

“Dance, Too, Originates From a Celestial Muse”

The Press Reception of Claudine Couqui’s Guest Performance in Pest, with Particular Attention to the Critiques by Pál Gyulai

“For the sake of the weaker ones, especially for people in the villages, I must explain: what is ballet? Otherwise, they wouldn’t know. It’s a play where everyone speaks with their feet, using their heads for nothing. Here, the characters’ faces do not move for the world – anger, good humor, or surprise *cannot* be shown, they must all be expressed with the feet. Hm. It is easy to express anger with the foot, by giving someone a good kick, but joy? Now, that is the art.”¹

Hedvig UJVÁRI
Péter Pázmány Catholic University
h.ujvari@t-online.hu

ABSTRACT

The Italian-born ballerina, Claudina Couqui (1835–1913), performed as a guest artist in numerous cities, including two appearances to Pest during the 1860s. Her first performance in 1863 was preceded by great anticipation, and after receiving an enthusiastic reception, she returned to the National Theatre the following year. This study seeks to explore the context of Pál Gyulai’s lesser-known—and, to our knowledge, only—ballet-related dramaturgical work through the lens of the guest performances of the ballerina who had come from Vienna. The investigation is justified by the fact that Gyulai’s critical writings and theatre reviews primarily focused on dramatic productions. However, Couqui’s guest performances required the clarification of some fundamental questions: What role did ballet play among theatrical genres? Where did it stand in relation to drama and opera? And what expectations did contemporary theatre critics and dramaturgists have regarding the genre? Furthermore, what could Gyulai have known about the ballet productions in Pest at the time, and to what extent? Addressing these questions requires an examination of the reception of specific ballet productions.

Keywords: Claudina Couqui, Pál Gyulai, ballet, National Theatre, Pest-Buda, critic

1 Kakas 1856. Emphasis in the original. The title of the study is a quotation from a theater review. See below: N. N. 1864f.

The career of the Italian-born ballerina, Claudina Couqui (1835–1913), began in Milan, continued in Paris, and later flourished in Vienna. As a guest artist, she performed in numerous cities, including two appearances in Pest during the 1860s. Due to regular reports in the local press about her successes in Vienna, her first performance in Pest in 1863 was eagerly anticipated. After an enthusiastic reception, she returned to the National Theatre the following summer. This study aims to contextualize a lesser-known dramaturgical work by Pál Gyulai, which, to our knowledge, is his only piece related to ballet. The analysis is conducted through the lens of Couqui’s guest performances in Pest.

This examination is warranted, given that Gyulai’s critical essays and theatre reviews² primarily focus on drama. However, before the Royal Hungarian Opera House opened in 1884, the National Theatre also hosted opera and ballet productions. In Gyulai’s career as a theatre critic, these types of performances received relatively little attention, and dance theatre performances, in particular, almost none. Couqui’s guest appearances raise fundamental questions: What role does ballet play among various forms of theatre, and where does it rank in the hierarchy amid the coexistence of the muses? What expectations did contemporary theatre critics and drama theorists have for the genre, and what did Pál Gyulai know – and to what extent – about the dance theatre productions in Pest at the time? Addressing these questions requires a more detailed presentation of the reception of individual ballet performances, as reconstructed from periodicals. Thus, this study takes an interdisciplinary rather than a narrowly literary-historical approach.

Among the arts, dance and music are the least conceptual, while painting, sculpture, and literature remain the most tangible. They leave no permanent, physical objects to which one can return or that can serve as reference points for later works. Music, at least, leaves behind a score, a tangible object that can be found; but for dance or ballet, nothing endures beyond the immediate experience, and even that is limited in time. Dance, “the art of creating time and space” (Boros 2020, 8-9), vanishes once the moment passes. The work “exists or ‘happens’ only as long as the artist is present in full physical, biological, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive reality.” The ballet dancer becomes one with the created space and time, yet the artwork only persists as long as the performance continues. It leaves behind no material object in time nor in space; the performance itself. It leaves no lasting objects in time or space; the performance is a one-time event, leaving nothing to revisit, walk around, or observe from multiple perspectives (Boros 2020, 8-9). Reconstructing dance history from the pre-recording era – writing about the invisible and the inaudible – thus presents a uniquely challenging task. Newspaper articles written in the wake of performances are the only available sources, making the study of periodicals crucial for

2 For the results of Gyulai research in recent years, see Ajkay–Császtvay 2018; Beke 2017; T. Szabó 2021.

examining cultural production, the dissemination of knowledge, and, not least, channels for expressing opinions (Török 2022, 227-228).

1. Musical stages in Hungary

Like most institutions, theatres were born out of social demand. In Hungary, opera appeared in the 18th century without prior foundations, so it did not have the roots and developmental stages seen in Italy or France. As in other European countries, demand for the genre came from the most affluent social strata – the aristocracy.³ The model was Vienna and the imperial court, where French language and culture dominated through Maria Theresa's husband, Emperor Francis I of Lorraine. In Hungary, there were more than 50 private theatres owned by the aristocracy, including the theatres of the Esterházy dukes in Kismarton and Eszterháza, the theatre of Bishop Ádám Patachich in Oradea, the opera of Count János Erdődy in Bratislava, and the opera companies of Prince Primate József Batthyány (Staud 1984, 7-15; Székely-Kerényi 1990).

In addition to the aristocratic establishments, musical theatre productions also began to appear in bourgeois theatres. The first musical theatre performances were staged in Pest, at Rondella, which opened in 1774 and was converted from a bastion into a theatre. However, these were ballets rather than operas, following the influence of Jean-Georges Noverre, whose work flourished in Vienna.⁴ The genre, popular in the imperial city, spread throughout the Habsburg Empire by German touring companies. According to records from 1783, the Rondella staged 274 performances over 137 evenings, of which 58 were ballets performed 134 times. Ballet was not only popular but also a relatively low-budget genre: a simple backdrop sufficed as scenery, a single costume was enough, and all roles, from the tragic to the comic, were danced to accompaniment typically provided by a harpsichord, violin, and a flute (Staud 1984, 16).

The cultural boom in the Buda region began after 1873 when Joseph II relocated the administrative centre of the empire from Bratislava to Buda. To entertain officials, the former Carmelite monastery in Buda, left vacant, was converted into a theatre. This new venue, the Castle Theatre, was completed in 1787 (Staud 1984, 16). The first independent Hungarian ballet initiatives appeared here on the programme of the Hungarian theatre company that operated between 1833 and 1836. During this period, efforts

3 The trend has continued in later years. See Ujvári 2023b.

4 Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810) was a French dancer, choreographer and ballet master. *His Letters on Dance* (1760) is considered the theoretical foundation of ballet. He was who first introduced coherent ideas into pantomime and then brought them to life through dramatic action, i.e. he recognised the role of dramatic action in dance. The plot was expected to be simple and easy to understand, since only mimicry and dance are available for the narrative.

to adapt dance performance for Hungarian audiences began. On the one hand, librettos were written on Hungarian themes; on the other, verbunk elements appeared in the music, and the choreography incorporated folk dance motifs. Alongside operas, ballets became an integral part of the theatre repertoire, and the genre enjoyed great popularity.

The German Theatre of Pest, initially proposed by Joseph II but completed only in 1812, also supported the development of opera and ballet.⁵ The new theatre, which could seat 3,500 people but had poor acoustics, was the largest theatre in Europe at the time, despite being located in a city with only 33,000 residents. Its repertoire was largely based on those of Austrian and German theatres. The massive auditorium posed a challenge for dramatic actors, so the venue was more suited to grand opera and ballet productions, although the high cost of scenery and costumes proved to be a limiting factor. In its early years, the theatre had no resident ballet company, a gap it filled by hiring guest artists – a practice that would later become standard (Staud 1984, 19, 45).

Of particular significance to ballet was the appointment of ballet master François Crombé,⁶ who, starting in 1842, made considerable efforts to train a ballet ensemble. Notable performances during the 1840s included *Giselle* and *Esmeralda*, and during this period, the celebrated ballerina Fanny Elßler⁷ also appeared as a guest in Pest. Several composers created music for the theatre’s ballets, including Ferenc Doppler, József Heinisch, and Ferenc Kaczér. However, in February 1847, the German Theatre was destroyed by fire, ending its leading role in opera. The displaced German company continued to perform temporarily in various venues, but was no longer able to stage ballet productions (Staud 1984, 24).

A milestone in the cultural life of Pest-Buda occurred with the establishment of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest in 1837 (renamed the National Theatre in 1840), which began staging operas in the 1840s.⁸ The opening performance conveyed both purpose and artistic dedication, featuring drama, opera, and dance: alongside the works of Vörösmarty, József Heinisch, and Márk Rózsavölgyi, Hungarian dances taught by Lajos Szöllősy were included.⁹ This third element – dance – was

5 For details see: Pukánszky Kádár 1914, 1923.

6 His biographical details are unknown. He was a member of the Vienna Court Theatre from 1829 to 1838, after which he worked as a ballet master in Graz.

7 Fanny Elßler (née Franziska Elßler, 1810–1884) was one of the most important ballet dancers of the Romantic era, alongside Marie Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, and Fanny Cerrito, and was known throughout Europe.

8 For details, see Pukánszky Kádár 1940, 45–176.

9 They collaborated in *Belizár*. See Mihály Vörösmarty: *Árpád ébredése*; Eduards Schenk: *Belizár*. The program of the opening performance of the Pesti Magyar Színház, 22 August, 1837. Reference: SZT SZL Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Színháztörténeti Tár - Színháztörténeti és Zeneműtár. [SZT SZL Theatre History and Music Collection]. The source of the image: Magyar Digitális Képekgyűjtő [Hungarian Digital Picture Library]. <http://www.kepkonyvtar.hu/?docId=27913>.

a logical addition, especially given the institution's aim to compete with the German Theatre in Pest (Staud 1984, 45).

Following the opening of the Hungarian Theatre, dancers from the German Theatre performed on its stage for a time. Notably, ballet master János Kolosánszky joined the Hungarian Theatre in 1839, followed later by Ferenc Kaczér. During this period, the *csárdás* evolved into its definitive form, emerging from the simplified *körmagyar* dance style (Staud 1984, 46).

One of the highlights of the National Theatre was the October 1846 appearance of Fanny Cerrito (1817–1909) and her husband, Arthur Saint-Léon (1821–1870) (Staud 1984, 46). Although the institution did not yet have a ballet master, it hired Federico Campilli (1820–1889) from Vienna in 1847. However, from the opening of the National Theatre until the early 1850s, ballet in the modern sense did not exist there, as the pieces staged were closer to pantomimes than to true ballet.

The Italian-born Campilli was tasked with establishing regular Hungarian ballet training, organizing the theatre's ballet ensemble, and developing the ballet repertoire. In the 1850s, ballet managed to exist as an independent genre within the National Theatre, primarily supported by Emilia Aranyváry.¹⁰ However, it struggled to connect with folk-national traditions and, crucially, it catered to the interests of the aristocracy, which led to intense criticism. Partly for these reasons, and due to economic considerations, director Gedeon Ráday (1806–1873) abolished ballet's independence, reducing it to merely a ballet accompaniment for operas. This shift also limited Aranyváry's opportunities, prompting her to leave the country in 1859. Following her departure, Campilli did not create any new ballets for nearly 20 years; instead, he focused on reviving old works and choreographing for operas.

