

Czech and Slovak
**Journal
of Humanities**

Theatre, Film and Media Studies

2/2012

Editorial committee

Ivan Blecha (Department of Philosophy, Palacký University Olomouc)
Jana Burešová (Department of History, Palacký University Olomouc)
Ladislav Daniel (Department of Art History, Palacký University Olomouc)
Tomáš Hlobil (Department of Aesthetics, Charles University Prague)
Jaroslav Miller (Department of History, Palacký University Olomouc)
Marek Perůtka (Department of Art History, Palacký University Olomouc)
Jiří Štefanides (Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies, Palacký University Olomouc)
Jan Štěpán (Department of Philosophy, Palacký University Olomouc)
Jan Vičar (Department of Musicology, Palacký University Olomouc)

International Members

Maria Craciun (Department of History, University of Cluj, Romania)
Jonathan Israel (University of London, Institut of Advanced Studies, Princeton University, USA)
Andrzej Kiepas (Director of the Institute of Philosophy, University of Katowice, Poland)
Eva Kowalská (Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia)
Robert Wilson (State University of Georgia, Milledgeville, USA)

Submissions

Articles submitted for publication may be sent all the year round to one of the editors:

Art History:	marek.perutka@upol.cz
History:	jaroslav.miller@seznam.cz
Musicology:	jan.vicar@upol.cz
Philosophy:	jozef.matula@gmail.com
Theatre, Film and Media Studies:	michal.sykora@upol.cz

Submission of a paper will be taken to imply that it is unpublished and is not being considered for publication elsewhere. All submitted articles are reviewed by two independent reviewers. The maximum length of the article should not exceed 8000 words including notes. All articles should be accompanied by an abstract in English. For footnotes, please use the Chicago Manual of Style.

Editor Eva Chlumská
Odpovědná redaktorka Mgr. Jana Kreiselová
Technická redaktorka Jitka Bednaříková
Návrh obálky agentura TAH
Grafické zpracování obálky Jiří K. Jurečka

Vydala a vytiskla Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Křížkovského 8, 771 47 Olomouc
www.vydavatelstvi.upol.cz, e-mail: vup@upol.cz

ed. © Eva Chlumská, 2012
© Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2012

ISSN 1805-3742

MK ČR E 19478

Časopis vychází dvakrát ročně

Content

Theatre

The Spreading of the Enlightenment on the Stage
of the German Municipal Theatre in Brno 6
MARGITA HAVLÍČKOVÁ

Czech and German Theatre in Opava (1918–1938) 13
SYLVA PRACNÁ

Oldřich Stibor and his Wide-ranging Contribution to Czech Theatre 26
HELENA SPURNÁ

The Anthropological Aspects of Polish Theatre
and its Influence on Moravian and Silesian Theatre Art since the 1960s
(A contribution to the topic “The Movement of Theatre Concepts in Central Europe”) 35
TATJANA LAZORČÁKOVÁ

Film and Radio

Josef Branžovský and Critical Reflection
on Broadcast Journalism over the Years 1970–1989 54
ANDREA HANÁČKOVÁ

The Hour between the Dog and Orion
Horizontality and Verticality in the Thematic Composition of Man
as an Image of Transcendence in František Vlácil's Films:
Pověst o stříbrné jedli (The Legend of the Silver Fir) and Sirius 75
VLADIMÍR SUCHÁNEK

Ideological Patterns in the Occupation Trilogy of Otakar Vávra
Dny zrady (Days of Betrayal), Sokolovo, Osvobození Prahy (The Liberation of Prague)
(1973–1975) on the Background of Czech Historical Films of the 1970s 89
LUBOŠ PTÁČEK

Reviews

Review of *Dedicated to Jan Čiřař Ad Honorem: Anthology on his 80th Birthday* 102

VLADISLAV KRACÍK

Review of *Gustav Machatý. The Longing to Make a Film.*

The Person of the Director against the Background of the History of Cinematography 105

MILAN HAIN

Review of *The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968*

Prague Spring. The Dietl Era Under a Merciless Scrutiny 107

PETR BILÍK

theatre|

Margita Havlíčková

Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the Faculty of Arts,
Palacký University Olomouc

The Spreading of the Enlightenment on the Stage of the German Municipal Theatre in Brno¹

Abstract | There has been a municipal theatre in Brno since 1733 and theatrical enlightened reforms were apparent here relatively soon. The nearby city of Vienna, however, played an important part in this. Starting in the mid 1750s, strolling players performing in German, who would come from Vienna to Brno, would adjust their repertoire to the new aesthetic demands by including regular dramas. In implementing the new repertoire, a major role was played by Italian impresarios who, apart from musical genres, also offered plays by Carlo Goldoni to the audience in Brno. As of the beginning of the 1770s, the Enlightenment repertoire was continuously performed for over the next twenty years in the German Municipal Theatre in Brno.

.....

The city of Brno has had a theatre building (the so-called Opera-Haus) at its disposal since the beginning of the 1730s. From the outside it was a somewhat indistinct building hidden in a narrow street full of butcher shops in the lower part of the Upper Square (at present the Vegetable Market). Inside, however, the theatre was extremely well equipped. The theatre construction and furnishing was supervised by two experts from Venice: the theatrical engineer and scenographer, Federico Zanoia, and the impresario, Angelo Mingotti. At a later point, Mingotti as the first tenant of the new Opera-House, provided the Brno audience with an outstanding repertoire of an Italian *opera seria* for three seasons (from 28th November 1733 until Shrove Tuesday on 14th February 1736).² Two other impresarios consequently took Mingotti's place; Alessandro Manfredi (1737–1738) and Filippo Neri del Fantasia (1738–1740), both of whom also performed the *opera seria*.³ The following first half of the 1740s, however, was not particularly favourable for the theatre business in Brno. In 1740 the War of the Austrian Succession began and the Prussian army invaded Moravia, consequently conquering Olomouc in December 1741. The inhabitants of Brno were thereby forced to take various emergency measures, such as closing the Municipal Theatre, which served as a provisions storage up until 1745.⁴ The performers visiting the town had to cope with these provisional measures, which they apparently did gladly, as their interest did not decrease despite the tense wartime atmosphere. In light of the fact that Brno was the capital of the Margraviate of Moravia, they could expect, apart from a wide range of audience from the general public, a significant group of fairly demanding and educated spectators, the ranks of which included not only the aristocracy but also officials working in provincial institutions and

¹ The study is part of the research objectives project Moravia and the World: Art in an open multicultural space, MSM 6198959225.

² M. Havlíčková, *Profesionální divadlo v královském městě Brně 1668–1733*. Brno 2009, p. 128–135.

³ J. Sehnal, "Počátky opery na Moravě. (Současný stav vědomostí)." in: *O divadle na Moravě*. Praha 1974, p. 55–71.

⁴ H. Welzl, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Brünner Theaters*, Town Archive, Brno. Manuscript no. 224, p. 31.

local wealthy burghers. The fact that the Brno Opera-House was the closest specialised theatre house situated north of Vienna, which could compete with European public theatres of that time in terms of size and equipment, should also be taken into consideration. In the region between Vienna and Brno, there were a wide range of places which contained a theatre hall with a stage on their premises. These were primarily private château theatres or other temporary premises, though accessible to the public, such as public houses. Apart from the above-mentioned period between 1741 and 1745, it was only the Municipal Theatre in Brno in this area which served theatrical companies. The Municipal Government willingly rented the theatre not only in order to support the theatrical productions but also with a practical incentive, as the money from the rent increased the income of the municipal treasury.

It certainly was not common, particularly in Central Europe, that a specialised theatre would be administered by a town at the beginning of the second third of the 18th century. A need for an every larger town to build its own stage or at least adjust the premises appropriate for running a theatre regularly only came about at the end of the 18th century. With the arrival of Enlightenment reforms, the Opera-House thus provided Brno with an advantage. The town could consequently manifest the enlightened changes into theatre practice shortly afterwards. This influence certainly did not come from Leipzig. When university professor Johann Christoph Gottsched, for example, presented his reform requirements there concerning German theatre and drama at the beginning of the 1730s, residents in Brno were only beginning to gain an acquaintance themselves with the benefits of the newly opened Opera-House. The Italian impresarios and German directors alternated on the Brno stage for not fewer than the next three decades and performed a varied repertoire mixture of late Baroque musical and dramatic genres. This does not imply, however, that such a repertoire did not undergo any changes. The enlightened reforms spread here from nearby Vienna, which under the Habsburg monarchy functioned as a significant theatre centre, influencing not only Brno, but also other provincial stages such as those in Prespurk, Linz and Prague. Itinerant players would bring fresh repertoire novelties and up-to-date news regarding the local theatre life in the city which often also had an impact on the situation in the Municipal Theatre in Brno. Those who maintained the connection between both cities were not merely theatre artists, however, with the aristocracy also playing a significant role. The majority of the aristocrats travelled between Brno and the royal court with its own theatre culture in Vienna. The members of the Moravian states held various functions in the Local Proconsulate in Brno and at the same time ranked among the eager visitors of the local stage. Finally, the Vienna theatre experienced the implementation of those reforms which were initiated in 1752 under the decree granted by Maria Theresa and aimed against the German improvised comedy. It was consequently not surprising that these changes, supported by the Enlightenment thinking aristocracy, also had an impact on Brno.

Of interest is the fact that theatre directors tried to adapt the structure of the repertoire and thus accommodate the new demands of the cultured audience. Between 1752 and 1756, the Municipal Theatre in Brno was most frequently rented by two directors: Felix Kurtz and Franz Joseph Moser. Kurtz ranked among the older generation of actors, whose art was based on the slowly fading Baroque Haupt- und Staatsaktion (Kurtz was actually at the end of both his artistic career and life cycle in the 1750s⁵). His rival Moser, who was almost thirty years younger, ranked, however, among the new wave of theatre directors. Unlike Kurtz, Moser was very much aware that he had to be in step with the time and thus adapted his repertoire accordingly. When read-

⁵ Felix Kurtz, the father of the famous Josef Kurtz-Bernardon, first became known as an independent director in Brno in 1725. He died in 1760 in all probability also in Brno. A. Jakubcová, et al. *Starší divadlo v českých zemích do konce 18. století. Osobnosti a díla*. Praha 2007, p. 328–331.

ing Moser's request for a permit to act in the autumn and the winter in the Municipal Theatre in Brno, addressed to the Local Proconsulate in July 1756,⁶ we notice a remarkable mixture of servile phrases commonly used by actors in such situations in the previous two centuries. Less typical, however, is the list of genres which Moser intended to include in the entertainment for the local audience. Nonetheless, a true novelty also enters the scene, this being comedies in verse ("*Commedien in Verssen*")⁷, ergo regular drama (*das regelmässige Drama*). It is no coincidence that the exact reference to this type of drama can be seen in Moser. The director would regularly visit Brno in the autumn from Baden near Vienna where he would perform during the summer for the spa guests, primarily made up of the cream of the crop of Vienna, who very slowly but surely began to reach an acquaintance with the new term *good taste* as of the 1750s. In addition, the vocabulary of the enlightened aestheticians and scholars included this term. Through demonstrating good taste, individuals indicated their level of education and consequently, also their moral quality. The issue of good taste also entered the syllabi of university lectures in the mid 1760s. At a much early point, however, it affected the field of theatre reforms in a practical manner where it was related, on the one hand, to the suppression of the improvised theatre and on the other hand, to the promotion of regular drama. As regards Moser's repertoire, there is no need to overrate his contribution to the implementation of the Enlightenment reforms. The director was above all practically oriented and was indeed fully familiar with how to entertain audiences. Apart from comedies in verse, additional genres in his repertoire are apparent, the majority of which are associated with traditional late Baroque theatre. In his request, Moser predominantly makes mention of the involvement of the comic character Lipperl which he had played already in the earlier visits ("*schon allhier gnädig-bekanten Lipperle*"). Furthermore, he promises a pantomime, flying scenes using stage machinery and a ballet ("*Pantomimen, Flug-wercken, und Tantz-Pallethern*").⁸ The actual appearance on stage of the comedies in verse of that time is nicely depicted in O. G. Schindler's study on the activity of the Baden troupe led by the director Josefa Schulz in Brno in the middle of the 1760s. Regarding C. Th. Koppa's comedy in verse, *Zlolajník* (The Mud-slinger), he writes, "*How closely the play was related to the traditional stage practice of wandering theatre companies can also be seen from 'the roles assigned' in the Brno production which does fully correspond with the traditional burlesque.*"⁹ The same applies perhaps to an even greater extent to Moser's comedies in verse, performed here prior to Schulz over a ten year period.

The new aesthetic standards were far more consistently put into practice in the repertoire of Mr. and Mrs. Schuch whose troupe comprised of German actors performed in Brno in the first half of the year 1755.¹⁰ This is evident from a well-preserved notice board, which has neither a dating nor was printed for Brno, but for a performance in Bern in Switzerland.¹¹ We have a fairly clear idea of the character of the troupe's repertoire, however, from its text. The notice board announces the introduction of Molière's comedy, The School for Husbands, not as an adapted text but as a translation ("*Ein Lust-Spiel In Versen und drey Aufzügen Aus den Schriften des Molière übersetzt*")¹². The director, Mrs. Schuch, who featured a main female character, her foster daughter Isabella, delivered her own verse ("*Rede in Versen*") as a bonus at the very end of the performance. To a certain extent, they were a commentary on the drama by the French

⁶ Moravian Regional Archive (further referred to as MRA). Coll. B 1 Gubernium, file. 73. sign. B 47, f. 155–156.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ O. G. Schindler, "Hra představovaná osobami, jež jsou té řeči zcela neznalé." Public house plays of Baden troupe comprised of German actors in Brno in 1767. *Divadelní revue*. Praha 1993, vol. 4, p. 50.

¹⁰ Brno City Archive. Coll. A 1/9 – Stará tereziánská registratura ekonomická, inventory no. 86, sign. C 51, file. 39.

¹¹ I would like to thank to Dr. Alena Jakubcová for this information.

