

# Anno

SZEM MAGAZINE - SPECIAL EDITION | 2025



## A Brief History of Our Future

Discover how the city's and the university's past shape their future through the achievements of remarkable professors and alumni

INSPIRING  
STORIES

HISTORICAL  
OVERVIEW

NOBEL PRIZE  
WINNERS

*What I lacked  
in natural ability,  
I could make  
up for in effort.*

”

A portrait of Prof. Dr. Katalin Karikó, a woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a red jacket over a black top. She is resting her chin on her right hand and smiling slightly. The background is a light, textured surface.

**P**rof. Dr. Katalin Karikó donated her Nobel Prize and the accompanying sum of more than half a million U.S. dollars to the University of Szeged, establishing the JATE Award to recognize and support the university's most outstanding students, professors, and alumni.

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# A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF SZEGED UP TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED

  Rita CSÚRI-MAGOS

The University of Szeged celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021, with its origins dating back 440 years to its predecessor institution, founded in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár) on May 12, 1581, by István Báthory, Prince of Transylvania and King of Poland. Displaced by the Romanian authorities at the end of World War I, the institution found refuge in Szeged in 1921, reborn as “Hungary’s second university of science”. With the University of Szeged enjoying the full support of Kuno Klebelsberg, the Minister of Culture, Szeged came to be known as the new Göttingen, more specifically, “Göttinga by the Tisza River”. It was here that Nobel Laureate Albert Szent-Györgyi conducted his groundbreaking research on biological combustion processes, focusing on vitamin C and the catalysis of fumaric acid.

**B**y the time the University relocated to Szeged, the rebuilding of the city after the devastating Great Flood of 1879 had endowed Szeged with its present-day urban character. Featuring a new and exciting layout with boulevards, avenues, and impressive Art Nouveau palaces, Szeged had been completely transformed by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gaining a new lease on life.

It is thrilling to uncover traces of Szeged’s rich history beneath your feet as you walk its streets. Underneath the modern buildings lies a colorful and turbulent past, marked by periods of glory and

prosperity, as well as struggle, war, and suffering. If you want to understand the past and the dominant character, the genius loci, of Szeged, there’s no better place to start than the so-called Castle. This historical site, now an exhibition venue of the Móra Ferenc Museum, offers a stimulating interactive permanent exhibition on the history of Szeged. The essence of this truly wonderful exhibition is captured here on these pages, allowing you to take a virtual tour of Szeged and discover the secrets of its past.

**It all started with three islands...**

# THE BEGINNINGS

“Thousands of years ago, the region around the confluence of the Tisza River and the Maros River in southern Hungary was a swampy area that was regularly flooded, with many islands rising above the floodplain. A settlement on the three largest and highest islands evolved to become the city of Szeged, with its three districts (Downtown, Lower Town, and Upper Town) corresponding to these three islands. Evidence suggests that the region has been inhabited since the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. The short, animated video shown just inside the entrance to the museum exhibition provides a snapshot of how life developed around the Tisza River over the centuries.<sup>(1)</sup>”

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, **Celtic tribes** migrated to the territory of present-day Szeged. Their control over the Great Hungarian Plain ended by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD with the arrival of the **Sarmatians**, an ethnic group of Iranian origin. Their early settlements were important for both Roman merchants and the Roman army. However, only one of these settlements, **Partiscum**, has been identified by researchers as being situated where Szeged is located today.”

Only the western areas of modern Hungary, known as Transdanubia, were part of the Roman Empire, specifically the Province of Pannonia. However, Roman control ceased with the Hunnic invasions of 370–410, led by King Attila. Later, Pannonia was part of the Ostrogothic Kingdom from the late 5<sup>th</sup> to the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century and subsequently part of the Avar Khaganate confederation from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>(1)</sup> *Courtesy of the Móra Ferenc Museum. ■ Original Hungarian text by Csilla Molnár. ■ English translation by Zsolt Vad. ■ Translation revised by the Translation Services Group of the University of Szeged.*





# ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISPLAY

One of the most inspiring features of the exhibition is a creatively arranged display reminiscent of an archaeological site or “dig” in Szeged, with different layers representing various historical periods. In an actual excavation, the lowest layers usually conceal artifacts from earlier periods, while the top layer contains the most recent finds.

## MODERN HISTORY

A double-headed eagle crest made from an iron plate – the coat of arms of the ruling House of Habsburg; an 18<sup>th</sup> century rifle; broadswords; cannonballs from the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries

1700 AD

## MIDDLE AGES

- A bow from the Ottoman period;
- Ottoman chinaware (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries);
- Ceramic pipes
- Medieval stele – tombstone of a bishop named Mark;
- Medieval sword fragments

1686 AD

1526 AD

## ANTIQUITY

■ Terracotta artifacts from the Roman era; Fragment of a relief;

■ Floor tiles; vessels from Celtic graves

# THE CONQUEST OF HUNGARY

The Magyar invasion, also known as the **Conquest of Hungary**, took place during the 9<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in 896. The Magyars (with “Magyar” being the native name for both the Hungarian people and their language) were **Christianized** at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and the Christian Kingdom of Hungary was established in 1000 AD, ruled by **the Árpád dynasty** for the next three centuries. During the High Middle Ages, the kingdom expanded beyond Pannonia all the way to the Adriatic coast.

The **first written mention of the city of Szeged**, or “Cigeddin”, was in **1183** in a charter concerning salt trade issues, recorded by King Béla III. Szeged was an important center of the **Transylvanian salt trade** organized along the Maros River. Being of immense value (comparable to that of gold), it was salt that probably spurred the early development of Szeged. This significant role of Szeged was also underpinned by the royal Golden Bull issued by King András II in 1222.



ÁRPÁD FESZTY: *Arrival of the Hungarians* (Main scene from the painting)



300 AD

MAGNA HUNGARIA

LEVEDIA

830 AD

ETELKÖZ

895 AD

CARPATHIAN BASIN

URAL

ALPS

CAUCASUS

BLACK SEA

# CENTURIES OF WAR

In 1241, during the reign of King Béla IV, Hungary was **invaded by the Mongols** under the leadership of Batu Khan. Over the course of this invasion, more than 500,000 Hungarians were massacred, and the **entire kingdom was reduced to ashes**. Szeged, too, suffered great losses. In the county of Csongrád, to which Szeged belongs, over 75% of the settlements were destroyed. However, the survivors managed to find refuge in the marshlands along the Tisza River. After the Mongols retreated from the region, both Szeged and its castle saw significant progress, as King Béla IV ordered the construction of hundreds of stone castles and fortifications to improve the nation's defense against possible future invasions. The first mention of the **Castle of Szeged** dates back to 1338, recorded in a treaty signed by King Károly I. Not coincidentally, the castles built by King Béla IV proved to be invaluable later in the long struggle against the **Ottoman Empire**. By the end of the 14th century, the armies of the Ottoman Empire had reached the southern borders of the Kingdom of Hungary, and the country bore the brunt of the Ottoman wars in Europe during the 15th century. These struggles culminated in the Battle of Nándorfehérvár in 1456, where János Hunyadi defeated the Turks. This victory had significant consequences for the future, stabilizing the southern borders of the Kingdom of Hungary for more than half a century and significantly slowing the Ottoman advance in Europe. In recognition of its vital role as a staging ground for the royal army during the Turkish campaigns, **Szeged was declared a free royal city in 1498**.

Written records from 1433 indicate that Szeged hosted prominent visitors at the time, including the French knight Bertrandon de la Brocquiere, advisor and esquire to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, who participated in Sigismund's military campaigns against the Ottomans. In his travelogue, he writes: "I journeyed from Becskerek to Segedin, a large city

in the lowlands on the Tisza River. [...] During my stay, I observed that the people here get their heat by burning nothing but straw or reeds that grow along the rivers and swamps, which are quite expansive in some places on the great plains. They eat no bread here other than soft, small buns. Segedin has only one road, which seems to me about a league [4 km] long. There is a great abundance of food here, especially fish, larger than any I have seen caught from other rivers. I also saw a large market for cranes and bustards, which are hunted, sold, and eaten as food. [...] There are many horses for sale in this city. As they are all wild, it is quite interesting to watch how they are tamed. [...] There is also a beautiful church in the city, belonging to the Cordeliers..."<sup>(2)</sup>

The Ottoman–Hungarian wars ultimately resulted in significant territorial losses for Hungary and the partition of the kingdom after the Battle of Mohács in 1526. Szeged and its castle came under Turkish rule in 1543. The Turks started important reconstruction works, reinforcing the castle walls to withstand cannon attacks. These extensive efforts improved the state of the inner buildings of the castle and the so-called "Palánk", a group of buildings attached to the castle and surrounded by a fence (palánk).

In 1552, the Hungarians tried to retake the city, but the failed siege led to brutal retaliation, with the Turks setting the city on fire in revenge. The Hungarian population fled and was largely replaced by Muslims and various peoples from the Balkans.