Campilli initially worked at the National Theatre until 1852, returning from 1855 to 1887 (from 1884 at the Hungarian Royal Opera). Although he was credited with organizing the ballet company, he did not establish a system of regular training. Instead, he adapted exercises and steps to each ballet being performed. This inconsistency, coupled with unregulated physical demands, often harmed the dancers. Frequently traveling to Vienna, Campilli staged productions he had seen there for the Pest audience. Throughout his lengthy career, he showed little interest in creating a national dance style, even though this became a key expectation in drama and opera. Ultimately, the ballet company lost its male dancers (Staud 1984, 46–47).¹¹

10 For a career profile of the first Hungarian prima ballerina, who proved herself on the international stage, see Pónyai 2020; Gara 2022; Ujvári 2023a, 2023c.

11 After a two-decade hiatus, however, Campilli staged Delibes' ballets, *Coppélia* (1877), then *Sylvia* (1878), and finally *Naila* (1881). The Opera House was already under construction, and Campilli was aware that, once it opened, ballet would play an important role in the theatre alongside opera.

Rózsi Vályi assessed Campilli as “a compromise-bound, average craftsman who jealously guarded his profession and kept Hungarian dancers separate from ballet” (Vályi 1956, 92-93). The most outstanding dancers, including Emília Aranyváry, did not learn from him. During his tenure, there was no integration of Hungarian dance traditions with foreign ballet, “which, under a more capable ballet master, could have provided the foundation for healthy development” (Vályi 1956, 93).

2. The role of national dance performance

Ferenc Erkel had already composed the Hungarian national opera by the mid-19th century, but the emergence of Hungarian ballet and ballet music, as well as the creation of a national dance play, were still forthcoming. Although there were attempts in this direction as early as the 1830s, a significant breakthrough had not yet been achieved (Kerényi 1979; Major 1987). One of the first reform-era dance performances can be considered József Heinisch’s *A haramiabanda* [The Haramia Gang], which was staged at the Budai Játékszín (Buda Playhouse, later the Castle Theatre) in 1834. The piece draws on various musical sources, incorporating elements of verbunkos, folk music, and even melodies from Beethoven, demonstrating the influence of European art music. Folk dance also proved successful and enduring, particularly with *Körmagyar* (1842), featuring music by Márk Rózsavölgyi, and choreography by Lajos Szöllősy. After the fall of the War of Independence, however, attempts in this direction ceased, with only Ferenc Doppler’s *Ilka vagy a huszártoborzó* [*Ilka or the Hussar Drummer*] (1849) and *Toborzók* (1854) choreographed by Emília Aranyváry, worth mentioning. The success of these dance plays lay in their Hungarian content, which resonated with the spirit of the times and the sense of patriotic national identity. However, after 1849, prohibitions on theatrical performances pushed the national character of these works into the background, resulting in a decline in theatre attendance. During this time, Hungarian stage dance was only performed in a few scenes of Erkel’s operas, and the National Theatre’s dance company operated under poor conditions. It was only after the construction of the Royal Hungarian Opera House that the company was given the opportunity to develop (Gelencsér 1984; Windhager 2020).

The process of Hungarian embourgeoisement and the attempts to regain national independence were characterized by obstacles and compromises. These anomalies impeded and often contradicted the development of the national character of various artistic disciplines. While the evolution of Hungarian national music is marked by the work of Liszt, Erkel, and later Bartók and Kodály, a comparable trajectory is absent in Hungarian dance. There were no outstanding Hungarian ballet artists who adapted the folk dances of the time to the ballet stage with the high artistic standard and alignment with the period’s

spirit and taste. As a result, Hungarian ballet in the last decades of the 19th century primarily followed the Viennese model, with only a few national elements incorporated into the *Csárdás* and *Vióra* (Körtvélyes 1966; Ujvári 2023d).

In discussing the role and significance of national dance, it is important to highlight that there was a social demand for the development of national dance culture and the art of dance in Hungary during the first half of the 19th century. However, the failure of the War of Independence, followed by the Neo-absolutist period, led to a decline in artistic efforts. After the Compromise of 1867, signs of revival began to emerge: the demand for the presentation of national dance culture became increasingly pronounced, bourgeois ballroom dance culture spread more widely, and the achievements of European dance art also began to make their impact felt.

The articulation of the necessity for national dance works, including the *daljáték*, emerged as a product of 19th-century bourgeois development. In Hungary, this artistic ambition became intertwined with the struggle for a national program, which emphasized Hungarian themes, national music, and dance, framed within the context of dramatic dance plays and romantic ballet (Gelencsér 1984, 153-154).

As noted earlier, unthinkable, the theatrical operations of the Reform-era were unimaginable without the participation of guest artists, a tradition that continued for decades. Below, we will examine the guest performances of the ballerina Claudina Couqui from Vienna (in 1863 and 1864), particularly because her productions reached a level of quality that inspired Pál Gyulai to write critiques of the ballet genre.

3. Claudina Couqui's first appearance in Pest (1863)

Claudina Couqui¹² began studying ballet in Milan at the age of seven. She initially danced at the Teatro alla Scala and, from 1855, performed in Paris. In 1857, she moved to the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna, where she achieved her first significant success in 1858 in *Carnival Adventures* (*Karnevals-Abenteuer*), a piece that Gyulai later criticised. She retired from the theatre with this production in 1868. Between 1870 and 1873 she also performed at the Court Opera. In addition to her performances in Vienna, she was a guest artist in Cairo and many European cities, including London, Berlin, Milan, Venice, Florence, St Petersburg, Warsaw, and Pest. She ultimately retired from the stage in Rome in 1874 (Cucchi 1904a, 126-129).¹³

She first performed in Pest in 1863 and returned to the National Theatre the following year. By this time, she was already familiar to the Pest audience, as her successes in Vienna had been reported in the

12 Claudina Couqui (née Cucchi, 1834 or 1835, Monza – 1913, Milan) was an Italian ballerina. Other spellings of her name: Claudine, Cucchi, Conqui.

13 In German: Cucchi 1904b; Wallaschek 1909.

Hungarian press.¹⁴ According to Károly Zilahy, Couqui was much loved by the audiences of the imperial capital, though he himself felt that her stage performances displayed “more *grace* and lightness than fire,” and that her expressions, despite her constant smile, “leave one cold” (Zilahy 1860).¹⁵ By the summer of 1861, reports indicated that three Viennese ballet dancers were expected to perform at the National Theatre.¹⁶ The anticipated guest appearance came to fruition two years later, but only Claudina Couqui arrived in Pest on March 29, 1863. News of her scheduled appearances had been circulating in the newspapers for weeks prior to her arrival. After rehearsals, she appeared in the following plays:

Ballet title	Presentation day (1863)
The Devil in Love (Szerelmes ördög)	8 April
Gizella (Giselle)	10 April
Catherine, the Robber Leader (Katalin, a rablóvezérnő)	13 April
Robert and Bertram	15 April
Carnival Adventures (Farsangi kalandok)	17 April, 20 April

14 In addition to the daily newspapers and periodicals (*Hölgyfutár*, *Nővilág*, *Kalauz*, *Vasárnapi Ujság*, *Ország Tükre*, etc.), the short-lived trade journals of the period also reported on theatre productions, such as *Délibáb*, *Kolozsvári Színházi Közlöny*, and *Magyar Színházi Lap* published by Gábor Egressy in the 1850s and 1860s. The *Színházi Látcsó*, published by Kálmán Szerdahelyi and regarded as the ‘official’ journal of the National Theatre, is significant for the period under discussion. It reported on the events of the Hungarian theatre world between 1863 and mid-March 1864. In German, the same task was performed by *Zwischenakt: Blätter für Theater, Musik, Kunst und Tagesereignisse*, published daily by Mór Morländer (= Moritz Engländer) between 1863 and 1869. From 1 January 1866, the administration of the publication was transferred to the Deutsch Brothers (Gebrüder Deutsch) at Dorottya street no. 11, while the owner remained Morländer. The ‘Theater und Kunst’ section was mainly devoted to articles and reports signed with a signature, as was the ‘Lokales und Tagesneuigkeiten’ section.

15 Zilahy 1860. Emphasis in the original.

16 It was first published in *Pesti Napló* (no. 3395, 7 June 1861), then taken up by other publications, e.g. *Hölgyfutár*, no. 28, 5 March 1861, p. 223.

Among the five ballets, *Carnival Adventures* was a novelty, not yet performed in Pest, which heightened anticipation around the guest artist's appearances (N. N. 1863a).¹⁷ Her debut, however, was somewhat overshadowed by a new policy at the National Theatre: only members of the drama selection committee were granted free tickets to *Gizella*, a policy noted in multiple newspapers.¹⁸ As a result, there was considerable interest in the reviews that Gergely Czuczor, Pál Gyulai, Lőrinc Tóth, and Ágost Greguss were expected to publish on "the ballabille, pas deux, pirouettes, entrechats, ballonades, and everything else presented by artist and her entourage."¹⁹

Mlle Couqui made her debut in *The Devil in Love*, first staged in Pest by Campilli in 1851.²⁰ This ballet was visually spectacular, featuring "Bengal fire, hellfire, lightning, a magic table, shooting up from the ground, descent into hell – all in quick succession" (L. 1851). The production was staged again in 1855, with Emilia Aranyváy in the leading role.²¹ *Pesti Napló* emphasized the importance to this production, viewing it as a significant step forward in the development of Hungarian dance:

"The theatre was once again very full, reflecting a growing receptiveness and appreciation for the noble ballet. This phenomenon is welcome; not long ago, the majority of audiences, both here and elsewhere, tended to favor the stirring appeal of more emotionally charged, bacchic dances. Now, we observe that the public is turning with interest toward a more refined ballet – a form that captivates not through provocative gestures but through poetic figures, the plastic

17 The theatre scene in Pest has benefited from the increased interest, as the number of spectators has dropped. The journal *Bolond Miksa* presents the situation as a joke, but in fact it accurately describes the situation, because after Emilia Aranyváy's departure there were no ballet dancers of outstanding quality in Pest: "Nothing could fill our theatre in recent times, and here comes Kuki [Claudina Couqui and fills the boxes and balconies [...]" (N. N. 1863e). In the days of Fanny Elßler and Ceritto, the ballet fever was greater, and the artists were treated with the public respect of (almost) royalty. The present, however, is not nearly so rosy, the situation of the ballet in Pest and its personnel need considerable renewal, but "even if something new is done, it is like repairing the fence of a museum with a board that has been stumbled over elsewhere and is even more outdated".

18 The contemporary title of *Giselle*.

19 N. N. 1863c. The *Szinházi Látszó* also refers to the appearance of "many learned art critics," as it was mainly the drama critics who received honorary tickets for the performances (N. N. 1863d). Humorous newspapers also noticed the unusual practice (N. N. 1863i).

20 Joseph Mazilier (choreography) – Napoléon Henri Reber, François Benoist (music) – Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges (libretto), *Le Diable amoureux*. Premiere: Paris, 23 September 1840. The libretto is based on the short story *The Devil in Love* (1772) by Jaques Cazotte. For the libretto see: <https://petipasociety.com/le-diable-amoureux-or-satanella/>.

