Treasures of balls a hundred years ago: dance cards. Mini-exhibition

2020/02/06 - 2020/02/25



A dance card or *programme du bal* was typically a booklet, initially made with a simple floral cover, later, however, it became a real masterpiece. National Széchényi Library has set up a mini-exhibition presenting various dance cards kept in its collection. The exhibition will be open from February 6 until February 25, 2020.



As the greatest Hungarian public collection, National Széchényi Library has been the keeper of a

plethora of treasures, that are only rarely on display and which can be surprising at first sight. Selecting from these items, each month NSZL presents a relic or curiosity that has never before, or only rarely, been seen by the Hungarian public.

Most of the dance cards are intimate and mysterious items, and no one knows much about their origin. NSZL's Collection of Posters and Small Prints is the keeper of hundreds of dance cards, which were traditional accessories for balls.

The history of dance cards goes back to the Age of Reform, but the heydays can be connected to the Age of Dualism. Following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the tradition of great balls revived in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Balls were regularly held not only in Vienna but also in Pest, resulting in a vibrant social life. The first surviving dance card originates from the 1830s, from the jurist ball held in Vienna.

A dance card or *programme du bal* was typically a booklet, initially made with a simple floral cover, later, however, it became a real masterpiece. As time went on, ornaments became larger, and the related booklets and pencils became smaller and smaller. At the turn of the 20th century, dance cards were made by bookbinders, goldsmiths and craftsmen. They were made of various materials including paper, velvet, silk and leather.

You can read more about dance cards (in Hungarian) in this blog entry [1].

The exhibition will be open from February 6 until February 25, 2020, Tue-Sat: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Venue: National Széchényi Library, Wing "F" of Buda Royal Palace, in the lobby of the Collection of Posters and Small Prints on Floor 5
2020/02/05 - 15:40

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Links:
[1] https://nemzetikonyvtar.blog.hu/2020/02/05/szaz_evvel_ezelotti_balok_titokzatos_kincsei
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