During the period of Ottoman occupation, Szeged was part of the so-called "Khas Estate", which was owned directly by the Turkish state rather than by an individual warlord or high-ranking military official. This status gave the city some protection against constant plundering. However, this privilege was not enough to spare Szeged from the burden of "double taxation": the city had to pay taxes not

only to the Turks but also to the Hungarian authorities and the Church. In addition, the local population was often conscripted to fortify the castle facilities. Defense against Ottoman expansion shifted in its focus to Habsburg Austria, and the rest of the Kingdom of Hungary came under the rule of the Habsburg emperors. The eventual retaking of Szeged was part of a broader military campaign by an international alliance formed to drive the Ottomans out of occupied territories. The Holy League army, numbering over 74,000 men, included German, Croatian, Dutch, Hungarian, English, Spanish, Czech, Italian, French, Burgundian, Danish, and Swedish soldiers, as well as other European volunteers, artillerymen, and officers. "On September 2, 1686, Buda was recaptured from the **Ottomans**, and a division under the command of General De La Vergne set out to recapture Szeged, Csanád, and Lipppa to secure a connection with Transylvania. Shortly after reaching Szeged, they occupied the Palánk district. Following a three-week siege, the situation of the Ottoman defenders turned dire, as both the relief troops and the main

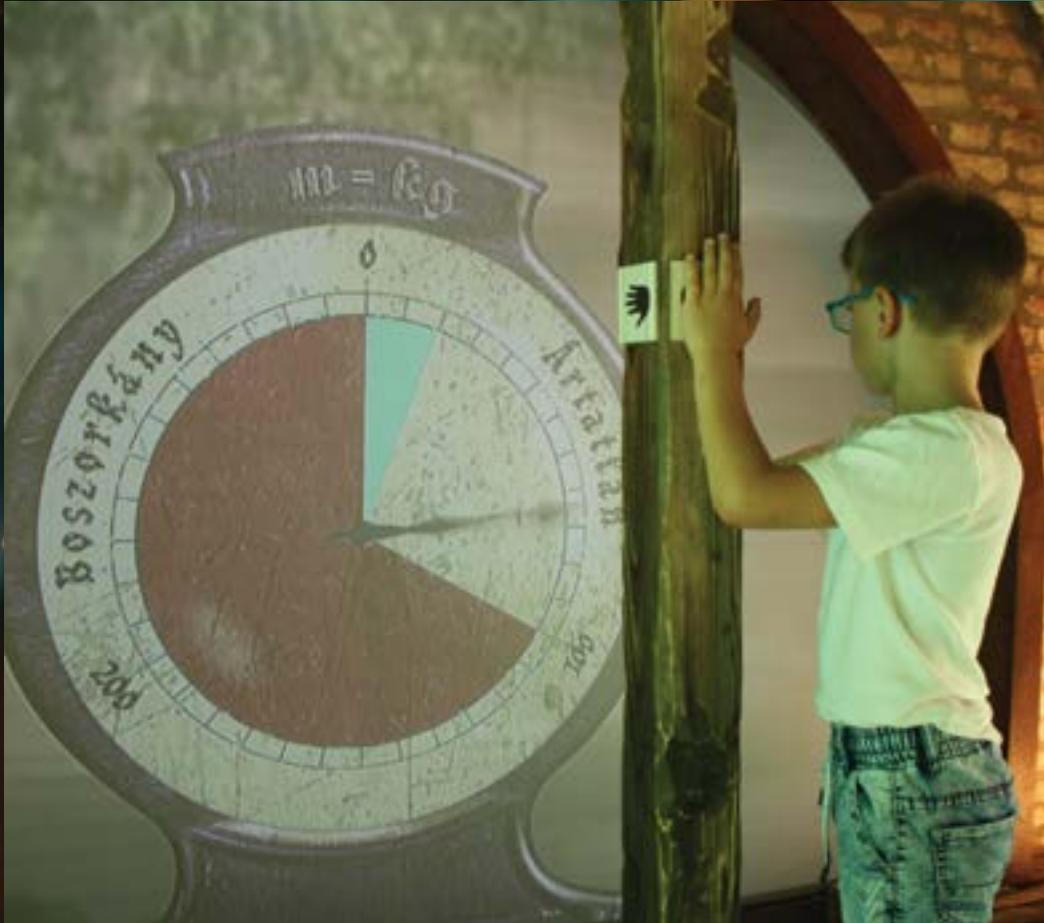
Ottoman army suffered a crushing defeat in the Battle of Zenta".<sup>(3)</sup> In the ensuing years, almost all the former Hungarian lands were liberated from the Turks, except for the areas around Timișoara (Temesvár). At the end of the Great Turkish War, these territories were restored, and the whole of Hungary was fully integrated into the Habsburg Monarchy. After the expulsion of the Turks, the Castle of Szeged received minimal maintenance, and, in 1692, the entire eastern wall collapsed into the river. Reconstruction began in the 1710s, resulting in the creation of a new Vauban-style defensive structure, which retained its form until the Great Flood. (A plastic model of this structure is on display at the museum in Szeged.) The city's former royal rights were restored on May 19, 1719, a day that has since been celebrated as the "Day of Szeged".



## THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AT ITS GREATEST EXTENT

(3) Courtesy of the Móra Ferenc Museum. ■ Original Hungarian text by Csilla Molnár. ■ English translation by Zsolt Vad. ■ Translation revised by the Translation Services Group of the University of Szeged.

# WITCH TRIALS



Interactive installation with a “stake”

The first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century brought hard times for the city of Szeged. The war against the Ottomans took its toll, while drought, famine, and epidemics also afflicted the people of Szeged, leading to general discontent. The authorities decided to “solve” the problem by blaming so-called witches, accusing them of fraternizing with the devil. During that time, a person could be accused of being a

witch for the following reasons:

- Possessing special powers like those of healers, fortunetellers, augurs, or visionaries
- Practicing a unique profession, such as midwifery
- Bearing unusual marks on their bodies
- Being particularly ugly and old-looking

In Szeged, a total of 37 people were sentenced to death for witchcraft during this period. The largest

trial took place in 1728, resulting in 13 individuals (6 men and 7 women) being condemned and burned to death. As these were actual trials, the prosecution had to present evidence to prove that the accused persons were, in fact, witches. Such evidence typically included a birthmark hidden under clothing, a contract with the devil written in blood, or the confession of the defendant. These confessions were usually obtained by torture. The trials often involved trial by ordeal, an ancient judicial practice used to determine guilt or innocence by subjecting the accused to an unpleasant, even painful experience, typically involving an element of danger. In ordeal by water, for instance, the hands and feet of the accused were tied together, and the person was plunged into the water. They were then considered innocent only if they sank like a normal person and guilty of witchcraft if they remained afloat. An alternative, ordeal by weighing, was rooted in a similar idea, based on the belief that witches were supernaturally light.

With the help of an interactive installation featuring a mock stake, visitors to the museum in Szeged can "undergo" a trial by ordeal and get a sense of what it might have felt like to be burned at the stake. Discretion is advised, however, as this part of the exhibition is not for the faint-hearted. For instance, there is a screen that shows a list of real charges transcribed directly from documents used in actual trials. One chilling example is the following: "By rubbing a magic potion on a cat, you turned it into a horse! You are, therefore, a witch!" This really does send shivers down one's spine...



# THE WORLD OF THE “BETYÁRS”

14

”

*Sándor Rózsa's saddling up  
his Velvet horse,*

*Thirty-three gendarmes  
pursue his trail and course;*

*Sándor Rózsa  
didn't take it for a joke,*

*He jumped on Velvet  
and rode off at a stroke.<sup>(4)</sup>*

As far as patriotism is concerned, in Hungary, patriotic sentiment arose mainly among intellectuals influenced by the Enlightenment and Romanticism, who wanted to bring about significant political and social reforms in the Austrian Empire. These revolutionary aspirations spread rapidly and formed the basis for the revolution of 1848–49. On March 15, 1848, mass demonstrations in Pest and Buda enabled Hungarian reformists to force the governing authorities to officially agree to their list of Twelve Demands. However, the revolution escalated into a war, and despite initial successes, the Hungarian army was eventually overwhelmed by Austrian and Russian forces, leading to the surrender of General Artúr Görgey in August 1849.

Photo of Sándor Rózsa  
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

<sup>(4)</sup> *Ballads of Outlaws, Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár*  
<https://mek.oszk.hu/02700/02790/html/145.html> ■ (Accessed: October 7, 2020) ■ Translation  
revised by the Translation Services Group of the University of Szeged.

Szeged played a crucial role during the war due to its proximity to the southern border. In the summer of 1849, the city became the seat of the revolutionary government. After the devastating end of the war, however, the castle was divested of its military function and was converted into a prison, where many of the local outlaws, collectively known as “betyárs”, were imprisoned.

The word “betyár” has come to mean “outlaw” in Hungarian, usually referring to the 18th and 19th-century criminals who lived in hiding to avoid capture by the authorities. These outlaws are part of Hungarian folklore. Their escapades have often been romanticized, with betyárs being portrayed as Hungarian Robin Hoods who stole from the rich and gave to the poor, even if this assessment wasn't entirely accurate.

The most famous, or rather, infamous betyár was Sándor Rózsa. He was first sent to the dreaded Szeged prison at the age of 23 but soon managed to escape. The breakout, along with a series of other exploits associated with the outlaw, became legendary. During the Hungarian War of Independence, however, he was granted amnesty on the condition that he establish a free military group. As a result, Sándor Rózsa assembled and personally led a 150-man cavalry unit. The unusual appearance and fighting style of his unit caused chaos in the enemy ranks. Members of the unit wore baggy pants and vests and were armed with a variety of unconventional weapons, including a special axe called a “fokos”, a lasso-like rope known as a “pányva”, and a bullwhip-like whip called a “karikás ostor”. Using guerrilla tactics, this unit often ambushed many unsuspecting Austrian dragoons.

Rózsa gained such a reputation that when he was imprisoned in Kufstein, Austria, he was put on public display, and people were charged money to see him. It is no wonder that he has been the subject of ballads and songs in Hungarian-speaking territories throughout the ages.

After losing the War of Independence against the Habsburgs in 1849, the country sank into “passive resistance” – a refusal by notable and respected individuals to take up any position or office or to en-

gage in politics, coupled with various other acts of non-compliance. The situation was eventually resolved by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867. The result was Austria-Hungary, often referred to as the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the Dual Monarchy, which was a constitutional union of the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary. This union lasted from 1867 to 1918, when it was dissolved at the end of World War I.

## THE SZEGED PRISON

In 1869, the minister of domestic affairs sent Gedeon Ráday, a royal commissioner, to Szeged to address the public safety issues related to the “betyárs”. He arrested every suspicious person and sent them to the prison established in the castle. These people included outlaws, bandits, horse thieves, robbers, and so-called “running rascals” who were hiding from the government after deserting from the army. Although the number of prisoners exceeded a thousand, the authorities were reluctant to release any of them, so only a few were actually freed. Most of them suffered for years in pretrial detention, and many were sentenced to death or 10–20 years of imprisonment. Cruelty and torture led to the death of many prisoners in the dungeons of the castle. Starvation, beatings, and humiliation were commonplace, and prisoners were often deprived of liquids. They were also kept handcuffed in their cells and were rarely allowed to walk outside in the prison yard. When they did get permission to go outside, they had to wear special masks. In addition, they barely had any access to sanitation.