21 But in 1854 *Die Presse* was already writing that *Der verliebte Teufel* was getting old, the ballet masters' imagination was paralysed, the plots were dull and pointless, and the new dances didn't seem new (N. N. 1854a).

beauties of form, and that enchanting power which elevates dance to the level of art. We must regard this shift as progress in the development of the public's artistic sensibility. This trend is particularly noteworthy, especially considering that ballet has faced a dangerous rivalry with national dances. This rivalry is significant because it is easier for even an average artist to make an impact in national dances, whereas only distinguished dancers can succeed in ballet. And this distinction is natural. National dances resonate more closely with the public's passions and express emotions and concepts that are more easily understood by them: the music of national dances does not merely accompany the dance but serves as its very foundation. In contrast, the effectiveness of ballet relies on techniques that may not engage those who seek a deeper, more imaginative expression in dance movements. These techniques include regularity and plastic beauty – art forms that can also influence the nobler senses through the coolness of marble.” (L. 1851)

About Claudina Couqui's guest appearance, Kálmán Szerdahelyi likely wrote in more detail in *Színházi Látcső*. As we shall see below, his critique aligns with Gyulai's observation: “Generally we do not wish to make a grand sacrificial fire for ballet – this theatrical luxury – but we must admire Couqui, for she is a mature artist who not only floats like a fairy, but also expresses every mood and emotion in her performance as dramatically as an actress” (N. N. 1863d). In the ballet *The Devil in Love*, she was required to portray the passion of a demon, which she achieved through her facial expressions and “fierce and beautiful movements, her wild and graceful elevations” (N. N. 1863d). The reviewer specifically highlights Couqui's hand gestures, noting that “[the] hand, it is said, is the greatest burden on the stage,” and this is especially true for a dancer (N. N. 1863d). However, Couqui turned this to her advantage, “making whole triumphs with her hands”: “How beautifully she carries them, and with them, she draws lightning-quick and delicate graceful figures in the air!” (N. N. 1863d)

According to the reviewer, the highlight of the performance was the seduction scene, characterized by its light and charming rendition of the dance. Couqui's dancing was not only superb but also highly expressive. “For her, expression is the main thing. From the tip of her finger to her heel, everything resonates. It creates a poetic image that charms with its truth and idealism. That's why not only ballet lovers but also friends of drama will be delight in watching her.” (N. N. 1863d)

The second performance of the guest appearance was the ballet *Giselle*. This was the “first complete dance piece staged in Hungary,” choreographed by the Viennese dancer Pasquale Borri (1820–1884) on 12 June 1847 at the National Theatre (Jaquemmet 2022, 61). In the mid-1850s, Aranyváry also performed it regularly with great success.

In its review of *Giselle*, the theatre magazine *Színházi Látcső* noted that Couqui's performance showcased her great technical preparation and brilliant dancing skills, paired with lightness and grace. Her acting

nearly crowned her performance, aided by her “finely etched and spirited” expressions, which conveyed every kind of emotion with ease. “Her Gisella possesses a whole dramatic expression of life.” (N. N. 1863b) “She portrayed the poor but graceful vineyard girl with precision”, and at the end of the first act, she also depicted despair, madness, and death with striking authenticity. Her performance was aesthetic, gripping, and true to life (N. N. 1863b).

In *Pester Lloyd*, Adolf Dux expressed his belief that the National Theatre’s monotonous and dull repertoire seems to be revitalised by Couqui’s guest appearance. Her performance in *Giselle* fully lived up to expectations, and rightly so, as she possessed everything needed for an artistic achievement: her technical prowess allowed her to execute the most difficult and surprising leaps with a brilliance and ease, providing audiences with a rare treat. Her acting and expressive facial gestures significantly enhanced her performance, particularly in her portrayal of despair, madness, and finally death. The audience was very appreciative of the guest artist’s performance, and also appreciated the contribution of Mari Rotter,²² and Campilli.

Dux also highlighted fundamental issues. In his view, the ballet had not established a secure place within the National Theatre, often serving merely to fill gaps in the repertoire. This was evident in *Giselle*: the theatre technology was not functioning properly. The lighting in the second act stripped the performance of any sense of romanticism, with daylight prevailing instead of the desirable twilight. There was no trace of eerie dimness, and the beautiful blue moon that typically graced the stage was nowhere to be found (D. 1863).

Giselle was performed frequently in the mid-1850s, leading to a decline in interest. In response, Campilli staged *Catherine, the Robber Leader*, which featured gunplay, brawls, and market comedy, in 1857.²³ This production, along with *Robert and Bertram*, received the least attention during Claudina Couqui’s guest performance and was scarcely mentioned in reviews. The critics’ lack of interest can be attributed to the

22 After Emilia Aranyváry’s departure, Mari Rotter (often referred to as Irma Rotter, 1841–1913) became the National Theatre’s prima ballerina, although she could not match her in talent. She also appears in the photo album of Kálmán Szerdahelyi: “...undeniably progressing in skill, but (we must admit) the graces seem to have forgotten to smile upon her at birth. She spins rapidly, moving on the tips of her toes with such speed that it almost has a sound, like a trill; she leaps and jumps with great vigor. However, there is no grace, roundness, or precision in her performance. Among other things, she carries her arms irregularly and expresses nothing with his face.” See: <https://kozvilagitas.blogspot.com/2016/06/szerdahelyi-kalman-fenykepalbuma-2015.html>.

23 Jules Perrot–Cesare Pugni: *Catarina, ou La Fille du Bandit*. Première: London, 1846. For libretto see: <https://petipasociety.com/catarina-ou-la-fille-du-bandit/>. In Budapest: *Katalin, a rablóvezérnő*. Regényes balett táncokkal és csoportozatokkal in 4 acts. [A Ballet with Dances and Group Movements in 4 Acts]. Adapted for the stage by Campilli. Premiere in Vienna: *Katharina, die Tochter des Banditen*, 29 April 1847. *Der Humorist*, no. 104, 1 May 1847, p. 414.

fact that these plays resemble folk theatre. To illustrate this point, the reception of the latter play in Vienna a decade earlier will be referenced.

The plot of *Robert and Bertram*²⁴ would have been familiar to Parisians, as the story of Robert Macaire²⁵ has been adapted for literature. The character of Robert gained popularity through the performance of Frédérick Lemaître²⁶, who made his fortune through theft and then established an insurance company to protect against it. However, the Viennese audience lacked this background information, so the story, as presented in the ballet, was not an unqualified success (N. N. 1854c). To put it more bluntly, the figures of a robber, a swindler, and a thief can be interesting and entertaining on stage, but these two ordinary prison inmates were not worthy of such portrayal. They were not in Paris either, and the play owed its lively and folkloric character to the performances of local actors (H. 1854).

The plot²⁷ of the ballet is permeated with folkloric traits, so the storyline could be the basis for a traditional pantomime rather than a ballet, as noted by a critic. The two protagonists are at the centre, and the value of the ballet lies in the performances of the two dancers: although as *divertissements*, they are also close to pantomime, wrote another newspaper. The amusing scenes of the first act feature the two villains dancing a *pas de deux* to fool the police, then robbing the barman, and finally escaping on horseback. After this, the plot loses its appeal. The first act is action-packed: burglary, chase, and escape, while the second act is a bit incomprehensible without background knowledge. The third part, with the Parisian avenue and the robbers escaping by airship, is very colourful and entertaining. The pantomime part suited the two

24 Michel François Hogue-Hermann Schmidt: *Robert und Bertrand: pantomimisches Ballet in 2 Akten*. Première: 22 January 1841, Berlin. Staged by Paul Taglioni. Libretto: <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00059411?page=6,7>. Première in Pest in March 1858, with Aranyváry. *Pesth-Ofner Localblatt*, no. 92, 23 April 1858, p. 4.

25 A fictional character, an unscrupulous crook, he embodies the archetype of evil in French culture.

26 Frédérick Lemaître (1800–1876): French actor, who played character roles mainly in buffoonery plays.

27 The plot: Robert and Bertrand are two rogues escaped from prison and on the run from the police. They first appear at a pub where the innkeeper's son is preparing for his wedding. The happy bride is the daughter of an industrialist, whose father brings the dowry in cash. Although the police are present, Robert distracts them with all sorts of stunts and then, taking advantage of the merriment of the wedding party, steals the dowry and finally escapes on horseback with his friend. In the second act, Robert is now at the head of an anti-theft insurance company, robbing many bona fide people of their shares. Meanwhile, the police reveal Robert's identity as he is about to marry the daughter of a wealthy marquis. On the day of the engagement, they try to catch him, but Robert is faster again, turning on his heels. While on the run, he and his friend steal the coats of two recruits and then turn up at a village fete, where they are again caught. From there, they escape in an airship (N. N. 1854b).

actors well: their acting was lively and entertaining, and the audience rewarded them.

4. Closing of the 1863 guest appearance

Claudina Couqui's guest appearance in 1863 concluded with the *Carnival Adventures*. Borri also incorporated the theme of the masked ball in one of his most successful works, the five-act ballet *Un'avventura di carnevale*,²⁸ which was later performed in Vienna, Milan, Parma, Reggio, Rome, Trieste, Turin, Florence, and Cremona between 1858 and 1864. The ballet was staged by Campilli at the National Theatre in 1863 under the title *Carnival Adventures* (Jaquemet 2022, 63). Following its premiere in Vienna in 1858, a correspondent from *Pester Lloyd* promptly reported on the performance. Several points from his critique would later resonate in Gyulai's review.

Based on the Vienna experience, the reviewer felt that this is not the kind of ballet to discuss in good company. It lacks depth and plot, with the sole aim of entertaining and stimulating the senses. Although the three acts are loosely connected, this is merely a facade. The spectacle, however, is lavish: Parisian painters, grizzled characters, a country aunt and uncle, an English traveller and his French companion, as well as countless supporting characters appear on stage. When they meet, they immediately break into dances, most often performing cancan. Adeline, the painter's model, showcases various forms of movement instead of remaining still. Waltzes, polkas and cancan abound everywhere: in the studio, in the fashion store, at the masquerade ball. Naturally, the latter is where the greatest revelry occurs, with the treacherous lord kidnapping the virtuous Adeline using dream dust. In the third act, she lies on a bed, observed from a respectful distance by her captor. This is the only scene in which Mademoiselle Couqui has the opportunity to prove herself as a mimic, according to the critic. Initially, images of the last night's festivities flash before her eyes, and she begins to dance involuntarily to the music. She becomes aware of her strange surroundings, recognizes the lord and slowly pieces together the events. Thanks to her friends, there is little time for despair, as one of the painters jumps through the window and confronts the lord. A shot is fired: the painter misses his target, and the English lord raises his gun but instead of shooting, he embraces the brave young man. The bridegroom appears, his jealousy dissipates, they celebrate their reunion, and the country uncle gives his blessing. This simple plot has one flaw: for two acts, Adeline is the wildest and most unrestrained of the grizzettes, only to suddenly reveal herself as a strong virgin. This dilemma is quite striking, according to the reviewer. He concluded that ballet dancers are particularly well-suited to

28 Pasquale Borri–Matthias Strebing: *Un'avventura di carnevale* [Carneval's–Adventure in Paris], première: Vienna, 16 October 1858. For libretto see: <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10581466?page=5>.

portray grizzettes and lovers rather than goddesses and mythical figures.²⁹ It marks a turning point in the history of ballet that the composer drew from real Parisian life for inspiration, rather than from thieves and knights, legends and fairy tales, or an approach to opera (Wallaschek 1909, 228).

