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The Artist (?) Pops in – Panels with Contemporary Hungarian Writers and Poets for Secondary School Students in Gherla – a Literature Popularization Programme Series

1. Best practice selection criteria

The title is a kind of puzzle the meaning of which is enlarged on each occasion we meet. The identity and the meaning of 'writer', 'artist' always emerges in the course of the conversations. The invited guests usually represent an area of art (writers, poets, actors, musicians, etc.) and demonstrate their creative process and way of thinking by answering questions or making presentations. In addition to panels with writers and book shows, this is one of our most popular programmes in literature popularization; students like attending on each occasion throughout the school year. The summer camp with the same name where the invited artists give a glance into their creation process is always booked out, too.

2. Organization(s) / person(s) the best practice can be related to

Gherla (Szamosújvár) is situated in Cluj County, 45 km north of Cluj Napoca, in Transylvania. Téka Foundation was established in Gherla in 1993. Our objective is to help diaspora Hungarians living in the Transylvanian Plain; assist and develop local community culture, education, youth and other communities. As an acknowledgement of our activities, our organization has been awarded among others the "Könczei Ádám", "Ipolyi Arnold" and "For Minorities" Awards, as well as the silver memorial medal of the Hungarian Parliament. Téka Foundation is one of the "Institutions of National Significance" of the Hungarian government. Throughout history, Hungarians in the Transylvanian Plain have suffered considerably, while they have contributed to the Hungarian national heritage by significant cultural and historical values.

Raising awareness of this fact, we have been making progress step by step since the political change in Romania, by interpreting the diaspora situation not as a disadvantage but as a challenge. We are challenged to build strongholds to protect the borders of Hungarian language and culture in our region.

Our Institutions:

- Téka Centre for Diaspora Culture,
- Téka Diaspora Boarding School of the Transylvanian Plain
- Transylvanian Plain Camp Centre of Laku
- Heritage House Museum and Community Centre of Laku
- Community House of Sanmartin
- Transylvanian Plain School Centre for the Disapora

Within the framework of following three framework programmes, we conduct various projects and activities at our institutions:

V. Public education and culture programme for the diaspore

The regular activities offered based on a weekly timetable schedule at Téka Cultural Centre are attended by over 600 persons. A major objective of our larger-scale events is to (re)occupy the room we deserve at the cultural level.

In 2018 the following large-scale events are organized:

- 22nd International Folk Dance Festival
- 18th Local History Summer Camp
- 22nd Kaláka Camp in Laku
- 19th Autumn Festival
- 22nd Transylvanian Plain Folk Music and Folk Dance Festival
- 13th Mother Tongue Contest
- 18th Meeting of Nativity Players
- 10th Handicraft Camp
- 5th Literary Camp
- 3rd Music Camp

IX. Education programme for the diaspora in the Transylvanian plain

The Education Programme for the Diaspora in the Transylvanian Plain ensures education in the mother tongue for the Hungarian diaspora in the Transylvanian Plain in a coordinated and purposeful way, in the long run. Within the framework of the programme our organization undertook to set up and run a boarding school as well as build a centre for diaspora education in the Transylvanian Plain. Téka Diaspora Boarding School of the Transylvanian Plain was established in 2001. Students from classes 5-12 attend from villages in the Transylvanian Plain and Kallós Boarding School in Rascruci (Válaszút). In the academic year 2017-18 we had 120 attending students. We inaugurated the Hungarian Education Centre of the Transylvanian Plain in 2016. The reason underlying the project is that the only way to attain significant advance in controlling assimilation is by providing a higher-level and better equipped educational institution with better background conditions than the average schools of the majority population.

X. Lake region development programme

Our programme aims to support the modernization efforts of villages in the lake region. The major objectives of the Lake Region Programme are to set up “action groups” with the cooperation of persons responsible for the community life of respective settlements; map local material and intellectual resources; establish a heritage house at each diaspora settlement of considerable size; establish and equip multifunctional community spaces; popularize the settlements joining the programme from the point of view of tourism (by making websites, tourism advertising materials, creating cultural routes); present the local cultural offer in a quality system.

3. Stakeholders and beneficiaries of the best practice

The target group comprises the Hungarian community in Gherla and environs, the students of the school of Gherla (40-120 persons per activity). This type of programme is primarily recommended to secondary school students, but considering its nature the series of events is open to all those interested, irrespective of age. Secondary school students were the first to express their desire for an event where they had the chance to meet with contemporary writers and artists.

4. Objectives and activities of the best practice

It is our general goal to help the Hungarian diaspora community in Gherla and the Transylvanian Plain keep their linguistic and national self-identity.

The primary goal is to ensure that people interested in culture are given the opportunity to meet with persons representing various creative fields; have discussions and express opinion within an informal framework. Via the former, to fill the concept of 'writer', 'poet', '*artis*' with content and come to terms with the creative process both in literature and in the case of other fields of art.