At the request of Gedeon Ráday, Szeged-based photographer Lázár Letzer took pictures of the most famous prisoners. These photos can be viewed at the museum in Szeged by opening small doors on the compartments of an installation on display. In addition to the photos, the compartments contain various items such as small objects and toys crafted by inmates who needed something to do to pass their time in prison. Visitors will also find a curious “friendly cellmate” in one of the compartments: a life-size replica of a rat.

# THE GREAT FLOOD

The winter of 1878–79 brought extremely high waters to Szeged. At 2:30 a.m. on March 12, 1879, the last levee gave way, and the Tisza River rapidly flooded nearly the entire city, leaving no time for the inhabitants to escape. The flood was mainly the result of decisions made during the regulation of the river at the beginning of the 19th century, specifically, the fact that the levees were built too close to the river. As a result, only the oldest part of Szeged, situated on higher ground, was spared from the flood. Approximately 151 people died, 5,458 houses collapsed, and 60,000 people were rendered homeless.

Emperor Franz Joseph visited Szeged after the flood as early as March 17, 1879. He vowed to help the city, stating, “Szeged will be more beautiful than ever.” Indeed, Austria provided substantial financial support to Szeged, delivering the largest donation among contributions from all over the world, including Germany, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, China, Japan, India, and France. The citizens of Szeged later expressed their gratitude by erecting a monument, the Great Flood Memorial, which lists the capitals of all the countries that offered their help to the city. An installation at the museum in Szeged clearly shows the flooded areas of the city, with destroyed buildings marked in black and new buildings and streets in grey.

It was among these newly constructed buildings where Albert Szent-Györgyi walked when he came to Szeged in 1930 shortly after the university had relocated to the city from Transylvania. As a young professor of biochemistry at the university in Szeged, and later as the Rector of the Medical University of Szeged during the pre-war period, he transformed his Institute of Medical Chemistry into an international “open laboratory”. True to his vision, the institute became an intellectual hub where the free flow of ideas, the enthusiasm of Szent-Györgyi’s staff, and the energy of the professor’s students all contributed to significant advancements in science. Today, the University of Szeged is committed to following in Professor Szent-Györgyi’s footsteps, helping to build a brighter future not only for its students but also for the greater community of the city of Szeged and the entire region.

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*Szeged will be  
more beautiful  
than ever.*

”

EMPEROR FRANZ JOSEPH



# Albert Szent-Györgyi

NOBEL LAUREATE RESEARCHER AND RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED

**Albert Szent-Györgyi, a descendant of a family of medical scientists, was born on September 16, 1893, in Budapest. His interest in research was sparked by the books and laboratories of his maternal uncle, Mihály Lenhossék, an anatomist and university professor. He earned his medical degree from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Budapest in 1917.**

## EXPERIENCING FREEDOM IN ENGLAND

Albert Szent-Györgyi's ambition was to build a "skyscraper of medical science". The foundation for this aspiration was laid by his extensive work in several foreign institutions. He worked as a medical researcher in Bratislava (1919), Prague, Berlin, Hamburg, Leiden, and Groningen (1922). His interests spanned biology, physiology, pharmacology, bacteriology, and later physical chemistry. In Groningen, Netherlands, he began studying cellular respiration and biological oxidation, and it was there that he first took on a teaching position. Szent-Györgyi also had the chance to experience the advantages of the research-friendly environment at the University of Cambridge, where he secured a research position in 1927 and earned his second doctoral degree (in chemical sciences). During his time there, he worked with biologically active compounds and succeeded in isolating hexuronic acid, an antioxidant the structure of which was unknown at the time.

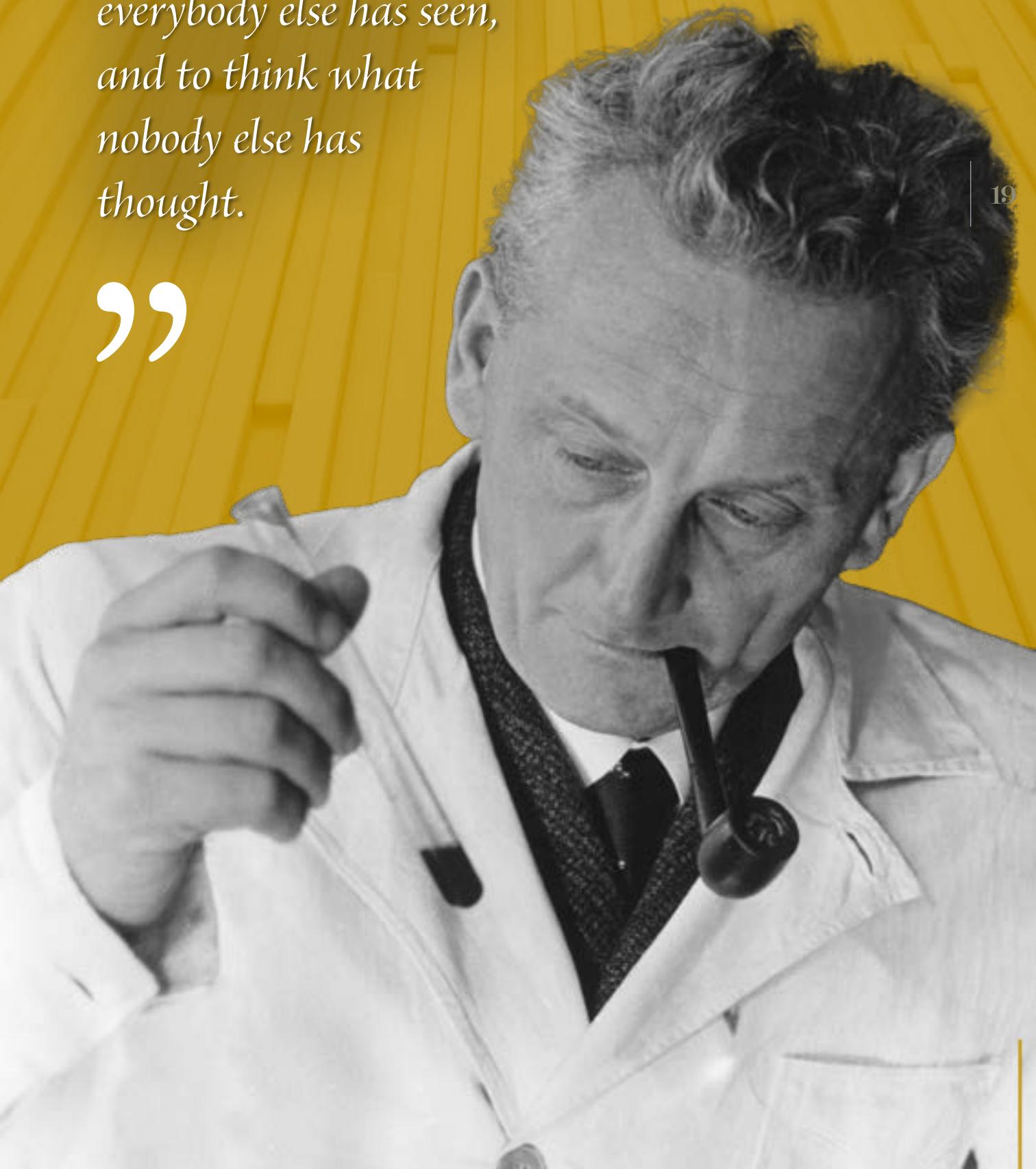


## HOLDING A PROFESSORSHIP IN SZEGED

Klebersberg Kunó, the Minister of Culture, invited Albert Szent-Györgyi back to Hungary and offered him a professorship at the University of Szeged's Institute of Medical Chemistry. Seizing this opportunity, the young scientist relocated to Hungary and was appointed professor at the University of Szeged in September 1928. However, he eventually moved to Rochester, Minnesota, to complete his research on hexuronic acid. Szent-Györgyi began his teaching and research work at the University of Szeged in the 1930–1931 academic year. Within a year, he launched Hungary's first biochemistry degree program. With the support of the government and the Rockefeller Foundation, he played a central role in establishing a scientific center at the University of Szeged. Here, he continued his research on hexuronic acid. It was in his institute that the famous guinea pig test was conducted, providing proof that hexuronic acid was identical to vitamin C, which was previously only known for

*Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.*

”





its antiscorbutic properties but not identified chemically.

On March 18, 1932, at the Budapest Medical Association, Szent-Györgyi declared that hexuronic acid and vitamin C were the same substance. He and his associate published this discovery in the journal *Nature* on April 15, 1932. Szent-Györgyi then tried to isolate the vitamin in plants and, in the autumn of 1932, managed to show that paprika plants grown in Szeged were high in vitamin C content.

### WINNING THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR THE DISCOVERY OF VITAMIN C

The Faculty of Medicine at the Royal Karolinska Institute in Stockholm awarded Albert Szent-Györgyi the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1937 for “discoveries in the area of biological combustion processes, particularly in regard to vitamin C, and fumaric acid catalysis”.

Szent-Györgyi traveled from Szeged to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize on December 10, 1937.

He is the only scientist to have earned this prestigious recognition primarily for work conducted in the laboratories of the University of Szeged as part of achievements attained not abroad but in Hungary.

In 1937, Szent-Györgyi's scientific accomplishments were further

acknowledged with the Hungarian Corvin Chain. From 1938, he was listed as a full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. On April 7, 1938, he was conferred an honorary doctorate by the Faculty of Science at the University of Szeged.

### MODERNIZING EDUCATION

Albert Szent-Györgyi, an enthusiast of the arts and sports, led a vibrant life in Szeged. He often attended concerts and theater performances. As a sports fan, he popularized volleyball, frequently played tennis, rode horses, enjoyed motorcycling, drove cars, and even took flying lessons. He served as the rector of the University of Szeged for the 1940–1941 academic year, implementing radical reforms. For example, he established a unified student organization against discrimination and also founded a theater group. During his tenure as rector, the university choir was given a permanent home, and he initiated the formation of a university drama society as well.

By modernizing education at the university, Szent-Györgyi aimed to ensure that students not only learned about literature, sports, and arts, but also experienced them firsthand.

