts: Macready began to dismiss the popular Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare and reverted to the original texts though not always with the original scene order; while Poel, the founder of the Elizabethan Stage Society, attempted to perform the almost entirely uncut texts, and recreate the Shakespearean stage.

Apparently, the media presence at the first Shakespeare cycle in June 1923 had brought to focus the problems of the 'mutilated' texts and the set-less space of the Elizabethan stage. By November the ideas that Hevesi had proposed in lectures, essays, and a variety of periodicals regarding the 'real Shakespeare' had become known simply as his 'new Shakespearean performance format' – which should be appreciated as a result, without questioning. It is interesting though that amidst the appraisals, Hevesi was never asked about the omission of the 300 lines of the Induction, and his writings keep silent about the *Shrew's* enigmatic dream-frame.

The description in the review above refers twice to the flow of the performance: the 'fresh pace' and the 'fast-paced shifts' were listed among the new features of the staging, as if the previous Shakespeare productions had been much more demanding of the audience's patience. In order to explore what made the performance so easy to follow, fast-moving, and hilarious, the next two sections will treat the way Hevesi problematised the interrelatedness of text, time, and space.

## The dramaturg's choices: text and translation

As to Hevesi's choice of translation, the first step is to examine the inscription on the inner cover of his manuscript: 'after József Lévy's translation revised by Sándor Hevesi'. This line gives away a more substantial change regarding the text than the act of merely 'touching up' or occasionally correcting Lévy's work: it appears as if Hevesi fully revised Lévy's translation. The detailed report about the comparison of the two Hungarian translations is beyond the scope of this article in English, but the result is not: it may reveal how Hevesi, the dramaturg-*cum*-translator approached the language of his 'real' Shakespeare.

The merit of Lévy's text was that it was the first Hungarian *Taming of the Shrew* translated from English,<sup>14</sup> but fifty-four years later, in 1923, it must have been perceived as rather archaic and seriously outdated. Hevesi said in the interview quoted earlier that 'with a sense of due piety and a gentle hand I only touched it up for a smooth flow' (*MAGYAR SZÍNPAD* 1923a: 1).

However, the fact that Hevesi did not use a printed edition of Lévy's translation and took the pains of rewriting the whole play, suggests otherwise. In fact, my line-by-line comparison proves that there was no point in correcting Lévy's translation: Hevesi's changes were literally continuous. The result was a flowing stage text, *hic et nunc*, free from artificial, complicated, 19<sup>th</sup> century turns and expressions, much easier to utter and understand.

Hevesi's practical view of the text questioned the fossilised Romantic cult of 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian Shakespeare in the name of clarity, freshness, and relatability. Hevesi's apologetic tone (and perhaps the fact that he did not dare to announce himself

14 The earlier Hungarian versions translated by Komlóssy were played under at least five different titles and were first based on Holbein's (used 1837–1846) then on Deinhardstein's (used from 1855) German adaptations. Lévy's translation was printed in 1868 and first performed on 12 September 1869.

on the playbill as the translator<sup>15</sup>) gives us an idea about the strong reverence that canonised Shakespeare works enjoyed at the time. Even the most renowned Hungarian translator of Shakespeare of our day, the linguist Ádám Nádasy needed decades to disseminate the idea that natural language change inevitably erodes translations and, as a consequence, new translations are necessary at least every fifty years (and that these need not be called re-translations) (NÁDASY 2005).

Hevesi's 'touching up' of Lévy's half-a-century-old text is perfectly justified by today's dramaturgical standards as well. The fact that he felt obliged to modernise the text and also harmonise it with the actual stage business and scenery betrays his meticulous attention to detail and capacity to see the production as an artistic whole. He was convinced that 'the language of the stage can never be the written language of books' and that 'not only the actor but also the translator' had a responsibility to ensure that the audience understood the performance (HEVESI 1916: 206). He argued in his essay 'Shakespeare-játék és Shakespeare-fordítás' [Acting and Translating Shakespeare] (1916) that it was not each and every word in isolation but more importantly, the *situation* that had to be understood. His text for the play in 1923 reveals this practical, and in its period extraordinary, approach to what makes a good stage text and what creates a sweeping overall effect. In a recent interview, dramaturg Annamária Radnai formulated what a dramaturg is – 'the professional who is responsible for the production's effect' (KOVÁCS 2014). Her formula suggests that Hevesi's work here should also be appreciated from a dramaturgical point of view.

