

[The first steps on the stage of *Showder Klub*]

TAMÁS KISS

**PhD Candidate, Doctoral School of Literature and Cultural Studies of
the University of Debrecen/ editor, HajduPress branch of Lorinvest Zrt.**

E-mail: tk107805@gmail.com

Abstract

The current paper aims to present the Hungarian stand-up comedy television show, Showder Klub. As stand-up comedy is fundamentally a live genre, it can be interesting to see how it appears on television. The first Showder Klub performances are interesting for another reason as well: for most of the performers, it is the first, and for some, it is also the last television appearance. The Showder Klub, which started in the spring of 2008, is the longest-running and most important among the Hungarian stand-up comedy shows. This study presents its operation and characteristics based on several interviews. My goal is to conduct a content analysis on the first performances of the performers in the first 15 seasons of the show, to examine, among other things, the ways in which they are introduced, the topics they mention, and how they engage the audience.

Keywords stand-up comedy; Hungary; television; Showder Klub; research

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Rezumat (Primii pași pe scena emisiunii Showder Klub)

Studiul de față prezintă Showder Klub, o emisiune stand-up comedy maghiară de televiziune. Stand-up comedy este de fapt un gen live, așa că poate fi interesant de văzut cum apare la televizor. Primele reprezentări în Showder Klub sunt interesante și pentru că în timp ce majoritatea artiștilor apar pentru prima oară la televizor, unii dintre ei apar pentru ultima oară. Showder Klub, lansat în primăvara anului 2008, este cel mai lung și important program de televiziune de stand-up comedy maghiar din Ungaria. Acest studiu prezintă funcționarea și caracteristicile emisiunilor Showder Klub pe baza interviurilor. Prin analiză de conținut a primelor reprezentări ale artiștilor din primele 15 sezoane ale emisiunii, analizăm – printre altele – modul în care apar, ce subiecte menționează și cum implică publicul.

Cuvinte cheie: stand-up comedy; Ungaria; televiziune; Showder Klub; cercetare

Kivonat (A Showder Klub színpadán tett első lépések)

A tanulmány célja a magyar stand-up comedy televíziós műsor, a Showder Klub bemutatása. Mivel a stand-up comedy alapvetően élő műfaj, érdekes megfigyelní, hogyan jelenik meg a televízióban. A Showder Klub első tévés megjelenései azért is érdekesek, hiszen a legtöbb előadó számára ez az első, néhányuk számára pedig az utolsó televíziós szereplés. A 2008 tavaszán indult Showder Klub a leghosszabb ideje működő és legfontosabb magyar stand-up comedy műsor Magyarországon; működését és jellemzőit több interjú alapján mutatjuk be. A műsor első 15 évadában szereplő előadók első fellépéseiről tartalomelemzéssel vizsgáljuk, hogyan mutatják be őket, milyen témákat említenek, és hogyan vonják be a közönséget.

Kulcsszavak stand-up comedy; Magyarország; televízió; Showder Klub; kutatás

Introduction

Stand-up comedy, which originated in the United States, has a history of several decades in Hungary – has now grown into an independent media industry sector. Despite this, only a few studies have been published on the topic, but, in my opinion, the Hungarian stand-up comedy deserves the attention of cultural studies.

Stand-up comedy is essentially a live genre (meaning that its essence lies in live speech and direct presence), which is why it can be interesting to see how it appears on television. The show called *Showder Klub* can be an excellent object of such an examination because it has been running for more than 15 years, and it is prestigious for performers to appear in it because even the biggest names in the genre participate in it, and this show is the reason why many young stand-up comedians choose this genre (for example, Balázs Máté Szabó and György Rekop). It is also the easiest way to access the genre, as all you need is a television, and unlike live performances, which are tied to a specific place and time, several of its episodes can be viewed online in the whole country. As a result, it is more appreciated by performers than ephemeral performances.

This article presents the Hungarian television show called *Showder Klub* and highlights its significance in contemporary Hungarian stand-up comedy. The show features members of *Showder Klub*, Dumasínház, Comedy Central, and

the Stand Up Comedy Humortársulat. With over 15 years of existence and over 60 performers, it plays a significant role in the Hungarian entertainment industry, which is why its analysis is important. However, an analysis of the entire show would be too lengthy, so it is necessary to highlight certain aspects only.