A secondary goal is *community building*: developing *confidence* through the joy of being together and interactivity. Last but not least, our goal is also to lay the basis for high-standard *communication* as well as *interest* in contemporary artworks. The programme is a kind of impulse to foster cultural open-mindedness and the healthy judgement of cultural identity.

The event that also boasts of concerts and book shows attempts to approach the audience in the broader sense of communication.

Through its informal atmosphere and the special invited guests the event brings artists and the audience close to each other; it entertains and *makes think*; it *enchants* and *urges to participate*. We wish to foster the above processes by highlighting with our programme that contemporary art and its various forms of expression are a thousand ways related to culture and everyday life.

For the fifth year we have organized our monthly project The Artist (?) Pops In. By this programme we aim to educate a young community with high demands, receptive to literature, in the diaspora region, orienting them towards contemporary literature. The invited guests usually represent an area of art (writers, poets, actors, musicians, etc.) and demonstrate their creative process and way of thinking by answering questions or making presentations.

Guests invited to the event held within informal frameworks have been, among others János Dénes Orbán (poet), Sándor Muszka (poet), András Márkus (poet, writer), Balázs Bodolai (actor), Funkorporation (band), Jazzybirds (band), Dubase (DJ), Nándor Vetési (actor, radio programmer), Loránd Farkas (actor), Szűcsinger (music poetry duet), etc.

In October 2013 we organized an excursion at the request of the community of this event, the aim of which was to visit the Hungarian Opera in Cluj Napoca. With the help of Balázs Bodolai participants had the chance to have an insight into the everyday life of the opera.

In the same year and similarly at a request, we launched a pilot camp within the framework of the event, also with the aim to provide an insight into contemporary art and especially literature for those interested.

The following year the event went on with the regular schedule and the summer camp was offered in a broader version.

Objectives of the camp:

- to organize an interactive literature camp in the Transylvanian Plain;
- familiarize young people in the diaspora population of the Transylvanian Plain with the figures, trends and creative methods of contemporary Hungarian literature;
- add a new and previously ignored region – the Transylvanian Plain (Laku, Camarasu) – to the mental map of literary experts and fans;
- community building; the joy of being together; develop confidence through interactivity;
- lay a foundation for high-standard communication and interest in contemporary works. The programme is a kind of impulse to foster cultural open-mindedness and the healthy judgement of cultural identity.

As regards its *Structure* the camp is made up of three major units: literature, dance and theatre (and these three are what the afternoon fine arts activities draw on). In the *four-day* camps the morning activities are of a theoretical nature, while practical activities follow in the afternoon. In addition the event has regular activities that combine the characteristics of the major programmes as regards their themes. The popularity of these activities as well as of the Artist (?) Pops in itself indicates that the Tuesday panels are not in vain because many of our students have started to orient themselves towards theatre and literature as a result of these.

5. Area(s) affected by the best practice

Since contemporary literature has very little role in minority education, our activity is meant to make up for this. It is contemporary literature that is able to formulate the topical cultural, social and political issues that today's people are concerned about. Secondary school students are very open to

new things and these activities develop their personalities, general knowledge as well as their openness to the world.

6. Territorial scope of the best practice

In the narrower sense the territorial scope is Cluj County and the Transylvanian Plain region; in the broader sense, whole Transylvania. The invited guests come from the area of the whole Carpathian Basin; we are always open to something new and our students learn and develop in a playful way.

7. The conditions (human, financial, technical) required for the best practice

The Romanian state does not subsidise institutions serving the Hungarian diaspora and thus the maintenance of the cultural centre and the organization of its activities require considerable financial efforts on our part. We obtain tender resources to partly finance the projects THE ARTIST (?) POPS IN and the Literature and Arts Camp in the Transylvanian Plain so as to be able to implement the projects. Some of the costs arising in the course of organizing the activities are financed by our foundation. Since we have our own rooms, a camp centre as well as the necessary technical facilities (projector, amplifiers, loudspeakers, microphones, etc.), such items do not have to be covered from the budget. The main organizer of the camp is the teacher of Hungarian language and literature at our school; the staff implementing it comprise the staff members of our foundation.

8. Results and short-, mid- and long-term impact of the best practice

We consider it success in the short run that students take part in such programmes of literary nature and thereby become parts of useful and cultured communities. This activity ensures cultured forms of entertainment and helps people to become readers. In the long run, participants will develop sensitivity to Hungarian culture, may become educated readers, develop their intelligence and thus, growing up to become thinking adults, contribute to social development.

9. Sustainability of the best practice

Sustainability is ensured by the vicinity of Cluj Napoca; as long as you organize such literary activities in the vicinity of a city like this, you are able to invite artists, contemporary writers, poets who meet students' demands and their curiosity and teach students to choose high-standard entertainment.

10. Adaptability of the best practice

This example of best practice can be adapted to any geographical region where there is an intention to help Hungarian culture flourish and help young people to become thinking adults.