

Dear Szilveszter,

On 15th November, 2024, as result of Virág Főző Phd. Deputy General Manager's hard work and resilient efforts, finally a meeting took place between the ballet ensemble and the Unions, where two-third of the ballet artists participated.

Due to the issues been delivered on this meeting, we find it urgent and vital that the employer is taking powerful and efficient actions as soon as possible. Therefore, we are initiating further consultations to ensure the ballet ensemble's lawful employment and that their artistic work may manifest in a free creative atmosphere. As it is soundly presumable, that the agreement signed on 24th September 2024, was highly influenced by the wave of indignation (or „riot” as you called it), that was the result of the approximately 80 emails mostly condemning our Unions, written quite quickly (within a few hours) and immediately sent to the box of the employer, probably forced by intimidation, deception and other pressure.

It is thought –provoking, that before and after the storm of e-mail, and even in other connections, there is this very unethical question to be given under consideration: „Are you with us or against us?”

The events showed clearly, that beside other things, this simple question provided enough „inspiration” for the writing of these short e-mails in great quantities...

Apparently, we all experienced the indignation, desperation, defencelessness, etc., but most of the attendance did not accuse the Unions as prime mover – so as it seemed from our perspective. Although they certainly hope, even expect more support from us. It is a solid subject of criticism for example, that the Collateral Agreement (further as C.A.) – over against any other employer's publication – is not available in English at any online platform of the Opera, whatsoever the suspicious agreement signed on 24th September. Maybe not without intensions. The Unions have definitely made a mistake, trusting you, therefore never occurred to us, that we should have checked on an accomplishment of an obvious event.

It is presumable, by the statements of the meeting in subject, that the agreement was only signed by the Unions, as bitter result of the setup by the e-mails probably written on false pretences, the employer using the good will and loyal hearts of the members.

Therefore, we hereby declare to annul Section 1., until the employer truthfully prove it, that they did not take advantage of their authority to reach their goal, concerning that they did not deceive neither the ballet artists, nor the Unions.

We do expect the employer to always organize and execute the workload of the members of the ensemble by entirely complying with the Label Code, and the C.A. (related to the employment), accepting and keeping their inwardness, all including the arrangements of the season plans.

Meanwhile as the Dubai tour was cancelled – due to still unknown”secret” circumstances - , the recitals planned to October and November became unnecessary. Therefore, the original yearly recital plan, agreed in the C.A. should have been executable, without the agreement in subject, and it is still executable now and further on. So Section 1. is unnecessary anyway.

We also would like to declare hereby, that the entire C.A., without the agreement in subject, still support and enable the financial recognition of the members of the ensemble, including the ballet ensemble, also supports the execution of the season plan on high quality level, as both the parties deliberately accepted to undertake. After all, Your Infallible Self created the optimal yearly season plan, after serious consideration of the signed C.A. ...

On the meeting of Friday morning, there was a lady - ordered by the employer, recalling the dark dictatorial times - , who started to collect and note down the name of the participants without any previous notice. Causing anxiety and uneasiness in many of us. We warned her to stop, so she immediately left the room. We sadly realised yesterday that the employer is keeping the ballet ensemble under psycho-terror, and obstruct them to advocate their rights. We don't understand how dare they openly incite them to quit their jobs immediately, written and verbal as well, against the Unions, who are serious participants of society even in the Fundamental Law. You often degrade the chosen officials by calling them on names, badmouthing. As for the Deputy General Manager, the employees of the Opera must have forcefully kept us away from the company meeting by your own command. Where we had the right to be and take part. (Dear Szilveszter, we would like you to pay attention to the fact that you are the General Director of the Hungarian State Opera not the Opera of the People's Republic of North Korea!)

The 38 members requested you uniformly, without hesitation, to provide a reliable platform on your own website for the union and the ballet ensemble to communicate with each other, with a good reason. This was an open statement of their cooperation, willingness to negotiate, putting their faith into the freedom of speech and expression that is eternal. Believing, that "If freedom means anything than it means we can tell people what they do not want to hear."

During the consultation, we would like to come to arrangements regarding how to stop the unbearable circumstances of the every days of the ballet artists, to ease the situation of constant anxiety, and fear regarding losing their existence, all kinds of psychological harassment and manipulation about banishment from the National Ballet. All this to avoid these unwanted precedents to curl into other department of the Hungarian State Opera.

To the consultation, that is suggested to be held on the 20th of November 2024, 9:00 am, please be kind to invite Tamás Solymosi Ballet Director as well.

Budapest, 18th November 2024.

Yours Sincerely:

Oszkár Rotter, Baláz Péter Bárány

P.S. We are quoting a letter of a member of the orchestra, addressed to me in September, relating the subject, for kind consideration.

“Dear Balázs,

As you know I am not a ballet dancer, actually I don't even have any connection to them. I only admire them from the distance. However, I've heard unimaginable things the other day, about how the Board of the Opera treats them, who are actually responsible for them. We all know that there is very few theatres to dance ballet in Hungary. This is already a very vulnerable situation, as they can not go on with their career if they are let go, the career they practice since their early childhood.

Nevertheless, let me sum up the most important part:

- Allegedly, they are starting to practice 10 am , that is just after another practice from 9 am which is not mandatory but rather strictly recommended – if they miss participating, they get registered!
- They start to practice at 10 am, that usually lasts till 6 pm, but sometimes even till 9 pm...

For all this long they get paid ONE service/duty fee, no overtime. Is this even legal???

- Because of the C.A. , his problem cries for attention, the ballet director decided to summon them in group of fives, one day to another, and talk to them about how bad would be for them financially if the get paid due to the C.A. or the Labor Code. He then asked them - without any pressure of course.... – that they e-mail him how they agree with him on this.

I am speechless about this, but then was the cherry on top. Allegedly, the newest rule is that even when they do not dance, they still have to be present at recitals, and for this they get paid not one service/duty fee but “normal working hours” ...

So basically they are forced to live in there 24/7. ..Ok, sure they signed up for this already, probably they have no other desires, or needs, thoughts – only the ballet. In addition, it is not mandatory to work here, the rest of them are foreigners anywayare they even human?

IF this is all true than isn't it cruel? Are there any laws protecting them? Isn't the Labor Code valid for them? I don't get this....could you please check on it?

Thank you.”