As a dramaturg 'you need to know a little bit about how directing itself works, because that's what you have to comment upon, not just on whether there should be a full stop or a question mark at the end of a sentence,' said a successful dramaturg-director, Ildikó Gáspár in the same interview (KOVÁCS 2014). In this light, we must notice that in addition to the sophisticated modernisation (and keeping the blank verse) Hevesi, the dramaturg, effectively collaborated with Hevesi, the director. As a dramaturg, he avoided cutting the texts and chose to touch up the old translations to provide a text that flowed easily for his actors. As a director, he relied on the clarity and modernisation of the entire text – only to remain true to Shakespeare. His 'real Shakespeare' was not only one that lacked cuts but also one that was easy to follow for his contemporaries.

15 This was one of the translations that for some reason was not under Hevesi's name on the playbill, even though it was obvious that he worked on the text enough to get his name published and get paid for it. Unfortunately for Hevesi, an administrator caught him taking a salary for a translation that did not bear his name as a translator and snatched on him to his superiors – an incident that was used to bring about his downfall in 1933.

## The 'real Shakespeare's' time and space

Unusually for a philologist-cum-director, a substantial part of Hevesi's essay on 'The Real Shakespeare' dealt with Shakespearean scenography. In this 1917 paper, Hevesi raised the question why in a performance of a Shakespeare play we need the curtain which 'inevitably evokes in today's spectator a sense of the passage of time' (HEVESI 1917: 26). He argued that Shakespeare already solved the problem of representing the passing of the time rather well, and that 'curtains disrupt this solution by creating time gaps where there is no need for them' (HEVESI 1917: 26). He concluded that if 'we let the curtain down on the Shakespeare play: instead of one chronology, we get two, Shakespeare's and today's; and as the two do not fit together [...] we are in fact right there where the 18<sup>th</sup> century stood with its fake/pseudo-Shakespeare' (HEVESI 1917: 26).

Six years later, obviously writing in support of the 1923 autumn Shakespeare-cycle, Hevesi's closest colleague, Lajos Bálint articulated the same dilemma, but this time addressed the wider readership of the popular periodical *Színházi Élet* [Theatre Life]. He emphasised, if one insists, as one should, on performing Shakespeare's plays 'as he wrote it, with full text and the same scene order,' then one must discontinue the earlier practice of using sets that aim at full illusion, and thus, are heavy and difficult to move (BÁLINT 1923: 22). Bálint directly appealed to the practical sense of the spectator/reader: 'Imagine, for example, how long the thirty-something scenes of *Antony and Cleopatra* would have lasted with the old method of staging everything on the boards. Who could have endured that performance, let alone the intervals, in a theatre without three or four mobile platforms?' (BÁLINT 1923: 22).

Certainly, no theatre at the time had three or four mobile platforms, and certainly, as this piece of mockery testifies, the problem of exhausting scene-changes in day-to-day practice was indeed acute:

Right away the curtains close,  
Bangs the people's loud applause  
Bored to death by lack of action –  
Curtains bring a real redemption!<sup>16</sup> (LOVACSKA 1923: 48)

Sensing this, it was only realistic on Hevesi and Bálint's part to continue the campaign for discarding the 'old set', and along with it, to weaken the positions of stage naturalism, too. In Bálint's comparison 'the old set was intended to give a *complete illusion of reality* by its own deceitful means – it did not achieve that goal, the modern set is only a pictorial and simplified *indication of reality* – and yet it most often gives a more complete illusion than the other' (BÁLINT 1923: 22, emphasis mine). Supporting the

16 This was published by an author who, under the pseudonym *lovacska*, regularly wrote theatre-related mockery for *Színházi Élet* – it was both an obligation and my pleasure to translate it for the sake of this argument.



next Shakespeare cycle, which began in early 1924, Hevesi pressed the issue of illusionistic scenography further, bluntly accusing the 19<sup>th</sup> century's so-called 'spectacular Shakespeare',<sup>17</sup> the (in)famous Charles Kean and Henry Irving tradition, of blurring the real Shakespeare:

The historically-set, 'spectacular' *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's shortest, almost sketchy drama, of which only 1,600 lines are spoken on stage, takes almost four hours to perform on a sweat-soaked set, whereas on Shakespeare's stage it took the audience barely two hours to watch. [...] If I have to see *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's most feverish tragedy, and there is a 14-minute pause between two short scenes that are connected: then I must be disappointed with Shakespeare as a playwright. Except that the 14-minute pauses were not invented by Shakespeare, but by 19<sup>th</sup> century staging. So this is the new Shakespeare that we are looking for and wanting and bringing to the stage today – the old Shakespeare, the oldest, the original, the real one. (HEVESI 1924: 10)

It is important to note that Hevesi had been maturing these ideas for a decade. In 1908 he took part in the international symposium discussing the concept of 'realism', organised by E. G. Craig on the pages of his periodical, the *Mask*; and then wrote a paper, again for Craig's *Mask*, entitled 'Shakespeare as Scenographer'. The paper was primarily interested in whether Shakespeare's plays should be performed in a space that was similar to the stage they were originally written for; and why and how it is beneficial if each and every dramatic text triggers its own performing space. Undoubtedly inspired by Craig, Hevesi then worked on three successful pilot projects with which he tested his theory in practice. One of these was a 90-minute *The Tempest* (1910), which he showed with the students of the Theatre Academy on Urania Scientific Theatre's bare stage for a matinée (turned soirée) of the Hungarian Shakespeare Committee. The other was an 'Elizabethan' *Hamlet* (1911) at the National Theatre, which was preceded by a talk by the Shakespeare scholar Bernát Alexander:<sup>18</sup> this time Hevesi experimented with a wooden frame, designed by painter-scenographer Ignác Újváry,<sup>19</sup> which reflected the then available information about the Elizabethan stage. This structure was used again in *The Comedy of Errors* (1923) when the play was announced 'with Shakespeare's stage' for the 1923 June cycle. However, for the revival of the *Shrew* in

17 Hevesi knew Charles Kean and Henry Irving's spectacular Shakespeare productions and the accusations they received at the time for turning Shakespeare into mere spectacle. More on this in, e.g., *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850–1910* by Michael R. Booth (1981).

18 Bernát Alexander (1850–1927), philosopher, aesthete, literary scholar, and educator, and from 1892, he was head of the Department of Dramaturgy of the Hungarian Academy of Theatre. He wrote the first Hungarian scholarly monograph on Kant's life and thought (*Kant. Élete, fejlődése és filozófiája* [Kant: Life, Development, and Philosophy]), and published his lectures on Shakespeare in 1920 (*Shakespeare*, Budapest, Franklin, 1920).

19 Ignác Újváry (1860–1927), painter, professor at the Academy of Decorative Arts, head of the Opera and National Theatre's common scene painting workshop. His works include contribution to the painting of the Feszty Panorama, murals for the Catholic church in Zebegény, and four *panneaux* for the Café of the Budapest Opera.

the autumn of 1923 Hevesi had again another kind of trailblazing in mind. It is only sensible to assume that, as his friend and colleague Lajos Bálint remembered, Hevesi 'knew it well that these nights [with the barren Shakespeare stage. – G.R.] were merely artistic experiments. [...] Today's theatre cannot entirely give up on the effects of the set and the lighting' (BÁLINT 1964: 54), so he pursued the effect and employed an architect-turned-scenographer.