¹² Brno City Archive, Coll. O 3 – Německé divadlo, inventory no. 63, file 1.

playwright. There is no doubt that the main part of the evening, i. e. Molière's bitter comedy, was dedicated to a cultured audience which could appreciate French literary drama in verse. Nonetheless, Mr. and Mrs. Schuch could not ignore the fact that the majority of spectators still expected the actors to produce an entertainment in the form of an improvised burlesque with the comic figure of Hanswurst (or Harlequin, Pantalone, Bernadon, etc.) in the main role. There was consequently a popular Chinese ballet (*“das beliebte Chinesische Ballet”*) at the very end of the performance with a sequel following in which Hanswurst appeared as a ridiculous tutor (*“Hanns-Wurst Der lächerliche Hofmeister”*).¹³ This grotesque sequel was unquestionably a parody of the key theme in Molière's comedy. In the history of the town theatre in Brno, Mr. and Mrs. Schuch along with Franz Joseph Moser thus ranked among the pioneering directors, who as early as the first half of the 1750s introduced, in one way or the other, the fundamental requirements of the enlightened aesthetics established by J. Ch. Gootsched for the German theatre, i. e. the requirement of the introduction of regular drama. It is also noteworthy that it preceded the performance of Josef von Sonnenfels, the most prominent reformer of Vienna or more precisely Austrian theatre, who only completed his studies at the Faculty of Law in 1756 and took another ten years to become a renowned authority.

It seems that a key role in promoting the new type of repertoire was played by certain Italian impresarios visiting Brno. Apart from ongoing offerings of opera or musical intermezzos, they also performed the comedies of Carlo Goldoni, an eminent playwright and a reformer of *commedia dell'arte*. This again raises the question of a comparison amongst the actual similarity between the scenic interpretation and Goldoni's comedies. We are predominantly interested, however, in the Italian impresarios emphasising in their requests the connection between Goldoni's plays and the new type of regular and text fixed drama. An example of this would be the impresario, Biagio Barzanti, whose request from 31st January 1757 for permission for theatre performances during the period after Easter only confirms what was stated above about the creation of the theatre in Brno in relation to Vienna. In his request, Barzanti refers to his stay in the capital city where his troupe performed in Schönbrunn in the previous year in the presence of both Their Imperial and Royal Majesties. They performed the Italian *opera seria*, musical intermezzos and well-constructed comedies by the renowned Goldoni (*“als ich nicht nur allein wor einigen Jahren der allerhöchsten gnade genossen, zu Schön Brunn ohnweit Wienn im allerhöchster gegenwart beyderseiths Key: Königl: May: sowohl meine Serieuses wällische opera, musicalische intermedia als auch wohl ausgearbeithete Comedien deß berühmthen Goldoni zu produciren”*¹⁴). He brought the exact repertoire to Brno. In his first request, dated 26th January 1759, Giosseppe Franceschini, *“Direttore della Compagnia de Comici Italiani,”*¹⁵ he also promised an introduction to the new theatre of doctor Goldoni and other renowned authors, committing themselves to meet all the set rules (*“Rappresentazioni del nuovo s Teatro del Sig. Dottor Goldoni ed altri Celebri Autori, Promettendo di adempire a tutti que statuti Regole”*¹⁶). He stayed in Brno for over one year, from January 1759 up until the end of Shrovetide 1760, which serves to indicate his immense success with the audience. At the end of the 1750s, the audience in Brno apparently viewed Goldoni's plays as a tempting novelty in the repertoire, particularly when the spectators had a chance to savour it in the presentation by the Italian artists. This was in contrast to local German companies who seemed as if they had nothing to offer to the audience and for that reason were often not even granted a permit. This is also the case for the director, Gottlieb Köppe, who submitted

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ MRA, Coll. B 1, Gubernium, sig. 47, file. 73, requests of the actors, puppeteers, lottery sellers, f. 8–9.

¹⁵ MRA, Coll. B 1, Gubernium, sig. 47, file. 73, requests of the actors, puppeteers, lottery sellers, f. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

a request at the Local Proconsulate on 3rd November 1759. Prior to this, Köppe stayed with his twenty-three-member troupe of German actors in Prague for three years (*“die in Prag 3. Jahr lang Befindliche in 23. Persohnen bestehende Compagnie Teutscher-Schauspieler”*¹⁷). He in contrast brought a varied repertoire performed by adult actors (comedies in verse, burlesques and plays written in prose) to Brno, but also by little children (pantomimes, ballets and dances). As was already indicated, his application was rejected. Apart from this, Köppe came to Brno when the Municipal theatre was rented to the successful Italian, Giosseppe Franceschini, whom he perhaps could not equal in terms of the repertoire. The German director suggested in his request that he take turns with the Italian impresario, however, the authorities did not seem to be fond of this idea and immediately rejected him along with his numerous troupe.

Johann Joseph Brunian is often regarded as the first director in the history of the theatre in Brno who had the courage to introduce a repertoire fully aimed at regular drama. Nevertheless, it is clear that when Brunian came to Brno in the spring of 1763, the groundwork had already been laid by his predecessors. He should be credited, however, with offering the local audience in a unique fashion such an intriguing and varied repertoire, based on French classicist tragedy and comedy in verse (Corneille, Racine, Molière) and also on texts of that time by contemporary playwrights (Voltaire, Gottsched, Lessing, Goldoni and others). The Local Proconsulate in Brno received a list by Brunian which included in all 59 titles of literary plays.¹⁸ He was granted a permit and in a letter of 25th April 1763 addressed to the Local Proconsulate, expressed grateful thanks for both the permit and the favours bestowed on him and a recognition of his efforts. He did not conclude with this, however. In the very same letter, Brunian made a truly extraordinary plea for that time, asking for the permit to be valid not only in the subsequent autumn and winter, i. e. for the limited period of one or two stagiones, as it was common, but asking for a validity for three years (*“nicht nur auf nächstkünftige Herbst- und Winters-Zeit, sondern allenfalls auf drey Jahr lang die Hohe und Gnädige Erlaubnus zuertheilen”*).¹⁹

It was a genuine novelty when a director would rent a theatre for a longer period with a permanent contract. It was also closely related to the Enlightenment reforms, as it brought about a shift from the theatre of itinerant players to the creation of a permanent theatre. To make the picture complete, Brunian's plans regarding his activities in Moravia were fairly elaborate. He did not intend to focus merely on Brno, but decided to expand his performances to nearby Olomouc. He consequently applied for another permit in his request from 25th April, this time relating to Olomouc. Brunian claimed that his troupe would generate low earnings as people were leaving Brno during the summer months. In addition, he supposedly had heard that there was a poor troupe comprising only three or four actors in Olomouc. They also probably decided that due to the low interest on the part of the audience they would finish and leave the town. The Local Proconsulate consequently passed on Brunian's request to be dealt with in Olomouc.²⁰

It is apparent that Brunian poorly assessed his plans in Brno and soon went bankrupt and left the town as early as the spring of 1764 after he was actually faced with the threat of confiscation of his property.²¹ Despite his short stay, he in all probability substantially influenced the taste of the local audience, or of at least the part which monitored the changes in the theatre in Vienna and on other German stages. Two years after this, i. e. in the middle of April in 1766, the director, Simon Friedrich Koberwein, expressed his interest in the Municipal Theatre in

¹⁷ MRA, Coll. B 1, Gubernium, sig. 47, file. 73, requests of the actors, puppeteers, lottery sellers, f. 97.

¹⁸ A. Rille, *Aus dem Bühnenleben Deutsch – Oesterreichs. Die Geschichte des Brünner Stadttheaters (1734–1884)*, Brno 1885, p. 18–19.

¹⁹ MRA, Coll. B 1, Gubernium, sig. 47, file. 73, requests of the actors, puppeteers, lottery sellers, f. 117.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 118.

²¹ H. Welzl, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Brünner Theaters*. Brno City Archive. Manuscript no. 224, p. 84–90.

Brno. As one might expect, he did not forget to emphasise in his request from Linz addressed to the Proconsulate that his theatrical troupe consisted of twelve brilliant actors and six dancers and that the mentioned actors were engaged from Brunian's and Sebastiani's companies.²² When establishing the variety of his repertoire, Koberwein drew inspiration from the legacy of his predecessor whose name served as a term for the new type of regular drama. He wrote that his troupe performed various kinds of tragedy and comedy both in verse and prose as well as moral comedies and ballets in the Brunian style (*"alß auch modeste Comöedien, und Balets auf Brunianische arth"*).²³ The director Koberwein was not granted the permit from the Proconsulate that year because the Municipal Theatre had already been rented. Between 1765 and 1767 the said Baden troupe stayed there, firstly led by Josefa Schulz and later managed by her second husband, Johann Matthias Menninger. Only at the end of the 1760s (1768–1770), Koberwein and his partner, Karl Joseph Hellmann, managed to acquire the permit in Brno, after promising to show plays *"produced in accordance with all the rules of the new stage."*²⁴

If we therefore admit that the theatrical companies in the Municipal Theatre in Brno reflected the Enlightenment reforms as early as the middle of the 1750s, it will be easier to understand the causes for the artistic and financial failure of the director, Kajetan Augustin Schaumberg,²⁵ who obtained the permit to rent the theatre for three years in the autumn of 1770. Schaumberg came to Brno as a theatrical scenery painter a year earlier²⁶ and the town placed an order with him to create new scenery and decorate the interior of the theatre.²⁷ Thus during the season from 1769–1770, the Koberwein and Hellman troupe played in the newly furnished and renovated theatre and consequently the leadership passed over to the director Schaumberg. Even prior to this, however, Schaumberg, as a painter, managed to decorate the ceiling of one of the halls on the House of the Estates with a new fresco painting. The hall was designated for an assembly of the Royal Tribunal. It was consequently an extremely prestigious task which the Local Proconsulate and not the town would have had to decide about. Just as this project was undoubtedly beyond Schaumberg's creative capacities,²⁸ the position of director of the theatre was also beyond his abilities. He only directed the theatre for less than one year, from September 1770 up until the summer of 1771. Schaumberg had to consequently resign from his position because of his debts and appointed the composer, Johann Heinrich Böhm, as the new director. Böhm was a member of his choir, whom he engaged at the beginning of his career in Brno along with his wife, the actress Marinna Böhm. The first creditor appeared on 3rd December 1770.²⁹ During the first half of the following year, the debts continued to grow and in the summer of 1771, the debts resulted in total bankruptcy. In July and August the Municipal Court dealt with the suits filed by burghers and actors whom the director owed a large sum of money.³⁰ As a consequence his property was seized, which was a common measure that the Municipal Court had made use of since the Baroque in case of debts

²² The director Franz Joseph Sebastiani worked in Brno between 1761 and 1762. He used pantomimes played by children but also German regular drama played by adult actors in his repertoire. See A. Jakubcová, et al. *Starší divadlo v českých zemích do konce 18. století*. Osobnosti a díla. Praha 2007, p. 524–526.

²³ MRA, Coll. B 1, Gubernium, sig. 47, file. 73, requests of the actors, puppeteers, lottery sellers, f. 231.

²⁴ A. Rille, *Aus dem Bühnenleben Deutsch – Oesterreichs*. Brno 1885, p. 20.

²⁵ For more information about Schaumberg's activity in Brno see M. Havlíčková, "Baroko kontra osvícenství: střetnutí dvou epoch v Městském divadle na Zelném trhu v Brně." in: *Miscellanea*. Praha 2005, p. 221–228.

²⁶ C. Hállová-Jahodová, *Brno, stavební a umělecký vývoj města*. Brno 1947, p. 214.

²⁷ A. Rille, *Aus dem Bühnenleben Deutsch – Oesterreichs*. Brno 1885, p. 20.

²⁸ C. Hállová-Jahodová evaluates Schaumberg's fresco painting as 'not particularly outstanding.' C. Hállová-Jahodová, *Brno, stavební a umělecký vývoj města*. Brno 1947, p. 214.

²⁹ H. Welzl, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Brünner Theaters*. Brno City Archive. Manuscript no. 224, p. 97.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

to professional actors. The situation calmed only at the end of August 1771 when J. H. Böhm, as the new director, generously promised to settle the majority of the overdue debts of his ex-boss.³¹

There is one more detail worth mentioning about Kajetan Augustin Schaumberg's bankruptcy, this being his unexpired and prematurely terminated contract for the theatre rental which he, as only the second director in the history of the Municipal Theatre in Brno, had signed for a particularly long period. The first director who did this was Johann Joseph Brunian who, as we know, similarly to Schaumberg, left Brno in debt after less than a year. There is a crucial difference, however, between the two directors. Despite the fact that Brunian failed, his engagement in Brno can be considered one of the first serious attempts to implement the new type of enlightened drama on the local professional stage, a drama based on a repertoire which was at that time only struggling to penetrate the theatre stages outside of Brno. As the dramaturg, Brunian bravely pinned all his hopes on the regular drama and using the new staging techniques, offered it on an immense scale to the local audiences, the majority of whom would not have been interested as yet. In contrast, Kajetan Augustin Schaumberg, who arrived only seven years later, substantially drew inspiration from the traditional late Baroque genres in his dramaturgy, primarily from pantomime using all kinds of expensive stage effects. This proved unacceptable to the cultured audience at the beginning of the 1770s. Thus this unsuccessful director attempted to restore the Baroque staging methods at a time when it was the regular drama and other genres of the enlightened repertoire that were successfully beginning on the German stages. He consequently came across as a poor artist who had fully ignored the significant style changes in his field.

The changes in the taste of the audience in Brno at the turn of the 1760s and the 1770s are apparent from the composition of the repertoire performed between 1771 and 1777 when J. H. Böhm was the director at the Municipal Theatre. Unquestionably, the most crucial part was the production of a wide range of dramatic ballets under the choreography of Anton Rössler who was a student of the renowned Enlightenment reformer of dance art, J. G. Noverr. As concerns drama, Böhm introduced the works of fledgling German and Austrian playwrights, such as J. G. Stephanie Jr. (*Der Unterschied bei Dienstbewerbung*),³² P. Weidmann (*Der Bettelstudent oder das Donnerwetter*) and H. F. Möller (*Der Graf Waltron oder Die Subordination*). The spectators in Brno also had the opportunity to see the major plays by Lessing (*Emilia Galotti*, *Minna von Barnhelm*) while Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was performed as well, undoubtedly in a period arrangement. The musical genres were predominated by French opera composers, primarily the popular A. E. M. Grétry (*Zemire und Azor*, *Der Hausfreund*, *Das Rosenmädchen* and others). The genre of singspiel slowly began to emerge. It was not widely performed until the period under Roman Waitzhofer, who was not merely Böhm's colleague in K. A. Schaumberg's troupe, but also his respected successor in the position of director of the Municipal Theatre in Brno between 1778 and 1784.