This study introduces the operation and characteristics of the *Showder Klub* based on interviews. I conduct a content analysis of the first performances of the comedians in the first 15 seasons of the show, examining, among other things, the ways in which the performers are presented, the topics they mention, and how they engage the audience. The first performances are the most important for the performers, as this is when they make the first impression on the audience, and this is when most of them gain popularity.

Showder Klub

The *Showder Klub* was created from the stand-up comedy segments featured on the late-night television show called *Esti Showder Fábry Sándorral*. The original concept of the show was to have four performers in one episode. Its diversity was an advantage because it caused viewers not to switch channels. When *Showder Klub* started, as with all programs, the channel RTL expected an audience of people aged 18 to 49 countrywide. In 2017, the channel set up new goals, namely to have a recognizable content with nationally inspired humour, to replace the purchased material produced based on foreign schemes. The broadcaster does not expect record ratings, but rather high-quality productions that will remain memorable for decades and help build the channel's brand.¹

Although similar television programs existed (among others *Mennyi? 30!*² on HBO Hungary, *Mondom a magamét!*³ on Magyar Televízió, *Dumakabaré*⁴ on ATV, and *Comedy Club*⁵ on Comedy Central Hungary), every single one of them ran for a significantly shorter period, and were discontinued by 2023. The professional leader of *Showder Klub* is András Péter Kovács.⁶ With *Showder Klub*, Kristóf Kovács won the Television Journalists' Award in 2014 and 2015.⁷

Kristóf Kovács describes the *Showder Klub* as a symbolic stage that popularizes comedians, a fixed frame in which new laughers appear. Viewers are attracted not by the show, but by the performers, the jokes, and the content.⁸

Showder Klub, launched in the spring of 2008, is the longest-running and most important television show in the Hungarian stand-up comedy realm. Over 15 years, it has so far produced 249 episodes, featured 72 comedians (66 solo, plus six who only appeared together: Steve Hajdu and Attila Magyar, Dániel Somoogyvári and Tomi Gimpel, Ferenc József Varga and Tibor Aradi), and contained 711 segments, as well as special parts such as solo evenings. A spin-off, *A Showder Klub bemutatja*, which first aired in 2017, now only includes solo and joint, thematic evenings. In the Hungarian stand-up comedy scene, appearing in *Showder Klub* has become prestigious: every comedian describes in their introductory text or biography that they have performed in it, even if it only happened once.

An episode almost always features 4 performers (except for episodes when several people take the stage at the same time, such as the Szomszédnéni Produkciós Iroda), a compère and three comedians. A performer is usually given 12

minutes, which can sometimes be exceeded by a few minutes. Of this, a material of 4-14 minutes is broadcasted on television, so the performers mostly tell a set list and rarely a whole story. The television show itself is also interesting, partly because it is an imprint of the era, and it also bears the traces of the coronavirus pandemic. In the spring of 2020, the whole season was cancelled due to health and safety measures, in order to minimize human contact which acts as the main way of COVID transmission, no performances were allowed. Then, in the fall season of 2020, the audience found itself in an unusual seating arrangement, with the chairs in the auditorium placed further apart, and some members of the audience seated on a certain part of the stage.

The episodes of *Showder Klub* are broadcast the fastest among Hungarian stand-up comedies available on television. While stand-up comedy must be topical, a solo or thematic evening is more timeless because a whole year can pass between the recording and its television screening (see, for example, the episode titled *A Showder Klub bemutatja: Orosz György: Hova hova?*, which was recorded on the 24th of October 2022 and screened on the 8th of October 2023). This makes *Showder Klub* the most direct type of stand-up comedy in Hungary after the live presence, and it does not require as much preparation as the solo evenings. As a result, it is rawer than the solo evenings, with which the performers travel the country for years. At the same time, these are usually more timeless, and, therefore, contain less topicality.

Little more than a week or two elapses between the recording of the first episode of a season of *Showder Klub* and its broadcast, the performances here are not recorded at the end of a longer tour, and the material presented is not necessarily preceded by such practice. These factors approach this show to the kind of stand-up comedy, produced in the United States of America, in which they use an open mic, or to those which can be seen as the cradles of the genre. However, this only applies to the premiere broadcasts. The previous episodes are played endlessly by the RTL KETTŐ channel, and a currently understandable reference may be unclear later when considered retrospectively. In this sense, it acts as an imprint of the era, because the performers highlight the celebrities and events of the given period.