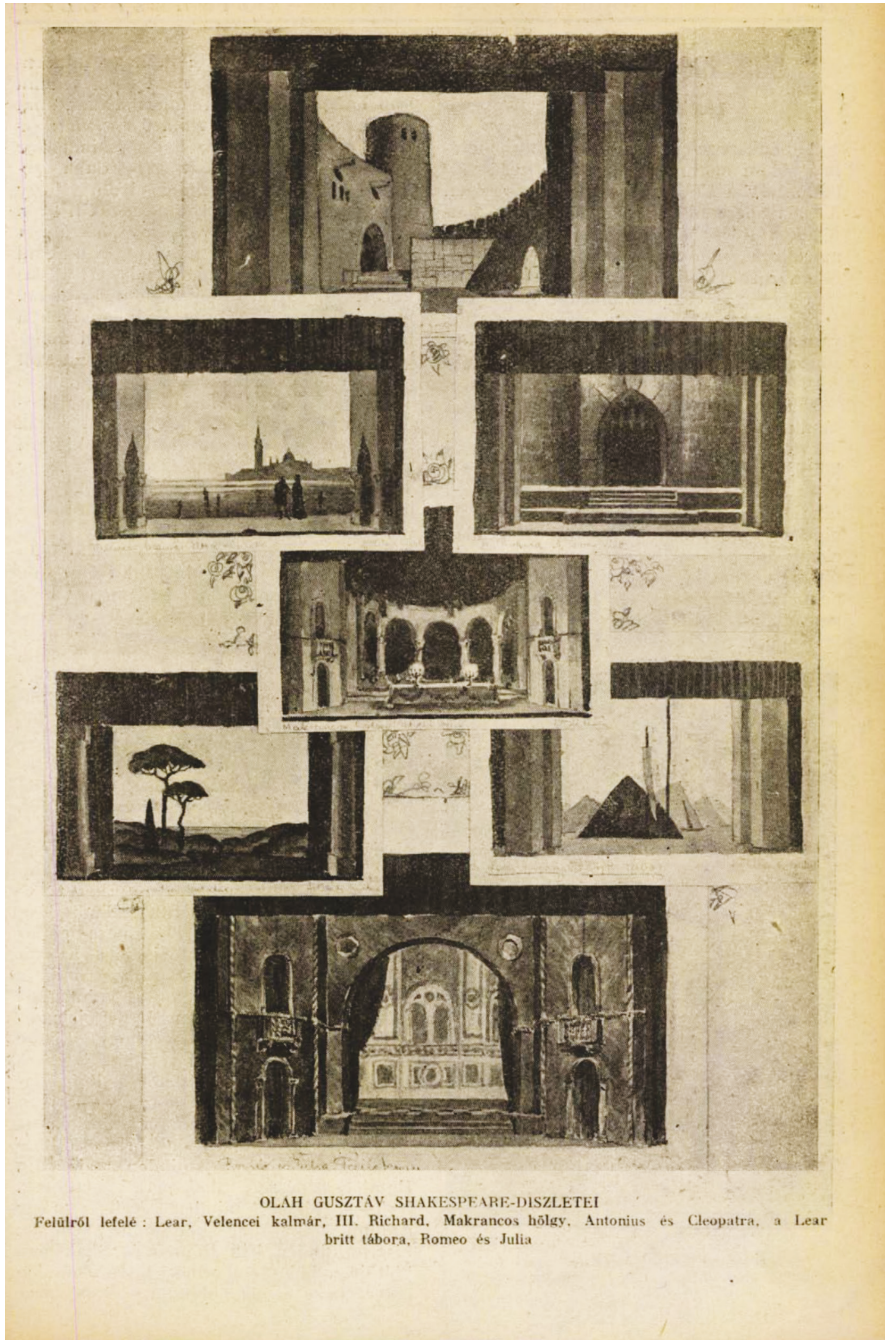
According to contemporary practice at the time, playbills did not mention the scenographer's name – for the simple reason that theatres employed only craftsmen, not designers. But Hevesi's revival of the *Shrew* was setting the trend in this respect as well. As we can find out from an article that accompanied the October–November (first) cycle of the 1923–1924 season and ran under the unusual heading 'Shakespeare díszletei' [Shakespeare's Sets], it did have a scenographer, the young Gusztáv Oláh.<sup>20</sup> The article proudly boasted that the sets of the autumn Shakespeare-cycle were not recycled from earlier productions as was otherwise usual, but were newly made at the joint workshop of the Hungarian State Opera and the National Theatre, following an artist's design. I believe the article, penned by Lajos Bálint (1923), is exceptional regarding its content: by the praising, explaining, and sharing of Oláh's paintings it powerfully contributed to the significant change that was to take place in the paradigms of thinking about scenography and staging Shakespeare's text.

