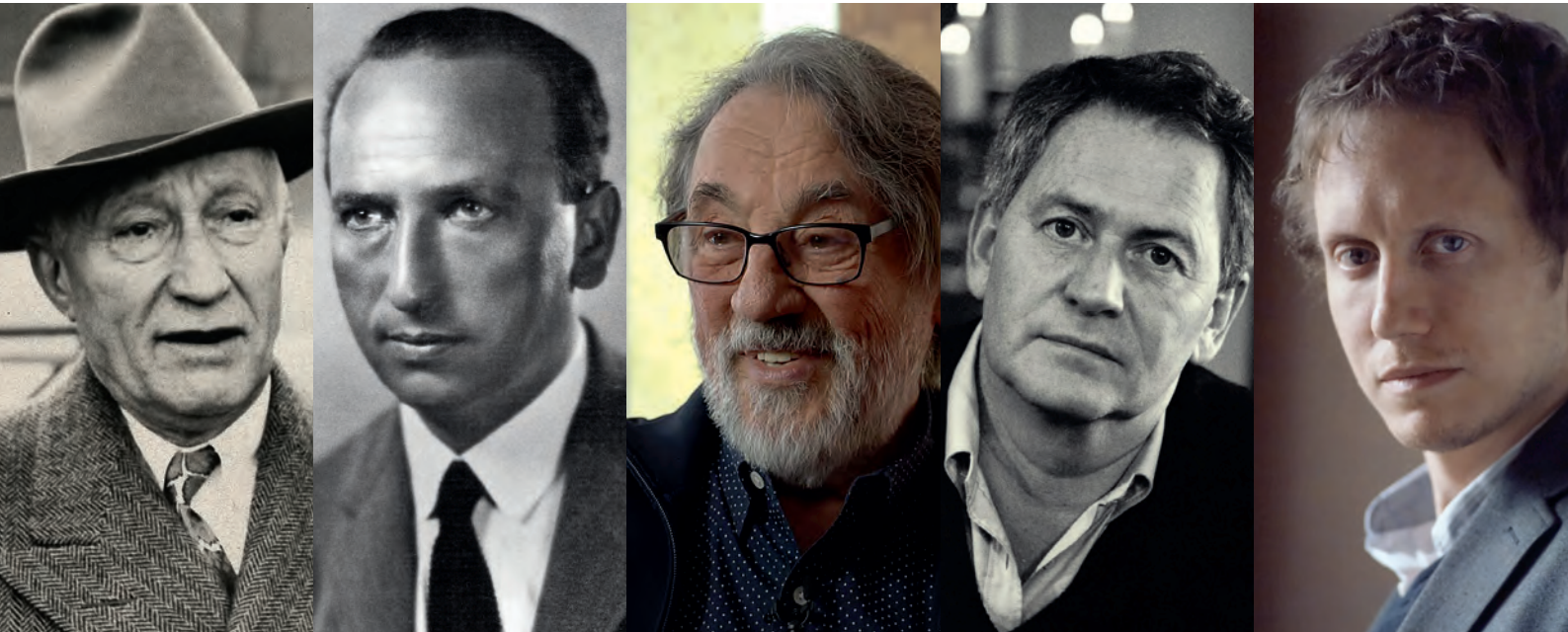


Fact Sheets

on Hungary



H U N G A R I A N S
I N T H E W O R L D ' S
C I N E M A T O G R A P H Y

Adolph Zukor and Cary Grant



I. IT IS (NOT) ENOUGH, TO BE HUNGARIAN...

Hungarians in the world's cinematography

The Hungarian history of the past centuries has been accompanied by the difficult decision to voluntarily or involuntarily leave the place of birth, which often resulted in a success story in the new homeland and increased the good standing of Hungarians worldwide.

The founding fathers of Hollywood

We can say with some exaggeration that Hollywood was founded at the turn of the last century by Hungarian immigrants arriving from Hungary, more precisely from the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. They arrived in the New World not as cinematographers, but penniless but greatly talented people, with great dreams, who made use of their talent in film. Their story itself would merit a screenplay. For a Hollywood film.

ADOLPH ZUKOR (born Adolf Zucker)
1873, Ricse – 1976, Los Angeles

He emigrated to America at the age of 15, with a few dollars in his pocket. He was twenty when he saw his first motion picture and immediately saw the business opportunity in it. He followed his motto at the time – *look ahead and dare to assume the risk* – when he decided to make films only with well-known actors to attract audiences into his theatre. He created the Famous Players in Famous Company and made feature length movies of popular plays and novels with well-known actors. It was thanks to him that Mary Pickford became one of the

first celebrated movie stars, but he also managed to attract Broadway stars to the movie world. By 1914, his company was producing 30 films a year. Together with Marcus Loew, the pioneer of the American film industry he created a network of cinemas in New York and opened a 3500-capacity movie palace on Broadway. He also set up his first Californian studio in a warehouse in Hollywood, which developed from the 1910s to become the centre of American film-making. Merging with the company of film producer Jesse L. Lasky and a film distributor, he created Paramount Pictures Corporation there in 1917. Zukor was soon working with

the best Hollywood directors, Douglas Fairbanks, John Barrymore, Pola Negri, Gloria Swanson, Clara Bow, Rudolph Valentino, Gary Cooper and other film stars began their careers in his studio. Although Zukor managed to survive the crisis of World War I, he went bankrupt during the global crisis, but the newly reorganized Paramount Pictures Inc. asked him to remain as Chairman of the Board. By the end of the forties, he realised the threat that television posed for the cinema. *Instead of losing our audience television, why not have television in our portfolio?* – he said when he joined forces with ABC Television, which by then had a huge influence over millions of viewers. The title of his memoirs written in 1953 is quite telling: *The public is never wrong. Zukor was not wrong either, when he created modern film industry and became one of the founding fathers of American feature film making. Legend has it that a sign on his office wall said: It is not enough to be Hungarian, you must be talented too!*