### MANAGING SCIENCE AND ENGAGING IN POLITICS

In his statements and actions, Albert Szent-Györgyi expressed his anti-war stance and made efforts to oppose the spread of fascism, even undertaking diplomatic missions. As one of the most significant figures of the opposition, he was arrested and spent the summer of 1944 under house arrest. In early September, he disappeared from Szeged and went into hiding within the country as a war refugee.



In 1945, Szent-Györgyi became the leader of the Civic Democratic Party and spent two months in Moscow. Back in Hungary, he worked as a representative in the newly reorganized parliament. As a researcher, Szent-Györgyi's interest turned to the biochemistry of muscle function, leading him to successfully investigate the role of muscle proteins in contraction. The results achieved by his team at the University of Szeged marked the beginning of modern muscle biology. He worked as a professor at the University of Szeged until 1945. Szent-Györgyi went on to head the Department

of Biochemistry at the Medical Faculty of the University of Budapest and founded the Biochemical Institute, where he was joined by most of his students from Szeged. There he continued the muscle function research he had begun in Szeged. Szent-Györgyi also played a significant role in reorganizing the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and served as its secretary.

#### **REBUILDING A CAREER**

Due to changes in the political climate in Hungary, Albert Szent-Györgyi settled in the United States in July 1947. He continued his groundbreaking muscle research, which significantly contributed to the understanding of heart and circulatory diseases. As a result, the American Heart Association awarded him the Mary Lasker Award.

In the U.S., Szent-Györgyi essentially rebuilt his career and from the late 1950s, began focusing on cell division triggers and, consequently, on cancer research.

In 1973, Szent-Györgyi visited Hungary again. He gave a talk on his research at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and participated in the opening ceremony of the Szeged Biological Research Center, where his former student, Bruno F. Straub, was appointed as director. During this visit, the Medical University of Szeged conferred an honorary doctorate upon him.





# Katalin Karikó

**An Olympic gold medal and a Nobel Prize in the same family? We asked Katalin Karikó about the secret behind this extraordinary achievement. In the following interview, the Nobel Laureate professor from the University of Szeged also shares her thoughts on the connection between sports and success – and recalls her very own “Eureka!” moment.**

*– What is the secret to success? As a Nobel Prize-winning researcher, you are frequently asked this question by many people, such as the high school and university students present at the round-table discussion jointly organized by the University of Szeged and the Mathias Corvinus Collegium in October 2023, marking the beginning of the educational campaign Nobel Weeks at the University of Szeged.*

– Ten years ago, I was considered a loser in the eyes of others. Nonetheless, personally, I felt successful in the laboratory because my research was productive. Whenever I’m asked about success, I always say that, based on my experiences, it’s vital to set an important goal and strive for something, whether you’re an elementary school student or a 99-year-old professor. Even the most distant dream can be realized, and the most complex problem can be solved if we “break it down” into smaller tasks. Every single day, we should pose and answer the following question: What can I do to achieve my goals?

**“TO BE BETTER!”**

*– The way you speak of your former teachers is admirable and exemplary, indicating your gratitude towards them for recognizing your talent and supporting you at the start. Based on your experience, what is your view on when and how talent can be recognized?*

– In first grade, I had good grades, while half the class had excellent grades. Even the grade I got for my conversation skills was only good, not excellent.

My mom laughed and said, “You talk so much, you should have at least gotten an excellent grade in that...” So, my story also shows that talent matters less than diligence and determination; it’s all about striving to be better and to know more.

*– This kind of attitude is very “sporty”. Your family is also successful in sports, including elite sports. Your daughter, Zsuzsanna Francia, born in Szeged, is a two-time Olympic champion rower representing the United States. It is quite unique in the history of both science and sports for a family to have both an Olympic gold medal and a Nobel Prize gold plaque. What advice does the Nobel Prize-winning researcher have for mothers and fathers in terms of achieving anything close to such double “gold” success?*

– The most important thing is family. Parents teach not just with their words but even more so by example. It’s important to assign tasks to children and involve them in family

”

*A person may lack  
prestige or a degree,  
yet still have  
a sharp mind.*

23

chores. However, instead of early and unnecessary extra lessons and sports sessions, children should be allowed to play and splash around in the pool.

– *Do play, leisure, and recreation help to foster talent?*

– Exercise, such as going for a morning run, was part of my daily routine for years. In Mainz, I ran six kilometers every day along the Rhine. But by 7 a.m. at the latest, I was already in the laboratory. And I always started my work with the experiment that took the longest time.

#### **THAT EUREKA MOMENT**

– *Before focusing on the modification of mRNA, you came to several realizations, eventually leading to significant discoveries. What is that “eureka moment” of grace like?*

– Research is similar to the excitement of investigation. The method that can be gleaned from the TV series Columbo and its mysteries is also useful for scientists: when experimenting, you have to pay attention to every detail, as one of them might be the key to the solution. When the overall picture came together, having been continuously adjusted based on the kind of persistent questioning characteristic of the fictional detective Columbo, I just had this feeling and said, “Of course!”

– *This “Of course!” realization was rewarded with a Nobel Prize by the scientific community. You are the first Hungarian female researcher to achieve this recognition. Does this “first” hold any special significance among Nobel Laureates?*

– The responsibility of researchers does not differ for women: one should do their job, help others earnestly, try to inspire future generations, and support fellow researchers they work with.



I also consider it important to inform people about progress in science. It depends on me, other researchers, teachers, and reporters how scientific information reaches the general public.

**– Does a researcher sit back and relax after that “Of course!” eureka moment?**

– No. I work hard every day. The famous stress researcher János Selye said that being a researcher is both a blessing and a curse. It’s a blessing because it allows you to find solutions to various complex problems and help people. But it is also a “curse” in the sense that you cannot “let go” of your research. At this point, I could just sit back and relax, as I’m at that age and have achieved certain results. But instead, I’m still driven by the desire to test ideas that might help people. It just bothers me if I do anything else. I cannot find peace in any other way. This may look like a “curse”, but, of course, it’s actually a good thing.

#### **THE BREAKTHROUGH SUCCESS OF BREAKING THROUGH**

**– As a researcher, you have explored yet another new way of disseminating scientific information by writing your memoir, *Breaking Through: My Life in Science*. Where did the idea for this autobiography come from?**

– In 1969, as a primary school student, I wrote my first paper on Linné’s life with a fountain pen for a competition organized by the high school in Kisújszállás. As for my own life story, I can say that several people expressed interest in writing it. I wasn’t sure that a stranger should write my story, though, instead of someone who actually knows me, like my daughter. Zsuzsi knows my life, she writes well, and her English is perfect. But she had a different idea. She recommended an agency that pitched the topic to publishers. That’s how they found professionals who helped with editing and with handling the legal and other matters related to publishing the book.

**– This proved to be a good decision, not least because your personal memoir, *Breaking Through: My Life in Science*, originally written in English, has already been translated into more than ten languages. Your message has thus reached readers in the world’s ma-**

**– *For languages. However, the global success of your book also enriches the University of Szeged: at the grand opening of the 95th Festive Book Week on June 14, 2024, you announced that you would donate the entire amount you received for the Hungarian publication of your memoir, 20,000 U.S. dollars, to the Klebelsberg Library of the University of Szeged. Why?***

– I’m glad to see that the quality work being done at the university library in Szeged is up to high standards. That’s why I decided to donate the proceeds from the royalties of my book to the university library. Among other things, it may be used to purchase foreign language journals needed for research.

**– The university library expressed its gratitude for this support by awarding you, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist, the title of Honorary Library Member. What memories do you have of libraries?**

– As a child, I would go to the library in Kisújszállás and borrow stories designed for viewing on slide projectors. As a young student, I read the most popular children’s books at the time, mainly the ones that came with those famous striped and polka-dotted covers. It was during high school that I first visited the National Széchényi Library in Budapest, as a guest of my older sister, who was a university student at the time. There, at the national library, I collected materials for a paper I wrote about what the turn of the millennium would be like compared to the present of the 1970s. My predictions didn’t turn out to be accurate, but it was interesting to learn how a library worked. Of course, libraries have served science since their inception, regardless of whether research results are recorded on papyrus scrolls or transmitted digitally. Later on, as a university student, I also learned the punch card method for retrieving scientific works. Since then, the ways in which libraries can assist researchers have obviously expanded. What I’ve observed over the past forty years is that librarians always adapt to the opportunities offered by technology.

**– You were a guest of honor at various events organized by the University of Szeged as part of the 95th Festive Book Week and the 23rd Children’s Book**



***Days. You also visited the country's only Textbook Museum at the University of Szeged and the Interactive Natural Science Knowledge Center. During these events, as well as at the pedagogical methodology mini conference held at the university's Botanical Garden, there were discussions on how textbooks can also be good books. How?***

– Professor Pál Venetianer [another researcher connected to Szeged] also wrote and edited textbooks. Thanks to him, less than ten years after the discovery of mRNA, we were already able to find information in our high school textbooks on mRNA and how the genetic code corresponds to amino acids. This is the essence of a good textbook. Of course, I also had university lecturers who taught from the notes they had taken as students many years before. In contrast, our organic chemistry professor, Gábor Bernáth, prepared notes for us in which the organic chemistry formulas and diagrams he wrote on the board were already printed on one side of the page, while we could write our own notes on the other, blank side. This way, we could pay more attention to his explanations

and didn't waste time on unnecessary copying. The professor helped us a great deal to appreciate the beauty of complex compounds. He enthusiastically endeavored to share his knowledge and show us the beauty of science. When I took my exam with him, I had to talk about polyamines, the simplest of molecules, which meant I couldn't really excel then and there; but I have loved organic chemistry ever since.

***– In Hungary, Breaking Through became the best-selling non-fiction book of 2023. In recognition of this, as a Nobel Prize-winning biochemist, you also received the Libri Literary Prize, accompanied by resounding applause and ovation at the prize ceremony.***

– I never hoped to receive a literary prize in my lifetime. Don't expect a sequel! There won't be a second volume or a Literary Nobel Prize either. Joking aside, I'm happy that so many young people found the book inspiring! It's possible that the next generation of Nobel Prize-winners will have drawn some strength from this book to carry on with their research efforts.

Make sure to read the interview '*Katalin Karikó's Message: Embrace Ideas and Overcome Regrets by Taking Action*' – compiled from her answers to journalists' questions at a press conference held in Szeged on April 16, 2024.