To conclude it should be remarked that it was none other than K. A. Schaumberg who brought Mr. and Mrs. Böhm as well as Roman Waitzhofer to Brno in 1770, whom he also engaged together with his wife, the actress Franziska Waitzhofer. Similarly, it should be mentioned that all the four actors came from Prague where they acted as members of J. J. Brunian's troupe. Surprisingly, it was the unsuccessful director Schaumberg who unwittingly created the core of the future permanent troupe.³³ This troupe was able to comply with the demands of the enlightened repertoire in a form which was later continually used on the stage of the German Municipal Theatre in Brno for more than twenty years.

³¹ Ibid., p. 107.

³² All the following titles are stated in M. Wurmová, *Repertoár brněnského divadla v letech 1777–1848*. Brno 1996, p. 9–10.

³³ This remark was already made by A. Rille, *Aus dem Bühnenleben Deutsch – Oesterreichs*. Brno 1885, p. 24.

Sylva Pracná

Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the Faculty of Arts,
Palacký University Olomouc

Czech and German Theatre in Opava (1918–1938)¹

Abstract | After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and after the proclamation of Czechoslovak independence on 28th October 1918, national questions were also addressed in the new political order. Městské divadlo v Opavě (The Town Theatre in Opava) was until then exclusively German and performances in Czech were only played there in a few attempts in the 1830s and 1840s. Over the years 1919–1938 the German Theatre in Opava was forced to lend part of their performance days to performances in Czech and share the building with the Czech minority. Czechs took advantage of the situation and ensured a regular hosting via an agreement with two Czech professional theatres in Ostrava and Olomouc. It turned out that there were three professional troupes (two Czech and one German) in Opava. German theatre followed an earlier tradition, while for the Czech branch this was a new position.

.....

The era of the 1920s and 1930s had brought a number of changes to the lives of the citizens of Opava in all spheres, from political, national and economic to intellectual and cultural. The changes also affected the structure of the organisation of theatrical life and brought a diverse mix and an opportunity for unprecedented prosperity for the theatrical muse in the town where up until that time there had been a strong German theatre tradition. The new situation provoked at the same time fear and hope. The German theatre of the Town Theatre in Opava, the only permanent professional theatre in the town, defended its position during this difficult period while, in contrast to German theatres in other towns (Ostrava, Olomouc and Brno), but also had to allow Czech plays to be performed. Professional Czech theatres from Ostrava and Olomouc were therefore invited and held their productions in the building of the German Town Theatre in Opava. In fact, three professional theatre multi-troupes of two nationalities took turns and played on one stage side by side, with this representing great artistic potential.

Political Developments and the Social Situation

After the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, Opava was a German town with Czech citizens as a minority. The new political situation aroused sharp contradictory reactions from the citizens of German nationality.² For many of them it was very difficult to cope with the new conditions which affected the public, social and cultural life in the town. The Czechs did not have an easy position either, however. In addition to political opposition from the German side,

¹ The study is part of the research objectives project Moravia and the World: Art in an open multicultural space, MSM 6198959225.

² It was proclaimed there that the Sudetenland province should remain part of Austria with Opava as its capital. The situation was stabilised as late as 18th December 1918 when Opava was occupied by Czechoslovak troops.

there were also social disturbances and on 22nd September 1919 there has been a disturbance at the German performance *Egmont* by Goethe,³ probably from the ranks of young Germans.

*...During the play youngsters and teenagers in the pit began to whistle, hiss, laugh, shout, and a former member of the theatre from the second gallery was forced to not mince words in order to adequately condemn the vulgarity and the editor of the theatrical inspection cried out: If you don't like it go ahead and go home!' At that moment, an even greater roar ensued and this schoolboy prank peaked. The summoned reinforced police guard intervened and they were forced to arrest eight people. The stalls were vacated and only then could the performance quietly continue. The causes of this reckless, inflamed roguery can be easily found at Thursday's protest meeting held at U tří kohoutů (At the Three Roosters) [...]*⁴

The editor of the article clearly provided the incident with national overtones or was it merely the afore-mentioned "schoolboy prank"? Or could it have been the immediate response to the low-quality performance? The author, however, tries to refute this as well at the end of his article: "[...] artistic motives, as the German culprits try to make us believe did not play any role here."⁵ Whatever the case, it was an extremely tense time when even the slightest pretext could have serious consequences. And it cannot be overlooked that the Czech newspaper *Moravsko-slezský denník* paid attention to the incident even though it was a German performance.⁶

In addition, a few facts should be mentioned here. Municipal elections held in June 1919 in Opava were postponed several times and implemented 25th January 1920 with 79% of the votes for the German parties and only 18% for the Czech ones. The composition of the new town council was therefore in a ratio of 33:8 seats. A similar distribution of power was also at a census in December 1921, when from the Czechoslovak nationals, 70% registered as being of German nationality and 27% of the population of Opava registered as Czech nationality.⁷ In June 1924 during a visit by President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the Czechoslovakian national flag was not raised and the President was greeted with a welcome speech as if in the German capital of Silesia. After this event, a regulation was issued on 7th August 1924 which took away the administration of the first political office post from Opava.⁸

In contrast, in 1918 a loose grouping of Czech nationals named *Nová generace* (New Generation), under the leadership of Jindřich Urbánek showed an unprecedented preparedness and ability to respond quickly to the establishment of Czechoslovakia⁹, presented in its programme new concept of Czech life, also including requirements relating to the administration of the Czech theatre. In January 1919, approval of this petition was achieved and agreement with the town ensured a public subsidy and free rental of Town Theatre in Opava for Czech theatre performances

³ M. Zbavítel, "Opavské divadlo v německé řeči (k dvěstěletému výročí opavského divadelnictví)", in: V. Kočvara (eds.), *Opava. Sborník k dějinám města* 5, Opava 2006, p. 46.

⁴ "Skandální scéna v městském divadle opavském", *Moravsko-slezský denník*, 24th September 1919, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶ As a result of these incidents and due to the obligation to release space for Czech theatre performances, the local government in Opava dedicated 220,000 crowns in 1920 to repair and expand the room at the locale U tří kohoutů for the German actors to play there especially at the time of introducing Czech performances at the town theatre.

⁷ D. Gawrecki, "Populační a sociální vývoj", in: K. Müller – R. Žáček (eds.), *Opava*, Praha 2006, p. 274–276. D. Gawrecki, "Politický vývoj, národnostní poměry", in: K. Müller – R. Žáček (eds.), *Opava*, Praha 2006, p. 279–285.

⁸ R. Žáček, *Dějiny Slezska v datech*, Praha 2004, p. 320.

⁹ S. Pracná, "Nová generace", in: J. Svoboda – L. Dokoupil (eds.), *Kulturněhistorická encyklopedie Slezska a severovýchodní Moravy*, 2nd part, N–Ž, Ostrava 2005, p. 40. P. Šopák, "Nová generace. K vývoji české kultury ve Slezsku v první třetině 20. století", *Vlastivědný věstník moravský* 58 (2006) 2, p. 158–165.

along with the implementation of regular activities for Czech touring theatres visiting Opava, and Czech theatre subscriptions.¹⁰ At first, it was six Czech performances a month, including ones in the afternoon, while later the number of playing days gradually increased.¹¹ In January 1920, a contract was made for regular tours by Národní divadlo moravsko-slezské (The National Moravian-Silesian Theatre) to Opava. In September 1920, theatrical agenda was handed over to Divadelní ochotnická jednota¹² (The Amateur Theatre Unity) which further expanded theatre activities and from season 1921/1922 also entered into an agreement with the theatre České divadlo (The Czech Theatre) in Olomouc.

German theatre continuously followed the earlier tradition but due to changing social conditions had to face a more difficult situation than before. The turnout was negatively influenced by the subsequent departure of Austrian troops and officials. Czech performances also lured Czech theatregoers away from the German theatre.

In the 1920s and 1930s a situation occurred in Opava whereby theatregoers could, at the local theatres, regularly attend performances staged by three professional theatres, one local German and two visiting Czech theatres. This situation and the natural efforts to obtain an audience created a competitive environment which is likely to have contributed to a higher artistic level of the participating troupes. It is difficult, however, to say at present to what extent this situation also influenced the dramaturgy, acting and other staging parts.

Both parts, the Czech and German, primarily promoted their national interests, although in the basic features their efforts and struggle were extremely similar. Among the most pressing problems were economic ones which significantly pressured and preoccupied both parts.

Economics versus the Performing Arts

Despite the fact that the town theatre was lent for Czech performances for free, including theatre equipment, technical equipment, lighting and heating and the association Nová generace also received a municipal subsidy, the costs still exceeded the obtained revenues in a relatively short period from January to May 1919. A loss from touring performances from Národní divadlo moravsko-slezské from Moravian Ostrava was in the end paid from a fund-raising campaign arranged the first Sunday of May in the Svobody town park, through which approximately 70,000 crowns was obtained.¹³

The Germans who ran the town theatre had to fight for its existence. The ever increasing number of playing days for Czech performances adversely affected economically and operationally the German theatre, which was not only losing its theatregoers, but especially the profit. Due to this situation, the German theatre was on the brink of financial bankruptcy in the season 1921/1922 but was saved by the fund-raising campaign among the German citizens. They wanted to ensure the required amount of three million crowns by selecting contributions in values of: one hundred contributions each of 10,000 crowns, a thousand contributions each of 1,000 crowns and ten thousand contributions each of 100 crowns. The fund-raising was successful and the theatre continued to perform.¹⁴

¹⁰ K. Boženek, *Minulost a současnost hudební kultury Opavska a Ostravska*, Opava 1977, p. 19.

¹¹ M. Zbavítel, *Kalendárium dějin divadla v Opavě*, Opava 1995, p. 47.

¹² Name Divadelní ochotnická jednota (The Amateur Theatre Unity) was changed at the General Meeting on 16th June 1921 to Divadelní jednota (The Theatre Unity).

¹³ M. Čeleda, "O organizaci české divadelní činnosti na Opavsku do osvobození" *Slezský sborník* 49 (1951) 1, p. 103–104.

¹⁴ "Německé divadlo opavské." *Jeviště* 2 (1921) 7, p. 109.

It was also desirable that both parties work together on certain financial issues. In a letter addressed to the Office of the burgomaster 18th January 1930, we learn that for jointly filed applications for the purchase of a circular horizon, more precisely new decorative equipment, extraordinary contributions were committed and awarded by the Ministry of Public Works and the Board of Trustees of the Jubilee Fund of the Republic to a total amount of 100,000 crowns also meaning, “... that these benefits were jointly awarded the Czech and German Theatre in Opava above the indicated purpose in terms of applications and that the appropriate partition is up to both theatres themselves to agree between themselves.”¹⁵

As has already been mentioned, the Town Theatre in Opava probably faced the most financial difficulties over their entire existence in this very period, the Inter-war period. Not even the director Arthur Löwenstein, however prudent and economic his management over the period of the economic crisis was, could manage to prevent the poor financial situation. In the spring 1932, it was no longer possible to pay salaries to the employees and the theatre director Löwenstein resigned. The theatrical season was prematurely terminated and the town council agreed to a benefit performance held on the actors’ own account in April.¹⁶ From time to time over the next years, the theatre showed a deficit in its economy, which was mostly settled by town council subsidies. Suggestions at to savings or the elimination of losses were also often presented during such opportunities.¹⁷ Both the Czech and German theatre had to pay a great deal of attention to economic issues throughout basically the entire period of the 1920s and 1930s. The Czech theatre sought to obtain annual subsidies at all levels of government, from town coffers, through the provincial administration to state subsidies. The association Divadelní jednota (The Theatre Unity) used the obtained funding mainly to cover the deficit in the opera tours for which it could not otherwise be realised. The German theatre also struggled with a number of financial problems during this period. They dealt with it through several different cost-saving measures or by requests for subsidies from the town.

Engelbert Warbek and the Czech Theatre

Engelbert Warbek became director of the theatre in Opava in 1922. He worked as the deputy director and the head of the expedition and cooperated with Divadelní ochotnická jednota in previous years. Thus, for example, in the autumn of 1920 during the negotiations concerning the sale of federal decorations in the hall known as Na Rybníčku (At the Little Pond) there was already an offer that if the leaders of the community sold part of the decorations to the theatre, Engelbert Warbek would be willing to help them, and the newly renovated hall at U tří kohoutů would be reserved primarily for the needs of Divadelní ochotnická jednota.¹⁸ As Director Engelbert Warbek managed to consolidate the theatre, and the loss of playing days over the period 1922–1925 solved by running a subsidiary stage in a rebuilt hall at the inn U tří kohoutů which featured mainly working-class performances at a lower price of admission, as well as certain opening nights. Furthermore, to offset financial losses for the borrowed days, the director Warbek implemented night performance at the town theatre which was played after the Czech

¹⁵ Regional Archives, branch SOKA Opava, Fond České divadlo Opava, Correspondence.

¹⁶ The information about the situation, under the headline “*Die Troppauer theatrekrise*”, was brought by, for example, the editorial office Deutsche Post on 13th and 15th March 1932.

¹⁷ “*Die Troppauer theatrefrage*” *Neues Tagblatt* 2nd February 1936, p. 8.

¹⁸ A hall with an approximate capacity of 500 seats would be rented for 200–300 crowns, and rehearsals for a small fee.

performance had finished.¹⁹ Despite these difficulties, Engelbert Warbek managed to increase the artistic level, especially in opera.²⁰

A certain rapprochement between Czechs and Germans also came about on a societal level, such as the evening performance on 24th September 1922 where the committee of Divadelní jednota invited the mayor and his wife and the German theatre director Warbek to Fibich's opera *Šárka*. The Olomouc theatre appeared as a guest with this opera here and it was the interpretation of the head of the opera, Karel Nedbal.²¹ At that time, tickets to Czech performances may have been sold at the box office of the town theatre, because it was suggested to the committee of Divadelní jednota 14th August 1922 by Miloš Čeleda to discuss it with the director Warbek. Even over the following period, and particularly in the 1930s, there are numerous references to mutual visits to performances and opening nights. And these both based on their own interest and at the invitation of the other party. In the Minutes of the 3rd Committee meeting of Divadelní jednota on 22nd October 1935 held in Matiční dům (Matiční House) a proposal can be found concerning the release of the box in the second order for the Art Ensemble of the German theatre, assuming it was not sold out and that the German theatre would also provide Divadelní jednota with its box. The management of the German theatre, for example, invited the Committee to both opening nights in January 1936. It was Smetana's opera *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*) and a play *Jízdní hlídka* (*The Cavalry Watch*) by Franz Langer.