5. Carnival Adventures, the “sugared emptiness” – or what is the function of the National Theatre?

The motto at the beginning of the essay, taken from Márton Kakas, continues:

“Next to me sat an inept old man, who spent the whole performance grumbling about how this is the purpose of the national theatre: to fill the entire evening with foot-tapping? What service do such empty spectacles render to the moral upbringing of the people, to the expression of their good feelings, and to their taste? These should be the aims of an institution like the national national theatre in Pest, and not the tickling of the jaded sensibilities of the audience and similar concerns.” (Kakas 1856, 189)

This fundamental question had already been addressed by theater critics before Claudina Couqui’s guest performances. Following the 1857 premiere of *Catherine, the Robber Leader*, the critic of *Pesti Napló* reflected on the coexistence of ballet and prose plays under one roof. He noted that Sunday was always considered a reliable theater day, as local residents, after the hardworking weekdays, attended the theater on Sunday regardless of the program. On this day, the theater hosted the “most grateful, most easily enthusiastic audience” (N. N. 1857a). This trend also sent a message to the theatre management: since the audience did not mind what was on the programme, it would be advisable to stage quality dramas on these days, as had been suggested before. In this context, the novel ballet *Catherine, the Robber Leader* was somewhat unconventional, as only plays had been presented until then. Although it had its place as a ballet, a return to the usual schedule would have been preferable, meaning that the National Theatre should have entertained audiences on Sundays with quality plays: “We do not wish for the management to present ballet to the Sunday audience any longer” (N. N. 1857a).

A few weeks earlier, the editor of *Budapesti Hírlap* took the same position (N. N. 1857c), basing his argument on the ideas of *Családi*

29 Vienna preface: O. R. 1858.

Lapok. Although the ballet was spectacular, it “does not belong in the halls of art at all” (N. N. 1857b). Spending on scenery and costumes was a waste, as purely eye-catching performances cannot reach the level of prose works or the depth of thought in drama, so “getting audiences accustomed to such spectacle is always to the detriment of serious dramatic recitation” (N. N. 1857c). He reaffirmed that drama is “what we also consider the primary mission of our national theatre” (N. N. 1857c). A year later the issue arose again. The *Vasárnapi Ujság* also lamented the lack of “original dramatic productions,” noting that, most recently, for two consecutive Sundays, “contrary to custom, we are treated to ballet,” which was of little use (N. N. 1858).

Following Claudina Couqui’s appearance in Pest, *A Hon* also resonates with the problem (X. 1863). The National Theatre’s core mission was to promote national language, art, morality, and public culture, according to his critic. In pursuing these aims, the different artistic disciplines (drama, music, and dance) were not mutually exclusive, although their separation and independent institutionalization had been mooted in the past. The term “national” implies certain obligations and expectations, and in the spirit of “noblesse oblige,” it must be acknowledged that for each artistic discipline, there are certain limits and quality criteria below which one cannot fall (X. 1863). In the case of prose, the introduction of folk theatre was welcomed, while the promotion of farce was deemed less fortunate.

In the reviewer’s opinion, the replacement of folk theatre with operetta was also a drop in quality; for instance, the performances by Rachel and Ristori’s foreign-language company were artistically acceptable,³⁰ but Levasseur’s³¹ vaudeville company was not. The guest appearances of Fanny Elßler and Cerrito on the national stage were also considered tolerable, whereas the appearance of Pepita and her companions was not welcomed.³²

Although Claudina Couqui’s dancing delighted many, the choice of program could have been more careful: Gizella and Uriele³³ demanded artistic interpretation, while *Carnival Adventures*, presented in two performances, represented a setback. The reviewer identified the basic problem in the cancan, which was not suitable for respectable ladies, even if it was referred to as a “carnival dance.” They asserted, “we will perform a modest cancan with virtuous movements, demonstrating that the cancan can also be danced modestly” (X. 1863). The critic also noted

30 Similarly see Pál Gyulai 1908b.

31 August Levasseur was a dancer at the Académie Impériale de Musique in Paris, and from 1858 ballet master and principal dancer at the Hamburg Municipal Theatre.

32 “This is how a Berlin newspaper described the art of world-famous dancers. Taglioni dances to make our blood boil; Elsler [!] to please; Grahn Lucille to amaze; Pepita to tease; Cerrito to stun; Couqui – as if to praise her – dances to dance, because dance is inspired by her passion, because dance is her life, her element, because she is all and nothing but dance.” (N. N. 1863j)

33 The woman-devil in *The Devil in Love*.

that it was pointless to include the csárdás in the ballet, as it was not the appropriate venue for it, given that the fundamental characteristics of this dance were entirely different

Regarding Couqui's guest performance in Pest, this production received the most coverage in the newspapers. *Színházi Látcső* pointed out that the dance play was presented in a shortened version with some omissions. Couqui performed more and more beautiful dances, including the csárdás with Rotter Mari, who was dressed as a man and danced “with the charm and grace of someone, who had learned it from the down-to-earth people at weddings in the Great Plain” (N. N. 1863f). Her performance to Spanish melodies was full “with Spanish fervour and exuberance”, Couqui “has a genuine artistic depth” (N. N. 1863f). All this was accompanied by graceful, light movements and charming expressions. Her costumes were also suited to the dances: for the csárdás, she wore a skirt in national colours and a headpiece, while in the Spanish dance, her headdress reflected the national colours.

The reviewer deemed the highlight of the ballet performance to be the pageant featuring the ribbon dance, set against a backdrop of colourful arbors. The piece concluded with a “noisy and folksy” carnival dance. The reception of the performance was equally lively: there were cheers and enormous applause, several dances had to be repeated. A shower of wreaths and bouquets was thrown at her feet from the boxes rented by the distinguished noblemen. “This shower of flowers was renewed three times.” (N. N. 1863f)

Among Couqui's merits was that the cancan was able to appear on the national stage, noted *Hölgyfutár* (N. N. 1863g). This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the piece was more of a “ball” than a ballet (N. N. 1863g, 383). She “brought enchantment to farce as well” (N. N. 1863g). Some of her dances, especially the csárdás and the Spanish dance, were greatly admired, being “welcomed with wreaths and whole showers of flowers” (N. N. 1863g). Following her guest performance, she left a significant void, making it difficult to entice the audience back to the theater.³⁴

6. Pál Gyulai

Pál Gyulai published two reviews of Claudina Couqui's guest performance in April 1863 in *Koszorú*, and included them in his *Dramaturgical Papers* (Gyulai 1908c). In his opinion, the Italian artist captivated the audience from her first appearance on the stage and “made a much deeper impression on our audience than the dancers usually do”. What struck him about the guest ballerina from Vienna was that, although famous virtuoso ballet dancers had appeared on stages in Pest

³⁴ N. N. 1863h. Another newspaper also warns of the dwindling audience: during Couqui's guest appearance the theatre was so full “that one could not see from the hats, now for some time there has been a constant comfort [...]” (Csukássy 1863).

a decade or more ago, even at the National Theatre, none could rival Claudina Couqui's stage presence in terms of dramatic expression: "we do not believe that any of them could have understood better than she how to express ideas and feelings – in other words, a complete dramatic act – through dance, movement, and facial expressions." (Gy. P. 1863a)

In his critique, Gyulai made it clear that he sought "dramatic excitement" in ballet as well and appreciated the acting skills of the dancers (Gy. P. 1863a). Among his expectations for the genre, he stated that, in addition to dance, technical skills, and the presentation of the "most difficult dance formulas" (Gy. P. 1863a). He also considered it necessary to include "dramatic action" in the dance performances on stage, expecting ballet to convey this. He noted that the difference between drama and ballet is that while drama relies on words and speech, ballet expresses human feelings and emotions through music, dance, facial expressions, and pantomime, which makes the plot of the scenes understandable. These four elements – music, dance, mimicry, and acting – help the ballet dancer narrate a story that is easy to understand. The task and art of the ballet dancer is to express the state of mind and the ideas as authentically as possible through movement, and this is what the charm and the dance technique must serve (Gy. P. 1863a).

In ballet, the first embodiment of the primacy of dramatic expression, the perfect example was Marie Taglioni,³⁵ whom Gyulai believed Fanny Elßler could never surpass. Claudina Couqui also fitted into this lineage, who "expresses the most subtle nuances of emotion with her muscular face" (Gy. P. 1863a). Her movements and dance were in harmony with the various emotional states required by the scenes, expressing the feelings demanded by her role with sufficient charm. This was only occasionally distorted by the difficult dance techniques dictated by the spirit of the times, the "neck-breaking formulas," and the physical strain, which to a considerable extent became a disadvantage for good ballet (Gy. P. 1863a). However, this occurred far less frequently with her than with other ballerinas.

During her guest appearances in Pest, Miss Couqui performed in several ballets, including *Giselle* and *The Devil in Love*, productions that the local audience had already seen in previous years. Gyulai attributed to Couqui the merit that, until now, "no one has been able to give these works as much plastic clarity or as faithful an expression of the spoken word" as she has (Gy. P. 1863a). In *Giselle*, her passing was natural: "she died a beautiful death, faithful to nature, but within the boundaries of grace, without using any materialistic means" (Gy. P. 1863a). Then, transformed into a willi and descending into her grave, she conveyed "a love so beautifully expressed that it could not fade away, even in the

35 Marie Taglioni (1804–1884) was a ballet dancer with Swedish and Italian roots, an inescapable figure in European dance history. Her niece, Marie Taglioni (1833–1891), was also an accomplished ballerina, who later married Prince Joseph Windisch-Grätz.

tomb” (Gy. P. 1863a). In *The Devil in Love*, she was able to intensify her performance, allowing the audience to vividly feel the demonic character that continuously evolved with the plot. She showcased the many shades of demonic nuances: “archness and softness, jealousy and revenge, mischief and anger were expressed in various shades through her face, dance, and movements” (Gy. P. 1863a). At the end of the play, during her transformation from demon to angel, she delivered a performance that rivaled those of the most distinguished actresses, as noted by Gyulai.

The criticism went beyond the stage production and concluded with a realistic assessment of the situation. Gyulai made it clear that his favorable critique was “not intended to provoke support for the ballet” (Gy. P. 1863a). On the one hand, it was necessary to consider what the primary task of a national theatre was and which types of theatrical performances could be integrated into its repertoire. On the other hand, the dance genre required considerable financial resources, which the theatre did not have at its disposal. At the same time, the arrival of exceptionally talented dancers should have been regarded as a positive aspect: “the main purpose of the national theatre had nothing to do with ballet: we did not have enough money to support it, but it was always beneficial to appreciate excellent artists, especially in a manner that was not sufficiently recognized in our country” (Gy. P. 1863a).

Claudina Couqui closed her guest appearance in *Carnival Adventures* (Gy. P. 1863b).³⁶ Gyulai’s second review focused on this performance. His strong verdict was that the work did not belong to the ballet genre. He noted that it primarily lacked a plot, and thus, “it makes no sense.” Although the *Színházi Látcső* described the sequence of events,³⁷ the reviewer stated that “we hardly saw any of it on stage” (Gy. P. 1863b). Gyulai also observed that the piece had undergone significant alterations, resulting in “a tasteless mixture that should not be called a ballet in the program of a national theatre. The problem is not that it is a bad ballet, but that it is not a ballet at all.” He further criticized the prima ballerina for “performing in such a trivial manner when she could express the dramatic side of ballet so well” (Gy. P. 1863b). However, she did not have the opportunity to do so in *Carnival Adventures*; although she danced beautifully, she lacked dramatic expression. “What could she have expressed when there was nothing to express?” Gyulai remarked (Gy. P. 1863b). The solution would have been “to perform in a tastefully edited potpourri instead of this so-called ballet” (Gy. P. 1863b). This could have included the carnival scene, which he regarded as the best part of the entire work, and the Hungarian dance would have fit well within it. Despite all this, the success was not lacking, but it would have been better deserved in *The Devil in Love* and *Giselle*, he concluded.

