

## NURSERY SCHOOL MUSEUM, MARTONVÁSÁR, HUNGARY

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The Brunszvik family of Martonvásár, Hungary, is famous for its connection and friendship with Ludwig von Beethoven, but on my visit there, while I was spending the spring on a Fulbright at Debrecen University, I discovered a very interesting Nursery School Museum. Most of what follows is paraphrased from the official handouts at the museum; all quotations come from the *Visitor's Guide*.

Theresa Brunszvik, a close friend of Beethoven's, was one of the best educated and most well-informed women of her time, and she became one of the pioneers of nursery school education in Europe. The nursery school she established in Buda, then the capital of Hungary, in 1828 was not only the first in Hungary but the first in all of Central Europe. Through her influence, the first nursery schools were later opened in Austria and Southern Germany.

The exhibit is divided into three parts. The first part includes a picture of the house in Buda where Teresa opened the first nursery school, and there is also a model of the school based on the original inventory and written descriptions. The teaching materials show that the children there were taught to read, write, and count in German. The teaching aids were developed by the German nursery school specialist Friedrich Fröbel and became widespread in Hungary during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The second part of the exhibit focuses on nursery education in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth. Until the 1870s, only men taught in these schools, and their classes ranged from 60 to 100 students. This part of the exhibit contains toys and teaching aids made by teachers and students from local products. There are dolls made of rags and "maize" cobs, toy soldiers, building blocks, and more. There is also an inkwell, a goose-feather pen, and a "clapper" to set the rhythm of physical exercises. Private nursery schools using the Montessori method became popular after about 1910.

The third part of the exhibit looks at nursery education from the end of World War II through the 1960s when it became normal practice for children to be at school all day. During the early years of Communist rule, the nursery school "was the first stage in socialist education." In the early years after the war, there were no toys in the schools, and children had to bring chairs or stools on which to sit. After 1960, Hungarian schools began to regain their earlier status. The Museum is working to move to a larger building and create exhibits covering nursery education from 1960 to 1990.

To say that this material is fascinating is an understatement; the Fulbrighters who went on this trip (sponsored by the Hungarian Fulbright Commission) spent more time and displayed more interest in the Nursery School Museum than in any other part of the Brunszvik Estate. Should you be in Budapest, the Brunszvik Estate is an easy day trip and well worth the effort.