WILLIAM FOX (Vilmos Friedman)
1879, Tolcsva – 1952, New York

He arrived in New York as a child: he sold newspapers, candies and worked in a laundry. It was in 1904, that he began operating a theatre and founded New



William Fox

York Film Rental Company, his movie distribution enterprise in 1912, entering into film production with Fox Film Company in 1914. He soon found himself among the largest movie producers. His cinematic *ars poetica* was simple: *The storyline above all!* He had a talent for understanding the taste of the audience, while he did not forget about European art tradition either: he was the one for example, who invited German director Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau to work in America. His company produced the first sound-film western; it was here in 1927 that Frank Borzage directed *7th Heaven* based on Hemingway's *A farewell to arms*, starring the first Hollywood "dream couple" Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell. The stock exchange crash that started the economic crisis in 1929 caused serious losses for Fox, thus in 1931 he was forced to sell his company.

The wave of emigration after 1919

Following the flourishing era of the 1910s, the twenties brought about dramatic crisis in the world of Hungarian film. The country came out of World War I defeated, losing two-third of its territory because of the Treaty of Trianon. The Hungarian Soviet Republic was declared in the economically and intellectually equally tormented Hungary during the spring of 1919. Directors, authors, theoreticians that supported the communist leadership which lasted four months, had to leave the country after its demise. This explains why there were several hundreds of films produced in 1918 and none when the crisis was at its highest in 1928. Hungarian film missed out on the prospering era of silent movies in the twenties, instead all those interested in avantgarde-type artistic ventures went abroad to test their luck.





Alexander Korda and Leslie Howard

ALEXANDER KORDA (Sándor Kellner)
1893, Pusztatúrpáztó – 1956, London

He published under the pseudonym Sursum Corda as the Paris correspondent of the daily *Független Magyarország* (Independent Hungary), hence the stage-name he used from 1909 onwards. He was the first Hungarian film-critic and film

magazine editor. He began making movies in 1914 and in 1916 he founded an independent film studio in Budapest. His works were characterized by literary perfection, consistent plot, authentic atmosphere creation and good actor instruction. He was forced to leave the country in 1919 because of his role in the overthrown Soviet Republic. He first went to Vienna,

then to Germany with his wife Maria Korda, but he also visited Hollywood and France, to finally settle in London. This was where he created his own company London Film Productions in 1932. The three Korda-brothers dominated Western, mainly English film production as a clan from the 1920s.

There are several anecdotes about Alexander Korda; one of them about the clever ruse with which he launched his career in England. In a bold move after arriving in London, he reserved the Presidential Suite of a London hotel and invited the cream of the film and economic life to a party. Mingling with this crowd, it was easy for him to gather the funding for his film plans. According to another anecdote, Churchill asked Korda to move to the United States and to make films there that promote the British position to the world, while trying to gather information about the war related policies of the United States. Korda did not disappoint Churchill: with the help of his brothers, he made *That Hamilton Woman*, a film about Admiral Nelson, starring Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. The film is unique in that the speech by Nelson, rejecting the peace offer of Napoleon was written by Churchill himself: *Napoleon cannot be master of the world until he has smashed us up, and believe me, gentlemen, he means to be master of the world! You cannot make peace with dictators. You have to destroy them, wipe them out!*

It is claimed that the Queen knighted Korda in recognition of his achievements on the recommendation of Churchill in 1942, as he really did revive British cinema with his ironic films that broke away from the traditional conservative history approach of British people, like the epochal *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933). He managed to bring people closer to great old masters (*Rembrandt*, 1936), but as the case of *Lady Hamilton* also demonstrated, he was also good at directing American style cinema. He employed many of his compatriots, **LESLIE HOWARD** (Steiner László) 1893, London – 1943, Strait of Gibraltar, the son of Hungarian parents also became a world-famous actor. The British Film Academy named a prize after Korda, most recently the film studio in Etyek, Hungary was also named after him.

ZOLTÁN KORDA

1895, Túrkeve – 1961, Hollywood

He was a cameraman and script writer from 1920 in Vienna but was soon retained by the German Universum Film AG as a film director. From the early 30s he lived in England, where he directed films for his brother's company and also worked in Hollywood between 1940 and 1949. His spectacular Kipling-adaptation of *Jungle Book* (1942) became one of the most successful films of all times.

VINCE KORDA

1897, Túrkeve – 1979, Chelsea

The third and youngest brother in the trio was an aspiring painter, who moved to England upon the invitation of Alexander to work as a production designer. His works were testament to his exceptional creativity, original ideas, virtuoso technical knowledge and fastidiousness, eventually his brother appointed him the art director of London Films. His son, Michael Korda wrote *Charmed Lives*, the adventurous and successful story of the family.



MICHAEL CURTIZ (Mihály Kertész)

1888, Budapest – 1962, Hollywood

He was the most important director of the early period of Hungarian film alongside



Poster of *Casablanca*, 1942

Alexander Korda, who first came into contact with cinematography in 1912. He soon rose to be one of the leading directors and also worked with Korda. It was during the Soviet revolution of 1919, that he made *My Brother Is Coming Home*, a propaganda film. After the fall of the Commune he made popular films first in Vienna, later in Berlin for Universum Film AG. He signed with Warner Brothers in 1927 and made such popular adventure movies as the *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) or *The Sea Hawk* (1940). One of the secrets of his success was how he could portray the spirit of his new home in his exciting stories. Accord-



Scene from *Casablanca*, 1942

ing to an anecdote, when after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that the United States was at war, Curtiz turned to the astonished crew and said: *We have bad news. But we have a wonderful story to tell the world. So, let us put away sad things and begin!* There are also legends about the difficulties surrounding

the shooting of *Casablanca*: the script was written on the go; the end was not yet written, and his notorious outbursts and vivid Hungarian swearing could somewhat dampen the otherwise quite low mood caused by the war. The whole of Hollywood was familiar with the Franzstadt (a district of Budapest) accent of Curtiz, there are a lot of anecdotes circulating about his so-called curtiz-

isms. On one occasion he demanded a *puddle* for one of the scenes, only to be presented with a puppy instead. Despite all this, *Casablanca* (1942) is one of the basic and cultic pieces of cinema history. The secret behind its success to this day is that it portrayed timeless archetypical human stories and emotions, in magical and exotic locations, with major stars and evergreen musical score.