Preparations, background processes and afterlife

Two or even three shows are recorded on a given day. The work process consists of the following stages: the RTL KETTŐ, formerly the RTL Klub channel, buys the broadcasting rights (annually); the producers compile the list of performers, announce the performances, and, finally, online ticket sales start on the website of Dumaszház (it is not possible to buy tickets on the spot, not even when some seats would still be available). The performers write, edit and recite their own material, there are no separate writers for the show.⁹ The producers know exactly what the performers are preparing because they receive a manuscript and an outline from them every time.¹⁰ The shows are recorded with a real audience, and the director, Dávid Fűri, has never stopped the recording because of the lighting, sound, or makeup corrections, as it is the case during the pro-

duction of a film series.¹¹ Given that this one version becomes permanent, an audience much larger than that of a live show can repeatedly see that every effort is made to create the best version.¹² What the performers say once, they cannot perform again later.¹³ Ian Brodie has put it this way: on the one hand, the joke needs the power of surprise to work, and on the other hand, it destroys the appearance of spontaneity if a stand-up comedian performs from a repertory that can be rewatched.¹⁴

Differences between live, televised and streaming versions

Although they are broadcast quickly, the episodes are edited and cut due to the fixed broadcast time. During post-production, only minor corrections are made: the footage is adjusted in terms of image and pace.¹⁵ However, what a viewer sees on location and on television is not the same. One of the most significant differences is that while the on-site audience watches it from one angle, from where they are seated, the television viewer's look is guided by the camera, the broadcast is captured from multiple angles.¹⁶

There is a warm-up on site, when György Kukuruzsnyák instructs the audience and gives them a possibility to practice what they need to do (such as muting the phone, clapping, whistling, raising their hands). A sound check also takes place, this means that they make sure that both the performer, and the audience can be heard on the recording, because they are working with real audience reactions and real audience sounds. That is why there are 18-20 microphones in the auditorium, which are attached to approximately every 5-6 chairs.¹⁷ Neither the warm-up nor the microphones are visible in the TV version. There is a table, a person who operates it, cameramen who operate the cameras, and a clock showing the time elapsed in the performance. These only appear in the TV recording when the performer refers to them. The on-site audience becomes part of the performance, seen and heard by the television audience, so that a second – physically not present – audience also becomes the viewer of the on-site entertainment, i.e. the dynamic interaction between the performer and the live audience becomes the static object of the second audience's aesthetic evaluation.¹⁸

Compared to the live versions, television ones are reduced in content. Sometimes editors cut out a story, a sentence, and some of the bloopers from the recorded material, but they also shorten the breaks between sentences, so that the screened version is shorter. However, they add a main title animation, a credits list, scenes from the next block before the commercials, and, sometimes, sketches recorded in front of a green screen, backstage scenes, or videos made at other locations, and calls for applications not shown to the on-site audience.

Method

Based on what has been described in the previous subsections, I will now examine the program. However, since it consists of hundreds of hours of material, instead of studying the entire television program from beginning to end, I will focus on a few issues. Based on a content analysis of the performers' first appearances, it is possible to identify some characteristics and the given era. My hypothesis is that the first appearances serve as a kind of negative introduction,

where the performers emphasize their negative characteristics, and, at the same time, their place of origin is also an important factor.

Analysis

Composition and the order of performers

The first *Showder Klub* performances are also interesting because for most of the performers, it is the first, and for some, it is also the last television appearance. This means that every performer who has ever appeared will be included in the case study. During the 711 segments, 66 individual performers, 61 men and 5 women took the stage of the Brandus Club at the Symbol Budapest event centre. I will analyse their first performances.

