



XTR M LY HUNGARY

art & culture beyond your expectations

EXTREMELY HUNGARY

A Year of Performances and Exhibitions in New York City and Washington, D.C., Celebrates Hungary's Contemporary Arts and Impact on American Culture

New York, NY – January 9, 2009 – Throughout 2009, audiences in New York and D.C. will have an unprecedented opportunity to experience contemporary Hungarian culture through a broad spectrum of visual, literary and performing arts programming. This yearlong festival, *Extremely Hungary*, will trace the roots of contemporary Hungarian culture and celebrate the innovations and artistic creations that Hungarians have made over the past century. *Extremely Hungary* also will highlight the enduring connections between America and Hungary, and the contributions that Hungarians and Hungarian-Americans have made to arts and culture—from the Bauhaus to Robert Capa, *Casablanca* to Béla Bartók.

Festival programs at leading cultural institutions will both celebrate Hungary's rich *fin de siècle* culture and also introduce contemporary Hungarian artists and performers, many of whom are renowned in Europe but not yet known in America. The festival reveals aspects of Hungarian contemporary culture through concerts, exhibitions, opera, new plays, literary symposia, and even such whimsical events as a mustache contest. Organized by New York's Hungarian Cultural Center, *Extremely Hungary* will be held at premiere arts institutions throughout the two cities, including **Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Jewish Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, Brooklyn Museum of Art, International Center of Photography**, and the **92nd Street Y** in New York, and the **National Gallery, Newseum** and **Library of Congress** in D.C.

"Hungary has witnessed tremendous change in the last hundred years, and its innovative cultural output reflects that dynamism," said George Soros, co-chair of *Extremely Hungary*. Festival co-chair Kati Marton added, "Hungary's contemporary visual, performing and literary arts reflect the extraordinary flux of politics and territory in modern Europe—imperialism, war, revolution, communism, the European Union, and the free market." Both Mr. Soros and Ms. Marton were born in Hungary and came to the U.S. as part of the twentieth-century immigration that brought waves of Hungarian talent to America.

Festival Programs and Events

The diverse programming of *Extremely Hungary* features close to one hundred events, ranging from exhibitions and performances to avant-garde installations and a modern reinterpretation of the traditional Austro-Hungarian opera ball. Alongside its cultural programming, *Extremely Hungary* will also address the impact of politics and of the fall of the Iron Curtain—2009 marks its 20th anniversary—with programs through the **New York Public Library** and **PEN World Voices**.

"In the two decades since the fall of communism, Hungary has undergone a renaissance to reestablish itself as the Paris of the East, a moniker gained during the early 20th century when its cultural energy—the literary coffeehouses, the music of composers like Béla Bartók, the beginning of the Bauhaus—was practically unmatched in Europe," said László Jakab Orsós, the Director of the Hungarian Cultural Center of New York. "*Extremely Hungary* will present this new generation of artists to American audiences, many for the first time."

The festival kicks off in January 2009 with a number of programs including “Celebrating Hungary” at **Carnegie Hall**, a two-week concert series of Hungarian musicians and composers, featuring repertoire as diverse as Haydn’s courtly masterworks and composer and performer György Kurtág’s New York debut.

One of the other winter highlights is the **International Center of Photography’s** exhibition of the recently rediscovered archive of legendary Hungarian photographer Martin Munkácsi, as part of ICP’s Year of Fashion. As staff photographer for *Harpers BAZAAR* in the ’30s and ’40s, Munkácsi blurred the lines between commercial and art photography with his stunning images of such icons as Katherine Hepburn, Jean Harlow and Joan Crawford.

In the spring, **The Jewish Museum** will debut “Danube Exodus,” an interactive multimedia installation of found footage by 2007 Erasmus Prize winner Péter Forgács. The installation traces two historic voyages on the Danube River: the first, the exodus of Jews escaping down the Danube in 1939, the second, a “reverse” exodus of Germans fleeing Soviets up the Danube one year later.

In the fall, the **Museum of Modern Art** will present a film series on avant-garde contemporary Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr. Alongside works by Tarr, an uncompromising master of contemporary cinema, MoMA will screen new works by young Hungarian filmmakers.