# THROUGH THE LENS OF LAW

 **Ilona ÚJSZÁSZI**  
 **István SAHIN-TÓTH**

**“When fate throws you into unexpected situations and calls you to service, you must not shy away from it. I consider it the greatest honor to serve my country, my nation,” stated Dr. Tamás Sulyok in his inaugural address as President of Hungary. Holding a law degree from József Attila University, one of the legal predecessors of the University of Szeged, he has repeatedly expressed his delight in being connected to the University of Szeged. He has spoken of this deep connection throughout his career as a lawyer and legal expert specializing in constitutional law, and since March 5, 2024, he continues to do so as Head of State.**

“Law is the art of equity and goodness,” Dr. Tamás Sulyok quoted Ulpian in his presidential inaugural address. These profound words were recited right after his own emphatic declaration: “Law is my support, the compass for my entire life.”

As a law student, the Hungarian head of state laid the foundation for his legal career at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences at József Attila University in Szeged. He obtained his degree in 1980 and began his career as a judicial clerk at the Csongrád County Court. After completing his bar exam in 1982, he worked as a legal counsel until 1991. From 1991 to 1996, he was a lawyer at the Sulyok–Japport Law Firm, and from 1997 onwards, at the Sulyok and Ádám Law Firm. He provided legal representation for the Municipality of Szeged from 1998 to 2002. Between 2000 and 2014, he also served as an honorary consul of Austria in Hungary.

In 2016, Tamás Sulyok was appointed President of Hungary’s Constitutional Court, the official body responsible for imposing limitations on legislative power. His term in this role ended on March 5, 2024, when he was elected President of Hungary. Dr. Tamás Sulyok actively contributes to advancing

legal education in Hungary. He earned a European Union legal specialist qualification (LL.M.) in 2004 from the Institute for Postgraduate Legal Studies at the Faculty of Law at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Since September 2005, he has been teaching constitutional law as a guest lecturer at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences at the University of Szeged, where he holds seminars and elective courses. In 2013, he obtained his Ph.D. from the doctoral school of the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences at the University of Szeged.

With ten years of experience as a constitutional judge, Dr. Tamás Sulyok has been leveraging his expertise to fulfill his role as President of Hungary since March 5, 2024. In his inaugural speech, he cited Grotius, emphasizing, “All things are uncertain the moment men depart from law.” He also believes that the state has a duty to serve its citizens. “I fundamentally view the world through the lens of law,” he asserted in one of his first interviews as President.

Even as President, Dr. Tamás Sulyok has often expressed his sense of belonging to the Hungary that extends beyond the capital, Budapest, high-



lighting his strong ties to Szeged and the University of Szeged. His social media posts reveal his love for his family and show the support he receives from his wife. He frequently travels "home" from his office at the Sándor Palace in the Buda Castle district of Budapest to the family's apartment in Szeged, taking pleasure in helping with cooking and shopping.

As chief patron, Dr. Tamás Sulyok presided over the ceremony held at the University of Szeged on April 16, 2024, to honor Nobel Laureate professor Dr. Katalin Karikó. At this exclusive event, Dr. Katalin Karikó, a former biology student, Dr. Tamás Sulyok, a former law student, and his wife, Zsu-

zsanna Nagy, a former humanities student, reminisced about their shared experiences at József Attila University. The alumni from Szeged resumed their conversation at the Sándor Palace, where the head of state awarded the prestigious Corvin Chain to Dr. Karikó.

It is quite remarkable that the Nobel Laureate professor, the head of state, and his wife all graduated from the university in Szeged. This fact indicates that the successful careers of these three distinguished individuals have roots in Szeged, where they gained an abundance of valuable knowledge and experiences as university students.

# The Breast Cancer Researcher

 **Ilona ÚJSZÁSZI**  
 **István SAHIN-TÓTH**

**One of the highest honors in the scientific community is membership in the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Dr. Kornélia Polyák is a member of both this nonprofit organization, founded in 1863 in the United States, and the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), established in 1970. Starting her academic journey at the University of Szeged, this internationally recognized breast cancer expert is now a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.**

Dr. Kornélia Polyák earned her doctorate in medicine in 1991 from the Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical University in Szeged. She conducted her Ph.D. research at the Biological Research Center in Szeged. She then moved to New York, completing her post-doctoral training in Baltimore at the Johns Hopkins Oncology Center. In 1998, she joined the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School, where she was promoted to professor in 2011. Dr. Polyák is a professor of oncology at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, focusing primarily on breast cancer. She was elected to the National Academy of Medicine for "documenting the clinical and functional relevance of intratumoral cellular heterogeneity." Listing her achievements, the Academy noted that "She has convincingly shown, using novel technologies and experimental models, that many other cell types besides neoplastic cells are responsible for the biological and physiological characteristics of any individual tumor."

Research carried out at the Polyak Laboratory for Breast Cancer Research focuses on the molecular analysis of human breast cancer. The research lab's website clearly states the lab's goals. "Our goal is to identify differences between normal and can-

cerous breast tissue, determine their consequences, and use this information to improve the clinical management of breast cancer patients. The three main areas of our interests are: (1) how to accurately predict breast cancer risk and prevent breast cancer initiation or progression from in situ to invasive disease, (2) better understand drivers of tumor evolution with special emphasis on metastatic progression and therapeutic resistance, and (3) novel therapeutic targets in breast cancer with particular focus on 'bad' cancers such as triple negative breast cancer and inflammatory breast cancer. All of our studies start with analyzing samples from breast cancer patients (or normal healthy women for the risk studies), formulate hypotheses based on our observations, use experimental models to test these, and then translate back our findings into clinical care."

In recognition of her achievements in cancer research, Dr. Polyák has received numerous honors, including the Paul Marks Prize for Cancer Research (2011) and the Rosalind Franklin Award (2016). It was in the United States that Dr. Polyák became acquainted with Dr. Katalin Karikó, another internationally renowned alumna of the University of Szeged, who was also elected to NAM in 2022.



The two researchers first met in Boston when Dr. Polyák attended the Warren Alpert Award ceremony as a guest at the invitation of Dr. Karikó. They share memories not only of the University of Szeged but also of the Biological Research Center in Szeged, as they have mutual acquaintances there, having done their doctoral studies at the research center. Dr. Polyák and Dr. Katalin are also connected through their membership in the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

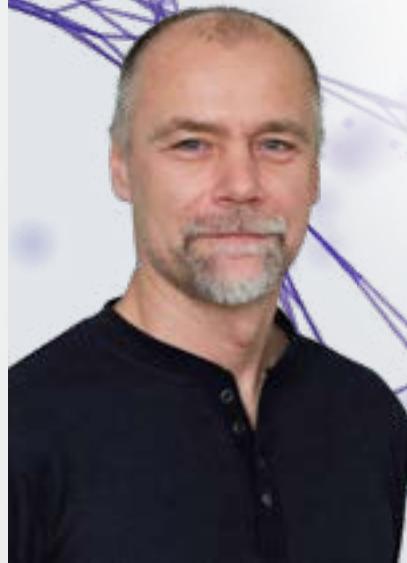
Dr. Polyák also has professional ties to Dr. Norbert Pardi, who was invited to work at the University of Pennsylvania by Dr. Karikó, under her mentorship, and has since established his own laboratory there. It is interesting to see the many ways in which the lives of these three researchers are intertwined. Both Dr. Polyák and Dr. Pardi graduated from high school in Szolnok, and all three of them were born in Szolnok and obtained their degrees from the legal predecessor of the University of Szeged.

# Actions & Sanctions in the Cerebral Cortex

**G**ábor Tamás graduated with honors in biology from József Attila University (a legal predecessor of the University of Szeged) in 1993. **As a Ph.D. student in Szeged and Oxford, he conducted research on the structure and functioning of connections between cortical neurons.**

In 1998, he founded a research group in Szeged and started working at the Department of Comparative Physiology, supported by various Hungarian and international grants. This model of funding also served as the basis for the operation of his research group "Tamas Lab". Since 1992, he has held various teaching positions at the University of Szeged. He received his Doctorate from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2005 and became a member of the Academy in 2013, at the age of 44. He is also a European Young Investigators (EURYI) awardee and oversees the operations of the Cortical Microcircuit Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the University of Szeged. This research group is engaged in exploring the functioning of the so-called "rosehip neuron" (discovered by Tamás) and other cells unique to humans.

With sports, photography, and traveling among his favorite pastimes, **Gábor Tamás has also made his findings accessible to the public in various popular-science formats.** For example, in 2007, he gave a public lecture entitled *Actions and sanctions in the cerebral cortex* as part of the Hungarian television series *Mindentudás Egyetemé (University of Omniscience)*.





# NOBEL LAUREATE GÉRARD MOUROU JOINS THE UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED AS RESEARCH PROFESSOR

Laser mutation research at the University of Szeged is now carried out under the mentorship of French physicist Gérard Mourou, who was awarded a joint Nobel Prize in 2018 for the development of a new method for amplifying laser pulses. The scientist assumed a research professor position at the University of Szeged in April 2024.

Gérard Mourou (born June 22, 1944, in Albertville) is a Nobel Prize-winning French physicist. He earned his PhD in 1973 in France and then continued his work in the United States. In 1977, he became a professor at the University of Rochester. He was the founding director of the Center for Ultrafast Optical Science at the University of Michigan and later the director of the optical laboratory at ENSTA Paris.

At the Laboratory for Laser Energetics in Rochester, his development of phase-modulated pulse amplification for lasers led to the advancement of high-intensity, ultrashort light pulse technology. This technique is used in laser micromachining, laser surgery, medicine, fundamental research, and various other applications.