In the context of *Showder Klub*, it is possible to establish the three categories of the performers based on their popularity:

- Well-known television personalities whose presence was important to the show, especially at the beginning:
 - Sándor Fábry: the host of the show *Esti Showder Fábry Sándorral* (season 1 and 21)
 - András Hajós: member of the show *Heti Hetes*, but he had his own shows as well before he appeared in *Showder Klub* (season 1 and 19)
 - Attila Magyar: actor, director, and stage writer (season 3)
 - Steve Hajdú: actor (season 3)
 - Róbert Puzsér: television host of several shows, radio host, and the juryman of the talent show *Csillag születik!* (season 11 and 21)
 - Tibor Aradi and Ferenc József Varga: members of the radio show *Rádiókarabé* and the *Mikroszkóp Színpad* (season 13 and 14)
 - Sándor Badár: actor and comedian (first appearance in season 7 and he is a returning performer since season 13): the only one of the big names who has since become a member of the *Dumasínház*, thus a regular performer at the *Showder Klub*, although he was already known in Hungary for his films and books.
 - It may have had a similar function when two episodes, episodes 4 and 6 of season 9, were recorded at the Thália Theater because – compared to Symbol Budapest – it is a venue with a larger capacity and a longer history.
- The newcomers who debuted in the *Showder Klub* block of the show *Esti Showder Fábry Sándorral* were already known to a narrow circle of the genre's fans before appearing in the *Showder Klub*:
 - Ádám Kiss, Péter Aranyosi, Trabarna, Balázs Beliczai, Tibor Bödőcs, Zoltán Köhalmi, and Dénes Benk have already participated in the first season.

- The third category is for new talents from *Showder Klub*, Dumaszínház, Comedy Central, and Stand Up Comedy Humortársulat, who appear on television for the first time. This includes most performers, everyone who is not included in the two categories above.

There are almost always new performers, and there are no major hiatuses, only a year at most. However, if there is a talent show (such as *Magyarország, szereplek!* in 2016 and 2018), it increases the number of new performers. The first material shown on television by new performers is on average 8:50 long. The shortest is 4:23, the longest is 13:29. Until the seventh season, the broadcast time for a performer performing for the first time was over 10 minutes. Since the eighth season, it has been under 10 minutes, except for the 21st season. The reason for this is that it takes time for each performer to develop a fan base – the seventh season lasted until mid-2011 – and when this happens, it is more practical to include as much of the performance of well-established names as possible, perhaps at the expense of the even less mature material of the new ones.

The new performers were the absolute majority; 35 times, they performed last (with one exception – with four performers; usually the third performer of the episode), 20 times, second. It happened rarely, only 10 times, that the new ones took the stage as the first performer of the evening. Five of these cases took place in the first season, when all the performers were new, and this season had new performers as the second and third ones of the evening in a similar proportion. This was necessary because in the first season, all the performers were new, and when this constraint was removed, the situation changed. In subsequent seasons, it was more of an exception when a new talent performed first in a given episode (for example, it only happened twice between the 8th and 28th seasons). The fact that newcomers were most often the last performers may be the result of the following: since this is a television show, viewers may tune out a stand-up comedian who is performing poorly due to their lack of experience, so featuring them at the end has less risk. Even if the viewer is not satisfied, they lose viewership only in the last minutes and not in the beginning or middle of the evening.

Genres

In *Showder Klub*, we find the following three genre categories: stand-up comedy, cabaret, magic. Each has its own characteristics which can be presented as follows:

- In stand-up comedy, a performer tells one or more stories, there are no sets or costumes. Props are rare (for example, Bruti and Ricsi Kertész use guitars). Sometimes, it is supplemented with singing, more often with parody.
- In cabaret, several people, in this case two performers, perform one or more scenes, and may add costumes and props to them (for example, in the case of Steve Hajdú and Attila Magyar). It is performed by actors, and the involvement of the audience is less typical than in the other two genres (it occurred only in one of the four cabaret scenes in the show).

- In magic, a performer tells one story and there is a high level of audience involvement (for example, being called to the stage or being involved in tricks). The props with which they perform the tricks are essential. They touch on fewer topics than the average stand-up comedians because they focus on the tricks.