In Oláh's colourful paintings for the new 1923 *Shrew* nothing even remotely suggests any variation of the Elizabethan stage known at the time. However, this was not due to Oláh's or Hevesi's ignorance. At the time, the early 1920s, it was not only scholarly studies that contemplated the idea, the potential, and re-constructability of the Shakespearean stage. For instance, short articles written for the popular periodicals, such as Károly Sebestyén's two-page piece for *Színházi Élet* [Theatre Life], did the same. Sebestyén's paper shared seven designs for Shakespeare productions by Oláh on one page (Fig. 3), and demanded 'modern Hungarian Shakespeare stage' on the other. He justified this claim by saying that

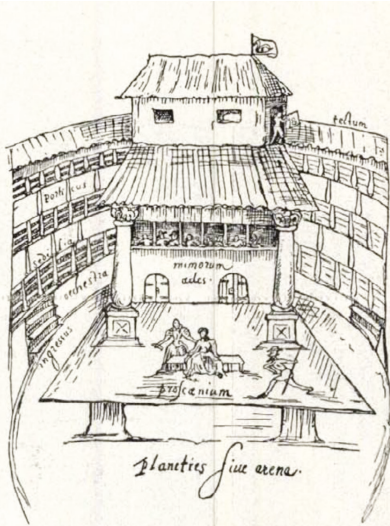
we cannot reconstruct the interior of the Globe or the Blackfriars with the present-day structure of the playhouses; we cannot send the present-day audience from the galleries to stand in the pit, or the spectators from the dress circle boxes to the boxes on the stage [...]. We could not do all this even if we had more reliable contemporary drawings available, such as the one by the Dutchman De Wytt. (SEBESTYÉN 1924: 22)

Instead of following the appearance of any then known Elizabethan performing spaces (see Fig. 4), Oláh and Hevesi created their own. It was a rather simple symmetric structure: a one-storey house on each side with doors on both floors, balconies in front of the top floor doors, and a row of arcades in the background. The houses on the sides were in fact the frame, the permanent part of the set, within which the picture,

20 Gusztáv Oláh (1901–1956), the first set designer to be named on Hungarian playbills. He studied architecture, became a professional pianist, then worked as a scenic artist and painter for the Opera and the National Theatre.



**Fig. 3:** Gusztáv Oláh's Shakespeare sets as they were published in the Hungarian periodical *Színházi Élet* [Theatre Life] in 1924 (SEBESTYÉN 1924: 23). Oláh's set for the 1923 *Shrew*, featuring the arcade and balconies on the two sides is image No.4, centre of the page.



A londoni Swan-színház (1596-ból való rajz után).



A Red-Bull színház színpadja (1662-ből való rajz után).  
SHAKESPEARE KORABELI ANGOL SZÍNPADI KÉPEK.

A harmadik felvonás ennek ötletes folytatása. Végül: Jura dr. és neje szöknek és Gusztáv meg Mária ott maradnak. A nagy művész

úgy örül, hogy most néhány napig pihenhet, elnéző és nem követelőző neje oldalán. De eszébe jut valami: Mégse lehet. De lehet, — mondja Mária, — elhozom magammal a hajfestő szert, Gusztáv boldog. Ebben a pillanatban megjő az a féltékeny némbor, a ki az egész galibát csinálta. Gusztáv nagyot nyög: újból kezdődik a komédia. Az egész kellemes, mulatságos szatira, vidám karrikatura, izlés-sel megkomponálva, művészettel megírva, article de Vienne, melynek megvan a maga bélyege. Göth ebben a szerepben mutatkozott be, mint a Magyar Színház tagja és nagy maesztriával kreálta az alakot. Az egész előadás igen jó volt, főleg Rátkai és Mészáros Gizella nagyon mulatságosak. Kevésbé jó előadás eltemette volna a darabot, melynek alakjait közönségünk nem ismeri, de ebben az előadásban nyomban megértette.