The influence of joint theatre links and the bilingual cultural environment influenced the repertoire of the German theatre. In addition, the director Engelbert Warbek was inclined to cooperation between Czechs and Germans and as of 1924 regularly assigned works by Czech composers and playwrights, of course in the German language to the repertoire. Among the first plays were Bedřich Smetana's operas *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*) and *Dvě vdovy* (*The Two Widows*), both presented in 1924, followed by operas by the composers Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček and plays by Franz Langer *Velbloud uchem jehly* (*Camel Through the Eye of a Needle*, 1925) and *Obrácení Ferdyše Pištory* (*Conversion of Fred Pištora*, 1929). In 1928 the director Engelbert Warbek was elected as an honorary member of the Czech Divadelní Jednota in Opava "... for contributions to the success of Czech theatre in Opava, which were obtained by smooth and loyal cooperation with corporations in our town theatre and a sincere willingness with which he was willing to help us. He always tried to do his best even 10 years after the revolution."²²

The theatre season 1928/1929 was the last season with Engelbert Warbek as the director and then he went on to a well-deserved rest. He remained working with Divadelní jednota, however, particularly in the preparation and implementation of the May Czech-German theatre festival of 25th May 1930. Apart from performances in the town theatre, Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta* was performed at Sokolský stadion in Ostrava under the leadership of Karl Kügler. A fee for the theatrical master Warbek, including other amounts related to the preparation and building of the

¹⁹ M. Zbavitel. – K. Boženek, "Německé městské divadlo 1918 – 1944", in: M. Zbavitel, [...et al], *Divadlo v Opavě 1805–2005*, Opava 2005, p. 40.

²⁰ M. Zbavitel, "Opavské divadlo v německé řeči (k dvěstěletému výročí opavského divadelnictví)", p. 48–49.

²¹ The minutes of the Committee meeting on 23rd September 1922. Regional Archives, branch SOkA Opava, Fund České divadlo Opava, 3th Protocol book of Divadelní ochotnická jednota in Opava, 16th September 1920 – 28th April 1925)

²² The minutes of the 41st Annual General Meeting 24th May 1928 which was held at the restaurant U Martinků, with the participation of 37 members, under the section Free Proposals. The actual transfer can be considered as confirmed in writing from the 3rd meeting of the central and touring committee from 28th August 1928, point: 16th, Letters received, where there is, among other things, mentioned thanks for an honorary diploma from Engelbert Warbek. Also in the Report on the activities from 1928–1929 this membership is stated. Regional Archives, branch SOkA Opava, Fund České divadlo Opava, 4th Protocol book of the Central Committee, 26th May 1925–29th May 1929.

stage, are included in the accounts for this performance. Cooperation probably lasted up until the end of season 1933/1934 when Engelbert Warbek died in July 1934. Members of Divadelní jednota attended the funeral and sent written condolences to the family. The minutes of the meeting of the Select Committee from 26th July 1934 stated: “*Divadelní jednota maintains the best permanent memory of the theatre master Warbek.*”²³

Cooperation between Czechs and Germans

Both ethnic groups cooperated the most in the 1930s. Together they celebrated public holidays and anniversaries. One of the largest celebrations was undoubtedly the joint performances upon the occasion of President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's 80th birthday which were held throughout the region (Ostrava, Těšín). Celebrations culminated in Opava with a joint Czech-German matinee on 7th March 1930 organized by Divadelní jednota, the Czech district educational choir, Deutscher theatre-und Musikausschuß (German theatrical and musical Committee) and Deutscher Stadt-und Bezirksbildungsausschuß (German urban and regional education committee). In an assembled program there were a recitation by Tárna Hodanová a member of the theatre Národní divadlo moravsko-slezské, the Choir of Silesian teachers conducted by František Chutný and a troupe from the German Town theatre with a tragedy by Franz Grillparzer *Libussa* directed by Viktor Saxl. Another significant joint event was a celebration to commemorate the 110th birth and 50th anniversary of the death of Bedřich Smetana, where the involved were Divadelní jednota, Křížkovský Choral Society, the Town Theatre and Deutscher Theatre-und Musikverein (German Theatre and Musical Society) and was also held in the theatre on 25th March 1934. The latest collaboration was associated with presenting the opening night on 21st February 1938, inspired by Klub českých a německých divadelníků v Praze a Ostravě (the Club of Czech and German theatre in Prague and Ostrava), alongside members of Divadelní jednota the German theatre actors performed a play by Jan Nepomuk entitled *Štěpánka, Čech a Němec (Czech and German)*. Under the direction of Emil Malý, soloists of the operetta Gretl Carpentierová played the role of Anička, and Adi Waté played Aaron while a member of the drama troupe Hans Heinz Janka portrayed the character Jirka.²⁴

Less than a month later, 16th March 1938, Dvořák's opera *Rusalka* conducted by chief conductor Franz Ehrenbergr was presented by the opera ensemble of the German theatre. The last Czech performance in the German theatre took place on 28th September 1938 when Národní divadlo moravsko-slezské in Ostrava performed an operetta by Jára Beneš called *Za naší salaší (Behind Our Sheepshelter)*, directed by Franta Hurych and the conductor Jiří Singer. In the lead role, apart from Lida Slaná, Máša Honců, Franta Hurych and Adolf Minsky also played Josef Žižka, who in 1942–1944 became a member of the German theatre in the Town Theatre in Opava and played under the name Josef Walden.

Outline of the Repertoire and Guest Artists

Challenging works by Richard Wagner were performed (*Parsifal, Twilight of the Gods, Lohengrin, The Valkyrie, Siegfried*), as well as operas by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (*The Magic Flute, The Marriage of Figaro*), Richard Strauss (*Salome*), Giuseppe Verdi (*The Troubadour, Aida*), Giacomo Puccini (*Turandot*) and Ludwig van Beethoven (*Fidelio*) at the advanced German scene in Opava

²³ Ibid., VI. Protocol book, 24th May 1934 – 18th January 1951.

²⁴ M. Zbavitel, “Jak vedle sebe v Opavě žili němečtí a čeští divadelníci,” *Vlastivědné listy* 30 (2004) 1, p. 15.

over a period of twenty years. This repertory composition made the German theatre in Opava one of the most important opera houses.²⁵ Nevertheless, particularly in the 1930s, the permanent part of the opera ensemble consisted of about one-third of the cast while other artists were invited as guest appearances. Hubert Leuer, Hans Breuer, Marie Gutheil Schoder, Karl Norbert, Josef Monawarda (soloists of the State Opera in Vienna), Bella Fortner-Halbaerth or Paul Mayer (both members of the Wrocław Opera), Innah Galliová, Otto Beer (Soloists of the Folk Opera in Vienna) and many others consequently performed on the stage in Opava. Visiting artists did not only affect the artistic level of the opera, but also other troupes. The management of the theatre also tried to diversify dramatic performances by inviting important guest artists, among whom were Rudolf Tyrolt and Wilhelm Klitsch (actors of the People's Theatre in Vienna), or Lilly Marberg and Josef Danegeer (members of the Imperial Court Theatre in Vienna). The drama repertoire included both classics, including Friedrich Schiller (*Mary Stuart*, *Intrigue and Love*, *The Maid of Orleans*, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*) and William Shakespeare (*Othello*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*), as well as contemporary drama.²⁶ Of interest at the beginning of the 1930s was Brecht's opera *The Threepenny Opera*, directed by Hans Hansen which became a successful production of that season.²⁷ From the period of director George Terramareho, between 1934–1937, thirteen dramas implemented in the first stage design cannot be overlooked.²⁸ The aim was that dramas and news from fashionable operettas from Vienna should counterbalance the intensive production of opera, so that the selection presented aroused the interest of the widest possible audience.

Czech performances always received the sonority and importance when the guest performers in them were primarily from Národní divadlo (Prague National Theatre). Especially in Ostrava productions, viewers from Opava had the opportunity to see Leopold Dostálová, Liben Odstrčilová, Jaroslav Vojta, Vaclav Vydra, Marie Hübnerová, Olga Scheinpflugová or Jan Pivec. Opera has been enriched by singing performances by members of the Brno Opera, or Národní divadlo. It was no exception for several soloists from various theatres to play, for example, in Ostrava performances of Verdi's *Aida* in March 1935 by Marta Krásová a soloist of Národní divadlo in the role of Amneris, and Vladimír Jedenáctík the Brno soloist as the representative of the King of Egypt were introduced to the audience in Opava.²⁹ Guests from abroad also came there with the performances from Ostrava. The soprano Eva Hadrabová, at that time soloist in the State Opera in Vienna performed the title role in Janáček's opera *Její pastorkyňa* (*Her Stepdaughter*) in October 1934. A year later in December the Italian opera singer of Russian origin Tatiana Menotti visited Opava and Ostrava and sang the title role in Verdi's *La Traviata* conducted by Jaroslav Vogl.

In contrast, not only distinguished guests, but also consistent and tenacious work determined the first steps and direction of the newly formed Czech theatres. When the director of the Národní divadlo moravsko-slezské in Ostrava Václav Jiříkovský appointed Emanuel Bastl first band-leader and later director of the opera in the season 1921/1922, he was probably unaware that he would rapidly develop an opera company of a high artistic level. Over four seasons Emanuel Bastl carried out the entire operatic works of Bedřich Smetana and on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Smetana, implemented a festive jubilee series. All of the

²⁵ K. Boženek, "Operní společnosti na scéně opavského divadla", *Časopis Slezského muzea* 31 (1982) serie B, 2, p. 145.

²⁶ M. Zbavítel, "Historická úloha Městského divadla v Opavě", *Vlastivědné listy* 31 (2005) 2, p. 19.

²⁷ Erne, "Die Dreigroschenoper", *Deutsche Post* 9th April 1931, p. 7.

²⁸ M. Zbavítel, "Aktuální otázky výzkumu historie německého divadla v Opavě (Stadttheater Troppau)", in: T. Lazorčáková (eds.), *O divadle na Moravě a ve Slezsku. Mezinárodní konference v Olomouci*, listopad 20–22, 2003, Olomouc 2004, p. 157.

²⁹ M. Zbavítel, *Kalendárium dějin divadla v Opavě*, p. 68.

composer's operas, apart from Dalibor and Viola, were presented by the Ostrava opera, from the beginning of February up until the end of May 1924 also in Opava.³⁰ Even other operatic works from Czech composers (Zdeněk Fibich, Antonín Dvořák, Josef Bohuslav Foerster or Leoš Janáček), but also world authors (Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, Gaetano Donizetti, George Bizet, Tchaikovsky, etc.), which he prepared and brought with his ensemble to Opava viewers, could compete with the operatic repertory of the German theatre. After Bastl's eight year activity, when he achieved excellent results and created a stable basis for the Ostrava Opera Company, the new head of Opera Jaroslav Vogel began to further develop this potential from season 1927/1928. Over the 1930s, he threw himself into studying complex operas in terms of interpretation and with his experience and musical erudition significantly influenced the growth of the art ensemble. The ensemble studied challenging works which included Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*, Wagner's *Parsifal* or Borodin's *Prince Igor*. The domestic work was formed by the basis of artwork by Bedřich Smetana, Zdeněk Fibich and a great deal of attention devoted by Jaroslav Vogel to Leoš Janáček, whose almost entire work he had performed. The audience in Opava then had the opportunity to see Fibich's opera *Pád Arkuna* (*The Fall of Arkun*) or the operas of Janáček *Její pastorkyňa* and *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* (*The Cunning Little Vixen*).

The drama did not lag behind. The first director and head of drama Václav Jiříkovský with the script editor Vojtěch Martínek sought the inclusion for as many plays from Czech dramatic classics from the 19th century as well as contemporary playwriting. This plan was fully in harmony with the wishes of the Opava theatre Divadelní jednota which deliberately favoured Czech authors. It could consequently happen that in certain seasons Czech plays took half of the repertoire of the Ostrava drama, and also about half the total number of the touring theatrical performances chosen for the audience in Opava by Divadelní jednota. In addition to the classics there were also contemporary pieces, Čapek's play *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)* or *Ze života hmyzu (Pictures from the Insects' Life)* by the Čapek brothers. Since the beginning of the era of Václav Jiříkovský as director, who took an interest in engaging quality actors, through the director František Uhlíř and consequently Miloš Nový, the ensemble that had been created was on a high artistic level. Taking advantage of this fact the young director Karel Prox staged Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard* which was among the most successful in the 1920s. In 1927, the director Nový hired Oldřich Stibor as Secretary and dramaturgical advisor for drama but he soon left Ostrava. In the 1930s, the director and the head of drama Jan Škoda significantly influenced drama in Ostrava. Out of his productions, the viewers in Opava could have seen Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear* or also new items such as Bruckner's *Elizabeth von England* and Langer's play *Angels Among Us*. At that time, Jiří Myron performed here not only as an actor of the main characters, but also as a director. He also played the main characters for the director Karel Prox. Therefore, in the mid-1920s viewers in Opava could see Jiří Myron in the role of Tantalus in the melodrama *Smír Tantalův (The Atonement of Tantalus)*, or later when Škoda was director in the 1930s, Myron also took on the major Shakespearean roles. One of the most important figures was undoubtedly King Lear. Apart from the domestic stage in Ostrava, *King Lear* was only played as a tour play in Opava, where Myron's performance was compared to performances of Lear by Eduard Vojan or Václav Vydra.³¹ Among the directing by Jiří Myron was a dramatization of Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* with Tania Hodaňová in the lead role.³²

³⁰ Opera Dalibor was presented by Ostrava opera in Opava also in the previous and in the following seasons.