BÉLA LUGOSI

1882, Lugos, today Lugoj, Romania – 1956, Hollywood

One of the best-known actors at the time. He played Hamlet, Romeo on the Hungarian stages, while appearing in the role of dramatic characters on the screen. Because of his involvement in the Soviet republic, he first fled from the retributions to Vienna, Berlin and eventually to the United States in 1922. From 1927, he played Dracula on Broadway, later on he became one of the biggest horror film stars, playing the creepy characters of Dracula and Frankenstein.



BÉLA BALÁZS (Béla Bauer Herbert)

1884, Szeged –1949, Budapest

The internationally acclaimed pioneer of movie aesthetics, during the Soviet Revolution he was the head of the Writers' Directory and oversaw theatre life, which meant that he was forced to emigrate first to Vienna, later to Berlin, where he also worked with Leni Riefenstahl (*Das Blaue Licht*, 1932). He wrote *Visible Man* and *The Spirit of Film*, his main German language works on film theory in emigration. In the thirties, he was invited to teach in Moscow, however it was only by chance that he managed to survive Stalin's wave of retributions after the war. He returned home in 1945, diving headfirst into the intellectual scene of the time, but his alleged avantgarde mindset was frowned upon, he lost his work and could not publish his works.

LAURENCE B. PEARSON (Lajos Bíró)

1880, Vienna – 1948, London

The renowned writer, journalist was also greatly influenced by the new genre of art, he began writing screenplays from 1914 onwards. He was also active in politics, thus after the fall of the commune, he lived in Vienna, Paris and Rome, arriving in America in 1925 to write screenplays for Paramount and First National movie production companies. He returned to Europe in 1928, he first lived in Germany and from 1932 until his death, in London. He was a co-founder of London Films with Alexander Korda, he was head of dramaturgy and wrote screenplays. Just a few titles from his filmography: *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933); Harold Young: *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934); Ludwig Berger–Tim Whelan–Michael Powell: *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940); Billy Wilder: *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943, United States).

LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY

1895, Bácsborsód – 1946, Chicago

The greatest figure of classic avantgarde after Lajos Kassák also left Hungary after 1919. He got acquainted with the Bauhaus-style in Berlin, adopting it overseas when he founded his school in Chicago. Moholy-Nagy made several avantgarde short films during the late

20s and early 30s, which were primarily typical city symphonies, characteristic of the era. His screenplays and theoretical works also remain significant. Were he allowed to work in Hungary, the avantgarde silent movie era of Hungarian film would probably not be missing altogether.

Seeking self-expression abroad in the 1920s

Beside the directors, writers, cameramen and actors, this populous and diverse group also has representatives of the increasingly popular genre of animation. They left their country not for political reasons, but because of the crisis of Hungarian film productions, many of them returning home later when the Hungarian film industry began thriving again in the 30s.

PAUL FEJOS (Pál Fejős)

1897, Budapest – 1963, New York

He had an irregular career. He first went to Germany at the end 1923, where he worked as an assistant to Max Reinhardt and Fritz Lang. He arrived in America at



Poster of *Spring shower*, 1932

the end of the twenties, where he was employed by Universal Studios. Between 1931 and 1933, he was already an acknowledged artist in Europe, he directed

two excellent films in Hungary during the early era of sound film in 1932 (*Spring Shower*; *The Waters Decide*), however both were a flop in his home country.

He continued film making in Denmark, after which he travelled in Northern Africa, visited East-India, New Guinea, the Inca cities of Latin America, where he studied archaeology and made documentaries. He turned his back completely on directing in 1941 and went on to become an internationally recognized archaeologist as a member of the New York Academy.



JOHN HALAS (János Halász)
1912, Budapest – 1995, London

He began his career in Budapest as an illustrator, poster designer and film commercial maker, later he spent one year in Paris in 1929. He founded an animation studio together with Gyula Macskássy and Félix Kassowitz; he was invited to England in 1936, where he directed colour cartoons using the new technology.

He worked together with Imre Hajdú, who became known as Jean Image. In 1940, he founded the animation company Halas & Batchelor with his wife Joy Batchelor. He achieved world fame with a feature-length animation adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* that they produced between 1951 and 1953.

JEAN IMAGE (Imre Hajdú)
1910, Budapest – 1989, Paris

He began in the film industry as a set painter and commercial illustrator. He settled in Paris in 1934. He produced the anti-Nazi, allegorical *Le Loupe et l'Agneau* (The wolf and the lamb), the copy of which, the producer destroyed upon the German occupation. During the war, he lived in the "free" Southern-zone, he started *Rhapsodie de Saturn* (The Rhapsody of Saturn), that he only finished after the war, but which brought him international success. His works were characterised by grotesque, sometimes lyrical humour, a mix of fantasy and scientific education.