*It is a great  
experience  
to be in this  
beautiful and  
advanced research  
environment*





# Studying Economics: A Prestigious Challenge

**W**hen **Tamás Szakál** joined the international oil and gas company MOL Group's plant in Algyő, a small town near Szeged, he was a petroleum engineer, with work experience gained in the eastern region of Hungary. He settled in Szeged, a city where he and his partner had planned to build their future. As part of those plans, he applied to the University of Szeged in the early 2000s to study economics. Driven by a thirst for knowledge, he had always seen studying economics as "a prestigious challenge" to be met. "My economics degree is what enabled me to secure a managerial position at one of MOL's subsidiaries," he says. "Studying economics, finance, accounting, and other subjects relevant to corporate management at the University of Szeged made me realize just how much all this knowledge benefits me and simplifies my daily work as a company manager." Tamás Szakál's advice to the students of **the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Szeged, as well as to his future colleagues, is to study hard.** "When you study, don't just memorize information, but strive to un-

derstand it. If you really understand something, it becomes an integral part of your knowledge, not just a visual imprint of what you've read in a textbook. When you grasp something, you can recall it at any time, even in the middle of the night, and apply it to your everyday life. This is crucial, and later on, when you start working in an industry or any work environment, you'll realize that what you need is not textbook knowledge, but common sense, logical thinking, and the ability to understand processes and connections."



*Logical thinking and understanding instead of textbook knowledge...*





*Belonging to a nation  
is what fosters the  
strongest sense of  
collective identity.*

”

## From the Golden Ring Award to the Széchenyi Prize and the Hungarian Corvin Chain

Between 1999 and 2009, **János Martonyi** was Professor and Head of the Institute of International Private Law and International Trade Law at the University of Szeged. He practiced law from 1994 to 1998 and again from 2002 to 2009. He also served as Government Commissioner for Privatization, State Secretary for Public Administration at the Ministry of International Economic Relations, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and **Minister of Foreign Affairs** from 1998 to 2002 and from 2010 to 2014.

János Martonyi comes from a **distinguished family of lawyers**. His father, János Martonyi Sr. (1910–1981), was a professor at the Department of Public Administration and Financial Law at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences at the University of Szeged from 1945 to 1980, serving twice as Dean of the Faculty and once as Vice-Rector. János Martonyi was born in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár) and graduated from high school in Szeged. He earned his “summa cum laude” law

degree from József Attila University (a legal predecessor of the University of Szeged) in Szeged in 1967 and was awarded a **doctorate with a golden ring** for his outstanding academic performance throughout his high school and university studies. He is a Széchenyi Prize-winning legal scholar, also honored with the Hungarian Corvin Chain. **He has published numerous articles and essays** on international trade law, competition policy, competition law, European integration, and international politics, among other related fields. In his 2018 book, *Nyitás és identitás: geopolitika, világkereskedelem, Európa* (Opening and Identity – Geopolitics, World Trade, Europe), he summarizes the evolution of his worldview. He believes that “Even though it has taken us a long time, we have realized that belonging to a nation, as a form of self-identity, is what fosters the strongest sense of collective identity, taking precedence over everything else.”



## Csaba Szepesvári

*Mathematician and IT specialist*

Csaba Szepesvári is a member of the AI program at the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR AI), the leader of DeepMind's "Foundations" team, and a professor of computer science at the **University of Alberta**.

He received his master's degree in mathematics and computer science in 1993 and his Ph.D. in 1999 from the Faculty of Science and Informatics at the University of Szeged. In addition to regularly publishing papers in top-tier journals and presenting at conferences, he has also authored or co-authored several books. He currently serves as an Action Editor for the Journal of Machine Learning Research and as an Associate Editor for Mathematics of Operations Research. His primary research focus is on the development of learning-based approaches to artificial intelligence.



## Endre Juhász

*Diplomat*

Endre Juhász received his law degree in Szeged from József Attila University (a legal predecessor of the University of Szeged) in 1967. He continued his studies with a **postgraduate program in comparative law** at the University of Strasbourg (1969–1972). He has worked for various Hungarian governmental institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of International Economic Relations, and, later, the Ministry of Industry and Trade. In 1995, he was appointed Ambassador of Hungary to the European Union. From 1998, in his capacity as ambassador, he was Hungary's chief negotiator during the country's European Union accession process. In 2002, his achievements were recognized with the Honoris causa Jedlik Ányos Award, and in 2003, he received the Commander's Cross with Star of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary. In the same year, the Prime Minister invited him to join the government and appointed him to the newly created position of Minister without Portfolio for the Coordination of European Integration Affairs. From 2004 to 2021, Endre Juhász served as a judge at the Court of Justice of the European Union.

## Arnold Koncsek

*Engineer and instructor of engineering*



Dr. Arnold Koncsek is the Quality Assurance and Laboratory Manager of Rubin Paprikafeldolgozó Kft. in Szeged, a paprika processing limited liability company, and he also holds an honorary associate professor position at the University of Szeged. He received his engineering degree in food technology in 2000, his instructor of engineering degree in 2001, and his certified food engineer degree in 2010. **His main research focuses on analyzing the carotenoid and antioxidant content of paprika as well as evaluating the quality of paprika in relation to cultivation and processing factors.** "The University of Szeged had served as a particularly inspiring environment for me. The excellent student community there has since transformed into professional relationships and friendships. What I'm most proud of is being trusted to work with something as famous and time-honored as paprika peppers, while also being able to complement my industry work with my engagement in scientific research and higher education. This way, I can take pride not only in my own accomplishments but also in those of my students whose academic papers, degree theses, and academic degrees I have had the opportunity to contribute to," says Dr. Koncsek.



## László Darvasi

*Poet, writer, journalist, and editor*

László Darvasi graduated from Juhász Gyula Teacher Training College (a legal predecessor of the University of Szeged) as a teacher of Hungarian language and literature, and history. He initially worked as a primary school teacher. Writing under the aliases *Ernő Szív* and *Eric Moussambani*, Darvasi is the author of some **30 books**, which have **received more than 20 awards**. Between 1990 and 1998, he was the editor of *Pompeji*, a journal created at the Faculty of Humanities (now Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) at the University of Szeged. In 1993, he became a principal contributor to the weekly magazine *Élet és Irodalom (Life and Literature)*. Several of his works have been published in French, German, and Dutch. His novels often evoke Szeged and its history in their themes and settings. **The Hungarian Theater Database shows that 19 of his works have been adapted for the stage.** László Darvasi has lived in Berlin and New York, and he currently resides and works in Budapest.

# A Gateway to New Opportunities

Ádám KOVÁCS-JERNEY

“We help young people develop a vision and build a future,” says **Mihály Karkas**, plant manager and managing director of Givaudan Hungary Kft., who oversees the company’s factory in the city of Makó. As a graduate of the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Szeged, he openly shares his secret to success.

As a local of Szeged, **Mihály Karkas** is deeply committed to the city and considers himself **fortunate to have built his career without permanently moving to another city** – a rarity among top executives today. He graduated from Radnóti Miklós High School in Szeged in 1987 and began his university studies at the Faculty of Food Industry at the University of Horticulture and Food Industry, the legal predecessor of the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Szeged. In 1992, he was one of the first students to graduate as a **certified food engineer**. He then continued his studies at the Budapest University of Economics, graduating in 1996 as an engineer with a specialization in economics. After a short internship at Pick Szeged Zrt., the company that produces the world-famous Pick salami, he was appointed shift manager in the vacuum packaging department of the company. In 1997, he joined the food company Bestfoods Magyarország Rt. as a production manager, supervising the production of Delikát food seasoning products, Knorr soup mixes and stock cubes, and Hellmann’s mayonnaise products. From 2001, following the merger of Unilever and Bestfoods, he worked as deputy plant manager at the company’s deep-freezing facility in Baja, which produced IGLO frozen vegetables.

**After the sale of the Bestfoods factory, he oversaw its integration into the Globus Group as a director.** From 2004, he managed the cannery of Bonduelle Central Europe Kft. in Békéscsaba, where the company’s annual production volume of canned peas and corn more than doubled during his tenure. Since November 2010, he has been managing the Makó plant of the Switzerland-based multinational company Givaudan,



A healthy daily  
food intake:

Carbohydrates:

60%



*Success requires determination and persistence.* ”



where **flavoring materials are produced for food manufacturing companies.**

In 2016, he became involved in the operations of the Csongrád County Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In 2020, the Chamber awarded him the Csongrád County Economy Award for his outstanding contribution to the local economy. Mihály Karkas is proud of the close cooperation he has facilitated between the University of Szeged and Givaudan Hungary Kft., which involves making annual donations to the Pro Talentis Foundation, hosting students for professional internships, and providing **dual training programs for students.** Within the framework of the internship program, he ensures a regular flow of job offers to recent graduates. The success of this cooperation is evidenced by the fact that **nearly twenty percent of the plant's employees have a degree from a higher education institution,** with more than ninety percent of that workforce having graduated from the University of Szeged. This demonstrates the significance of the University and the high standard of its professional and educational efforts.

Mihály Karkas sees **great opportunities ahead for the Hungarian food industry.** The processing of agricultural products and raw materials can generate added value, contributing to the country's GDP by expanding the sale of Hungarian food products in domestic and international markets. As a result, there is a growing need for highly educated, agile graduates to drive the growth of emerging companies.

"The learning process that takes place at university leads to important milestones in the development of one's personality. When a student strives to bring out the best in themselves at university, they lay an excellent foundation that will enable them to overcome challenges later on in life, regardless of where they end up working. In today's world, you can only be successful if you take what you're doing very seriously, no matter what line of work you're in," says Mihály Karkas, plant manager and managing director of Givaudan Hungary Kft., alumnus of the University of Szeged.

His motto: **"Success requires determination and persistence, along with a desire to achieve your goals!"**

Fats:

30%



Proteins:

10%



# Pioneering Dental Implants

**Dr. István Vajdovich** has always been driven by the desire to provide the highest level of care to his dental patients. As an honorary professor of the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Szeged, he takes pride in the fact that, for more than half a century, he hasn't let a day go by without learning something new and refining his skills.

# *Love our profession, strive to get better, achieve more, and keep learning!*



“It is essential for us to love our profession, strive to get better, achieve more, and keep learning!”

Dr. Vajdovich was born in 1941 in the town of Szegvár into a family of doctors. He graduated from Horváth Mihály High School in nearby Szentes, then moved to Szeged to attend the University of Medicine, the legal predecessor of what is now Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School. After completing his fourth year as a medical student, he transferred to the newly established dentistry program when dental training was started in Szeged. He graduated as a dentist in 1965 and, in the same year, began working at the Dental and Oral Surgery Department of the County Hospital in Szentes, where he remained until his retirement in May 2007. He subsequently continued to work in his own oral surgery practice until the summer of 2020.