³¹ Both actors played the character Lear at the Národní divadlo (Prague National Theatre). Eduard Vojan under the direction of Kvapil (1914) and Václav Vydrain in the staging by Karel Hugo Hilar (1929).

³² M. Zbavitel, *Kalendárium dějin divadla v Opavě*, p. 68.

In light of the fact that the troupes in Ostrava theatre with their art directors had excellent results in the 1920s and 1930s and their drama and opera productions ranked among the broader context of Czech theatre production, the viewers in Opava had a unique opportunity to follow the development of this important stage through regular touring activities.

The theatre České divadlo in Olomouc (Czech Theatre in Olomouc), which also had a contract to host their troupes in Opava with Divadelní jednota, had significantly less space for presenting their plays. The numbers of imported shows transformed over twenty years, but was approximately six to ten performances over the entire season, with the largest part being Czech drama. At times during the season, there was only one listed opera by the Olomouc troupe and it was usually a question of the implementation of their bosses at that time, Karel Nedbal or in the 1930s Adolf Heller, who often worked with the director Oldřich Stibor.

The first drama performance brought by Olomouc to Opava in November 1921 was the comedy by Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* directed by Drahoš Želenský. This was followed by other directors of drama productions: Jiří Steimar and his presentation of Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, or Karel Černý with the comedy *Liliom* by Ferenc Molnár where he played the lead role. Other productions were directed by Otomar Korbelař, František Salzer, Jaroslav Průcha, Otto Čermák and Emil František Burian. Drama in Olomouc began to significantly take shape with the arrival of Oldřich Stibor in 1931. It is unlikely that the viewers in Opava were reached out to and fundamentally affected by Stibor's efforts to have topical and modern theatre with avant-garde practices, given the relatively small number and diverse dramatic productions listed in Opava. Having said that, in the first half of the 1930s Oldřich Stibor presented Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*, Sophocles' drama *Oedipus the King* or O'Neill's *Marco Millions*, while in the second half of 1930s it was mainly about his opera directing. Within the framework of the drama, plays directed by Stanislav Langer were presented more likely.

The natural environment of mutual confrontation gradually contributed in a certain way to raising the level of the studied productions. Apart from the fact that it was presented there on the stage of Opava theatre, as has already been mentioned, the directional work of important artistic personalities, both Czech theatres, the Ostrava Opera heads Emanuel Bastl, Jaroslav Vogel, the head of drama Jan Škoda, the head of the Olomouc Opera Adolf Heller, the director Oldřich Stibor, and the Opava German theatre directors, especially Arthur Lowenstein in Opera and Georg Terramare in drama. If there were comparisons of performances and if it was also influenced by the composition of the repertoire of the theatres, it is hard to say at present. Nevertheless, there was a unique situation where viewers could watch the performance of one title in two and sometimes three different staging interpretations with this occurring over relatively short time intervals. The question remains whether it really happened, or was this merely a hypothetical situation. The most likely possibility appears that this option was only utilized by a small portion of the intelligentsia, which was actively involved in theatre activity and directly influenced the choice of repertoire composition. Verdi's opera *Aida*, for example, was introduced to viewers on 10th October 1926 in a production by a troupe from Ostrava under the direction of Emanuel Bastl, and ten days later the same title had an opening night by the domestic German ensemble under the baton of the chief of opera Arnold Langefeld and directed by his son, the theatre director, Otto Warbek. A similar situation occurred again in that season, in the spring when the opera *Fidelio* by Ludwig van Beethoven was introduced first by the German theatre with the première on 24th March 1927 in a musical preparation by Gustav Witt and directed by Warbek. Fourteen days later the same work was presented as a gala performance by the Olomouc opera in an implementation by its head Karel Nedbal. Choosing the title was logical, as in March 1927 it was the centenary of Beethoven's death. During the next period it happened, for example, that in just two days in March 1930 various troupes had a performance of William

Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. In retrospect, this event can be described as the greatest sensation of the season, not only due to the title, but mainly due to the interpretation of the two main performers acting in the role of Hamlet. First there was the German drama with the visiting actor Alexander Moissi from Deutsches Theater in Berlin (German Theatre), and subsequently the Ostrava drama introduced as the lead character, the director Miloš Nový. The excellent Alexander Moissi performed several times in March and April 1930 in Opava, and not just as Hamlet, but also as Fedi in Tolstoy's play *The Living Corpse*. Both of these mentioned roles were among his most celebrated and most frequently played in the travelling performances.³³ Miloš Nový performances in Opava in the lead role of Hamlet on 5th March 1930 was not one of the ordinary performances as it was part of the week-long celebrations on the occasion of the 80th birthday of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. In addition, we can list the première of the social comedy *Rovnováha* (*Balance*) by an author from Opava, Karel Baron,³⁴ where within one month at the end of 1931, the play was presented in Opava by the Ostrava theatre as a drama directed by Jaroslav Skála, and by a German drama directed by Josef Krastel. Although the German press devoted to the première quite a lot of space, comparisons of the performance by the German drama troupe in Opava and Ostrava troupe are nowhere to be found. In addition, the play was not considered as the most successful as the lengthy text lacked an internal emotional, development of the main characters at the moment of the arrest of the husband because of his bank fraud, and the last act brought no major surprises. The excellent play rating was primarily influenced by the fact that Karel Baron was an important citizen and a local author.³⁵

*“Wenn auch das wohl mehr persönlich als künstlerisch interessierte Publikum von Beginn an zum Beifall entschlossen war, so errang außer der vorzüglichen Darstellung doch auch das Werk des tschechisch-schlesischen Autors mehr als einen Achtungserfolg, da es ein Zeugnis jener vornehmen Gesinnung ist, die das Deutschtum unserer Heimat auch bei jenen zu schätzen weiß, die nicht seiner Sprache und seines Blutes find. Wir wünschten nur, daß uns öfter Gelegenheit geboten wäre, den tschechischen Nachbarn – sei es künstlerisch, sei es politisch – von jener Seite kennen zu lernen, die uns die Freude an der Bekanntschaft mit Dr. Karl Baron als ehemaligen Leiter eines schlesischen Landesamtes wie als ‘jungen’ Bühnenautor so ungetrübt macht!”*³⁶

In 1934, viewers could see the play *Tovaritch* from the life of Russian émigrés by the French author Jacques Deval and even in three different stagings. In the March play was performed by both of the Czech theatres, directed by Stanislav Langer in Olomouc and in Ostrava by George Myron. In the autumn on November 24th the German drama introduced a première directed by the theatre director Georg Terramare. Divadelní jednota which arranged both of the Czech performances for travelling appearances did not comment further on this fact.

A staging of Langer's drama from the environment of legionaries entitled *Jízdní hlídka* (*The Cavalry Watch*) was unveiled to the audience in Opava on 4th November 1935 by the Ostrava drama directed by Jiří Myron in Ostrava, and in less than three months, 31st January 1936, the German drama introduced an opening night of *Die Reiterpatrouille* by director George Terramare again. The production of the play was enthusiastically received in the press, and also the Czech press briefly (in ten lines), mentioned the success of the German première, but did not forget

³³ Max Brod said after one of his performances: “*Hamlet is written for Moissi and Moissi was born for the role of the Prince of Denmark.*”

³⁴ M. Zbavitel, “Opavské divadlo v německé řeči (k dvěstěletému výročí opavského divadelnictví),” p. 49.

³⁵ J. Svoboda, “Baron, Karel”, in: L. Dokoupil – M. Myška (eds.), *Biografický slovník Slezska a severní Moravy*, new series, book 3 (15), Ostrava 2007, p. 16.

³⁶ Erne, “Gleichgewicht” *Deutsche Post* 10th December 1931, p. 6.

emphasizing in the last sentence the nationalist point of view: “*Jízdní hlídka showed such distant efforts to bring together the two nations in the field of culture.*”³⁷

The Committee for touring of Divadelní jednota ensured nearly a thousand performances by permanent Czech professional theatres over the years 1919 to 1938. Due to the close proximity of Ostrava and Opava, the number of these performances from Ostrava was approximately four or five times higher than the number of performances from Olomouc. The repertory was proposed by the Theatre Board of Divadelní jednota and was carefully chosen, but mostly depended on the offers from the Ostrava and Olomouc theatres. It also was involved, however, in sending, at its sole discretion, ideas and a list of appropriate plays for staging which would be good to bring to Opava to the directors and heads of theatres. Often the members, whether of the committee or council, complained that the Directorate of the theatre performed an adverse change in the production at the last moment.³⁸ They were well aware of the need for variety and representation of all genres. Therefore, the total number of performances was divided roughly into quarters: one included drama with serious themes, another part comedy drama. Opera, of course, could not be neglected and the last representative imaginary part was devoted to operettas and ballets. Czech and Czechoslovak production was primarily supported by the committee and the federal editors with this being represented by the highest percentage possible and in some seasons forming almost half of the played shows, in contrast to works of art from other Slavic countries and world dramatists. The ratio of the performed classic plays and dramatic innovations was highly similar to the German repertoire, and perhaps also because they wanted to equalize and approach the contemporary selection of repertoire in theatres. In the 1930s they already maintained the same arrangement of guest playing troupes in their subscription of two groups, a white and blue subscription, along with the performing of individual genres, and approximately half of the played titles appeared in both subscriber’s groups. Therefore, it sometimes occurred that the subscribers had the same play, but one group went to see the Ostrava performance and the second the Olomouc. It must be said, however, that this only happened rarely, about once per season. This suggests that it was probably a matter of operating as opposed to a deliberate artistic intention. Nevertheless, this situation occurred and representatives of the German theatre, organizers of the Czech theatre and theatre enthusiasts from the audience could have taken advantage of this unique opportunity for comparison’s sake. At the same time, members of Divadelní jednota also sought the highest possible artistic level, because they still had in mind the struggle to be equal socially and nationally with the German theatre in Opava which symbolised a rich theatrical and artistic tradition in Opava. For this reason, the city council resolution on 19th November 1934 was of paramount importance to Divadelní jednota as it permitted them the use of the town emblem which they considered an immense appreciation of their work and recognition of the importance of the Czech theatre.

Also noteworthy was an initiative by Divadelní jednota and its Secondary school theatre committee led by Bohumil Čepický, whereby over 1931–1938 the committee held Czech performances for German high school students and German performances for Czech students. These were only a few performances, however, since the annual report for the 1933–1934 theatre season reveals that of the seven student performances only one production for Czech schools and one for German was carried out by an exchange in a given season. A similar situation also occurred in the following season.

³⁷ -P-, “Jízdní hlídka na německé scéně v Opavě”, *Moravskoslezský deník* 4th February 1936, p. 4.

³⁸ In addition to notes on implemented changes mentioned in the minutes of the Committee, it is identified as a printed report on the activities of Divadelní jednota in Opava in the Federal jubilee year 1922–1923 in paragraph VII. Theatre Board.

The Press and its Impact

The fact remains that the German newspapers *Deutsche Post*³⁹ and subsequently *Neues Tagblatt*, *Volkspresse*, *Silesia*, *Sudeten-Rundschau*, as well as other German newspapers featured only the German performances in their regular columns on player overviews of plans for the Town Theatre in Opava including other theatres in the region. And when the German ensemble did not play, it was simply stated: "... *findet im Stadttheater keine deutsche Vorstellung statt.*" Information was mainly about German productions and premières in regular sections devoted to art or theatre. Other short reports were published in the section *Aus der Troppauer Theaterkanzlei* (From the Opava theatrical agency). Reports on the Czech performances occurred only occasionally and systematic comparison or reaction to Czech performances by the German press, or even reviews of productions or performances, occurred only sporadically. Greater attention was paid by the German press to joint Czech-German events or staging innovations. A relatively large space, for example, was devoted to the opera in three acts *Nach dem Glück* (*To Happiness*), which was performed by the theatre in Ostrava, and was played on 5th April 1925 in the Opava theatre. Jáchym Blechta was the author of the libretto, and the music was composed by Miloš Čelinský; in both cases these were pseudonyms for local citizens.⁴⁰ The reaction of the independent newspaper *Sudeten-Rundschau mit Troppauer Lokal-Anzeiger* was brought out in the Sunday edition on 19th April 1925, where the editor even compared the work to the most famous opera by Erich Wolfgang Korngold *Die tote Stadt* (*Dead City*): "... *Herrn Čeleda ist vor allem wirklich etwas eingefallen, und die Musik packt den Hörer beim ersten burning. Die technische Durchführung und Instrumentierung sind glänzend, modern und doch maßvoll, steilenweise an die Ausdrucksweise EW Korngold's in der, toten Stadt 'erinnernd. Jedenfalls handelt es sich um ein hörenswertes, wertvolles Werk, das eine Zukunft haben kann. Die Aufführung war vorzüglich und 2. Akt ein Höhepunkt.*"

A similar situation occurred logically also on the other side. Entries from the amateur theatre *Divadelní ochotnická jednota* and then *Divadelní jednota* reveal that members of the committee sent free tickets to Czech performances to the editors, but especially to the Czech newspaper. The minutes of the 4th meeting of the Central and Touring Committees 18th September 1928 reveals a the decision of the Committee "... *granted one free ticket just the kind of newspapers which are most read in the Opava region...*" It was the Opava editors and their newspapers *Moravskoslezský deník*, *Svobodná republika*, *Naše Slezsko* together with *Katolické noviny*, also *Bezručův kraj*, *Opavan*, and then in the 1930s also *Slezan* and *Náš domov*. Regarding the German editorial office, the committee of *Divadelní jednota* in their minutes stated that only one ticket will be alternately available for the German editorial office, which was not clarified further. The German newspapers *Deutsche Post*, *Silesia*, *Deutsche Volkswehr*, are mentioned in the 1930s and in the season 1935/1936 it was *Troppauer Haushalt-Blatt*. The committee asked the Czech and German newsrooms to disclose for free information about the introduced performances and consequently their critics.⁴¹ *Národní Moravsko-Slezské divadlo* in Ostrava had its regular column

³⁹ Diary of *Deutsche Post* published from December 1918 to the end of 1933, followed on *Troppauer Zeitung*, and was among the leading German periodicals in Silesia and North Moravia.