The involvement of the audience

In *Showder Klub*, and in stand-up comedy and magic in general, but sometimes even in cabaret, it is common not only to greet the members of the audience, but to directly involve them in the performance. This can be done by singling out one person or addressing the audience collectively. The first category includes two methods. The first one was chosen by Ricsi Kertész and Tamás Badár, who called members of the audience onto the stage, and twelve other performers, who singled out a member of the audience, reacting to their responses or briefly addressing them. This method is usually accompanied by a form of address. The second consists of tricks and questions, the latter took three forms: yes/no questions, open questions, and poetic questions. However, as Dániel Ligeti points out, poetic questions do not expect an answer, so I will not examine this type of question. The most common type was the yes/no question which the audience could answer in different ways, most often by raising their hands (for example, Dániel Mogács: “Ki az, aki félt már gyerekkorában?” / Which of you has ever been afraid in their childhood?). There were four exceptions with other ways of answering: applause in cases of the questions asked by Soma Hajnóczy, Gábor Horváth, and Miklós Valtner, and laughter in the case of those asked by Dániel Gaál. Twelve performers asked yes/no questions. The aim of this was to bring the audience closer to the performer by expressing the similarities between them or by “directing the performance”. In the case of open questions, the performer could not think of anything and asked for help (Péter Aranyosi and István Bellus), but there were also instances when the audience was involved in the performance, for example when Ádám Maczkó asked how long it takes a woman to buy shoes, or when György Orosz asked how a man takes off his underpants. As for the tricks, the entire audience is engaged in some kind of physical activity. Soma Hajnóczy involves the audience in magic tricks, Magyed Al-Gharati takes selfies with them, asking them to smile.

Involving the live audience is important because their contributions are visible on the recordings and this is advantageous for two reasons. On the one hand, it signals to the viewers of the recording and to each other – the members of the audience are also an audience for each other, and their reactions add up¹⁹ – what was entertaining (in the form of applause or laughter). On the other hand, when the members of the audience actively participate, they are more influenced by the performance than when they just passively observe it, which can elicit more favourable reactions or create funnier situations. Ian Brodie emphasizes that stand-up comedy is performed “not to” but “with” an audience.²⁰ A performance is created from the encounter between the performer and the audience which takes place at a given place and time.²¹ The success or failure of the performance

is indicated by the sound effects of the audience present, and these are indelibly intertwined with the recording through which the audience not present experiences it.

Introduction and Announcement

Since the performers, with a few exceptions, are appearing on television for the first time, it is necessary and useful for them to talk about themselves, especially since they are not yet known to the national audience. However, during these introductions, the stand-up comics highlight their negative qualities, which can be considered as a characteristic of the genre: the use of irony and sarcasm means that the downsides of phenomena are more accentuated in the stand-up comedy, and self-deprecating humour is also among the characteristics of the genre.²²

The analysis of the performances partly supported this phenomenon, as it turned out that not everyone talked about themselves, but those who did mention not only positive aspects, but also negative ones. They highlight their most visible or audible, physical characteristics, that they are too tall (e.g., Fruzsina Ács), too short (e.g., Marcsi Redenczki), overweight (e.g., György Orosz), balding (e.g., Ádám Maczkó), or have a speech impediment (e.g., Edu Tóth). In their introductions, they can include information about their personality, current situation in life, or previous achievements: their relationship status, if they are single (most of Fruzsina Ács's performances are dominated by the themes of singleness and looking for a partner), their qualifications, and the careers they have left (e.g., Balázs Beliczai graduated from teacher training college, but does not teach; Áram Heideri originally wanted to be an electrical engineer but became a gyros chef). In case they hosted a show, they focus on the negative elements by saying that it ended quickly (András Hajós), or that it was broadcast in the early hours of the morning (Miklós Valtner). At the same time, it is seen as positive when they are in a relationship or if they talk about their qualifications and work, for example. Their origin or background is seen as a neutral characteristic. Out of 66 performers, 23 mentioned where they come from, which is less than I expected, but not a negligible factor.

The other side of the introduction of the performers, when the compère stays to talk to them. As Jason Rutter notes in the English scene, this evaluation is almost exclusively positive.²³ The examination of *Showder Klub* shows that this also applies to the Hungarian scene. In the introductory texts, the compères highlight mostly the positive qualities of the performers (for example, that they have won a competition or appeared elsewhere, on Comedy Central or TV2), only occasionally does a negative thing appear (for example, that Dániel Said is half Arab, but does not speak Arabic, or that Ervin Sallai has no friends).

