

Europa Cinemas

Network Review #33 Cannes 2019



Cinemas on the move
Statistical Yearbook 2018



Hungary

Tisza Mozi, Szolnok

A family-run cinema between tradition and innovation

Tisza Cinema's building was transformed from a Jewish Synagogue to a Cultural Centre and began operation on March 4, 1954. In 1990, when systemic political change occurred in Hungary, we had established our own company and leased the building, which was already in disrepair. In 1996, the cinema building was put on sale and we bought it. As the building was in such bad shape, no one besides us wanted to buy it. Since then, we have

embarked upon renovations, step by step. By 2005, it was partly restored and digitised. Then, in 2014, the interior was completely reconditioned with the help of the local municipality as well as our own resources and loans. Thanks to this redevelopment we were able to welcome our audience with high standards, therefore increasing the number of visitors and screenings, and the takings as well. Now, our cinema is living its second golden age.

In 2019, we continue the expansion and the development of the building. This spring, we are expanding the café space by opening up two unused offices at the front of the cinema. We will also create a studio in the attic, suitable for film club discussions and workshops as part of filmmaking camp and training programmes. The building will also be modernized with new windows and solar panels. Our motto is to continuously improve 'our house'. We have three screening rooms (with 133, 38 and 30 seat capacities) which are persistently modernized and kept in top condition. In 2018, the seats in Room B were completely changed to new ones and stairs were put in so that the audience would have a better view.

A cinema that is constantly being improved deserves to have its programme continuously developed also. We want to create a programme that speaks to different age groups within our audience. Our efforts have always been met with sympathy from local residents and we always try to listen to their input. Based on this, we try to create ambitious programmes and to shape our cinema. With persistent and conscious work, we could transform our cinema into a diverse cultural platform where we could offer colorful programmes and where regular film screenings are complemented by extra content.

Our cinema not only wants to focus on the local community, but also aims to be open to the public both nationally and internationally. We work hard to be in contact with film professionals and filmmakers in the context of our film festivals. In 2019, we will celebrate the 50-year anniversary of our main event: the first film festival of fine art was held in Szolnok and our family has kept it alive since 1990. In 1998, it became international and was totally renewed in 2018. Last year, we integrated the festival programme with a European Feature Film competition and renamed the festival *Alexandre Trauner ART/Film Festival* focusing on the work of production designers. So, valuable content and programming were established, but the question remained: who will be our audience? Fortunately, we have a very good relationship with six Hungarian universities (with art, media and film studies faculties) and we have been hosting screenings for students for many years at our film festival. Our goal is to raise the number of partner institutions (abroad as well) to become a major meeting point for the young Central-European audiences. Last year's main achievement was that two universities participated in our masterclass held at the festival, giving two ECTS credits to students who participated in the lectures. Two international universities joined our festival, also. All in all, we can say that our international film event has won a worthy place among the list of international film events and has definitely helped champion the current hit streak of Hungarian cinematography.

We love to innovate our programme, the building and its surroundings, too. Our cinema is situated on the same square as the Synagogue in our town. The town council gave us this square, into which we have expanded our terrace and installed a 2x3 metre LED screen on the side wall of our

building. We screen short films, trailers, cultural news, film classics and long-forgotten European feature films for free on this screen every day from 5pm to 11pm. We also offer cultural programmes, gastronomic events and concerts on the square to broaden our repertoire and attract more people into our cinema. Last year, we introduced another innovation, in collaboration with the local student council. The name of the programme was *Rendez-vous day*, meaning that on every 14th day of each month students can come in pairs, watch a film with just one ticket and receive free popcorn and an alcohol-free cocktail. This initiative was so successful with a younger audience that ever since they have helped us brainstorm and create other programmes to their tastes. We hope this will help us better communicate with them, involve them in our programmes and popularize the cultural events in our town.

Each of these innovations and improvements would not have been possible without us being a family. And this is the main characteristic of our cinema: it is a family business. My wife, Eszter joined in 1997 and my three children (Istvan 43, Ditta 45 and Éva 33) started working in the cinema a couple of years ago. A few colleagues have joined our family and, thanks to them, the theatre is open every day of the year. Together, we have created a recognized arthouse cinema that both the city administration and residents are proud of. Our audience knows that our door is always open to them because coming to our cinema really feels like home.

'Our cinema is like a colourful flower: whereby the colours are the arts and its pollen is produced by the content. The flower lures an audience seeking its nectar (knowledge, culture and art). We are the gardeners who look after and cultivate the flower, waiting for the bees to begin pollination.'

Istvan Demeter

Director