Pál Gyulai’s views on stage dance and his dramaturgical views on dance overlap completely (Kovács 1963, 110, 226-276). The literary

36 According to Gyulai, during her tour three times, actually twice. See below.

37 I could not find a detailed description.

press, as well as the political daily newspapers, closely followed the issues of drama and theatre even during the years of neo-absolutism. They regularly wrote about the performances of the theatres in Pest, especially the National Theatre, and not infrequently intervened in its programming policy. In Gyulai's oeuvre, drama reviews occupied a prominent place: he published his reviews regularly as early as the 1850s, and in the following decade, he turned his attention even more towards the theatre. His interest in the Hungarian theatre could be justified by its position and role, as the stage already represented a decisive intellectual force in the reform era greatly influencing national movements, the cause of independent national culture, and the development of the social and national role of drama. Drama and theatre could also become public and national issues, because during the years of repression, the National Theatre was one of the public cultural institutions that continued its activities even during the years of neo-absolutism, thus being regarded as a stronghold of the Hungarian language and culture. Its task was to strengthen national consciousness, and this expectation was articulated for all artistic branches (Kovács 1963, 226-227).

The central element of Gyulai's criticism is the plot. According to his interpretation, the plot is a fundamental part of drama, because it is "the most important element in which the character of the hero is realized and reflected" (Kovács 1963, 245). He also places great emphasis to the spiritual motivation behind the characters' development. He articulates the essential requirement that character portrayal should occur not behind the scenes but in full view of the audience, within the plot. "He urged an inner, essential connection between character and action," and he could not identify with the surprise events typical of the Romantic period, with their unexpected turns (Kovács 1963, 247-248). He rejected "the accumulation of unexpected plot twists, cheap excitement, i.e., the Romantic forms of effect" (Kovács 1963, 248). Furthermore, he did not consider the world of fairy tales and fairies to be an appropriate dramatic basis, although he acknowledged that poetic fantasy and lyricism could also manifest in such works (e.g. *Csongor and Tünde*) (Kovács 1963, 251).

According to his critical criteria, the duration of the theatre performance is closely linked to the plot. Within a few hours, it is given that fates, an entire human life, and complications must be presented and then resolved. All this requires the playwright to weave a fast, dynamic plot to maintain the audience's attention. Unlike a novel, there is no room for episodic scenes, multiple threads of plot, or slow depiction of events. The exposition and the resulting complication form a tight unit, the former having to expose almost the entire work. In this light, the possibilities for characterisation are limited, and there is no room for detailed and complex portrayals. Naturally, characters can easily find themselves in intricate situations, but the complexity of the situations always arises from the circumstances rather than the intricacies of the character themselves (Kovács 1963, 252-253).

Dávid Angyal also pointed out that for Gyulai, true drama could not exist without the harmony between plot and characterisation (Angyal 1911, 360-393, 378). He took a firm stance on the portrayal of death on stage, which also appears in *Giselle*. In his opinion, this was not a simple theatrical situation, rather “it was a big mistake to want to die on stage as people did in real life. An actor must never conceive of death from a realistic perspective and strive for a fidelity that would have earned the approval of doctors” (Angyal 1911, 380).

7. Claudina Couqui’s second guest performance in Pest (1864)

1863	1864
<i>The Devil in Love</i>	7, 12 April
<i>Gizella</i>	–
<i>Catherine, the Robber Leader</i>	–
<i>Robert and Bertram</i>	–
<i>Carnival Adventures</i> (comic ballet)	2 April, 6 April ³⁸
	<i>Esmeralda</i> (novel ballet): 10, 13 April ³⁹

Claudina Couqui returned to Pest in April 1864. Compared to the previous year, she appeared in only three ballets: *Carnival Adventures*, *The Devil in Love*, and, as a novelty, *Esmeralda*. “If we remember correctly, when she was here last year, she even delighted certain stern and serious critics with her footwork,” wrote *Koszorú*, referring to Gyulai (N. N. 1864a). However, *Fővárosi Lapok* deemed her choice of programme for the following year inappropriate, mainly due to *Carnival Adventures* (N. N. 1864b). Although she had achieved her greatest success with this play the previous year, the reviewer noted that the artist “seems to have been happy to deviate a little from her muse,” and, in attempt to win favour with the audience began her new guest appearance in Pest with this piece (N. N. 1864b). Her choice was by no means beyond criticism, since the work was “much less than a bad ballet, if not a ballet at all,” but rather a dance mixture that had undergone significant abridgement – a botched job, in fact, devoid of any dramatic plot (N. N. 1864b). This, however, was not acceptable to the adjudicator, as a coherent dramatic plot was seen as a fundamental requirement for a dance play.

³⁸ The performance scheduled for 3 April was cancelled due to a mild case of illness. See *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 78, 6 April 1864, p. 346.

³⁹ *Fővárosi Lapok* published on 12 April 1864 (p. 366) the Adventures of Carnival as Couqui’s last guest performance for the next day, while the 13 April issue announced *Esmeralda* as her farewell performance (p. 370).

According to reports, the other two ballets, *Giselle* and *The Devil in Love*, were much more in line with these requirements. In the former, she was able to “die so movingly,” while in the latter, she captured the mood swings of “a softening demon” with artistic depth and impact (N. N. 1864b). By comparison, in the quodlibet, she could only display her remarkable dancing skills. However, there was more to Mademoiselle Couqui, according to the *Fővárosi Lapok*’s theatre critic: she was capable of nuanced characterisation, vivid storytelling, and conveying dramatic elements through her acting. None of these skills came into play in *Carnival Adventures*, where the dance sequence merely showcased her light movements, charming gestures, and the flexibility of her body. Thus, the performance essentially focused on entertainment, whereas in a dance play rich in action, all these abilities would have served a higher, artistic purpose. The reviewer believed that the audience, too, seemed to be aligning somewhat with these expectations, as evidenced by the applause, which was more restrained compared to the previous year.

The reviewer pointed out the tendencies of contemporary ballet, namely that this genre was beginning to lose its poetry, with fairies, butterflies, willies, and demons being increasingly replaced by bourgeois figures. At the same time, he stated that, regardless of the direction in which dance theatre might develop, it could not forsake plot and a coherent story for mere spectacle. In the case of an artist of Couqui’s calibre, he called it a management error not to make better use of her talents by choosing a more appropriate programme. He observed that the ballet repertoire in Pest was fundamentally limited and that local theatres were not well supplied with sets and machines. Additionally, the cost of featuring guest artists was a considerable financial burden.

Although the entirety of *Carnival Adventures* was a poor piece, one part, the seguidilla, stood out as a true highlight. Couqui’s appearance was captivating, her costume consisting of a black veil and a cherry-coloured dress adorned with black lace, completed by her coquettish posture, her “face was full of desire, daydreaming, and joy” (N. N. 1864b). The music of the dance play was “so evocative and amorous that we almost felt sorry for the circus music of this kind of dance play” (N. N. 1864b). Graceful steps, the clatter of castanets, and the beating of drums culminated in a dance filled with sensual, rapid, and passionate movements. Last year, this had to be repeated, but a year later, it was not. The reviewer noted the dancer’s illness, which may have hindered her performance, but stated that she would remain a “poetic phenomenon for a long time to come” (N. N. 1864b). Her other dances showcased beautiful shapes, playful lightness, and charm. “Such dancing is the poetry of the female body. Love it, and you will be turned away from the rough and raw sensuality of the cancan.” (N. N. 1864b) The reviewer did not consider himself a fan of ballet, nor did he believe that this genre necessarily belonged on the national stage; however, if ballet was to claim a right to exist independently, the art of Mademoiselle Couqui

could serve as a guiding example, though she should be featured in a dance play that was more suited to her talents (N. N. 1864b).

The journalist of the *Fővárosi Lapok* further stated that although Couqui had once again charmed the audience in *Carnival Adventures*, this piece was not worthy of her artistry and talent. However, the fundamental problem in Budapest was that the ballet repertoire of the National Theatre had been defined for ages by two ideal ballets, *Giselle* and *The Devil in Love*.

He remarked that the theatre’s management could arrange for a couple of new ballets if dance theatre were given its own space, at least during guest performances. Another issue was the worn costumes and outdated sets, which adversely affected the guest artists performance, as they did not engage the audience. In Couqui’s case, “there were also empty rows and boxes” (N. N. 1864c).

According to *Családi Kör*, although Couqui was renowned as an excellent dancer, she was “not very selective in her means of triumph;” otherwise, she would not have performed in *Carnival Adventures* for the first time during her second tour in Pest, as this dance work “reveals everything rather than the poetry of dance” (–i –r 1864). The critic considered the Debardeur dance to be the least suitable for presentation on the national stage. “Let’s leave the ‘Dunanan’ laurels to the Buda theater” (–i –r. 1864, 352).⁴⁰

Gyula Bulyovszky stated that *Carnival Adventures* was “sugared emptiness” (Bulyovszky 1864a, 21-22). He was not impressed by Couqui’s performance, saying that “either she didn’t dance with enough energy or not with enough spirit” (Bulyovszky 1864a, 21). He doubted the latter, as she had been paid four hundred forints for one night. Bulyovszky believed that Couqui had moved past “the first glamour of youth,” and instead exhibited “a certain proportion and completeness in her technique as well as in her dance” (Bulyovszky 1864a, 21).

The reviewer of *Pesti Napló* also discussed the reasons for the worn costumes and sets in *Esmeralda* at length (N. N. 1864g). He noted that these decorations had not been in better condition last year, yet the performances still attracted a full house, so this could not explain the lower attendance this year. Since then, the theatre has hired a set designer tasked with creating new sets and renovating the old ones, and the ballet has also received several new costumes. “Never look for the cause of a problem other than where it really is,” was the admonition

40 One of the dances of the *Carnival Adventures* is the debardeur dance (cancan), performed by the female ensemble in lighter costumes and masks. This dance also appears in Offenbach’s comic operetta, *Le voyage de MM. Dunanan père et fils*, which Gyulai also reviewed, see Gyulai 1908a. The cancan was already well-known before Couqui’s guest appearances, as Offenbach’s work was first performed at the Budai Népszínház in 1861 and subsequently staged over a hundred times. For more on Offenbach’s reception at the time, see Bozó 2021, 45-85.

(N. N. 1864g).⁴¹ Last year, the sets were even worse, but Miss Couqui's first guest appearance in Pest was preceded by heightened anticipation. However, this year's guest performance coincides with the visit of a German actress⁴² who was performing cancan, "with a natural shamelessness that Couqui's true art cannot match."⁴³ The appearance of the cancan was greeted with positive responses from many critics, who welcomed its arrival after Paris. According to the reviewer, this was a sign of a loss of taste, and the public will soon be content with even less.