The introduction is a characteristic feature of stand-up comedy and precedes the comedians' entrance and their first joke. It prepares the audience for the performance. The importance of the introduction is also demonstrated by the fact that less than half of the 66 performers, 30 in total, also appeared in the role of compère. The fast-paced information about the comedian which is provided by

the compère encourages the audience to engage in interaction, and provides a social context in which the audience can place the comedian, allowing them to see the performer not only as a performer in general, but also as an individual. In English stand-up comedy, this includes contextualization, framing of response (which encourages the audience to greet comedians with a certain attitude, such as enormous affection), evaluating the incoming comedian (by expressing an opinion about them), request for action (applause) from the audience, introducing them (by name), and the audience's applause.²⁴

Three types of introductions are used in *Showder Klub*. The first and most common is when the compère introduces the performer in a few sentences. Here, in addition to the name of the comedian, contextualization and applause are always present, which can be supplemented by framing the response, evaluating the arriving comedian, and requesting action. Not all the elements of the English version are present in the beginning, and their order may be different (for example, while – in Rutter's description – the name can only come before the request for action and the applause, here, the name can precede everything else), less fixed than that of the English version. This was the only format used until season 8. The next format is when only the name of the performer is announced, which happened in the cases of Balázs Hajdú and Ricsi Kertész. This means that there is no contextualization. The third and longest format is when the compère stays to chat with the performer for a short time before their performance. This serves multiple goals: to reassure the performer, to increase interaction between the compères and performers, and to make the show more varied by modifying the usual formula or alternating with it at the beginning. It may also differ from what Rutter describes, because these evenings are not just stand-up comedy performances, but also part of a television program. The producers take into consideration that there is a second audience, and even though its' members are not present at the venue, their needs must also be met.²⁵ The third version has been around since season 10, it has become common since season 15, and after that, only Tamás Badár and Sándor Fábry deviated from it. Tamás Badár first took the *Showder Klub* stage with his father, Sándor Badár, who preceded him by a few minutes. They did not stand up at the same time, so by the time it was his turn, the compère has already left and could not talk to him. Sándor Fábry was not introduced, but a story was told about him. In the case of Róbert Puzsér, there was a conversation after the performance, the goal here was not to relieve stage fright, but to discuss what had been said.

As for the locations mentioned by the performers, Budapest, Buda and Pest are the most prominent, especially two districts (Kőbánya and Pesterzsébet), which are mentioned 29 times. The reason for this is that most of the comedians (at least 24, some of whom have unknown addresses) come from the capital, so their stories take place there, and the television recording takes place in this same city. This is followed by America, its various names (USA and United States) and cities (New York, San Francisco, Dallas, Pasadena, and Los Angeles), supplemented by the states of Hawaii and Texas (with 17 mentions). This shows that most often, they named the capital of the country, where they lived, worked,

and visited, followed by a place that they did not necessarily have personal memories of, it appeared rather something they had seen on television, whether in a fictional or news programme. It is also striking that the settlements in Eastern Hungary occur more often (specifically, the following cities appear in at least two performances: Miskolc, Ózd, Békéscsaba, Debrecen, Mátészalka, Nyíregyháza, Salgótarján), while from Western Hungary, only Pécs is mentioned, even this one occurs only twice. There are two reasons for this tendency. One is that more comedians are more familiar with the eastern region of the country than the western one, which is confirmed by the fact that Péter Aranyosi and István Bellus are both from Miskolc. The other reason is the play on stereotypes: for example, when Ádám Maczkó says that as a 31-year-old man with a beer belly, he looks like a sixth-grade student from Ózd, the audience understands that he is referring to the fact that in the mentioned city, students often repeat their year.

The role of stereotypes in stand-up comedy is significant because it allows the performer to activate the audience's background beliefs, which is beneficial for comedians: they do not have to describe the place where the story is set because the members of the audience already have a preconceived image of the city in question, which are important in stand-up comedy because they can activate the audience's background beliefs.²⁶ Stereotypes provide a basic framework for understanding the content of a joke. The use of stereotypes is made possible by relevant background knowledge.²⁷