\*

A Kisfaludy-Társaság Shakespeare-bizottsága a maga utolsó matinee-ját soirée-vé változtatta át és előadta az Országos Színművészeti Akadémia növendékeivel *Shakespeare «Vihar»*-ját, még pedig Shakespeare-korabeli színpadi berendezéssel (Hevesi Sándor dr. vezetése és rendezése mellett), díszlet nélkül, felvonásköz nélkül, egyhuzamban, másfél órai tartammal. E sorok írója az előadás előtt húsz pereznyi előadást tartott ennek a berendezésnek a mi-voltáról és magáról a darabról. A hozzáértők nézete szerint ez a kísérlet annyira sikerült, hogy valószínűleg folytatása lesz. A közönség nagyon érdeklődött az ügy iránt, minden jegyet elkapkodott, úgy, hogy az előadást szombaton (23-ikán) ismételnünk kellett. Nehányunk nézete szerint kitűnt, hogy bizonyos darabjait Shakespearenek voltaképp csak így lehet játszani. A jelenetek szünet nélkül való egymásra következése oly titkait tárja föl a Shakespeare-féle kompozícióknak, melyekre eddig alig gondoltunk, melyek eddig merőben ismeretlen hatásokat tettek. Például: A Vihar első jelenete nagy vihar. A mai színpad nagy-szerűen csinálja a vihart, minden rendben van. A viharok vége. A függöny összeesapódik. A színház emberei lázasan dolgoznak, hogy új szintért alkossanak. Nagy szünet. Végre a függöny széjjel lebben, Miranda és Prospero állnak előttünk és Miranda fájdalommal el-telve sópánszik a tönkrement hajón, az elpusztult embereken. Semmi hatás! Hol van már az a vihar! Ellenben a Shakespearei színpadon: Még dörg a vi-



Egy angol színpad (1632).

**Fig. 4:** Bernát Alexander's Introduction to Hevesi's experimental production of *The Tempest* was published by the Hungarian periodical *Vasárnapi Újság* [Sunday News] in 1910.

The article featured the three images of theatre spaces that were then known to have been related to Shakespeare.

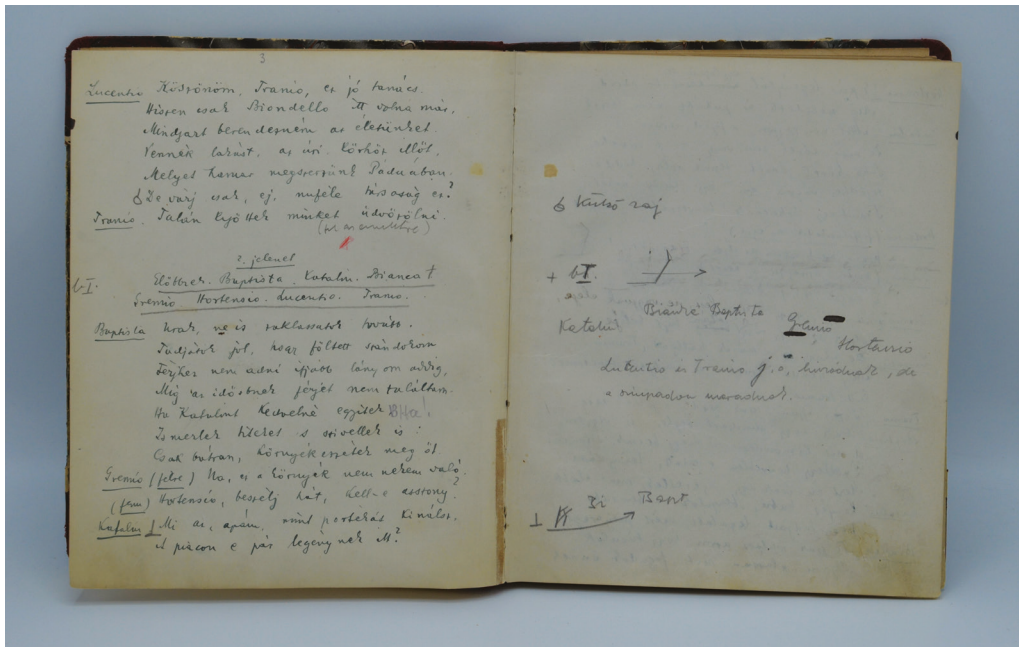
e.g., the arcades, could change with the scenes. The place can equally be assumed to be a small Italian piazza or, especially when the arcades in the back are partly covered by a leafy wall, a movable element, the inside of a larger well-to-do property, which showed conspicuous simplicity and flexibility, only suggestive of possible venues/locations. Hevesi argued that the production needed no sophisticated scenography at all – and here again he appealed to Shakespeare's authority – saying that Shakespeare already solved this problem. 'There are no scenes or lighting. Both are written into the text – the actor announces them,' Hevesi wrote, and referred to, e.g., Lucentio and Petruchio's opening lines (1.1.1–2 and 1.2.1–2),<sup>21</sup> which indeed indicate the characters' location (HEVESI 1924: 3). Hevesi understood Shakespeare's script as that of a fast-paced film, and sketched the description of the ideal scenography like this:

As it shows nothing: it can indicate everything. The foreground – which is open – can be a street, a public space, a forum, a highway, a city – whatever the poet wants. Shakespearean drama is thus made up of scenes – like film drama – two or three plots develop in parallel, as two or three planes of the stage play constantly. (HEVESI 1924: 3)

While Oláh's scenography did not resemble any Elizabethan stage at all, he did create exactly what Hevesi needed and thus ensured the performance's fast tempo. The two balconies on the first floor opened the third dimension for the director, and even the ground floor space was further divided by a few (stage-)wide steps to create two planes (so the level of the so-called upstage part was a few steps, about half a metre). In this space the scenes could seamlessly flow into one another. According to a pencilled inscription in the manuscript, 'fel az emeletre' [up the balcony] (HEVESI 1923: 3, Fig. 5) at the end of 1.1. Tranio and Lucentio ascend the balcony to watch and comment upon Baptista, Katherine, Bianca, Hortensio, and Gremio's dialogue in 1.2. from above. Before the others leave, Lucentio and Tranio start descending from the balcony; and while the others are still on their way out, Lucentio and Tranio already begin their dialogue coming to the fore and down the few steps. In the manuscript Hevesi meticulously exchanged all relevant prepositions and locatives accordingly, harmonising the text throughout with the actual stage business. As a spectator saw it, Hevesi's

most daring and ingenious, and also his most successful, test so far has been the stage of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The giddy *prestissimo* demanded by the Italian temperament was in full effect in this production. Everything remained in its place as the poet had intended. The splendour of the costumes made the poverty of the scenery disappear; the magnificent acting of the actors concentrated all attention on the action. (SEBESTYÉN 1924: 22; emphasis mine)

21 LUCENTIO: 'Tranio, since for the great desire I had / To see fair Padua, nursery of arts, / I am arrived' (1.1.1–2), and PETRUCHIO: 'Verona, for a while I take my leave / To see my friends in Padua' (1.2.1–2).



**Fig. 5:** Pencilled inscription in the manuscript, 'fel az emeletre' which reads 'up the balcony' at the end of 1.1. Hevesi's manuscript *Makrancos hölgy* [The Taming of the Shrew], 1923. Unpublished manuscript, 62.2406. Photo by Gabriella Reuss. Courtesy of the Hungarian Theatre Institute and Museum, Budapest.

Stage lighting can also help in maintaining the performance's dynamism; however, the 1923 manuscript remains silent about the lights. We may assume though, that the relatively modern technique Hevesi had applied for the 1911 *Hamlet*, namely, 'only that part is lit in which something is actually taking place' (ÚJVÁRY 1914: 38), was part of his consideration. Writing at the time of the première about the new scenography, Bálint noted that 'lighting plays a particularly important role in these stylised sets' (BÁLINT 1923: 23).

Curiously, the manuscript does not mention lights, but it does include notes about the requirement of live music and indicates sound effects at every scene change. This solution seems to me less cinematographic and more theatrically self-reflective. This might have been Hevesi's aim, and would resonate with what his *Hamlet*'s scenographer, Újváry, had written in 1914: 'the cinema conjures up images taken from real nature, and with these the stage can never compete' (ÚJVÁRY 1914: 37).