GEORGE PAL (György Pál)
1908, Cegléd – 1980, Beverly Hills

He produced animation films in the company of János Halász and Gyula Macskássy. He moved to Germany in 1931

and two months later he was the head of the animation department of Universum Film AG. After Hitler's rise to power he went to Paris, from where he was invited by the Philips radio factory to the Netherlands. He perfected Dutch animation film production with the commercials he made for them. The threat of war made him move to America in 1940, where he had his first success with his special technique short puppet shows. He was a master of combining normal shots with animation or effects. In 1949 he founded his own production company, mainly producing sci-fi from 1950 onwards, the most successful of which was the 1960 adaptation of *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells.

JOSEPH KOZMA (József Kozma)
1905, Budapest – 1969, La Roche-Guyon

Who revived French chanson, graduated as a composer – conductor from the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy as a disciple of Leó Weiner. In 1929, he received a scholarship to the Berlin Opera, but abandoned conducting and joined the company of Berthold Brecht. He moved to Paris in 1933. It was there that he met Jacques Prévert, composing eighty musical scores for his poems. The public heard these after the war, performed by Yves Montand, Germaine Montero, Frères Jacques. He composed

his first film score in 1935, which was followed by numerous evergreens, mainly in works of French poetic realism, like Jean Renoir and Marcel Carné. He composed the music of the animation films of Jean Image as well. Lyrics in his songs were more important than in the case of other traditional title songs, while his musical arrangements were considered revolutionary.



MELCHIER LENGYEL

(Menyhért Lengyel)

1880, Balmazújváros – 1975, Budapest

He wrote his play *Typhoon* while still in Hungary in 1909, which was adapted to the screen in America in 1914, while he spent the 1920s in Berlin, as a story editor. He moved to Hollywood in 1937. Ernst Lubitsch made movies of his most famous screenplays (*Ninotchka*, 1939; *To Be Or Not To Be*, 1942).

RUDOLPH MATÉ (Rudolf Máté) 1898, Krakkó/Kraków, Poland – 1964, Beverly Hills)

He worked in Austria in 1921 as an assistant cameraman for Alexander Korda and Zoltán Korda. He is remembered for his close-ups as the trendsetting cameraman of *Jeanne d'Arc* (1928) by the Danish-born Carl Theodor Dreyer. The innovative artist moved to the United States in late 1934, where he teamed up with such famous directors as Alfred Hitchcock (*Foreign Correspondent*, 1940) or Ernst Lubitsch.



MIKLOS ROZSA (Miklós Rózsa) 1907, Budapest – 1995, Los Angeles

After his studies in chemical engineering and music first he travelled to Paris, then in 1935 to London, where he wrote his first film music score for Alexander Korda in 1936. He moved to Hollywood in 1940 and became one of the best-

known representatives of masterly arranged romantic film music in a variety of genres. The list of directors he worked with is quite impressive: Alexander and Vince Korda, Ernst Lubitsch, Billy Wilder, Alfred Hitchcock, André de Toth, Jules Dassin, Fritz Lang, Vincente Minelli, John Huston, John Ford, William Wyler, Nicolas Ray, Alain Resnais.



ALEXANDRE TRAUNER (Trauner Sándor) 1906, Budapest – 1993, Omonville

After studying painting he joined his innovative friends in 1928 in the editorial staff of *Munka* (Work) published by Lajos Kassák, but by 1929 he was in Paris. He met set designer Lazare Meerson on the Montmartre and they designed the set of René Clair's film *Sous les toits de Paris* (1930). They worked together on a total of fourteen films until 1936, while from 1937 onwards he was accepting individual offers. He rarely used mock-ups,

relying instead on a painted set and optical tricks to create the desired scene. Several of Marcel Carné's masterpieces were produced during the thirties and the forties in sets designed by him. During the fifties he worked in Hollywood with Orson Welles (*Othello*, 1952) and with Billy Wilder (*Witness for the Prosecution*, 1958, *The Apartment*, 1960, *Irma la Douce*, 1963). Towards the end of his life he worked again in France, among others in *Don Giovanni* (1978) by Joseph Losey. He was 78 years old when the young Luc Besson asked him to be the production designer for *Subway*, in 1982 he returned to Hungary and designed the set for Sándor Simó's *Viaduct*.

GÁBOR POGÁNY

1915, Budapest – 1999, Rome

He attended architecture courses in Budapest, then studied painting in London. He started working as the production design assistant to Vince Korda in 1934, but he was much more interested in "painting with light", being a cinematographer. He did not receive a work permit in London, so he settled in Italy in 1937. Becoming a master of lighting, composition and colouring, after the war he worked on more than one hundred films, including masterpieces of Géza Radványi, Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica, among them *La Ciociara* (1960).

Artists fleeing World War II and the persecution of Jews

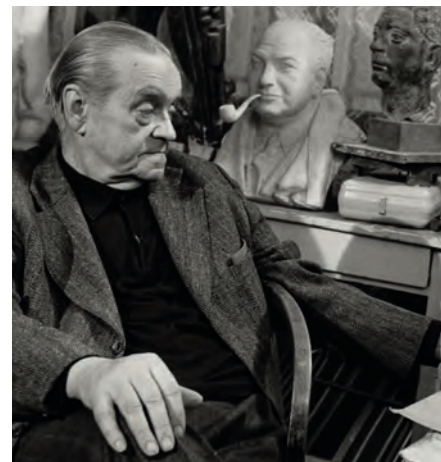
Many cinema artists were forced to flee World War II and mainly the persecution of Jews. Several extremely successful artists, like Gyula Kabos, the indispensable actor of 1930s comedies suffered huge setbacks in their careers while in US emigration. Some of them did not flee the country, like Béla Gaál, the director of *Fairy Tale Auto*, who eventually became a victim of the Holocaust.