This critique also raised the fundamental question of the place of ballet in the country's first theatre. The verdict was that ballet had no independent *raison d'être* on the national stage, and could only be understood as part of opera and drama. Ballet could only be presented in its own right in exceptional cases, "and only if it is not to the detriment of drama in particular" (N. N. 1864g). Of all the types of theatre, ballet was the least suited to the aims of the National Theatre. The basic requirement was that it should receive the minimum financial investment and the least amount of time (playing days), while drama should be given priority. The current director fully met these requirements and deserved praise: he first had the sets and costumes necessary for staging a drama repaired, and then had new ones made along the same lines (N. N. 1864g).

In connection with Claudine Couqui's guest performance, the *Pesti Napló*, essentially the official critic of the National Theatre, and the *Fővárosi Lapok* engaged in a polemic. According to the latter, Couqui's success was less prominent than last year due to the battered and unattractive sets, while the latter argued that the theatre's painter had been preparing for the Shakespeare Festival, making it understandable that he had not focused on the sets for the guest artist's performance. The critic's stance was firm: "Shakespeare's celebration comes first, while ballet – in our view – should not be given any space on the national stage" (N. N. 1864h). He asserted that even the guest appearance of

41 The *Fővárosi Lapok* also said that the charm of the novelty had lost its shine: although Couqui "danced with charming grace" and her acting was excellent, "she is not making as much noise as last year. Most people seem to think that if you're a guest, you should not only be good, you should be new" (N. N. 1864d).

42 Josephine Gallmeyer (sometimes Gallmayer, 1838, Leipzig – 1884, Vienna) performed at the beginning of her career as an actress in Brno, Braşov, Timişoara, Pest, and in 1862 she was engaged by the Theater an der Wien.

43 Ibid. The situation, Gallmeyer's performance, and her cancan are also referred to in the *Fővárosi Lapok*: "We hear from many that it is not so much beautiful as scandalous. It is the non plus ultra of the »Dunanan's father« debauchery, which no modest woman can watch without blushing. We have also heard outcries. »The authorities, they say, »have reprimanded the cancan dancers in Buda, and rightly so; they ought to be reprimanded, and reprimanded severely. [...] and there is no better way of expressing the difference between the two theatres in Pest than to say that while there Mlle Gallmayer is blushing the women and making the men laugh, here Mlle Couqui is charming us all with her idealistic and beautiful dance." (N. N. 1864e)

such a renowned dancer should have been adjusted so that it did not interfere with the timely staging of a drama, and that, among other things, the set designer would have sufficient time. Ballet, too, required proper presentation, as it was primarily a feast for the eyes, and harmony had to be ensured. Once staged, both the performers and the audience had to be provided with the right visuals for the overall effect of the stage and performance to be complete. One of the essential tasks of a large theatre was to organize and maintain its set and costume design. However, if there was insufficient time to properly showcase a ballet, “then don’t invite a guest dancer” (N. N. 1864h).

The dispute between the two sides continued over the ballet’s sets and costumes. *Pesti Napló* reiterated its arguments and its stance on the hierarchy of genres. On this point, there was consensus among colleagues: ballet had a right to exist only in a subordinate position to drama and could not be given a place of its own.

In the discussion, *Pesti Napló* addressed a sentence in *Fővárosi Lapok* suggesting that the former was considered the official critic of the National Theatre and had access to many internal matters. *Pesti Napló* rejected these claims. It also pointed out that the National Theatre had its own official publication, *Színházi Látcső*, in which Károly Vadnai, chief editor of *Fővárosi Lapok*, was involved. *Pesti Napló* declared its independence, good faith, and dedication to drama, emphasizing that in their articles, they adhered solely to their own journalistic programme and professional credo, reviewing theatre performances as unofficial critics. This stance included that if, in their view, the management of the National Theater faced unfair or unwarranted attacks, they would come to its def

The debate had yet to reach a conclusion. *Fővárosi Lapok* briefly revisited the issue of the sets for the productions. They argued that the situation during Couqui’s guest performance might have arisen because a significant portion of the available financial resources had been allocated to costumes rather than to upgrading the stage equipment. The reviewer suggested it would have been more beneficial if the new costumes had been created gradually, allowing the larger portion of funds to be directed toward refurbishing the stage.

The article also responded to the question of identifying the theatre critics. According to *Pesti Napló*, the official journal was *Színházi Látcső*, and Vadnai had contributed to it. However, the publication had turned out to be short-lived. *Fővárosi Lapok* retaliated by asserting that, although *Pesti Napló*’s weekly review was published anonymously, it was widely known to be written by Szigligeti (N. N. 1864i).

Pester Lloyd also expressed its views on Couqui’s recent guest appearance (2, 1864). There was no doubt that Couqui’s presence enlivened the theatre scene in Pest. The ballerina faced plenty of competition, and she was not the best dancer. Her artistry had its technical limits: she was not the fastest in pirouettes, nor did she

perform her jumps with the same confidence as Legrain.⁴⁴ However, it was worth highlighting the beneficial harmony and innate sense of rhythm in her dancing – qualities that could benefit some singers. The performance of *Carnival in Venice* and the seguidilla received special praise.⁴⁵

While others praised Couqui's mimicry, the reviewer noted that she could not shed the Italian tradition: her facial expressions followed the rhythm of the music rather than the beating of the heart. The *Carnival's Adventures* represented a significant milestone in our theatrical history, as it was the cancan that crossed the borders of the Monarchy. The *debardeur* symbolized the modern carnival, while the fearsome Domino, the merry Harlequin, and the simple-minded Pierot appeared as outdated characters.

The ballet performance was criticized for being presented with significant cuts, and as a result, the plot suffered. However, in contemporary ballet, it was difficult to critique this aspect, as it no longer drew from themes consistent with the genre's forms. Its plot was not organically structured; it did not unfold organically from a dramaturgical idea. Instead, it accommodated various unrelated scenes that could be fitted into a series of dances, such as a dance performed in a Parisian fashion shop during *Carnival Adventures*. The reviewer questioned how one could even speak of a plot in such a case.

The *Fővárosi Lapok* critic stated that *The Devil in Love* proved to be a much more fortunate choice than *Carnival Adventures*, as this ballet "already has a basic idea," a plot, and provides the cast with the opportunity to "not just jump around, but to create and express something" beyond dance (N. N. 1864j). According to the reviewer, in this piece "the guest artist was much more in her element" than in the previous ballet. In addition to her dancing skills, she impressed with her expressive acting, demonstrating that she possessed "darker shades of passion" alongside charm and seduction (N. N. 1864j). Scottish dancing and a few *csárdás* steps enriched the performance. However, the staging left something to be desired; apart from the technical problems, it was mainly the behaviour and pacing of the actors backstage that the audience could see. The audience was sizable, even though Gallmayer was also guest performing in Pest at the time (N. N. 1864j).

Claudina Couqui concluded her tour with *Esmeralda*, which was the subject of a lengthy and insightful review in the *Fővárosi Lapok*. The reviewer praised the performance of the guest artist, noting that she was able to showcase her excellent acting skills in addition to her "light, delicate" dancing (N. N. 1864f). The dance was based on Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, in which the characters, the scenes,

44 Victorine Legrain (1833–1916) made a guest appearance in Pest in April 1857, appearing twice in *The Devil in Love*.

45 According to the programme, it is not the *Carnival in Venice*, but *The Women in Venice*, performed by Couqui with Irma Rotter, while the seguidilla is performed by Campilli and the dance troupe.

and the entire story were described as "grotesque, picturesque, and more suited to such silent formulae than to the strict ramp of drama" (N. N. 1864f). The reviewer called Couqui's dancing "the poetry of movement:" "like the nayadai of the tale, she touched the ground with the tip of her toe and floated as lightly as if the air itself were lifting her" (N. N. 1864f). Her light, graceful movements and beautiful hand gestures were complemented by great acting, dramatic elements, and "wit." The reviewer placed her silent performance almost above dance productions, stating: "Her mute face speaks, and she seems to understand and feel every little degree and nuance of emotion and mood" (Bulyovszky 1864b, 45).

He illustrated this with a detailed example. The charming Esmeralda is pursued by a man of wild passions, Frollo. They meet four times, and she is repulsed by him on each occasion, gradually building up to her reactions. The first time, she shows only the fright of an innocent girl; the second time, awakened from sleep, she is overcome by terror and runs away; the third time, she is overtaken by despair at the loss of her lover. The fourth encounter, the final scene, is the most dramatic: when she is taken to the place of death, Frollo would sacrifice his life for Esmeralda's love, but only scorn is his reward. In this final scene, Couqui did not even dance: she only acted, and it was here that her acting skills were at their most powerful. Her costume was not ballet-like either: instead of a tiny skirt, she wore a "long, floor-length shroud-like" dress, with her hair falling to her shoulders (Bulyovszky 1864b).

"She staggers towards the scaffold, and every step she takes is moving. No one can fail to understand the sadness of her plight. Yet this apparition is not cold. The rays of religiosity and memories of love break through this heavy envelope. She prays, and as she kneels and lifts her hands to heaven, she presents an image of a suffering Madonna. Her face is surrounded by her raised arms, the most beautiful frame for such an expressive image. Then she rises, lifting herself onto tiptoe, and the spectator forgets the scaffold, thinking only of her ascent to the sky. Something comforts me as she convinces me that, though she dies, she dies pure and noble. But then comes the heavy moment of despair, and she collapses to her knees, broken, hiding her face. At this moment, Frollo whispers that he will save her from the bloodbath if she will love him. The broken girl straightens up, as if the feeling of contempt has restored all her strength. How she looks upon this hated and unkind man! Her gaze is like the eye on Minerva's shield, capable of turning men to stone. Her eyes flash like lightning, and her

brow is full of majesty. Such is the full expression of her recollections of love when she kisses the red kerchief of Phebo. All the cheerfulness flows from her long-suffering face; you can see the faith that there is a better world where they will love each other. This revelation is transformed by a sudden turn of events. Phebo, healed from his wound, appears, saves his beloved, and kills Frollo with his own dagger, this dagger being aimed by Quasimodo's hand. Love and rapture could not be more touchingly expressed than in the face of the woman who has gone to the scaffold and come into his arms. Every muscle speaks. She looks now to the sky, now to her sweetheart's eyes, which both alike promise her heaven. The carnival masqueraders take her on their shoulders and lift her into the air, that we may remember still more this statuesque image, which is the noblest expression of the joy of the woman's heart." (N. N. 1864f)

In the third act there is a similar, perhaps less powerful scene in which Esmeralda moves towards fulfilment with pure love: "She hides her eyes from her lover, afraid of what she desires: she shudders, but at last a flame crescendos, covering her face and eyes, and she collapses in Phebo's arms in rapture." (N. N. 1864f) The reviewer's assessment is that "the innocent girl's invincible love, her first confession and her pure surrender cannot be more beautifully portrayed in a silent play" (N. N. 1864f). She sees in Couqui an artist who "warns the audience that dance also comes from a celestial muse" (N. N. 1864f). She considers this particularly important, given the increasing prevalence of bacchanalian dances, vulgarity, and movements that appeal to the senses on the stage.

According to the reviewer, the most negative aspect of the performance was the costumes and sets, "the poverty of the exhibitions," which greatly detracts from the overall effect (N. N. 1864f). The play was accompanied by a "worn, ugly and unpainted set" that "belongs not in front of an audience but on a rubbish heap" (N. N. 1864f). This may partly explain the drop in attendance. "There are many people of good taste who seek a cohesive presentation, and though the fairest fairy may fly on the stage, she will not delight if she flies among ugly, dirty, and fragmented scenery" (N. N. 1864f).