Dr. Vajdovich took his specialization exams in the field of dental and oral diseases in 1967, and in oral surgery and dental implantology in 1979. He has been involved in medical research since 1972, focusing on dental implantology since 1980. The dental implants he developed, as well as the surgical methods required for their implantation, have been widely used both in Hungary and abroad for many years.

“I’m very pleased to see that the prosthodontic method I developed and continuously improved has evolved to such a great extent. It appears that my original idea is becoming a reality, suggesting that this method is appropriate for a broad spectrum of dental patients as an advanced way of replacing missing teeth,” says Professor Vajdovich.

Between 1986 and 1990, Dr. Vajdovich served as the Deputy Director of the County Hospital in Szentes, after which he became the hospital’s Director and Chief of Medicine. In 1992, he received the title of Honorary Associate Professor at the Department of Dentistry and Oral Surgery at Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School. In 2009, following a decision by the Senate of the Uni-

versity of Szeged, the rector of the university conferred upon him the title of Honorary Professor in recognition of his scientific work and teaching activities. In 2011, he was awarded the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary for his outstanding work. His accomplishments in the dental field were further recognized with the Medal for the Advancement of Hungarian Oral Surgery in 2016 and the Medal for the Advancement of Hungarian Prosthodontics in 2017. In 2021, he also received a lifetime achievement award as an Honorary Citizen of the City of Szentes.

Dr. Vajdovich is a member of numerous scientific societies and professional associations. He is one of the founding members of the Hungarian Society for Dental Implantology and served as its president between 2004 and 2008. He is also a founding member of the Hungarian Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and has been on its board of directors since 1994.

Dr. Vajdovich has been regularly teaching dental students since 1986. He currently teaches at the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Szeged, giving lectures in both Hungarian and English. He also conducts field practice courses in implantology and participates in various joint research projects. In addition, he is one of the leading instructors of the postgraduate intensive implantology training courses organized jointly by the Department of Dentistry and Oral Surgery of the University of Szeged and DenTi System Kft., a limited liability company.

“In my professional endeavors, I’ve always been driven by the pursuit of providing the highest level of care to dental patients. I take pride in having actively contributed to this profession for the past fifty-four years. As a researcher, I am particularly proud to have collaborated with outstanding physicians and managers in the Departments of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and Dentistry at both the University of Szeged and Semmelweis University in Budapest,” says Dr. Vajdovich.



## Integrating the Faculty of Health Sciences into the University of Szeged



1983, she applied for the position of associate professor at the Healthcare College in Szeged, and in 1997, for the position of director general of the College Faculty of Health Sciences, which was part of Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical University. Her goal was to raise the standards of education for midwives, nurses, social workers, and physiotherapists, as well as to improve their respective positions in the fields of healthcare and social work. During her tenure, she advanced the institution to the point that it became a part of the University of Szeged. As a result, the programs formerly offered by the college were integrated into the programs of the larger university, which, in turn, contributed to raising the prestige of these professions. Throughout this process of integration, Dr. Boda's credo was "to be driven not by the desire to realize my personal goals but to serve the community by doing something useful."

**DR. MÁRTA BODA** is an influential figure in Hungarian pediatrics and the only one of Professor Domokos Boda's three daughters to follow in the footsteps of their father, the legendary head of the Department of Pediatrics at Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical University. "I received an excellent education at the Medical University of Szeged," says Dr. Boda, who focuses on the prevention of pediatric gastroenterological diseases as a physician, and, as a researcher, investigates nutritional and environmental effects and their consequences, free-radical reactions, and trace elements. In

*I was not driven by the desire to realize my personal goals, but to serve the community.*

”



# The Joy of Discovery in Pharmacognosy

Barbara TÓTH  
Anna BOBKÓ

**Judit Hohmann** graduated as a pharmacist from the University of Szeged in 1980 and has spent her entire career at the Institute of Pharmacognosy, formerly known as the Institute of Medicinal Plants and Drugs, at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Szeged. In this interview, the researcher, who is also a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, talks about pharmacognosy and the potential in this field of science.

**“Every discovery gives the researcher a feeling of success,”** says Judit Hohmann, explaining why she became interested in plants when, as a student, she joined the Students’ Science Association. Since then, her research has focused on the isolation and structural analysis of biologically active plant compounds, the search for and identification of active compounds in medicinal plants, and the analytical evaluation of medicinal plants and preparations.

“Our field of science, **pharmacognosy, can be considered a curiosity within chemistry.** The fact that I have been elected a member of the Academy indicates a **recognition not only of my work, but also of this field of science in general and all those who do research in it,**” she says. Among the 102 new members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), 26 are women, and **the proportion of women in the Academy in Hungary is still lower than in many similar institutions in**

**Europe.** However, Judit Hohmann believes there is a visible trend of improvement in this respect.

“For my generation, **the desire to secure a job at the university after graduation was offset by low salaries.** On the other hand, some of my peers were fortunate enough to open their own pharmacies in the era of pharmacy privatization in Hungary. For researchers, however, to this day, the only way to obtain an acceptable level of income is through public tenders,” she says, sharing her experiences. “Instead of being born a researcher, you grow to become one, which, of course, requires dedication. Research is an intellectual activity that doesn’t end at the end of the workday.”

*Instead of being “born”  
a researcher, you grow  
to become one.*

”



# The Superpower of Scientists



Ferenc LÉVAI

István SAHIN-TÓTH

“Every single field of research offers something exciting to explore,” says **Dr. Katalin Geretovszkyné Varjú**. In this interview, the Director of Science of the ELI ALPS (Extreme Light Infrastructure – Attosecond Light Pulse Source) Research Institute, Associate Professor at the Department of Optics and Quantum Electronics at the Institute of Physics (University of Szeged, Faculty of Science and Informatics), talks about her journey to the Laser Research Institute in Szeged.



– *Where does your interest in physics come from?*

– I was born in Szeged to a physicist and a mathematician, so I was essentially “infected” with science at a very young age. **I have always been fascinated by how phenomena of the physical world can be described and how processes in the world can be calculated and predicted by relying on a few basic correlations.** By understanding the laws of nature, we can come as close as possible to controlling these processes. This is the secret of the “superpower” of scientists.

– *What steps led you to the University of Szeged?*

– I was a student at Radnóti Miklós High School in Szeged, where my teachers fostered my thirst for knowledge. As a result, I ranked high in numerous math and physics competitions and graduated from high school with excellent grades. In my final year, I was also selected for the team that qualified for the International Physics Olympiad for High School Students. It was thus only natural for me to continue my studies at József Attila University, one of the legal predecessors of the University of Szeged, where I received a degree in physics with distinction and a high school teaching degree in physics with honors, both in 1999. I pursued my doctoral studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury and at the University of Szeged. **In 2002, I was awarded the honorary doctorate title “Promotio sub auspiciis praesidentis Rei Publicae” by the President of Hungary.** I then got a job at the University of Szeged. In my research, I’m motivated by the joy of discovery, and in my teaching efforts, by the opportunity to share knowledge with others. At the university, I have worked at the Department of Optics and Quantum Electronics at the Faculty of Science and Informatics, and the Institute of Medical Physics and Informatics at the Faculty of Medicine [now Szent-Györgyi Albert Medical School]. My research has been supported by grants from the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA) as well as EU Marie Curie grants. In addition, my scientific achievements have been recognized with a Magyary Zoltán Research Grant and a Bolyai János Research Grant.

– *How did you join the ELI team?*

– Funded by the EU’s Marie Curie Program, I spent two and a half years as a postdoctoral fellow in **Lund, Sweden**, working in the team of Anne L’Huillier. **There, I immersed myself in my current research subject, the generation and applications of attosecond pulses produced by high-intensity laser fields, a topic that spans the fields of optics and atomic physics.** This research area is now the main focus of the ELI ALPS Research Institute in Szeged. This is what enabled me to get involved in the ELI project and eventually become the director of science of this one-of-a-kind research institute established in my hometown.

– *How did your research focus evolve into its current form?*

– The focus of my research interest has changed several times during my career. I have conducted research in classical

# Progress in science is driven by collaboration and collective thinking.

and quantum processes, optics, and atomic physics, participating in both theoretical and experimental projects. In each project, I had the opportunity to learn how to use new tools, some of which later helped me solve problems that had arisen in completely different contexts. **In reality, the choice of a research topic is rarely driven solely by scientific curiosity. It may be influenced by one’s personal life, or even by sporting opportunities in one’s neighborhood, as well as by financial considerations. Even the personalities of the members of a research group can make a position attractive and be a decisive factor in the choice of a thesis topic or a focus for a doctoral research project. Wherever these factors may point to, every single field of research offers something exciting to explore and helps develop a way of thinking that is essential to conducting research.**

– *What advice would you give to current students of your alma mater?*

– Studying and doing research abroad is always a challenge because it requires a high degree of self-reliance. However, those who dare to do it gain a lot, both in terms of life experience and the development of a scientific mindset. **For a successful career in research, it’s practically indispensable for young researchers to become familiar with different scientific schools and learn how to use a range of research tools.** That’s why I encourage them to take advantage of the mobility programs of the EU, especially the opportunities offered by the University of Szeged, to explore the world and, within it, the world of science! **Progress in science is driven by collaboration and collective thinking.** Substantial momentum may be gained whenever professionals from different backgrounds and fields of expertise pool their research resources.

# Starting Out with Resilience

“I live in Újlipótváros, a most charming part of Budapest. My wife is an exceptional person, and not only because she stood by me even in the worst of times. Our little daughter, Hanna, was born in the summer of 2019. I’m a good cook, I love our vinyl records, and when I’m at a loss for words, I strum the guitar. I enjoy dancing with my daughter and taking part in running events. I also appreciate slow days, good wine, and resting my eyes.” These are the words of introduction addressed to the public on the website of Krisztián Grecsó, József Attila Prize-winning poet and writer.

– Having attended elementary school in your hometown of Szegvár, near Szeged, you went on to graduate from Batsányi János High School in Csongrád, also located near Szeged. In 2001, you graduated from József Attila University [a legal predecessor of the University of Szeged] with a degree in Hungarian Language and Literature. Your breakthrough on the Hungarian literary scene came with the publication of *Pletykaanyu* [Gossiping Mom], a collection of short stories inspired by life in your hometown. You are the author of several highly successful novels and have also been a newspaper journalist. Since 2009, you have been the editor of the prose section of the weekly newspaper *Élet és Irodalom* [Life and Literature]. Looking back on these key stages of your life, what do you think has determined your career choice?

