

Remembering Special Moments in Budapest Last September

By Kati Casida

We arrived in Budapest for a significant meeting. Cleaning up the environment was the focus of the first ever International Conference on Agri – environmental Chemistry and Toxicology, held September 2011 in Budapest, Hungary, organized by Professor Tamas Komives and colleagues of the Hungarian Academy of Science and chaired by Professor Tamas Nemeth of the Hungarian Academy and Professor John Casida of the University of California, Berkeley.

This conference was of interest to us because it was sponsored by Hungarian governmental, academic and private organizations that are active in agriculture, health care and environmental protection, topics on everyone's minds these days. One fascinating feature of the meeting was an excursion to a countryside "remediation site" now transformed into green hills and fields but was once a hazardous waste dump from decades of chemical manufacturing.

Our hosts treated us to a perfectly delightful evening at the elegant Budapest Opera House where we saw the beautiful ballet of "Midsummer Night's Dream" from Mendelsohn, choreographed by Laszlo Seregi. The costumes were exquisite, especially the animal characters. We were thrilled to meet our friends at the bar during intermission where we enjoyed a glass of wine while admiring the stunning architecture of the Opera House.

Of particular significance to me as an artist was to discover a marvelous exhibition of Gyorgy Kepes at the Ludwig Museum of Art. He will always be my hero from the first days as an art student when I was introduced to his book, "Language of Vision". His experiments with photomontage and films were among the first images, for me, of new advances in the art world.

All together we enjoyed the charming, warm ambiance of the Hungarian people, plus another delight when our hosts introduced us to a new wine, a product of their own vineyard.

We hope that a Second Conference on the Agri - environment will bring us once again to the wonderful pleasures of Budapest and the Hungarian countryside.