⁴⁰ M. Palák, "Blechta, Jáchym" (real name Anton Raab, also written in Ráb), in: L. Dokoupil – M. Myška (eds.), *Biografický slovník Slezska a severní Moravy*, new series, book 4 (15), Ostrava 1995, p. 19–20. J. Mazurek, "Čeleda, Miloš" (Pseudonym Miloš Čelinský), in: L. Dokoupil – M. Myška (eds.), *Biografický slovník Slezska a severní Moravy*, book 5, Ostrava 1998, p. 20–21. R. Spisarová – J. Mazurek, Miloš Čeleda, http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milo%C5%A1_8Celeda (16th November 2012).

⁴¹ This practice was common in the following years, see a record of the second touring Committee meeting on 19th August 1930 (Provincial Archives, branch SOkA Opava, Fund České divadlo Opava, 5th protocol book 31st May 1929 – 5th December 1930).

in many Czech newspapers, but their journey to Opava was not mentioned each time. Divadelní jednota mainly depended on posters and their posting for advertising.

The fact is that there was almost no reciprocal consideration, the German press did not pay attention to Czech performances and the Czech press, except for minor informative messages, did not comment on events in the German theatre, this being particularly hard to understand from today's perspective. This situation was not only tied with Opava, but a similar distance was maintained by individual newspaper editorial office in nearby Ostrava.

Conclusion

Although Divadelní jednota paid attention to presenting Czech plays and the German theatre presented new Czech works in the German language, the structure of the repertoire may give the impression that this was a targeted intent and a mutual confrontation in terms of the introduction of the same titles. However, I believe that the national perspective was reflected more than art, and in the long run the reality was perceived as a phenomenon of one stage. It is true that the Czech theatre in particular wanted to achieve an equality with the German theatre, which already had a rich tradition in Opava. On the other hand, the German theatre tried to make the best impression in order to financially withstand and maintain its position in the town.

The dramaturgy for all three theatres met at some points because the German theatre in Opava, particularly in the Inter-war period, in addition to classic and dramaturgy quality titles mainly focused on dramatic news, as in the newly formed theatres in Ostrava and Olomouc.

These two decades were of great importance for the Czech theatre with regard to the post-war development after 1945, when the citizens of Opava longed in the ruined and bombed town for a multi-troupe theatre like they had attended in the previous period. In addition, organizers of post-war theatrical life knew quite well the practice and the functioning of theatre. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the operational committee for management and supervision of the new Czech theatre there were names represented such as Emil Malý or Leopold Peřich.⁴² They contributed significantly to the theatre life as early as the period of the First Republic.

⁴² P. Šopák – K. Müller (eds.), *Leopold Peřich – texts*. Opava 2007, p. 783.

Helena Spurná

Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies at Faculty of Arts,
Palacký University Olomouc

Oldřich Stibor and his Wide-ranging Contribution to Czech Theatre¹

Abstract | This article focuses on the distinguished theatre director Oldřich Stibor (1901–1943) whose work in Olomouc in the 1930s represents a unique period in the history of Czech theatre. The first part of the study is devoted to an evaluation of the importance of Stibor for Czech inter-war theatre. The second part analyses his open-air performances and focuses on his efforts to establish a festival of religious plays on the Holy Hill near Olomouc. He finally brought his idea to fruition in the years 1936 and 1937 and thousands of people had the opportunity to attend his production of Hofmannsthal's adaptation of *Jedermann* (Everyman), *České pašije* (Czech Passion Plays) by Jan Port and Bohuš Stejskal and the Guardian Angel Play by Max Mell. This tradition was unfortunately violently interrupted by political developments in Central Europe in 1938.

The 1930s are the most significant era in Olomouc in terms of the theatre of the first half of the 20th century². This era is characterised by a progressive dramaturgy and the creative development of stimuli from modern European theatre. The theatre in Olomouc was consequently integrated into a group of the most prominent theatres of that era and also achieved European renown.

The director Oldřich Stibor (1901–1943) must be made mention of as having had a great share in the artistic success of the theatre. Stibor occupies a specific place in the history of Czech interwar theatre. He is part of the Czech avant-garde movement which is primarily represented by the directors Jindřich Honzl, Jiří Frejka and Emil František Burian. Stibor sympathised with them and was connected with them via their fundamental artistic approaches. The connection with Soviet theatre which can be seen in the works of Honzl, Frejka and Burian, as well as in Jan Škoda in the theatre in Ostrava, is also apparent in Stibor's works. This was due to the fact that he was closely in touch with it during his study tours of the Soviet Union. Concurrently, his opinions were extremely close to the prominent figure of Russian avant-garde theatre Alexander Tairov. The influence of German theatre expressionism, which was considered outdated by Prague avant-garde artists, as well as Piscator's political theatre, can be seen in his thinking

¹ The study is part of the research objectives project Moravia and the World: Art in an open multicultural space, MSM 6198959225.

² The beginnings of the permanent Czech professional theatre in Olomouc date back to the era after the formation of an independent Czechoslovakia. On the 1st May 1920, according to the contract concluded with the municipal authorities, the Czech Theatre Cooperative received a theatre licence and hired the building of the Městské divadlo, thus establishing a Czech Theatre in Olomouc (it played under this name up until 1944). Four months a year the theatre was made available for German plays, with this later becoming Mondays and Thursdays. The independent German ensemble in Olomouc ceased to exist in 1922 and over the following years German plays were played in the theatre in Brno by amateur actors from Olomouc. The turning point was the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia when the permanent German ensemble was re-established in Městské divadlo and the activities of the Czech Theatre were firmly restricted.

on theatre and stage work. Stibor's interest in mass theatre and exterior plays also indicates the influence of Max Reinhardt's work. He also found stimuli in contemporary Polish theatre which was often overlooked at that time. From the beginning of his career as a director in the late 1920s, Stibor had proclaimed an ideal of the theatre in which there was an organic connection between new artistic forms and the social content. He had always been concerned with a theatre which would in a new form answer the pressing social issues of his era.

I do not know any art without a tendency and any theatre without a tendency I consider for an antiquated institution, which lacks any thrilling power and movement. [...] Any theatre which is not capable of creating a connection between those who are alive, such a theatre which does not clarify the historical movements of the social and ethical processes of the contemporary world, theatre which does not excite the audience by a live event and does not make politics impartially, such theatre is an anachronism and does not have any deeper sense in the contemporary expressions of the human spirit.³

This phenomenon has to be seen in connection with the origins of Oldřich Stibor which are set in the nationally and socially complex Moravian-Silesian region which also formed his ideological and artistic opinions.⁴ He could fully express his fondness for left-wing views and attitudes during his stay in the theatre in Ostrava where he managed to influence the dramaturgy of the drama and consequently begin his career as a professional director.⁵ From the very beginning he emphasised the importance of the dramatic element and the staging techniques which reflected major social ideologies, escalated opposites and contradictions in the contemporary world, and the revolutionary movement of the masses in post-war Europe. German theatre expressionism, particularly its form which was closely interconnected with the proletarian movement, was close to him with its social pathos, the sense of stage movement, the interest in mass theatre and the ability to ideologically and politically mobilize the audience. His inclination for this theatre movement was clarified in one of his first productions, in Toller's revolutionary drama *Die Maschinenstürmer* (*The Machine Breakers*), premiered in Národní divadlo moravskoslezské (the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre) 19th April 1929. When Stibor presented this expressionistic play, which takes place in England in the early 19th century and is about the rebellion of workers in a textile company who protest against the implementation of machines in the production process, he had a clear goal. He was convinced that the message of the play could be successful and make an impression on the political consciousness of the audience in the socially cheerless climate of Ostrava. Due to this boldness he would be prohibited to work as a director of the official stage of the theatre, as his play had outraged the right-wing press.⁶ Although he moved to Prague in 1930, he did not abandon the programme of socially engaged theatre. He shortly worked as a director of the newly established Artistic Theatre which he organised as a theatre reflecting the pressing social issues of his era. The choice of the opening play was extremely radical and thus it was not surprising that it was banned shortly prior to its première. This came about because Stibor actually chose to open the theatre with a play by Upton Sinclair,

³ O. Stibor, "O divadle" (Interview), *České slovo* (Olomouc), 1. 1. 1937.

⁴ Stibor's birthplace is Řepiště, a village in the region of Frýdek-Místek which is only a few kilometres from Ostrava. Stibor was born here on 16th March 1901. His father had a homestead, a pub and a small shop. He was a nationalist and also the mayor of the mostly Czech Řepiště.

⁵ The theatre beginnings of Oldřich Stibor are reviewed in the professorial thesis by Jiří Stýskal entitled *Oldřich Stibor a jeho cesta k divadlu (1901–1931)*, Olomouc 1990, p. 234.

⁶ In detail *ibid.*, the chapter "The Machine Breakers", p. 111–126.

the American critic of capitalism, called *Singing Jailbirds*. Stibor publicly agreed with Piscator; the play undoubtedly also caught his attention due to its mass scenes.⁷

Stibor's thinking on theatre matured during his stay in Olomouc over the years 1931–1940. Here Stibor, as a mature director, expressed his multiformity. He presented both international and Czech works, from ancient to contemporary drama. His inclination for poetry also found ground in semiscenic evenings with poetry. In a theatre which struggled with long-term economic issues, he had to exhibit maximum productivity and creative enthusiasm. Over one season he usually directed approximately 20 plays. Simultaneously with drama he also directed opera as of 1933, doing this in an unusual way. The artistic rise of opera production in the local theatre during the 1930s came about not only thanks to the chief conductor Adolf Heller but also thanks to the director Oldřich Stibor who was able to provide the operas with a modern, stylized expression. With Stibor's involvement with the opera stage in Olomouc, the traditional practice of opera directing was transcended. Stibor violated the prevalent models in opera and looked for new interpretations for classical works. During the six years of Heller's presence at the head of the opera in Olomouc (1932–1938), 35 world, Czechoslovak or Olomouc opera premières took place. Stibor was involved as director in more than half of them. Worthy of mention are some of the most important directed by Stibor: the world première of Debussy's one-act play *L'enfant prodigue* (*The Prodigal Child*, 1932), the comic opera *Le testament de la tante Caroline* by Albert Roussel (*The Testament of Aunt Caroline*, 1936) and Dvořák's *Alfréd* (*Alfred*, 1938), from the Czechoslovak premières, the operas *Der Zwerg* (*The Dwarf*) and *Der Kreidekreis* (*The Chalk Circle*) by Alexander Zemlinsky (1932 and 1934), *Maria Egiziaca* and *Lucrezia* by Ottorino Respighi (1934 and 1937), or *Arabella* by Strauss (1933). The first Czechoslovak interpretation of *Orfeo* by Claudio Monteverdi (1935) and the first Czech interpretation of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1936) met with particularly strong reactions.⁸

Stibor employed numerous directorial and artistic ideas which can only currently be documented with difficulty in his stagings. The director books have not survived and the appearance of the stagings can thus only be derived from the historical reviews or, in better cases, from the surviving photos and scene drafts. Stibor's main colleague was the stage and costume designer Josef Gabriel (1902–1970). Gabriel's scene settings created an active and interpretative component for Stibor's stagings. Gabriel was one of the busiest artists in the theatre in Olomouc (during his work over the years 1931–1941 he presented an unbelievable 300 premières!). He was able to fully capture the distinctiveness of the play which was being staged as well as its idea. He was a stage designer who was ideally able to adapt to the directorial approach. His designs for Stibor's productions were characterised by the simplicity of the stage which he created by means of architecture or painting. He reduced the realistic elements, he used the techniques of constructivist scenography, segmented the stage space with the use of stairways and platforms, and was fond of using draperies, gauze curtains and ribbons. A semicircular horizon was the characteristic feature of his Olomouc stage designs. Stibor and Gabriel experimented with various ways of dynamization of the stage, from the movement of machinery to the play of lights and polyekran. In the staging of *Chanson d'Asie* (*The Asian Songs*, A. P. Antoine, 1936) they ingeniously employed photomontages by the avant-garde photographer Karel Kašpařík. From the reviews we can deduce that Stibor showed a remarkable imagination in the sound direction and the use of the stage music. With his emphasis on the effect of the music in the theatre he

⁷ In 1927, Sinclair's play was staged by the Piscator Theatre. It was directed by Ernst Lönner who had already staged it in Vienna previously. Piscator himself wanted to stage it during his work in Volksbühne. Compare E. Piscator, *Politické divadlo*, Praha 1971, p. 192–194.

⁸ I analyse the problems of Stibor's opera performances in my article "Zpráva z výzkumu operní inscenační tvorby Oldřicha Stibora" which was issued in the publication *O divadle 2010*, Olomouc 2011, p. 70–77.

resembled E. F. Burian. Regarding the stage music, the turning point came with the arrival of Vít Nejedlý to Olomouc. Nejedlý had cooperated with Stibor on plays since the season 1936/37. Stibor's most significant synthetic directions, in particular, Raskolnikov's dramatization of the novel *Resurrection* by L. N. Tolstoy and *The Queen of Spades* in a dramatization by M. S. Gus and K. A. Zubov, are inseparably connected with the art of Nejedlý as a composer.

Shortly after his arrival in Olomouc, Stibor initiated the establishment of Komorní divadlo (The Chamber Theatre). The repertoire of drama could thus be differentiated more easily. On the stage of Komorní divadlo he presented, for example, Strindberg's *Samum*, Schönherr's *The Children's Tragedy*, A Florentine Tragedy by Oscar Wilde, Hartley's mysterious piece *How Death Came into the World*, Tagore's *The Post Office*, *The Exchange* by Paul Claudel, or Cocteau's *The Human Voice*. As part of the evenings with poetry he achieved renown, in particular, with *Máj* by Karel Hynek Mácha (May, 1936) which he staged on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the death of this renowned Czech poet. He followed the example of his Prague avant-garde colleague Emil František Burian who presented *Máj* in two stage adaptations in the years 1935 and 1936. Based on the reviews, a connection between Stibor and Burian's approaches can be surmised. Unfortunately, we do not have enough preserved sources to prove it demonstratively. It is certain, however, that Stibor worked in Olomouc in association with the Prague avant-garde companies. He patiently observed the works of his colleagues and expressed his opinions on them. He also provided the Olomouc audience with the opportunity to stay in touch with the works of his colleagues in various ways, for example, through guest appearances by Burianovo divadlo D (Burian's Theatre D), or Osvobozené divadlo (The Liberated Theatre).

