This first series of poems requires a little explanation. Károli Gáspár University asked if any of us, the Americans, wanted to participate in their Christmas party. The explanation wasn't clear, but we heard that some of the Hungarian students were performing short skits, singing, playing instruments, etc. I volunteered with two others a couple days before the event without much of an idea, just knowing we would come up with something.

I ended up writing a short series of poems about particular aspects of our Hungarian semester and had the crowd guess what they were. I'll accompany each poem below with the answer and short description of what it is. Then, at the end, I've included a link to a video of our performance.

Hearing the dulcet tones
of your Albertfalva moan
by your sultry announcement
I get up, giving a groan.
Taking steps onto stone
it's now time to go home.

(Answer: One of the tram drivers that drove the route back to our dorm would announce all stops in a very soft, sensual voice. Alberfalva was our stop on the tram.)

You are the bane of my Hungarian existence,
the only thing I want between us is distance.
Pushing your buttons, I end up mad,
there goes the cheerful spirit I once had.
I indignantly fume, and you kick me out.
Frustration resumes, you instill such doubt.
I'm just trying to do what my superiors have asked of me
but it's clear that all you'll ever be
is a pain in my asterisk asterisk asterisk asterisk!
(Answer: Neptune, which is the Hungarian version of Blackboard. It never worked properly and this was openly acknowledged by Hungarian students and faculty alike from multiple universities.)

You always make me wait!
And when we're finally ready to go,
you take a smoke break.

(Answer: The night bus. Budapest had a pretty extensive network of nightbusses. At the main nightbus stop that we would use, whenever the bus would pull up after we'd been waiting in the cold for 30 minutes, the drivers and control officers would amble off the bus and leisurely smoke a cigarette.)

Nice sleeves
you're all thick as thieves,
because of my expired I.D.
you made me grieve.
I still can't believe
you didn't grant me reprieve
what were the chances
I'd get caught by your sieve?

(Answer: Budapest public transportation control officers. This crew had these fist-wide sleeves they would wear to assert their authority and if they caught you riding without proper passes, heavy fines were levied. One day, because my student ID was expired, I was caught and fined.)

Your fruity fragrance titillates my nose,
If I follow you,
who knows where my night goes?
Szilva? Nem, málna.

My expectations were so high,
but when you finally touched my lips,
and danced with my tongue,
I wanted to cry.

(Answer: Pálinka. This is a Hungarian specialty, a brandy made by Hungarians that smells much better than it tastes. Many Hungarians make it themselves, with plum (szilva) and raspberry (málna) as two of the most popular flavors. Nem means no.)

The link to the video of our performance can be found below:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-jAvlh1qG8&feature=share

The Magyarország Manuscripts
Trace memory’s trail, the streak of
A shooting star. May it imbue as it fades, our
Youth gambols through the days, adolescence ambles
Leisurely, though not perfunctorily I pray.
Our experience, directed by the current of this
Riparian city,
Must not be evanescent. Heed
Aldous Huxley’s advice and
Reminisce sans nostalgia. Don’t
Yearn for last evening’s
Sunset, but the coming sunrise. With
Movement, practice repose. Hungary carved
Indelibly our spirits as Duna etched
The banks of Buda and Pest, pumping
Heart of the city, beating in my chest.

Untitled
These bright eyes bulge before my open mind
Lost on the cusp of thoughts expanding time
It’s tough to know which flow is really mine
The undertow sweeps below my tread.
Communism soaked this city in drab gray
Concrete blocks frame squalor still today
Distrust cracks any hope to repave
Potholes of paranoia.
Pull down the shades block out the rising light
Guard against the city’s prying eyes
See through your neighbor’s affable disguise
Maintain a coat of wariness.
But Duna washes bloodstains of the past
Erodes down the stones that were first cast
Waves of hope rehydrate Budapest
Grace withstands the trials of time.

Haikus
Tracking stale railways
The ruckus of the frontier
Feeds fresh memory

Knees meet in tram seats
A zipper, comb close to me
Turning cog release

I am the pigeon
Lunging for crumbs on the ground
With food in my mouth

The River
I trekked to inspect a trickle of attraction
traversed Duna's dark strands to stand at attention.
Tracing the tender touch of her fluvial tongue
shivers shuttle down sinews
of songs yet unsung.
The Danube she teaches me
timid
tenacious (and)
truthfully
how love falls and flows down as tears
erodes away ostensibly irrevocable fears
and conscientiously carves on throughout the years.
Here, in the mirror, depth perception
is obscured amidst the reflection
I peer past
my grasp
of understanding
to contemplate what exactly brought us into connection.

A spring at Duna's heart grows forcefully wide
crumbling my cracking knees
to humble appease
and surrender
to this current of never before seen splendor.
Eternity temporarily suspends timeless moments like these
holding me on the cusp of my heart agog between beats.
No other river
raised hair, pulse, or shiver
leaving licked lips atop a silent love quiver.
Too much to admire for a young poet's fire
waves of emotion never cease
surging what my heart acquires.

Beautiful bridges reach toward your shores
pausing between embankments, I rest on my oars
let my thoughts float across
then out of the blue
my nerves ice my knuckles
the deck sways and it shifts
my ankles start to buckle
as my repose is rattled by a rift
Stability shakes from vibrating connections
I'm narrowly focused and paying close attention
to the tremors that distract
though the bridge holds fast
upstream ripples undulate
in the wake of my past.

I am reminded of His love with which I've been endowed
as the mellow peach sun melts down scoops of sherbet clouds.
Then the sky dwindles dimmer
dusk draws night's blanket back
her twilight strands shimmer
beneath this stellar firmament
one last winking glimmer
blinks off of the water
my soul's left to simmer.
I am still; I know.

The horizon yawns goodnight
my eyelids descent invites
the dreaming spark to ignite
and the Danube delicately drifts my spirit to slumber.