ANDRÉ DE TOTH (Endre Tóth)
1913, Makó – 2002, Burbank

Began his career in the movie industry began as a scriptwriter, editor in Budapest, then continued at the German company, Bavaria. He debuted as a director in Budapest in 1939: he made a total of five films in a single year, still he had to flee from the threat of World War II to Great Britain, where he was contracted by Alexander Korda. He found his way to Hollywood with the crew of London Films. He created quality films in America in almost all the genres, ranging from adventure films to thrillers and westerns. He made the first three-dimensional movie, *The House of Wax* (1953).

Emigrants fleeing the communist take- over of 1948

From among the active cinema professionals it was precisely the directors of the two films promising the post-war revival of cinema art, who decided that they were not willing to comply with the expectations of the communist dictatorship: Géza Radványi and István Szóts.



GÉZA RADVÁNYI

**1907, Kassa, today Košice, Slovakia –
1987, Budapest**

Already worked abroad between the two world wars: he was a scriptwriter and assistant director for French and

German film companies. He returned to Hungary in 1939 and the first films he directed were already exceptional. He joined the efforts to reorganize Hungarian film art in 1945, he directed *Somewhere in Europe*, for which he was given the prestigious Kossuth Prize as well. Representatives of the increasingly dogmatic official cultural policy accused him of being unpatriotic and cosmopolitan, forcing him to leave in 1948. He directed successful films in Italy, France and Germany, with the participation of such stars like Michel Simon, Romy Schneider, Lili Palmer, Curd Jürgens. He returned home in 1977 and made his last film *Circus Maximus* in 1980.



JOE ESZTERHAS (János Eszterhás)
1944, Csákánydoroszló

He settled with his family in Cleveland in 1950. He had been writing screenplays since the seventies, but it was only in the nineties that he became the

best known – and best paid – Hollywood screenwriter. *Basic Instinct* (1992) the first part of his series, which created the genre of erotic thrillers was directed by Paul Verhoven and was a huge box office hit.

EFRÁJIM KISHON (Ferenc Kishont)
1924, Budapest – 2005, Appenzell, Switzerland

He managed to adventurously survive the persecution of Jews, at the end of the war, he also “managed to miss” a Soviet transport of prisoners of war. He said that it was the war that made him satirical. He first emigrated to Austria in 1949, then to Israel, where he achieved huge successes as a theatre writer, director and finally as a film director. His humorous sketch-film *Sallah Shabati* (1964) attracted unprecedented audiences in Israel.

KATINKA FARAGÓ 1936, Vienna

She arrived in Sweden in 1940. In 1954 she joined the crew of Ingmar Bergmann as a production assistant, then worked as a production manager. Finally as a production director. *Fanny and Alexander* was her last film with the Swedish maestro in 1982. She was also the producer for Andrei Tarkowski's last film *The Sacrifice* (1986) made in Swedish coproduction.

The 1956 emigrants

It was mainly the fresh graduates that left the country in 1956 and began their careers abroad. The established artists of the time were less involved in this wave of emigration. Beginning as a huge promise, István Szóts only managed to produce a documentary and a short feature film in ten years, so losing all hope, he finally decided to leave his country in 1957. Among the 1956 emigrants, the cameraman János Badal was perhaps the only cinematographer who had made significant Hungarian films until then.



JEAN BADAL (János Badal)
1927, Budapest – 2015, Budapest

He graduated as a cameraman. During the 1956 revolution and anti-Soviet freedom fight, he was the head of the revolutionary committee of the film studio's

camera teams documenting the revolutionary actions against the political elite, as a result of which he was laid off after the fall of the revolution. He fled the country in 1957 and settled in Paris. He made his first French film in 1963, which attracted Jacques Tati's attention. He asked him to be the cameraman for his film *Playtime* (1968). Beside French artists, he made films with Canadian, American, English and Swedish directors as well during his career spanning one hundred films.

LÁSZLÓ KOVÁCS

1933, Cece – 2007, Beverly Hills and



VILMOS ZSIGMOND

1930, Szeged – 2016, Big Sur

They attended the Budapest College of Film Art between 1952 and 1956 as students of György Illés. They left Hungary together in 1956, carrying more than ten thousand meters of film reel recorded during the revolution; this became the material for the film *Ungarn in Flammen*

(Hungary in Flames) in 1957, directed by István Erdélyi. Both of them settled in America and tried to go their own ways to succeed in the movie business. A decade and a half later they were together again and became known – and admired – worldwide by many as “the two Hungarians”.

László Kovács worked as the cameraman of short reference films and adult movies, until Peter Bogdanovich asked him to shoot *Targets* (1968). This brought the much-awaited change for him, while *Easy Rider* (1969) brought fame. These early works, which by now have become significant milestones in film history, carry all the characteristics of Hollywood renaissance: “cheap movie”, unprecedented visual-artistic quality, strong movie atmosphere, colours used to express psychology and dramaturgy. László Kovács worked with virtually all the important directors of the time, from Robert Altman, to Bob Rafelson and the “enfant terrible” Martin Scorsese.

Vilmos Zsigmond first made documentaries, the directors of the Hollywood renaissance also appreciated him for the work style and visual literacy that he brought from Hungary. It was Robert Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, which brought the breakthrough for him in 1971, and it was working together with directors like Jerry Schatzberg, Steven Spielberg, Brian De Palma, Michael Cimino, Martin Scorsese

and Woody Allen that made him one of the most outstanding cameramen in Hollywood.



LÁSZLÓ SZABÓ

1936, Budapest

He also emigrated to Paris in the autumn of 1956, where he encountered the Cahiers du Cinéma and became one of the famous character actors of the French new wave directors (Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette), but from the end of the sixties, he also appeared in numerous films in Hungary. He debuted as a film director in 1970. His entertaining film noir *Les gants blanc du diable* (1973) received a favourable review from Truffaut.