Those stagings which expressed his revolutionary thinking and sense for socially engaged works were, however, the most typical for Stibor. In connection with this he presented Russian and Soviet drama at the theatre in Olomouc; often for the first time outside the borders of the Soviet Union and Russia. His direction of *Optimistic Tragedy* by Vishnevsky (1935) became a landmark of Olomouc drama. The success of this play reached far beyond the borders of Olomouc. Stibor saw Tairov's staging of this play during his stay in Moscow in 1934 and managed to be the first outside the borders of the Soviet Union to stage it in a Czech theatre. He chose to stage it in such a way that the idea of the play resonated in its specific political sense. Needless to say that the staging bore the marks of Tairov's direction. The uniqueness of the Olomouc staging was visible, however, in the perfectly elaborated mass scenes which Stibor placed the main emphasis on.

Stibor's intensified artistic perceptiveness concerning social-political issues was evident in a particularly courageous way in the post-Munich era and at the beginning of the occupation. In this era Stibor ranked among the few Czech theatre artists who participated actively in the struggle against Fascism. The newly interpreted Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1938), Schiller's *The Robbers* and Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (1940) were played along with Czech classic plays such as Jirásek's *Gero*, Dyk's *Zmoudření Dona Quijota (Don Quixote Grown Wise, 1938)* and Macháček's *Ženichové (The Grooms, 1939)* as a protest against non-democratic political developments in Europe and against the Fascist dictatorship. Stibor's last staging was *Jan Vůrava* (1940) by F. A. Šubert. The play had its première only after he was arrested by the Gestapo in April 1940. Stibor, as the head of the illegal regional leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, was given an eight-year sentence. He was transferred to a prison in Polish Brzeg in the spring of 1942 where he died on 10th January 1943 after being severely mentally and physically tormented.

In the second part of this article I will look closely at Stibor's stage works in the outdoors which are a significant part of his legacy. When we talk about Stibor in relation to his open-air plays we have in mind specifically the three following stagings: the adaptation of Hofmannsthal's play

Jedermann (Everyman), *České pašije* (Czech Passion Plays) by the duo Jan Port – Bohuš Stejskal and the staging of *Guardian Angel* by the Austrian writer Max Mell.

Stibor's open-air stagings were closely connected with his lifelong interest in spiritual subject matter and the tradition of folk theatre. During his work in Olomouc he tried to establish the tradition of religious plays on Holy Hill.

Many people might ask the obvious question as to how this interest came about with his political persuasions and progressive opinions? I am of the opinion that Stibor was always interested in expressing his opinions on fundamental issues and timeless topics of human existence. If this was only possible through a religious theme he was able to do it despite being an atheist.

Stagings in exteriors, an interest in mass scenes and his efforts at reviving the ancient tradition of theatre celebrations were trends of that time. In connection with this we should make mention of Max Reinhardt, the theatre globetrotter of Austrian origin. It is well known that Reinhardt had an extraordinarily developed sense for experimenting with stage space. He had an interest in examining the possibilities of stage work in large as well as small, intimate spaces. Stagings in theatres were natural to him as well as stagings anywhere else, whether it was a large concert hall, circus arena, church, castle, square, garden, courtyard of the city hall, or even a riding school. We can thus observe the modern trend of "site-specific performance" in Reinhardt's work as well. Reinhardt was the director who was the greatest source of inspiration for Stibor's work and thinking regarding the theatre. He closely observed Reinhardt's theatre development and during his frequent travels abroad saw a number of his stagings including those that Reinhardt designed in exteriors. We can thus speculate that Stibor's idea to stage Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann* in front of Saint Wenceslas Cathedral in Olomouc probably arose from the aforementioned Austrian theatre artist. He was actually the one who presented the same play in August 1920 in front of the cathedral in Salzburg on the occasion of the opening of the traditional theatre festival. Similarly Stibor's unrealized plans to stage Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* in front of the Hussite Church in Olomouc are reminiscent of the famous opus directed by Reinhardt at numerous places in Europe.⁹

Jedermann,¹⁰ the first of Stibor's three outdoor stagings, was performed in four versions over the years 1932–1937. The individual stagings probably differed in terms of the changes in the cast of the minor roles and primarily in the transfer to a different location. Stibor presented Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann* in front of Saint Wenceslas Cathedral in Olomouc¹¹, in the theatre building,¹² in front of Saint Florian Chapel in Prostějov¹³, and finally in the courtyard of the Basilica of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary on Holy Hill.¹⁴ The play *České pašije*¹⁵ was presented in the theatre in 1936 and consequently once again that same year and in 1937 as part of the

⁹ Stibor only presented the play on the stage of the Czech Theatre (the première on 11th October 1932). In his concept, *Oedipus the King* was staged without the use of a curtain and without a break.

¹⁰ Translation: František Večeřa – Střížovský. Setting: Josef Gabriel. Music: Stanislav Vrbík. Conductor: Jaroslav Budík. Choreography: Loris Relský.

¹¹ *Jedermann* was staged in 1932 and 1934 in front of the cathedral in Olomouc. In 1932 it was on Friday 26th August in the evening and on Sunday 28th August in the afternoon. In 1934 *Jedermann* was staged only once on Monday 30th April in the evening.

¹² The staging had to take place in the theatre due to the poor weather conditions on Monday 29th August 1932 at 8 pm.

¹³ On Friday 2nd September 1932 at 8 pm.

¹⁴ As part of the Holy Hill festival. First in 1936, on Sundays 28th June and 5th July in the afternoon and on Mondays 29th June and 6th July in the evening. The play was staged once again as part of the Holy Hill spiritual festival; it was the following year, three times, from 27th June – 29th June 1937.

¹⁵ Jan Port – Bohuš Stejskal: *České pašije*. Directed by Oldřich Stibor with Josef Srch. Setting: Josef Gabriel. Music: Jaroslav Budík.

Holy Hill spiritual festival which took place annually at the end of June and the beginning of July.¹⁶ Stibor presented Mell's *Guardian Angel*¹⁷ as part of this theatre festival on the Holy Hill only once in 1937.

Jedermann was first presented in the Czech Lands in 1930 under the title *Hra o bohatci* (A Play about a Rich Man) at Zemské divadlo in Brno (The Land Theatre). It was directed by Rudolf Walter. A new translation by the vicar-general František Večeřa-Střížovský was created for Olomouc. The reviewers were not unanimous as to their opinion regarding the quality of the translation. Střížovský was criticised for the use of colloquial, salty language and artless verse which weakened the poetical figurative value of the original.¹⁸ Stibor, along with his designer Gabriel, created the staging of the adaptation of the well-known late medieval morality, which Hofmannsthal himself called "Das Spiel vom Sterben des reichen Mannes", for the space in front of Saint Wenceslas Cathedral. This space was divided into three parts. Both of the side parts were elevated. In compliance with the medieval theatre tradition, the individual scenes and characters had a special place on the stage. The centre of the play was in the middle of the stage, behind it was a choir which connected up the side parts of the stage. The nearby Mannerist Saint Anne's chapel was also involved in the play, representing the home of *Jedermann*. The première took place in the evening hours when the magnificent three-part portal of the Neo-Gothic cathedral by the architect Gustav Merreta was already floodlighted. The audience thus had the chance to experience something unforgettable and therefore the moral message of the play undoubtedly had a particularly strong impact. The première was attended by 3,000 people who had an amphitheatre auditorium built for them directly opposite the entrance to the chapel. Given the fact that the play was staged in four different environments and at different times of the day an interesting question emerges as to how these aspects influenced the individual stagings. The initially unplanned staging indoors (in the theatre) which was moved due to poor weather was generally considered inferior than the other ones. In the traditional space of the theatre, the ceremonial pathos of Stibor's staging lost its impact despite the fact that the performances were more constricted. The director apparently did not distinguish the contrast between the "secular grandeur" of the first part and the "mysterious" atmosphere of the second part. He reportedly let both of them be played with a red horizon and in a dim light.¹⁹ The comparison with the staging of the play on the courtyard of the Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary on Holy Hill provides interesting conclusions. The spiritual message of the play resonated less intensively than in the monumental environment of Saint Wenceslas Cathedral. Compared to the magnificent Neo-Gothic Cathedral, the Chapel of the Virgin Mary is a small, purely Baroque building. Moreover, the intimate environment of the courtyard lined with cloisters was able to accommodate only half of the audience as on Václavské náměstí (St. Wenceslas Square). The audience at the performance in front of Saint Wenceslas Cathedral was sitting in an open space which was accessible to passer-bys and were thus constantly in touch with the real world. In contrast, the courtyard of the Holy Hill cathedral is a secluded world of its own. During the staging this space was closed for other people thereby creating a closed community within the sacred walls. Simultaneously, the place was protected from poor weather conditions and had excellent acoustics. These technical aspects did not hold true for the space in front of the Basilica of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, although *Jedermann* would undoubtedly have looked better

¹⁶ 1936: Saturday 27th June – Monday 29th June and a week later on the same days. 1937: Sunday 27th June – Tuesday 29th June and Monday 5th July – Tuesday 6th July.

¹⁷ Max Mell: *Guardian Angel*. Translation: František Večeřa – Střížovský. Setting: Josef Gabriel.

¹⁸ Compare Stojaník, "Každý", *Národní republika*, 2nd September 1932.

¹⁹ Compare M., "Divadlo", *Moravský večerník* (Brno), 31st August 1932.

there. The primary problem of the place was the steepness of the terrain which is paved with three long stairways. This made it impossible for the designer to place the amphitheatre here.

In an effort to create the clearest idea of Stibor's directions in the exteriors we come across the general problem of all the research on Stibor's work, a lack of sources that would enable us to reconstruct the appearance of the staging. Apart from a few photos, we can only rely on period reviews in the press which are not of a high informational value. There are reactions to only a limited number of central moments of the performances. Moreover, the preserved sources provide only a vague idea as to the ways the individual stagings differed from one other. We can generally state that regarding the exterior stagings Stibor emphasised the element of the theatrical atmosphere which is a characteristic feature of religious processions. The attempt at simplicity was a fundamental principle. He sought out a dramatic element and the impressiveness within the heart of the story itself. The stagings were marked by simplicity. The stage designer Josef Gabriel managed to make use of the architecture of the place in an impressive and functional way, only supplementing it with fine details. The same holds true for the costumes, with them being simple and appropriate. A considerable number of the reviews were dedicated to an evaluation of the actors' performances. In the staging of *Jedermann*, Stibor led the actors to "a suggestive way of depicting the characters" and adjusted the staging to the "basic tones of the medieval frescos".²⁰ Josef Toman received positive reviews for his performance in the role of the main character with the reviewer Hofírek even comparing it to Mossi's performance in Reinhardt's *Jedermann*.²¹ Nevertheless, the reviewers were not unanimous in their evaluations of the manner in which Toman managed to portray the development of the character from his exuberance, cynicism, and sensuality to humbleness, conciliation, and a return to belief. Particular attention was paid to the character of Death which was played by a woman. The too artificial J. Bubeníková was replaced in 1934 by J. Čeledová whose portrayal of the character was vastly superior as she presented Death in all her mercilessness and "breathtaking speed."²² J. Kurandová was praised for her portrayal of the Mother. Jiří Vasmuť who played Mammon also performed remarkably well. In contrast, Jaroslav Raušer as the Devil was criticised for his performance being too similar to Mephistopheles, the character of the Devil should be more relaxed in nature.²³

There were 150 actors playing in the staging of *Jedermann*. This once again exhibits Stibor's masterly work with extras, perfect elaboration of mass scenes at which a great number of the Olomouc amateur actors and Holy Hill local residents took part. Regarding the staging of *Jedermann*, music also played a prominent function there. The author of the music was Stanislav Vrbík, the organist in the cathedral and composer. In the reviews of the first adaptation of *Jedermann* in the summer of 1932 there was a polemic concerning the instrumentation of the music composition. Vrbík actually only used a wind ensemble which was supplemented with an organ and several drums. A mixed choir was used in the closing section. Certain critics called for the use of a symphonic orchestra²⁴, while others praised the primitivity of the instrumentation with the notion that the intent was to create the impression of medieval music.²⁵ Of interest is the fact that in the stagings of *Jedermann* that followed, Stibor decided to replace the orchestra with an organ.

²⁰ Compare Č. [J. Čičatka], "Každý", *Pozor* (Ostrava), 3rd May 1934.

²¹ Compare Hfk. [K. D. Hofírek], "Zdařilý experiment", *Našinec* (Olomouc), 28th August 1932.

²² Compare A. Lin, "Olomoucké provedení Každého", *Našinec* (Olomouc), 2nd May 1934.

²³ "Here it should be cheated, popular devil, without any tricky finesse; it should be a sort of relaxation after the mystery that forced the audience to pay attention and two hours spoke to their souls. His performance should return the audience to reality." Compare Jr. [V. H. Jarka], "Z olomoucké činohry", *Pozor* (Ostrava), 28th August 1932.

²⁴ Compare e. g. Abs. [E. Ambros], "Hra před portálem katedrály", *Československý deník*, 28th August 1932.

²⁵ Compare e. g. Hfk. [K. D. Hofírek], "Zdařilý experiment", *Našinec* (Olomouc), 28th August 1932.

