

## Editorial Foreword

MAGDOLNA JÁKFALVI

The Zöld Szamár (Green Donkey) Theatre in Budapest was founded and staged its first performance in 1925. Alongside the periodicals edited by Lajos Kassák, it became one of the most significant hubs of avant-garde artistic activity in Hungary, and later a site of cultural remembrance. Dadaist and Surrealist performative practices, the use of found spaces, modern dance, and creative improvisation sustained the collaborative work of Sándor Bortnyik, Iván Hevesy, Sándor Jemnitz, Alice Madzsar, Farkas Molnár, Ödön Palasovszky, and Magda Róna over an extended period. Through theatrical experimentation, these avant-garde artists engaged with the multilingual and culturally diverse Budapest audience of the interwar era, and while speaking Hungarian, challenged the primacy of realistic illusion, stable linguistic meaning, and of rule-bound concepts of beauty. One hundred years ago, on Csengery Street—as announced by a poster designed by Farkas Molnár—they presented, for the first time, a gramophone pantomime, a jazz ensemble, and a typewriter orchestra.

In commemoration of the Green Donkey Theatre, the editors of *Theatron*, in collaboration with the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Pécs, organised a conference in 2025 to mark the centenary of its founding. Our aim was to explore whether theatrical expressivity and Dadaist and Surrealist visual strategies remain discernible today, and whether the linguistic fragmentation characteristic of the early twentieth century continues to be perceptible alongside contemporary forms of media mediation.

*Theatron* 2025/4 commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Green Donkey Theatre by offering a platform for scholars researching the events and aftermath of the Hungarian avant-garde and neo-avant-garde to present

their most recent findings. In examining some manifestations of the avant-garde and its ongoing influence, this issue seeks to convey the intellectual vibrancy of interdisciplinary scholarly exchange, whether addressing artistic practices associated with the Green Donkey in the fields of modern dance, music, applied and fine arts, dramaturgy, film, or theatre. By publishing six selected studies, this commemorative issue both pays tribute to and reaffirms its commitment to the role of avant-garde forms within theatre history. Magdolna Jákfalvi analyses the forbidden and hidden status that was the backdrop to avant-garde events and their existence through an examination of the performance spaces of both an interwar troupe and a group active in the 1970s. Árpád Kékesi Kun discusses avant-garde performances staged in provincial Hungarian theatres through the analysis of two productions of *Ubu*. Gabriella Kiss situates the avant-garde techniques and performative situations employed in student theatre within the framework of the cultural canon. Rozália Székely conceptualises the experimental character of avant-garde theatre around questions of presence, introducing one of the performances at the Szentkirályi Basement. Dániel Fenyő investigates the influence of the Hungarian avant-garde poet Károly Tamkó Sirató on the work of younger avant-garde artists, interpreting this influence as a form of rediscovery. Bettina Simon revisits a debate, identifying within it a renewed opportunity for understanding the avant-garde event.

Taken as a whole, the issue foregrounds the everyday practice of avant-garde insights and the shifts in perspective that led avant-garde artists in so many directions: toward free spaces, free creative techniques, and free communities. This is the freedom we commemorate.