Topics

In stand-up comedy performances, just like in everyday conversations, it is important to know who the communication is about, and this also determines the topics. So, I collected personal and common names that refer to the friends, family, or acquaintances of the performers. Their shows could be divided into six major topics based on who they talk about (family members and relatives, acquaintances and strangers, celebrities, pop culture references, politics, historical, and religious figures). It is true for each performer that they talked about their acquaintances or unknown people whom they had met or seen in everyday life. This proves how important observational stand-up comedy is in Hungary. This is followed by the mention of family members or relatives, which still means people from the performer's immediate environment. These two topics were closely followed by references to celebrities and various elements of popular culture, which provide a common reference point for the audience, the members of which are familiar with the individuals and cultural products mentioned by the comedian. Certain topics, however, were not covered in half as many performances: politics, history, and religion. Although certain historical and religious figures are known to the entire Hungarian population (such as the prime minister, Zrínyi, or Jesus), jokes about them can still be divisive. Political and religious figures are usually not mentioned because a joke about them would be an offense to their followers. Performers rarely bring about historical figures because the members of the audience are poorly educated and do not know them. The fact that a stand-up comedian touched on an average of four topics in the first performance also indicates

that it is not common to get too immersed in one topic that time, but they rather choose to try out several options: even if they highlight certain elements only, their shows are varied, and in addition to acquaintances observed in a setting (for example on the street), family stories appear, as well as interpretations of tabloid events and pop cultural references. All this takes place in about ten minutes.

Among the relatives, parents were mentioned most often, and the mother appeared most often, followed by the father as second. Next on the list of frequently mentioned people was the girlfriend who is part of an informal relationship, followed by the wife, who was mentioned 12 times, but meanwhile, the husband was mentioned only twice (interestingly, the mother-in-law also appears twice, although we would expect a higher frequency because of the mother-in-law jokes, but this data confirms that they tell their own stories on stage and not jokes). This number is the result of the gender ratio, as 61 of the *Showder Klub* performers were men and 5 were women. This shows that the importance of closeness in relationships changes: in the beginning of the list, we can find close family members, but after that, when the parents have already been mentioned, this is no longer the case, for example, the girlfriend precedes the wife.

When it comes to other human relationships, male and female friends were most mentioned, more often than any relative. This proves that the performers talk more about the casual relationships than the more solid, less influenceable ties. Schoolmates, classmates, and seatmates were each mentioned twice. They were at the bottom of the list because the speakers, except for Dániel Gaál, are no longer in school, so they could only talk about the past memories of these relationships, while friendships last longer, and some other relationships, such as those with a neighbour, a colleague, or a buddy are still ongoing.

Among the occupations, teacher and pedagogue were mentioned most often, followed by policeman. The reason for this is that everyone went to school, so they met teachers, and meeting policemen is independent from education or work. Besides these, there are professions that most people encounter in everyday life, either in person, or indirectly through public discourse, which also strengthens the presence of observational stand-up comedy in the contemporary Hungarian stand-up comedy scene.

Among the ethnic groups, races and religions mentioned, only Szekler and Romanian were directly connected to the Transylvanian performers (Péter Felméri, Szomszédnéni Produkciós Iroda, and Levente Zsók), the others are known in Hungary through the media.

In the context of other, more general subjects, it is seen that they talked about women mostly, and they used less respectful terms such as “chick”. Slang also occurred, indicating the use of a low linguistic register, as opposed to, for example, a play or a cabaret.

Conclusion

In my research, I intended to present the characteristics, topics, and formal elements of *Showder Klub*, the longest-running Hungarian television stand-up comedy show, through a content analysis of the first performances.

My hypothesis that stand-up comedians present themselves in a negative light was partially refuted, as they also include their positive qualities in their first performances, and the compères mostly highlight their positive qualities in their introductory texts.

An interesting finding is that although they most often named the country's capital as the place where they lived, worked, and had visited, this was followed by places of which they did not necessarily have personal memories, but had seen on television only, either in fictional programs or in the news.

My analysis of the occurring topics revealed that – in Hungary – those based on everyday observations are much more important than politics, history, and religion, presumably because the latter tend to divide the audience. It can also be observed that a stand-up comedian touches on an average of four topics in their first performance, which also indicates that it is not typical for performers to delve too deeply into a single topic during their first appearance, it is preferred to try out several possibilities.

The stand-up comedy performances include the characteristics of the genre among which we can find the active participation of the audience and the use of stereotypes. The use of slang and low register is striking, and is visible even in the way the characters in the stories are named. In addition to this, these television programs have other characteristic features as well, such as the need to change the established announcement and the frequent use of new performers to create variety.

As I have demonstrated in this study, *Showder Klub* bears the hallmarks of the Hungarian stand-up comedy scene (gender ratio). The demographic composition of the performers is also reflected in the appearance of family relationships.

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Endnotes

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