Those leaving after 1968

The military intervention of the „Prague Spring” in 1968 dispelled all hopes that intellectuals and artists in Warsaw Pact countries had for a possible reform process. During this period, those opposed to the incumbent political leadership were not incarcerated, instead the official administration facilitated their departure by issuing emigrant passports for them. Film artists were also included in this smaller wave of emigrating intellectuals.

YVETTE BÍRÓ 1930, Budapest

Received a degree in Hungarian-Philosophy, later she became a dramaturg and worked in films of Károly Makk, Márta Mészáros, Zoltán Fábri and Miklós Jancsó. Between 1965–1973 she worked as the editor-in-chief of *Film-kultúra*, making the magazine the progressive hub of Hungarian intellectual life. After being removed, she went abroad and taught at the Sorbonne, at Berkeley and Stanford in California as well as the Jerusalem University. She

became a professor of the New York University Institute of Film & Television in 1982 and was the author of numerous essays and publications..



JÁNOS HERSKÓ 1926, Budapest – 2011, Budapest

He left Hungary unexpectedly in 1970, despite several successful films and significant academic and studio management work in the sixties. He settled in Sweden, where he became a lecturer, later the Rector of the Stockholm Drama Institute. His method of teaching film language basics using video attracted global attention. He returned to Hungary after the change of the political system and lectured as the University of Theatre and Film Arts.

DEZSŐ MAGYAR 1938, Szolnok

He was one of the most promising members of the generation, which began working in 1968, who after two of his emblematic films made in the Béla Balázs Studio were banned in 1971, decided to begin a new life in America. He studied creative writing at the University of California, had several attempts at directing and screenwriting. However, in 1988 he decided to use his creativity in education and worked up until 2015 as the Dean of Chapman University's College of Motion Pictures..

On the next page: SCENES FROM HUNGARIAN FILMS

1. Zoltán Fábri: *Merry-go-round*, 1955
2. Zoltán Fábri: *Twenty hours*, 1965
3. István Gaál: *Current*, 1964
4. István Gaál: *The Falcons*, 1970
5. Ferenc Kósa: *Ten thousand days*, 1965
6. Miklós Jancsó: *The Round-up*, 1965
7. Miklós Jancsó: *Csillagosok, katonák*, 1967
8. Zoltán Huszárik: *Sindbad*, 1971
9. István Szabó: *Father*, 1966
10. István Szabó: *Confidence*, 1979
11. István Szabó: *Colonel Redl*, 1985
12. Péter Gothár: *Time stands still*, 1981
13. Károly Makk: *Another way*, 1982
14. Márta Mészáros: *Diary for my children*, 1984
15. Géza Bereményi: *The Midas touch*, 1988
16. Béla Tarr: *Satantango*, 1994



II. ...YOU MUST BE TALENTED TOO!

Hungarian Festival successes worldwide

The successes of Hungarian films at international festivals provide a very accurate picture of the evolution of Hungarian film history. Truth be said– with the exception of a few longstanding, still existing traditional events like the Venice Film Festival - festivals themselves only became a popular film presentation opportunity after World War II, and then even only from the sixties. Hungarian film makers won significant Hungarian festival awards from the end of the 1950s.

The majority of Hungarian films produced during the silent movie and the early sound movie period until 1945 were genre films, popular movies attracting huge crowds and not festival success. After 1945, this trend only changed after a short interim period and the artistic decline of the socialist realist period: individual artistic style, so-called auteur films gained prominence from the sixties. and from the seventies these dominated the scene. Auteur and genre films reached a balance after the change of the political system in 1990. So, from the fifties there are films and artists worthy of praise in Hungarian films and thankfully this tradition still persists.



ISTVÁN SZÓTS

(1912, Szentgyörgyválya, today Valea Sângeorgiului, Romania – 1998, Vienna) won an artistic prize in Venice in 1942. He was the only artist, who wanted to go beyond the genre movies of the time with his exquisitely artistic film *Men in the Alps* in 1941. His efforts were rewarded with an outstanding festival success. However even this could not protect the artist from the undeserved attacks at home, as the new era post-1945 also rejected its own art. The Italian neo-realists who were beginning their careers then received his film enthusiastically and celebrated him as a role model in Venice, which in itself was more recognition than any sum of money would have been, Szóts could not be a prophet

in his own country. His second masterpiece *Song about the Corn Fields* was banned personally by Mátyás Rákosi, the Secretary-general of the Hungarian Communist Party, the leader of the country at the time. Szóts first went into a decade-long self-imposed exile in his own country. He left the country in 1957, but only directed a few documentaries in Austria, among others about Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele.

His uncompromising personal and artistic attitude, his career overshadowed by 20th century history and consisting of only two feature films and a few documentaries – similarly to his pamphlet *Manifestum*, which envisaged the post-1945 revival of the film profession – have remained an overarching example for Hungarian film artists.

Socialist realism ended the series of international prizes that began with István Szóts, but after 1953, the death of Stalin and the softening of the regime, significant festival successes started coming again. **ZOLTÁN FÁBRI**, whose films were all about the desire for freedom, the rejection of violence, humiliation and defencelessness, the command of facing the past produced the epochal *Merry-Go-Round*, which got an enthusiastic reception in Cannes in the spring of 1956. Francois Truffaut, who was working as a film-critic at the time wanted to give him the Grand Prize and the prize for best actress to Mari Töröcs-



Zoltán Fábri
Across: Poster of *Merry-go-round*, 1956

sik. Although this time they were not rewarded, Fábri and Töröcsik went on to win significant international prizes later. The director won the Grand Prize in Karlovy Vary for *Professor Hannibal* produced in 1956 but only presented in 1957 because of the revolution and later the Grand Prize for *Twenty Hours* in Moscow in 1965. The Oscar-nomination of *The Boys of Paul Street* in 1969, was of film historic significance, a first but definitely not the last occurrence. *Late Season* of 1967 was recognized in Venice, *The Fifth Seal* in Moscow in 1977 and *Requiem* in 1982 in Berlin.