## Conclusion: the end of Hevesi's quest for the 'real Shakespeare'

When Hevesi set out on his quest for 'the real Shakespeare' and staged *The Tempest* in 1910 on the Urania's barren stage, he seemed to be the champion of the 'unmutilated' Shakespeare and the Elizabethan stage. By the time he staged his flamboyant *Shrew* at the National Theatre in 1923, Hevesi dismissed the idea of the barren stage, and omitted the 300 lines of the play's Induction. By reading Hevesi's director's copy of the *Shrew* and revealing the circumstances of the production, this study made it clear that Hevesi's concept of 'the real Shakespeare' meant more than performing the entire Shakespearean text. Moreover, my study documented a slight change of vision over the years: by 1923 Hevesi was less concerned with the restoration of the fullest possible text and the Elizabethan looking stage, and much more concerned with the tempo and flow of the entire performance.

The only explanation I can find for this shift is related to the director's more than average awareness of the audience's demands: he knew, as his early scenographer, Újváry expressed, that 'the spectator is impatient and anxious, and cannot stand the long intervals between acts and scene changes that in old times extended most Shakespearean performances to extreme and unbearable lengths' (ÚJVÁRY 1914: 37). Clearly, in his 1923 *Shrew* Hevesi intended to further economise on time, hence the omission of the Induction, and presented the body of the play in the most complete, concise, and engaging form. Taking the National's stage as a given, Hevesi did not press the idea of the Elizabethan stage for his Shakespeares and offered his audience a feasible compromise between the barren stage and the heavy old-fashioned sets: Gusztáv Oláh's beautifully stylised scenography.

As it has been argued throughout the paper, Hevesi and his scenographers, Újváry and Oláh, did all they could for the theatre performance to flow as smoothly as possible, yet neither Hevesi nor his scenographers meant to compete with film. However, the sheer fact that they all mention film, this relatively new medium, and that they expressly relate it to the spectator's impatience at the lengthy scene changes and the tediously reverent (yet often incomprehensible) Shakespeare productions, reveals their awareness about the possibilities and the limitations of film and theatre. The performance of the *Shrew* lasted just long enough without the Induction: around two hours and thirty or forty minutes, plus one 20–30-minute break (the playbills read 'it starts at 7 and ends before 10'<sup>22</sup>). A strangely recurring phrase on the 1923 playbills and the 1926 programme booklet ensured that the experience was meant to be uninterrupted: 'the doors of the auditorium will remain closed until the interval'. I read this as the reflection of a new attitude, one that expects continuous attention for the continuous action, and rewards it in turn by an intensive and engaging experience.

Hevesi's idea about the real, authentic, and popular, Shakespeare manifested in his 1923 rendering of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The production undoubtedly achieved the

22 Before *Much Ado* and *Comedy of Errors* a sonnet sequence was included, probably because according to the reviews, these two productions ended 'within two hours'.

popularity that the director desired – not for himself, but – for Shakespeare: the audience flocked to the theatre to see his productions. As the playbills testify, all the tickets of the Shakespeare-cycles were sold out in advance. In a time of soaring inflation,<sup>23</sup> people were willing to queue for hours, and occasionally fight, not for lard or coal, as on other days after WWI, but for theatre tickets. *Pesti Napló* [Pest Diary] (1923) and the *Magyar Színpad* [Hungarian Stage] (1923b) both recorded this strange phenomenon. People 'stood in the warm autumn afternoon sunshine and waited patiently to be let upstairs at four o'clock, where, for their saved thousands – oh, the pennies of 1923 – they could buy something worth having: a little oblivion of this world, an escape to Shakespeare's fairy realm, true art, a little happiness' (*MAGYAR SZÍNPAD* 1923b: 2). I am amazed to see that Hevesi's revivals were the most creatively and carefully balanced compromises negotiated between the Shakespeare scholar, the theatre historian, the artistic and managing director of the National Theatre dependent on the box-office, the experimenting theatre director, and also the spectator, who needed an engaging experience, and who longed for action, fast pace, and the feel of a spectating community.

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23 The Treaty of Trianon, 4 June 1920, that rounded up the negotiations at the end of WWI cut off 71 % of Hungary (left 93,073 square kilometres out of 325,411 and 7.9 million inhabitants out of 20.9 million), which caused chaos in every field of life, but particularly in transport and economy.



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