The reviewer of *Hölgyfutár* held a similar view of Couqui's performance: it was her dramatic portrayal that made her unique, particularly the struggle depicted in the final act of *Esmeralda*, which, even without words, was perfectly expressed on Couqui's face during the mourning procession. Her expression "gave every muscle, every line a certain meaning and a definite expression" and "reached into the soul, and, besides the intellect, struck the tenderest strings of the heart" (N.

N. 1864k). The reviewer regretted that in this year’s tour, she would only be appearing in three ballets, not ideally chosen, and noted that this may not have been her decision. It would be good, he added, if the principal director could address this conundrum. “Responde mihi, due Szigligeti!” he concludes (N. N. 1864k).

Although Couqui’s talent, versatility, beautiful acting, light and varied dancing, and conscious artistry could only be praised, the *Kalauz* reviewer had little positive to say about the other actors in *Esmeralda*, with the exception of Mr. Lannesz as Frollo, who credible portrayed his role. “Campilli is not a pleasant dancer, his art has already become paralyzed, and as a director, he does not offer much to commend him either. The dancers remain as vague as ever; he has little sense of order, and some formations are truly offensive to the eye” (Jósika 1864).

A few months later, the *Wanderer* criticized the National Theatre’s operations, programming policy, financial situation, and its shortage of singers and ballet dancers. Among the points of criticism was Couqui’s guest performance, which “not only consumed all income but also a despicable amount beyond that” (Radnótfáy 1864). In response, the intendant explained that the National Theatre “has never placed much emphasis on ballet, which serves merely as a decoration for operas and other performances; independent ballet performances are only given on rare occasions” (Radnótfáy 1864). The first private dancer, Mari Rotter, held her own alongside the celebrated European guest, and the audience appreciated the work of the dance company. Although Miss Couqui’s performances in the spring of 1864 did not attract as many spectators as the previous year, after deducting all expenses, the theatre’s coffers retained a net profit of 147 forints per performance (Radnótfáy 1864).⁴⁶

8. Summary

Through an exploration of the prima ballerina Claudina Couqui’s guest performances in Pest (1863, 1864), this study seeks to address how 19th-century theatre criticism, particularly that of Pál Gyulai and his circle, regarded the function of the National Theatre and the position of ballet as a form of theatre alongside national drama and opera. The topic necessitated a detailed reconstruction of the reception of individual ballet productions based on press accounts, as well as a broader discussion of related issues. Consequently, it also became necessary to briefly address the status of musical stages in Hungary, the process of institutionalisation, the establishment of the National Theatre, and within it, the position of ballet, including the work of Frigyes Campilli. Despite Campilli’s decades-long career, Hungarian ballet remained disconnected from folk and national traditions, and no

⁴⁶ The *Fővárosi Lapok* and *Sürgöny* also published the article, as well as *Pester Lloyd* a day earlier. See: N. N. 1864l.

distinct national dance theatre was established, even as such expectations were increasingly placed on drama and opera.

Until the opening of the Hungarian Royal Opera House in 1884, ballet was staged at the National Theatre alongside drama and musical performances. However, the three theatrical genres did not enjoy equal standing, with the primacy of drama remaining unchallenged. Musical productions met critics' expectations only to a limited extent, as their generic characteristics did not align with the broader demands placed on the nation's premier theatre. They did not advance linguistic cultivation or the development of national literature, nor did they always fulfil essential dramaturgical requirements – especially in the case of ballet.

Pál Gyulai showed interest in the National Theatre's productions, regularly publishing his critiques from as early as the 1850s, with his focus on theatre intensifying in the following decade. His commitment to Hungarian theatre may have been driven by its role and responsibilities: since the Reform Era, the stage had represented a vital intellectual space, significantly influencing national movements and the cause of a distinct national culture, as well as the evolving social and national role of drama. Drama and the performing arts became a matter of public and national importance, particularly as the National Theatre, one of the few cultural institutions allowed to operate during the neo-absolutist period, stood as a bastion of Hungarian language and culture. Its role in strengthening national consciousness became an expectation extended to all branches of the arts.

Although Gyulai also paid some attention to musical theatre, he rarely addressed it in his dramaturgical essays, focusing instead on opera. Ballet was an exception, however, in the case of Claudina Couqui's appearances in Pest. His two critiques encompassed multiple threads: beyond evaluating specific dance productions, he offered his assessment of ballet as a genre, thereby expressing his view on the relative standing of theatrical forms and the function of the National Theatre.

Commenting on the guest performances, he noted that Couqui's stage presence and performance style had a profound impact on him, much more so than other ballerinas. What distinguished Couqui, he suggested, was her unique dramatic expressiveness – a quality rarely matched by earlier famous ballet dancers on Pest's stages, with the exception of Marie Taglioni. Couqui's movements and dancing were in harmony with the emotional states demanded by the scenes, and she portrayed the requisite sentiments with ample charm. Yet, technically, her execution had certain limitations. In *Giselle*, her fading away felt natural; in *The Devil in Love*, she managed to elevate her performance further, vividly conveying to the audience the continually evolving demonic character in line with the plot. Gyulai considered her portrayal comparable to that of the finest actresses, although he could not say the same of her role in *Carnival Adventures*. He felt the piece did not belong in the ballet genre, largely due to its lack of storyline. He also

criticised Couqui for choosing this piece, as it did not allow her to fully demonstrate her dramatic expressiveness.

In his critiques, Gyulai made clear where ballet stood within the hierarchy of muses – drama, opera, and ballet – at the National Theatre. In viewing the dance productions, his most intense criticism was directed at weak plot construction; yet, he valued Couqui’s dramatic artistry, recognising it as the most significant means of expression available to dancers in the absence of spoken language, alongside technical skill. Gyulai, an advocate of high art, maintained distance from mass culture but found ballet to be acceptable. Nevertheless, he saw challenges in its struggle to become nationalised or to acquire national traits, as it frequently intersected with mass forms of dance, especially the cancan, then highly popular. He found this difficult to tolerate, viewing it as a form of empty entertainment that stimulated the senses.

Among the basic expectations he held for any theatrical production was the primacy of dramatic plot, and he saw this as a foundational requirement for dance productions as well, beyond technical skill. He regarded the distinction between drama and ballet as primarily that the former relies on words and speech, while the latter expresses human feelings and emotions through musical accompaniment, dance, facial expressions, and mime, making the plot understandable through these elements. The ballet dancer’s task and artistry lie in conveying states of mind and ideas as authentically as possible through movement; charm, grace, and dance technique must serve this aim.

For Gyulai, dramatic action was inseparable from the hero’s character and the psychological motivation of character development. Genuine drama, in his view, required the coherence of action and characterisation. He stated as a fundamental principle that character portrayal should unfold before the viewer’s eyes within the action itself rather than behind the scenes: within a few hours, the play should present destinies, a full human life, create complications, and resolve them. This required the dramatist to weave a swift and dynamic plot to retain the audience’s attention. Unlike the novel, drama afforded no scope for episodic scenes, multi-stranded plots, or slow-paced events, nor for detailed and intricate depiction.

Bibliography

- Ajkay, Alinka, and Császtvay Tünde, editors. *(B)Irodalom: Gyulai Pál az irodalom élén* [Pál Gyulai at the Forefront of Literature]. Reciti, 2018. <https://www.reciti.hu/2019/5122>. Accessed 19 November 2024.
- Angyal, Dávid. “Gyulai Pál.” *Budapesti Szemle*, vol. 148, no. 420, 1911, 360-393.

- Beke, Albert. *Gyulai Pál személye és esztétikája* [The Personality and Aesthetics of Pál Gyulai]. Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem – L'Harmattan, 2017.
- Bólya, Anna Mária, editor. *Auróra: A magyar balett születése* [Aurora: The Birth of Hungarian Ballet]. MMA MMKI, 2020.
- Boros, János. "Előszó" [Foreword]. Bólya, pp. 7-14.
- Bozó, Péter. *Fejezetek Jacques Offenbach budapesti fogadtatásának történetéből* [Chapters from the History of Jacques Offenbach's Reception in Budapest]. Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 2021.
- Bulyovszky, Gyula. A hét történetéből [From the History of the Week]. *Nefelejcs*, no. 2, 10 April 1864a, 21.
- . "Szinházi szemle" [Theater Review]. *Nefelejcs*, no. 4, 24 April 1864b, 45.
- Cucchi, Claudina. *Venti anni di palcoscenico; ricordi artistici*. Voghera, 1904a, <https://archive.org/details/ventiannidipalco00cucc/page/n3/mode/2up?q=Claudina+Cucchi>. Accessed 19 November 2024.
- Cucchi, Claudine. *Erinnerungen einer Tänzerin* [Memories of a Dancer]. Einzig autorisierte Übers. aus dem Ital. v. Otto Eisenschitz. Wiener Verlag, 1904b.
- Csukássy, József. "Tarka levelek" [Colorful leaves]. *Hölgyfutár*, no. 53, 5 May 1863, p. 421.
- D. "Nationaltheater" [National Theatre]. *Pester Lloyd*, no. 81, 10 April 1863, p. [2].
- Gara, Márk. "La ballerina en voyage: Aranyváry Emília külföldön" [Emília Aranyváry Abroad]. *Táncstudományi Közlemények*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2022, pp. 29-39. https://real-j.mtak.hu/25503/7/TTK202202_javitott2.pdf. Accessed 18 November 2024.
- Gelencsér, Ágnes. "Balettművészet az Operaházban 1884–1919" [Ballet in the Opera House 1884-1919]. Staud, pp. 151-164.
- Gyulai, Pál. "A Budai Népszínházról: II. Offenbach: Dunanan apó és fia" [On the Budai People's Theatre: II. Offenbach: Dunanan Father and Son]. *Dramaturgiai dolgozatok* [Dramaturgical Essays] II, edited by Gyulai Pál, Franklin-Társulat – Magyar Irodalmi Intézet és Könyvnyomda, 1908a, pp. 121-125.
- . "Signora Ristori" and "Még egyszer Ristori I–III" [Once More Ristori I–III]. Gyulai, pp. 137-164, 167-216.
- . "Couqui Claudina vendégszereplése" [Claudina Couqui's Guest Appearance]. Gyulai, pp. 403-408.
- Gy. P. "Couqui Claudina k. a. vendégszereplése" [The Guest Appearance of Mlle Claudina Couqui]. *Koszorú*, no. 16, 19 April 1863a, 381-382.
- . "Farsangi kalandok" [Carnival Adventures]. *Koszorú*, no. 17, 26 April 1863b, 406.
- H. "K. k. Hoftheater nächst dem Kärthnerthore" [Royal Court Theatre Next to the Kärthnerthore]. *Der Humorist*, no. 319, 10 December 1854, p. 1276.
- i –r. "Egy hét története" [The History of a Week]. *Családi Kör*, no. 15, 10 April 1864, pp. 352-353.