LÁSZLÓ RANÓDY was a contemporary of Fábri, who was also dedicated to literary adaptations. Antal Páger received the prize for Best Actor in Cannes in the 1964 film adaptation of Dezső Kosztolányi's *Skylark* while the adaptation of Zsigmond Móricz's soul-stirring *No Man's Daughter* was given the Grand Prize in Karlovy Vary in 1976. Hungarian films achieved their greatest successes at this event, which continues to be one of the most significant international festivals of the Central-Eastern European region.

In terms of form and style, the best of Hungarian film's middle generation (Zoltán Fábri, Károly Makk, András Kovács) also caught up to European modernism by the sixties. With respect to content, the revolutionary changes came thanks to young artists gathering in the Béla Balázs Studio, which was founded in 1960 and offered artistic freedom and experimental opportunities unparalleled in Central-Eastern European countries.

Beyond presenting their own generation honestly and in a unique voice, directors who experienced the war as children, but understood 1956 as adults aspired to process 20th century Hungarian history in a manner that is free of lies and manipulations, without being able to openly mention the taboo topics of the era: the country's exposure to the Soviet Union and the bloody crushing of the 1956 revolution.



The debut of the Hungarian new wave, **ISTVÁN GAÁL**'s feature film *Current* won the grand prize in Karlovy Vary in 1964, but Pier Paolo Pasolini calling the film the most memorable one of 1965 was perhaps an even greater recognition for the director. In 1970 István Gaál got the special prize in Cannes for *The Falcons*.



Ten Thousand Days the debutant film of **FERENC KÓSA** got the prize for Best Director at the Cannes Festival in 1967. This case is quite telling of the cultural policy of the time. The film made in 1965 did not air publicly in Hungary, because in the part about 1956 it called the October events a revolution. The direc-

tor did not give in to the censors, but meanwhile the Cannes film selectors heard about it and invited the film to participate. It was difficult to make the film disappear after this and it ultimately premiered in Hungary uncut, albeit two years later. At the same time, it also has to be said that beside looking at artistic value, Western-European festivals tended to pay attention to Central-Eastern European films and the prizes awarded were often meant to recognize the political courage of the artists. This consideration does not lessen the artistic value of the awarded films; however, it is striking how *Sindbad* by Zoltán Huszárík, which was aesthetically very valuable, but carried no political message escaped the attention of foreign critics.

It is equally contradictory that despite his signature one-takes and historic allegories, depicting the eternal struggle between the individual and the state, the oppressors and the oppressed, the nature of the manipulations by the ruling elite, **MIKLÓS JANCsó** a modernist artist of international impact, could boast relatively few festival successes in comparison to his prestige globally at the time. *The Round-Up*, which created a new school of film won the FIPRESCI Award of international film critics in 1966 in Locarno and one year later in 1967 it got the prize for the Best Foreign Film of the Year in London. In 1968 his film *The Red and the White* was in the



competition in Cannes in 1968, but the film festival was interrupted because of the May student demonstrations, no awards were distributed, although many considered the Jancsó-film to be the potential winner. *Red Psalm* got the award for Best Director in 1972 in Cannes, while the jury handed out a Special Award in 1979, beginning a long line of lifetime achievement awards.



The festival career of **ISTVÁN SZABÓ**, who won the most and the most important prizes began during the new wave era. *Father*, the autobiographically inspired second part of his first trilogy



Poster of *Mephisto*, 1981

about the coming of age of his young hero, who struggles with the absence of his father who died at the end of the war received the prize for direction in Cannes and the Grand Prize in Moscow in 1967. 25, *Fireman's Street* portrays the story of a community living in a bloc of flats through dreams and visions, which received the Grand Award in Locarno in 1974. István Szabó shifted his style from the personal to the external, epic narration in 1980: the wartime chamber drama *Confidence* was given the Silver Bear in Berlin and this was the first film of the director, which got an Oscar-nomination, which he won in 1981 – as the first Hungarian film to win – with *Mephisto*, which expanded the analysis of the relationship between the individual and power to the whole of Central-Eastern Europe and the first half of the 20th century. *Mephisto* received several other significant festival awards, in Cannes it was given the Best Screenplay and the FIPRESCI Award. *Colonel Redl* was also received by a similar flood of prizes: it got the Jury's Prize in Cannes in 1985, it was nominated for the Golden Globe and for the Oscar just like the third part of the trilogy, *Hanussen*. The four successive Oscar nominations and the one Oscar Prize are testament to an extraordinary achievement.

Cameramen – like László Kovács and Vilmos Zsigmond – learning the ropes of the trade from György Illés played a significant role in creating and

bringing to a success the visual world of Hungarian new wave films. Hungarian cinema art can be grateful for the emblematic visuals of **SÁNDOR SÁRA** in *Current*, *Ten Thousand Days*, *Sindbad*, *Father*, *25*, *Fireman's Street*, *No Man's Daughter*, of János Kende in Jancsó's films between 1967 and 1992 as well as the visual work in the films of István Szabó from *Confidence* onwards with Lajos Koltai.



Károly Makk directing

Poster of *Love*, 1971

After the new wave, contemporary critics began writing about the crisis of Hungarian film, however this was not substantiated by the number of international awards. Festivals started to recognize the works of **KÁROLY MAKK**. *Love*, the captivatingly beautiful story of the old mother of a man incarcerated based on trumped-up political charges in the fifties and her daughter-in-law trying



to keep her alive until his liberation with well-intentioned lies told with the poetic shots of the cameraman János Tóth received the Jury Prize and an award from the International Catholic Film Office. *Another Way*, depicting the tragic story of two women's love, set in the harsh dictatorship following the 1956 revolution also got the FIPRESCI Award in Cannes in 1982, while Jadwiga Jankowska-Cieślak won the Best Actress award.