Other programs in New York include:

- Productions of new Hungarian plays at the **Lincoln Center Festival**, an annual summer-long showcase of international theater;
- Cabarets of Hungarian music at the **Neue Galerie’s Café Sabarsky**;
- Two exhibitions at **The Forbes Galleries**, one showcasing ceramics by the legendary Zsolnay porcelain factory, including Art Nouveau masterworks; and the other featuring early 20th-century Hungarian paintings from the collection Nancy G. Brinker, former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary;
- An underground music festival of revolutionary bands active in Eastern Europe in the 80s and their contemporary counterparts at **LaMama**, and **(Le) Poisson Rouge**, in coordination with the **New York Public Library for the Performing Arts**;
- Contemporary Hungarian design exhibition and fair in conjunction with **New York Design Week**;
- A contemporary dance performance by Hungarian-American choreographer Vicky Shick at **Danspace Project**;
- The Opera Ball on Earth, a contemporary Austro-Hungarian opera ball with an extraterrestrial theme, presented at the **Brooklyn Museum of Art**;
- Five contemporary Hungarian writers at **PEN World Voices Festival**.

In Washington, D.C., festival events include:

- A specially commissioned performance by György Kurtág of a new work inspired by Béla Bartók’s music, presented at the **Library of Congress**;
- An exhibition at **American University’s Katzen Art Center** juxtaposing works by Lajos Vajda, the most distinctive artist of the Hungarian avant-garde, with those of contemporary Hungarian artists;
- A panel discussion on the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism at the **Newseum**, including discussions with journalists who reported from Eastern Europe in 1989;
- A concert by European folk sensation Beáta Palya at **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**.

A full listing of confirmed programs for both New York and Washington, D.C., is attached.

Hungarians in America

America is a country collaged of settlers and immigrants, and Hungarians are embedded into our nation’s firmament—during the American Revolution, Hungarian-American Michael de Kovats founded the nation’s

cavalry. Since then, Hungarians have maintained a constant state of immigration to the United States, with surges following the Hungarian revolutions of 1848 and 1956.

In the 1930s, many talented Hungarian intellectuals immigrated to the United States, among them numerous internationally known scientists, artists, and filmmakers who would forever impact America. Forced into exile by the rising tide of fascism, they would alter the way we fight and prevent wars, help shape modern art, design, photography and cinema, and transform the way we communicate and view the world.

The thread of creative achievements by Hungarians and Hungarian-Americans infused the fabric of American culture with contributions that helped to establish modern art movements. Bauhaus leaders Marcel Breuer and László Moholy-Nagy linked form and function with their highly influential International style; Breuer went on to design the Whitney Museum of American Art. Franz Liszt and Béla Bartók are considered among the greatest composers of the last two centuries, with legacies that extend to modern and contemporary compositions. Hungarians and Hungarian-Americans also made their mark in Hollywood: from entertainers Harry Houdini and Béla Lugosi, to business tycoons William Fox and Adolph Zukor, the founders of 20th Century Fox and Paramount Studios, respectively. Émigré Michael Curtiz directed *Casablanca*, one of the most influential films of all time, itself an anti-fascist treatise. The legacy of Hungarian-American entertainers continues today with Jerry Seinfeld, Drew Barrymore, Kate Hudson and Adrien Brody, among others.

Over a dozen Nobel Prize winners emerged from the mid-century generation of Hungarian talent, including innovators who helped usher in both the nuclear age and the age of the computer. Physicist Leó Szilárd discovered nuclear chain reactions, the foundation for the atomic bomb—and the discovery that fueled the Manhattan Project. In 1951, the Hungarian physicist Edward Teller, who had worked alongside Szilárd on the Manhattan Project, built on that work to conceive the hydrogen bomb. Meanwhile, Hungarian-born computer scientist John Kemeny invented BASIC computer language, which made computers usable for the masses. A few decades later, fellow émigré Andrew Grove pioneered the Intel microprocessor.

New York remains the area with the largest concentration of Americans of Hungarian origin. First generation Hungarian-American political leaders include former New York governor George Pataki. Hungarian-American titans of industry include technology executive and space tourist Charles Simonyi and financier George Soros. These and many more form the body of exceptional individuals and contributions that are the foundation, and inspiration, of *Extremely Hungary*.

The Hungarian Cultural Center

Dedicated to enhancing knowledge and appreciation of Hungarian culture, the Hungarian Cultural Center (HCC) organizes and supports a wide spectrum of events that celebrate Hungary's past, present and future. Since its founding in 2001, the HCC has linked Hungarian artists and intellectuals with American audiences through exhibitions, lectures, concerts, performances and screenings. The HCC has also partnered with major venues, including the New York Public Library and Lincoln Center, to bring its programming to larger audiences.

Extremely Hungary is made possible in part by funding from the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture. Additional information can be found on the festival's website, www.extremelyhungary.org.

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