– It’s a great honor to be a Hungarian writer, but the path to becoming a writer is never conventional. The story of every author’s career is unique and incomparable. There is no specific university program or exam for writers, nor is there a workplace that can fully utilize all their skills. Consequently, there is no clear path to follow. Writing is a soli-

*What really matters in life is whether we can cope mentally...*

”



tary pursuit. At the risk of sounding self-centered, I have to say: I was born with this defect.

– ***University years are a pivotal time in every person's life. How do you remember that time in your life?***

– Each day of it was a magical experience, and I'm not just saying that because things usually seem better in hindsight. However, by my third year, I was terrified that it would all come to an end soon. And my fears were, indeed, justified, because it ended in no time at all.

– ***In what ways did your professors at the University of Szeged help you build your career?***

– In those days, students were huge fans of their professors, and we really looked up to them as if they were gods. I had wonderful masters, and I'm not being sarcastic when I refer to my professors with this particular word. For me, real learning is rooted in a master-student relationship, characterized by an emotional bond and unconditional love. My alma mater in Szeged provides the best environment for this to this day. I still have a good relationship with my former professors, especially with Mihály Ilia, whom I love dearly... Then there's my thesis supervisor, Professor András Kovács. Sándor Olasz is another former professor of mine about whom I have nothing but good things to say. I also have fond memories of Gyöngyi Mikola's classes as well as László Szilasi's seminars on old Hungarian literature, which had a profound impact on me. Professor Ötvös definitely deserves to be included in this list as well...

– ***You have been awarded many literary prizes, including the Bródy Prize, the Déry Prize, and the József Attila Prize. You are also a two-time winner of the Libri Literary Audience Award, established by Hungary's largest bookseller. You also hold no less than three Honorary Citizen titles. Moreover, your literary work is about to become a research topic at the Doctoral School of Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Szeged. How does it feel to be a "living-and-breathing part of a university curriculum"?***

– I'm very pleased that there is a group of students studying my writings under the guidance of Márk Szántai at Eötvös Dormitory, the very place where I used to live as a student. It fills me with joy, not in the least because writers are always haunted by the feeling that "no one can be a prophet in their own country". That is why it's so important for me to have a good relationship with students and professors at the University of Szeged. Professor Zsófia Szilágyi, for instance, is someone I simply couldn't do without. She is such a brilliant scholar and a great organizer who knows how to bring all these young people together and help them stay together so that they can strengthen and motivate each other. I also meet with Márk in Budapest from time to time. We sit down to talk, and he updates me on his work. For example, he wrote a profound and detailed essay on my third book, *Tánciskola* [Dance School]. That novel was actually a big flop, but Márk's paper helped it end up on the right shelf. Of course, as an editor, I am fully aware of how these things work. You know, students tend to do cheeky and unprofessional things that they wouldn't dare do ten years down the line. One upside of this kind of cheekiness is that it may even open up new paths for the person who's being criticized.

– ***As the author of the highly successful novel *Vera* and, most recently, *Valami népi* [Something Folk], what is your message to today's university students?***

– Don't allow yourself the luxury of feeling offended! Don't let yourself be hurt by others! When you're starting out, it's all about being resilient, since others in the profession often have no interest in seeing a young professional gain a foothold and establish themselves. This ability to tolerate failure and bounce back is often more important than talent itself. At the beginning of your career, you must toughen up your spirit. After all, what really matters in life in general is whether we can cope mentally...

# The Power of Singing: Protection from Trauma in Times of Crisis



Boglárka KÓSA

Gábor MÓDOS, I. L.



Hungarian folk singer **Irén Lovász** is not only one of the most renowned folk singers in the world but also holds a candidate's degree in ethnography. She embarked on her first expedition to collect folk songs in various regions of the Carpathian Basin inhabited by Hungarians while she was still a humanities student at the University of Szeged. Throughout her singing career, she has received numerous awards, including the EMERTon Award for Best Female Singer of the Year, the Hungarian Arts Award, the Béla Bartók Award, and the German Record Critics' Award. She also holds the honorary title of Merited Artist of Hungary and was awarded the Kossuth Prize in 2021 for her achievements.

Irén Lovász was born in Karcag and spent her childhood in the rural regions around Kísújszállás and Dévaványa, small towns located on the Great Hungarian Plain. She graduated from high school in Siófok, specializing in English, and then moved to Szeged to pursue studies in Hungarian and Russian at the Faculty of Humanities at József Attila University, a predecessor of the University of Szeged.

"I look back on my university years with a sense of gratitude. For me, it was a time of spiritual awakening, personal independence, and self-discovery, accompanied by a sense of belonging to the regime-changing generation that ushered in the end of communism in Hungary. It was in Szeged that I first encountered the freedom to hold different political and ideological views and learned to read between the lines. Of all my professors, Mihály Illia is the one who influenced my life the most, both professionally and personally. I had the privilege of joining the esteemed "Illia Team" of writers and poets of Szeged, a team that included such well-known figures as István Baka, János Gécz, and Tibor Zalán."

In addition to focusing on her singing and academic career, Irén Lovász often speaks publicly about the **therapeutic effects of singing**.

"As a singer, ethnographer, and anthropologist specializing in folk music and folk religiosity, I've found that **singing plays a crucial role** in life-and-death situations as well as in **various other pivotal moments in people's lives**. As a researcher, I also see that singing protects people from trauma in times of crisis. **Singing relieves tension in the soul**. What's more, **folk music keeps you grounded** with songs that are tied to different seasons, significant days, and holidays. This provides a kind of temporal stability in line with the various periods of the year. That stability is essential, because without it, the soul just drifts aimlessly through the turbulent storms of freedom," explains Irén Lovász. "After all, we all know, don't we, that freedom, as wonderful as it is, can be just as destructive."

# Entertaining for the Love of It

 Tamara PÓSA



Over the past two decades, **István Dombóvári** has accomplished everything possible in the entertainment industry, putting smiles on the faces of countless people through his books, social media presence, TV appearances, and one-man stand-up shows. Since 2020, he has been serving as the director of the Petőfi Cultural Center and Library in Jászkarajenő, a small town south-east of Budapest. In this role, he relies on the knowledge and skills he acquired as a cultural management student at the Juhász Gyula Teacher Training Faculty of the University of Szeged.

“Today, humor is more present in the lives of Hungarians than ever before. In the 1980s, it was mainly grandparents and parents who listened to cabaret shows on the radio or watched New Year’s Eve comedy shows on television. Now, however, comedy is embraced by and popular among young people as well, much like music, theater, or cinema. This shift is partly due to the fact that entertainment and recreational options have become increasingly available to the majority of the public over the past twenty years,” says István Dombóvári, reflecting on the current state of humor. As a comedian, István’s motivation has always been to entertain people, not to seek fame. His goal is simply to make people laugh.

“For the past two years, my mornings have been dedicated to organizing and managing cultural events in my town, while my afternoons are reserved for my shows. In between, **I work on bringing my ideas to fruition.** I also actively engage with my audience on social media, and I am currently working on my fifth book,” says István, describing his daily routine. He considers all aspects of his profession important and **devotes as much energy to small tasks as he does to big projects.**

“What is the secret of my success? **It’s the ability to add a unique touch to my performances.** Twenty years ago, I was

Instead of chasing success, we should cherish the journey that takes us there!

fortunate enough to find a common voice with my audience, so they know what to expect when they see me.”

He used to feel it was unfair that today virtually anyone can become a comedian on the Internet.

“Seeing that 90 percent of the country has been on The X Factor and 95 percent spend their days trying to be funny on TikTok, and yet they haven’t become singers or comedians, I realized that **the Internet is just a tool. It’s how you use it that matters.** Of course, we shouldn’t forget that, at the end of the day, everything is up to the audience,” concludes István Dombóvári.

# Unyielding Spirit Yields Olympic Gold



**Anna Kárász** is an Olympic gold medalist and four-time world champion kayaker who graduated in Economics and Business Administration from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Szeged in 2015. Her career reached its most recent pinnacle at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, which had been postponed from 2020. Winning the 500-meter final of the Women's Kayak Four at the Olympics, she took the top spot on the podium alongside her teammates Danuta Kozák, Dóra Bodonyi, and Tamara Csipes.

**A**nna Kárász, who is a member of the MVM Szeged Water Sports Association, has a sports career that attests to her exemplary perseverance and diligence. In terms of success, kayaking and canoeing are among the most flourishing sports in Hungary, and the country's female kayakers are top-ranked globally. Consequently, **it's actually harder to get on the national four-member kayak team than to go on to win an Olympic gold medal with that team.**

The year 2014 was a turning point in Anna Kárász's life. As a student at the University of Szeged, she triumphed at the U-23 World Championships in Szeged and won her **first adult World Champion title** in Moscow the same year. In February of the following year, she graduated from the University of Szeged. Throughout 2016, the year of the Rio Olympics, her athletic performance remained top-notch, placing her among the best. In the end, however, she didn't qualify for the Olympics. But Anna did not give up. Facing intense adversity and overcoming countless obstacles, she continued to fight for her dreams. Her determination was finally rewarded with her greatest success to date when she won the title of Olympic Champion in 2021.

"It was clear to me that I wanted to go to university, as I had always been a good student, for the most part, and I just didn't want to focus on a single thing without having a backup plan," says Anna. "So, when I was offered the opportunity to continue kayaking as a member of the Szeged Kayak Team, I decided to apply to the University of Szeged, specifically, the Faculty of Economics. **The main factor in choosing my major was to get a degree that would be practical if I decided to pursue a career outside of sports.** Throughout my studies, the University of Szeged helped me in every way possible. I was able to pursue a full-time degree program according to my personal schedule. Both my groupmates and my teachers were very kind and supportive during the more difficult times. Based on what I've heard from fellow athletes who attended other universities, the University of Szeged stands out in comparison because it handled the whole situation exceptionally well."



SZEGEDI TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM

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**100**  
SZEGED  
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