Adoption, **MÁRTA MÉSZÁROS**'s portrayal of the depressing everyday life in the Socialist-era, especially the deeply emphatic portrayal of women's lives won her a Golden Bear in Berlin in 1975, whereas *Nine Months* earned her a FIPRESCI Award in 1977 in Cannes. In *Diary for My Children*, made from her first journal recalling her tragic childhood in the Rákosi-regime and the dra-

matic coming of age after 1956 got her the Jury Prize at the 1984 Cannes Festival, while the second *Diary for My Loves* in 1987 was awarded the Silver Bear and the International Catholic Film Office Award.



The films of **BÉLA TARR**, portraying the lives of "the humiliated and the cast-down" as well as the decaying world around them using black-and-white, one-takes and slow camera movement were internationally recognized for using a new language at the turn of the millennium and these foreign festival awards greatly facilitated his work at home. It is not an exaggeration to say that without these awards, Tarr would not have been able to realize his films, which became successes later, including the masterpiece of his life work *Satantango*, because production was only possible thanks to international coproduction. His first documentarist feature film *Family Nest* received the Grand Prize in

1979 in Mannheim, the *Almanach of Fall* got a Bronze Leopard in 1984 in Locarno, followed by a prize for *Satantango* in Cagliari in 1994, to be crowned by the Silver Bear in Berlin in 2011 for *The Turin Horse*, which was intended to mark the end of his career. His art was recognized by life achievement awards on numerous occasions.

PÉTER GOTHÁR stands out among the artists beginning to work in the eighties, his work was a precise diagnosis of his own generation, hopelessly revolting against the lies of the period marked by the rule of János Kádár after the fall of the 1956 revolution. His film *A Priceless Day* received a Golden Lion in 1980 in Cannes for Best First Work, whereas *Time Stands Still* was given the Special Prize of the French Minister of Youth in Cannes, and the Critic's Award in New York. The cinematographer for both works was Lajos Koltai.

The Golden Camera Award for Best First Work was given to **ILDIKÓ ENYEDI** in 1989 for *My 20th Century*, which is a film about a hope filled new beginning. *The Midas Touch* a film about the fate of the businessman solely preoccupied with business yet exposed to the politics of 1945–1956 was a significant success in 1989, the year of the political changes in Hungary: **GÉZA BEREMÉNYI** received the Best European Director Award for the film. The change of the political system, which dismissed earlier



Poster of *Time Stands Still*, 1981

taboos and brought an ecstatic feeling of freedom, did not result in a true change of style in Hungarian cinema art. Structural changes in the nineties were induced more by economic pressures rather than political reasons, which presented a completely new challenge for the generation socialized in the Kádár-system. After lengthy professional discussions, the Motion Picture Foundation of Hungary was created in 1991 and was tasked with distributing the funds appropriated for the support of Hungarian film culture. The latest transformation of the administration system came in 2011: the Hungarian National Film Fund, which provides support for the production and the promotion of feature films, documentaries and animations.

The arrival of a new generation brought a renewal in style and genre in Hungarian film around the turn of the Millennium. Instead of the earlier social commitment, the members of this generation used individual poetic portrayal, metaphoric storylines and a variety of genres to describe what they think of themselves and the world. The names of Kornél Mundruczó, Bence Fliegauf, Szabolcs Hajdú and others have since become known and their works have received significant recognition at international festivals. Just a few of the most important ones: *Milky Way* by Bence Fliegauf received the Golden Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival in 2007,

Just the Wind was given the Silver bear in Berlin in 2012. Kornél Mundruczó won the Grand Prize of the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes for his film *White God* in 2014. Szabolcs Hajdú received a Grand Prize in Karlovy Vary in 2016 for *It's Not the Time of My Life*. And this brings us to the most significant successes of the recent years: the newcomer László Nemes Jeles (and his crew) were given the Cannes Grand Prize in 2015 for *Son of Saul* and the Oscar in 2016. 2017 was the year of Ildikó Enyedi: her film *On Body and Soul* received the Golden Bear in Berlin and was nominated for the Oscar in the Best Foreign Language Film category. The latest success came in 2018 with the FIPRESCI Award given to *One Day*, a film by Zsófia Szilágyi in Cannes. And we should also mention in this long list of successes *The Fly*, which was a short animation directed by Ferenc Rófusz, which received an Oscar in 1981 and *Sing* by Kristóf Deák, for which he received the Oscar for Live Action Short in 2017.

Andy Vajna, the Government Commissioner running the Hungarian National Film Fund since 2011 went to America in 1956 and became one of the most influential distributors and producers there from the mid-70s. Films produced by him include such films as the *Rambo* series, *Red Heat* (1988) and super productions John Huston's *Victory* (1981) or Alan Parker's *Evita* (1995).



Poster of *The Midas Touch*, 1988



László Nemes Jeles, director
The poster of *Son of Saul*, 2015

What is interesting about the last three is that numerous scenes from these films were recorded in Budapest. The name of Andy Vajna, who is a co-owner of the Korda Studios in Etyek and the availability of excellent Hungarian film professionals has attracted numerous American productions to Hungary. The Film Fund has revealed that Budapest has become the second most important shooting location after London. This means that it is not only Hungarian talents who increase awareness about us in the world but also stars like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Madonna, Robert Redford, Brad Pitt, Bruce Willis, Uma Thurman, Antonio Banderas, Robert Pattinson or Eddy Murphy.



Ildikó Enyedi, director
The poster of *On body and soul*, 2017
Scenes from *On body and soul*, 2017



Fact Sheets on Hungary



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