- Jaquemet, Thierry. “Az olasz táncteknika hatása a balett magyarországi meghonosítására” [The Influence of Italian Dance Technique on the Introduction of Ballet in Hungary]. *Táncstudományi Közlemények*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2022, pp. 55-66. https://real-j.mtak.hu/25503/7/TTK202202_javitott2.pdf. Accessed 18 November 2024.
- Jósika, Kálmán. “Nemzeti Színház” [National Theatre]. *Kalauz*, no. 15, 17 April 1864, 119.
- Kakas, Márton [Jókai, Mór]. “Kakas Márton a színházban” [Márton Kakas in the Theatre]. *Vasárnapi Ujság*, vol. 3, no. 22, 1 June 1856, p. 189.
- Kerényi, Ferenc. “A reformkori magyar táncjátékról” [About Hungarian Dance Performance in the Reform-era]. *Táncstudományi Tanulmányok*, vol. 10, 1978-1979, pp. 123-142.
- Körtvélyes, Géza. “Balett és néptánc” [Ballet and Folk Dance]. *Muzsika*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1966, pp. 34-35.
- L., “Budapesti Lapok” III. [Budapest Journals. III.]. *Pesti Napló*, no. 467, 29 September 1851, pp. 1-2.
- MagyarDigitálisKépekonyvtár* [Hungarian Digital Image Library]. <https://kepkonyvtar.hu/jetspeed/portal/browser.psm?docID=27913>. Accessed 10 November 2024.
- Major, Rita. “Romantika és nemzeti tánc történet (1833–1848)” [Romantic-era and National Dance History (1833–1848)]. *Táncstudományi Tanulmányok*, vol. 14, 1986-1987, pp. 25-44.
- O. R. “Wiener Briefe” [Vienna Letters]. *Pester Lloyd*, no. 238, 17 October 1858, p. 2.
- Pónyai, Györgyi. “Aranyváry Emília, az első magyar prímabalerina és koreográfusnő működése a korabeli sajtó tükrében” [The Work of Emilia Aranyváry, the First Hungarian Prima Ballerina and Choreographer, in the Contemporary Press]. *Bólya*, pp. 127-142.
- Pukánszky Kádár, Jolán. *A budai és pesti német színészet története 1812-ig* [The History of German Acting in Buda and Pest till 1812]. Pfeifer Ferdinánd Könyvkereskedése, 1914.
- . *A pesti és budai német színészet története 1812–1847* [The History of German Acting in Buda and Pest 1812–1847]. Budavári Tudományos Társaság, 1923.
- . *A Nemzeti Színház százéves története* [The Centennial History of the National Theatre] I. Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1940.
- Radnótfáy, Sámuel. “Válasz a »Wanderer«-nek” [Reply to the “Wanderer”]. *A Hon*, no. 210, 15 September 1864, pp. [2-3].
- Staud, Géza, editor. *A budapesti Operaház száz éve* [100 Years of the Budapest Opera House]. Zeneműkiadó, 1984.
- . “Előzmények” [Precedents]. Staud, pp. 7-15.
- Székely, György, and Kerényi Ferenc, editors. *Magyar színház történet* [Hungarian Theatre History]. Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990. <https://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02065/html/1kotet/index.html>. Accessed 10 November 2024.

- Szerdahelyi Kálmán *fényképalbuma*, <https://kozvilagitas.blogspot.com/2016/06/szerdahelyi-kalman-fenykepalbuma-2015.html>. Accessed 10 November 2024.
- Török, Zsuzsa. "Periodika-tudomány, periodika-kutatás: Az angolszász paradigma" [Periodicals-science, Periodicals-research: the Anglo-Saxon Paradigm]. *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, vol. 126, no. 2, 2022, pp. 221-245. DOI: 10.56232/ItK.2022.2.03
- T. Szabó, Levente. "»Kritikai komolysággal tapsol«: Gyulai Pál, a színházi kihívások és a színházi hivatásosodás fordulata" [Applauding with Critical Seriousness: Pál Gyulai, the Challenges of Theatre and the Turn of Theatrical Professionalism]. *Verso – Journal of Literary History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2021, pp. 9-46. DOI: 10.15170/VERSO.4.2021.2.9-46
- Ujvári, Hedvig. "Aranyváy Emília a Bécsi Udvari Operában" [Emília Aranyváy in the Vienna Court Opera]. *Táncstudományi Közlemények*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2023a, pp. 4-24. https://epa.oszk.hu/04900/04973/00028/pdf/EPA04973_tancstudomanyi_2023_01_004-024.pdf. Accessed 10 November 2024.
- . "The Reception and Social-historical Context of the Viennese Waltz in Vienna and Budapest." *Dance and Education*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2023b, pp. 69-83. DOI: 10.46819/TN.4.1.69-82
- . "Újabb adatok Aranyváy Emília pályaképehez" [New Data on Emilia Aranyváy's Career]. *Táncstudományi Közlemények*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2023c, pp. 46-63. https://mte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/TTK2023_02_javitott5.pdf. Accessed 10 November 2024.
- . "Magyar tematikájú balettbemutatók a Magyar Királyi Operaházban Gustav Mahler vezetése alatt a korabeli sajtó tükrében: (Új Rómeó – Csárdás – Vióra)" [Hungarian-themed Ballet Performances at the Royal Hungarian Opera House under the Direction of Gustav Mahler in the Contemporary Press: (New Romeo – Csárdás – Vióra)]. *Médiatörténeti mozaikok 2022* [Media Historic Mosaics 2022], edited by Paál Vince, Médiatudományi Intézet, 2023d, pp. 41-72. https://nmhh.hu/upload/mediatorteneti_mozaiokok_2022.pdf. Accessed 10 November 2024.
- Vályi, Rózsi. "Nemzeti tánc hagyományaink sorsa a színpadon, és a balett az abszolutizmus és a kiegyezés korában [The Fate of Our National Dance Traditions on Stage, and the Ballet in the Era of Absolutism and the Austro-Hungarian Compromise]. *A magyar balett történetéből* [Chapters from the History of the Hungarian Ballet], edited by Vályi Rózsi, Művelt Nép, 1956, pp. 92-145.
- Wallaschek, Richard. *Das k. k. Hofoperntheater, Die Theater Wiens* [The Imperial and Royal Court Opera Theater, the Theaters of Vienna] Bd. 4. Gesellschaft für vervielfältigende Kunst [Society for Reproduction of Art], 1909. <https://archive.org/details/dietheaterwien00we/page/226/mode/2up?q=couqui&view=theater>. Accessed 10 November 2024.

- Windhager, Ákos. “A többszörös kezdet: A magyar balett megszakított hagyománya” [The Multiple Beginnings: the Interrupted Tradition of Hungarian Ballet]. Bólya, pp. 71-86.
- X. “Nemzeti színház. Couqui Claudina tánczművésznő föllépte” [National Theatre. Performances by the Ballet Dancer Claudina Couqui]. *A Hon*, no. 90, 21 April 1863, p. [2].
- Zilahy, Károly. “Bécsi tárcza” [Vienna Feuilleton]. *Divatcsarnok*, no. 11, 13 March 1860, p. [2].
- “Pester Briefe” [Pester Letters]. *Pester Lloyd*, no. 95, 26 April 1864, p. [2].
- N. N. “Ueber eine Ballet-Vorstellung, welche wir nicht gesehen haben” [On a Ballet Performance Which We Have Not Seen]. *Die Presse*, no. 221, 24 September 1854a, p. [3].
- N. N. “K. k. Hofoperntheater” [The Imperial and Royal Court Opera Theater]. *Fremden-Blatt*, no. 291, 9 December 1854b, p. [3].
- N. N. “Hofoperntheater” [Court Opera Theater]. *Morgen-Post*, no. 301, 9 December 1854c, p. [2].
- N. N. “Nemzeti színház” [National Theatre]. *Pesti Napló*, no. 2280, 25 August 1857a, p. [2].
- N. N. “Hirfűzér” [News Chain]. *Családi Lapok*, no. 5, 30 July 1857b, p. 72.
- N. N. “Nemzeti színház” [National Theatre]. *Budapesti Hirlap*, no. 173, 31 July 1857c, p. [2].
- N. N. “Színházi napló” [Theatre Diarium]. *Vasárnapi Ujság*, no. 33, 15 August 1858, p. 396.
- N. N. “A nemzeti színház nappal” [The National Theatre During the Day]. *Színházi Látszó*, no. 1, 6 April 1863a, p. [2].
- N. N. “Couqui a. k. a. mint Gizella” [Mlle Couqui as Gizella]. *Színházi Látszó*, no. 6, 11 April 1863b, p. [2].
- N. N. [no title]. *Hölgyfutár*, no. 43, 11 April 1863c, p. 342.
- N. N. “Couqui k. a. mint a »Szerelmes ördög«” [Mlle Couqui k. a. as “The Devil in Love”]. *Színházi Látszó*, no. 8, 13 April 1863d, p. [3].
- N. N. “Heti okoskodások Bolond Miskától” [Weekly Wisecracks from Mad Mishka the Fool]. *Bolond Miska*, no. 14, 19 April 1863e, pp. 61-62.
- N. N. “Couqui k. a. a »Farsangi kalandok«-ban” [Mlle Couqui in “Carnival Adventures”]. *Színházi Látszó*, no. 16, 21 April 1863f, p. [2].
- N. N. [no title]. *Hölgyfutár*, no. 48, 23 April 1863g, p. 383.
- N. N. “Nemzeti színház” [National Theatre]. *Pesti Napló*, no. 3960, 26 April 1863h, p. [2].
- N. N. “Heti okoskodások Bolond Miskától” [Weekly Clever Quips from Mad Mishka the Fool]. *Bolond Miska*, no. 16, 3 May 1863i, p. 74.
- N. N. “Németország” [Germany]. *Hölgyfutár*, no. 1, 2 July 1863j, p. 7.
- N. N. [no title]. *Koszorú*, no. 14, 3 April 1864a, p. 335.

- N. N. "Nemzeti Színház. April 2. Couqui k. a. első föllépte" [National Theatre. 2 April. First Performance of Mlle Couqui]. *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 78, 6 April 1864b, p. 346.
- N. N. "Nemzeti Színház" [National Theatre]. *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 80, 8 April 1864c, p. 354.
- N. N. "April 10. »Esmeralda« – ballet, Couqui k. a. mint vendég [Mlle Couqui as a guest]" *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 83, 12 April 1864d, p. 366.
- N. N. "Gallmayer k. a. kankánja" [Mlle Gallmayer's Cancan]. *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 83, 12 April 1864e, 365.
- N. N. "Nemzeti Színház" [National Theatre]. *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 86, 15 April 1864f, pp. 377-378.
- N. N. "Heti szemle a nemzeti színház drámai előadások felett" [Weekly Review of the Dramatic Performances of the National Theatre]. *Pesti Napló*, no. 4256, 23 April 1864g, pp. [1-2].
- N. N. "Fővárosi hírek" [Capital City News]. *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 94, 24 April 1864h, p. 409.
- N. N. "Fővárosi hírek" [Capital City News]. *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 99, 30 April 1864i, p. 429.
- N. N. "Nemzeti Színház" [National Theatre]. *Fővárosi Lapok*, no. 81, 9 April 1864j, p. 358.
- N. N. "Nemzeti színház" [National Theatre]. *Hölgyfutár*, no. 44, 14 April 1864k, 356.
- N. N. "Tagesneuigkeiten" [Daily News]. *Pester Lloyd*, no. 209, 14 September 1864l, p. [3].

Author's profile

Hedvig Ujvári is a literary historian (Germanist), and a habilitated associate professor at the Faculty of Humanities, Péter Pázmány Péter Catholic University (PPKE BTK). Her main research areas include the history and literary-mediatory role of German-language newspapers in Pest-Buda after 1849, cultural transfer, the reception of stage dance, and the profiles of feuilleton authors for the *Pester Lloyd* (e.g., Max Nordau, Adolf Silberstein, Adolf Dux).