After *Jedermann*, Stibor chose to stage something from Czech drama, specifically *České pašije* by the authorial duo Jan Port – Bohuš Stejskal. This play had its première in 1935 at the Vinohrady Theatre in Prague and was directed by Stejskal with the stage designer being Josef Wenig. “This mysterious play about the martyrdom and resurrection of Christ in two parts” was assembled by Port and Stejskal from the fragments of church plays, the oldest Czech dramas and folk plays from the Bohemian Forest and Giant Mountains. Their play was not received, however, without objections by Olomouc reviewers. A number of people preferred the more famous version from Oberammergau. Stibor had to accept the reproofs claiming that the version by Port and Stejskal lacked genuine Catholic spirituality.²⁶ After its Easter première at the theatre in Olomouc it was decided that the play would be staged on Holy Hill. With the staging of *České pašije* on Saturday 27th June 1937 in the courtyard of the Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary the cycle of the spiritual plays on Holy Hill was officially opened. The conception of the space was extremely similar to that in *Jedermann*. The grassy space in front of the chapel was divided into three functional sectors. The basic elements of the stage were present, with three short stairways, four lined Dorian columns, a red velvet curtain at the entrance to the chapel and a carpet on the steps. The most important moments of the play were performed in the central part in front of the entrance to the chapel. Here, on the stairway, for example, the final judgement of Christ took place. Pilate sat down on a chair which was moved there quickly. On the lawn the stations of the cross were performed. The actors indicated this by returning repeatedly through the side entrances to the chapel and then going out again. The crucifixion was not visible to the audience. The curtain at the main entrance to the chapel was drawn open, Christ entered, the curtain was drawn again and a sharp spot of light lit the velvet with the cry of the dying Christ being heard from behind, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” The staging was played at a brisk pace. The mass scenes constituted an important part of Stibor’s direction. The work with light also had a fair share in the success of the play.²⁷ Stibor hired not only actors but also singers and numerous extras. A number of the actors played more than one character in the play. The main character was played by a prominent actor from the theatre company in Olomouc who also contributed to the direction of the staging. According to the reviewers, Josef Srch characterized Christ in a natural and simple way with an unusual respect. He brightened the character with a deep compassion for the sufferers, but avoided an empty pathos.²⁸ Vlasta Kleinová in the role of the Virgin Mary was an equal partner to him.²⁹ From the reviews we can deduce that the staging was more opulent in the theatre, the wonders of the stage machinery are mentioned and the mass scenes were performed by more actors and were better coordinated.

The last of the three plays to be presented by Stibor in an exterior was the *Guardian Angel* by Max Mell. The play was staged upon the occasion of the festival on Holy Hill in 1937. It was the Czech première. We have the least information about this staging. The play is a folk mystery about punished pride. It tells the story of a pious girl from a good family who is happily promised to a good boy. She evokes God’s anger at herself, however, by looking scornfully at a single mother of several children and condemning her. While doing penance at the church door she is humiliated and degraded. God’s judgement on her, interpreted by her Guardian Angel, involves her having to offer herself to every man who passes by. The penance is horrible but she does it humbly. She is even forced to become engaged to a soapmaker who is a well known drunk. The girl’s humiliation is to be topped with the preparation of the wedding with him. At the deciding

²⁶ Compare e. g. JMS [J. M. Slavík], “Kulturní hlídka”, *Našinec* (Olomouc), 15th April 1936.

²⁷ Unsigned, “Divadlo”, *Hlas lidu* (Olomouc), 22nd April 1936.

²⁸ Compare Erv., “Duchovní hry svatokopečké zahájeny”, *Moravský deník* (Brno), 2nd July 1936.

²⁹ See note No. 31.

moment, however, a change comes due to God's intervention. The soap-boiler does not come to the wedding, instead in the procession of the Guardian Angel the girl's rightful fiancé comes and they become man and wife. Finally, the girl is purified from her sin. Stibor reportedly provided the play with a more "real" dimension and portrayed the characters in the "sharp lines of everyday life" and thus the central message of the drama was emphasised.³⁰ The girl was played by Julie Charvátová who managed to portray her "humbly, avoiding the silent shine of the deep, religious spirit in a way the author had it in mind". V. Kleinová who played the Angel could have stressed the "unearthly pathos" more which would have distinguished her more from the other minor characters. The drunken soapmaker was portrayed by Josef Benátský as a rough man with a simple soul. J. Raušer played the Devil as usual. He wore the juggler's masque of the Ahasverian Mephistophelian intriguer.³¹

Finally, to conclude the basic facts, I will once more shortly look at Stibor's efforts to establish the annual tradition of a festival of religious plays on Holy Hill. Stibor's intent was to revive the ancient Greek idea of theatre as a collective celebration. Within this theatre festival he wanted to exclusively present those great, timeless topics which focused on the fundamental questions of human existence. The festival of religious plays on Holy Hill took place at the turn of June and July 1936 and 1937. In the opening year 11 performances were presented over 6 days, while in the year following it was 15 performances over 9 days. They took place in the afternoon (at 4 pm) and in the evening (at 8 pm). The stagings had to be consequently designed for both the daylight and the evening. Apart from the three plays already mentioned one more play was presented within the cycle in 1937. It was called *Muži v černém* (*Men In Black*). This consisted of a Jesuit play, *The First Legion* by Emmet Lavery. The performance was produced by Josef Srch, an actor and director of the theatre in Olomouc. It was a rather marginal production which was primarily suitable for the numerous religious community. Stibor took into account the continuous extending of the cycle as well as presenting the plays at schools. A special committee was established for the purpose of the festival. A fundamental role was played by Družstvo Českého divadla (Czech Theatre Cooperative) which gave considerable amounts of money to this event. This theatre feast was also supported by the Church. As for the interest of the audience, the first year's festival surpassed all expectations. An expansion of the tribunes on the courtyard was actually considered in 1937. The first Monday evening in July 1937 the courtyard had to be closed by the police as the crowds were so large. There were actually considerations that part of the plays would be broadcast on the radio. All the plans were thwarted in 1938, however, due to the problematic political situation. It was not until 1948 that the members of the civic organisation Maticе Svatokopecká (The Holy Hill Matrix) gathered to discuss a draft by František Večeřa-Střížovský who wanted to restore the tradition of the plays on Holy Hill. Although the draft was accepted, politics interfered once again. Not only were the plays not restored, but after the Communist takeover in February 1948 even the church on Holy Hill had to fight for its survival.

³⁰ Compare Fn. [František Neužil], "Mellovo duchovní mystérium Anděl strážný", *České slovo* (Olomouc), 7th July 1937.

³¹ Ibid.

Tatjana Lazorčáková

Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies at Faculty of Arts,
Palacký University Olomouc

The Anthropological Aspects of Polish Theatre and its Influence on Moravian and Silesian Theatre Art since the 1960s (A contribution to the topic “The Movement of Theatre Concepts in Central Europe”)¹

Abstract | This study focuses on the inspirational aspects of Polish theatre and their application to the Czech theatre context of the second half of the 20th century. With specific examples from studio and authorial theatres in Moravia and Silesia, it analyses the influence of the anthropological concepts of Jerzy Grotowski and Tadeusz Kantor on the poetics and expressional techniques used in *Divadlo Husa na provázku* (Theatre Goose on the Rope) and *HaDivadlo* (HaTheatre). In the second part of the text, I examine closely the aspects of Polish directorial concepts which drew inspiration from the authorial concepts of Grotowski's and Kantor's theatre, as well as from the tradition of Polish drama and the application of these aspects to contemporary Czech theatre via Polish directors who worked in Moravia and Silesia after 1989.

.....

From the theatrical-histographical point of view, the Moravian and Silesian region is perceived as a transition area. This is due to the fact that since the 17th century various itinerant theatre companies (English, German, French, and Italian as well) have stayed here and created a substantially shared repertoire along the stylistic foundations of theatre works in Europe. Thank to their activities and rotation, it was possible to maintain the dynamic transfer of the stylistic aspects of European theatre and a relatively uniform stylistic expression for decades. This was different, however, in the 20th century where the movement of itinerant theatre companies was more problematic. The development was influenced by the existence of various artistic concepts which emerged at specific places in Europe and were connected with distinct personalities of the theatre world who strove for the reformation of theatre form. Worthy of mention are several established concepts arising out of modern theatre practice beginning with Appia's concept of vivid art with a focus on the expression of movements and Craig's examination of the concept of “Übermarrionete” which aimed at the visual sign of the performer's activity at the close of the 19th century. The theatre form reflected these concepts in various ways over the following

¹ The study is part of the research objectives project *Moravia and the World: Art in an open multicultural space*, MSM 6198959225. It was presented at the international conference “O divadle na Moravě a ve Slezsku IV” (On Theatre in Moravia and Silesia IV) which took place in Olomouc in 2010.

decades. As of the middle of the 20th century, additional original theatre concepts came about. These consist of Mejerchold's biomechanics, the alienation effect along with Brecht's concept of epic theatre, or Artaud's concept of the Theatre of Cruelty. As Jan Hyvnar has stated, the initial movement along with Appia's and Graig's revolutionary visions of the theatre, and the subsequent avant-garde experiments resulted in those concepts which culminated in the second half of the 20th century. Apart from works by Peter Brook who, in his early experiments, found inspiration in Artaud's concept of physical expression, and who in a parallel manner emphasised the ontological sense of theatre dialogue which is performed from the zero situation (an empty space), there can also be observed a continuation of inspiration in Grotowski's physical theatre, Kantor's theatre of death, and his perception of the actor-mannequin.²

Regardless of how the concepts mentioned above are connected with overcoming the traditional perception of the theatre in its realistic illusiveness, or with the departure from the psychological-realistic acting, together with the removal of the limits of expression, or with the blending of the stage and the auditorium, they represent inspirational impulses which in the second half of the last century strongly influenced the flow of theatre works. This was labelled by the Polish theatrologist Kazimierz Braun as the second theatre reformation. It is also closely connected with today's concept of alternative theatre.³ The above-mentioned line of thought and its specific forms have something in common: the anthropological aspects of the theatre that these concepts involve. These do not entail merely the departure from the traditional concept of the actor as a performer of his or her character, but also the emphasis "on the actor's creativity and the methods and techniques that are connected with it"⁴ and primarily on the perception of theatre as a place for communication, meetings, and co-existence. Parallel with this process an "opening" of theatre reaching beyond the borders of European cultural traditions took place, as well as an intense interest in performers in different, primarily oriental, theatre cultures and their elements, or in a return to the ritual and ceremonial substance of theatre.

When taking a look at the development of Czech theatre after 1989, there is not only apparent the turbulent arrival of new trends, the transformation of the classic types of theatre and genres, and in the spirit of global interconnection, significant inspiration by world theatre trends, but also an awareness of how strongly prominent the Central European theatre companies are (just as it has been in history) as natural places of movement and points of intersection of various theatre concepts. When considering the first decade of the 21st century, it is obvious that European theatre companies opened up to artistic concepts which originated in Asian or African cultural traditions, and in the cross-typological and cross-genre overlapping, with the abandoning of the known and traditional paradigm of European theatre culture. Together with the loss of "the anchorage" of today's form of theatre, there is also an increasing effort to seek out the initial impulses, establish their primary movement and influence through traceable contacts, relationships and inspirations.

The following text is a contribution to the aforementioned search for the interconnection of theatre concepts in the specific forms of Czech theatre in the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. Within the aforementioned European concepts, it focuses on the anthropological aspect of Polish theatre, and the so-called Polish directorial school, which is an area with a high concentration of traditional relationships in the territorial and language interconnection of Moravia and Silesia, as well as in the resemblance of the cultural and political development, in the area of drama and theatre development.

² Compare J. Hyvnar. *Herec v moderním divadle*. Praha 1999, p. 79–258.

³ K. Braun. *Druhá divadelní reforma?* Praha 1993.

⁴ J. Hyvnar. *Herec v moderním divadle*, p. 211.

For the majority of people the concept of Polish theatre of the second half of the 20th century is particularly connected with the personalities of theatre artists whose artistic concepts influenced that of both European and world theatre. I am thinking here in particular of Jerzy Grotowski and Tadeusz Kantor whose methods became a source for the distinctive theatre language of Polish theatre of the second half of the 20th century. Numerous artists drew inspiration from their work; the world concept of anthropological theatre which returns to ritual ways, to the motion picture, and the visual sign and symbol claims an allegiance to them. In the Czech theatre context it was specifically this line of laboratory exploration and subsequently the created model of “open” theatre (as in the sense of the theatre as a meeting place) that had an inspirational value for authorial and studio theatres from the 1960s on.

It is, however, also necessary to search for the roots of the specificity of Polish theatre in the historical tradition of drama production, such as texts by Adam Mickiewicz (especially his drama *Dziady / All Souls' Day*⁵), and Stanisław Wyspiański who created a theatre which draws inspiration from Romanticism and which simultaneously destroys the classic drama code. It is a theatre which is inspired by myths, the mystical interconnection of the world of the living and the dead, and by the theme of seeking out a national identity, by emotive theatre, as well as by expressive theatre together with a moral appeal. Among their followers were dramatists such as Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy), Witold Gombrowicz, Sławomir Mrożek, and Tadeusz Różewicz who in the second half of the last century reflected the world in its absurdity, the grotesque image of certainties falling apart. This line of theatre direction which interprets this Polish drama through a figurative stage language with anthropological elements includes prominent personalities such as (apart from the aforementioned directors Kantor and Grotowski) Józef Szajna, Kristian Lupa, and Jerzy Grzegorzewski. The theatre theorist Eleanora Udalská describes their works with the terms creative theatre, or the theatre of visual narration.⁶ The theatre involves grotesque and apocalyptic stage scenes, colour symbolism, work with masques, and particularly the symbolism interconnection of motion and motionlessness, being and non being, searching for one's own identity, the connection between the past and the present as a space for finding one's own and collective memory.⁷ These Polish directors also introduced the echo of hinted concepts, meaning those aspects which can be considered the most significant aspects of the so-called Polish directorial school, (if this can be said about the diverse in expression, but at the same time more or less stable complex of themes and scenic methods) to the contemporary Czech theatre context.

The individual tendencies of Polish anthropological theatre along with the movement of the second theatre reformation, this being a line which is usually called alternative, and with the enforcement of the autonomy of the theatre, began to appear in the context of the Czech theatre beginning in the early 1960s. This was in particular the trend of authorial and studio theatres which experimented with the authenticity of physical expression, with a return to ritual, mythical and archetypal themes in a search for the psychophysical spontaneity of acting.⁸ These tendencies

⁵ In the Polish theatre context Mickiewicz's drama *Dziady* can be found which was inspired by the ritual traditions of invoking spirits of ancestors and the interconnection between the world of the dead and the living. Juliusz Osterwa and Mieczysław Limanowski, who in 1919 established the ensemble Reduta (Little Fortress) in Warsaw, built upon the domestic traditions and the line of theatre reformations which had taken place since K. S. Stanislavski. More in J. Hyvnar. “Divadlo i klášter: polská Reduta a její radikální reforma étosu herectví.” *Disk* 31 (2010), p. 66–81.

⁶ E. Udalska. “Polské divadlo výtvarné narace” in: D. Fox – J. Roubal (eds.): *Pohledy – Punkty widzenia*. Olomouc 2000, p. 97.

⁷ E. Udalska, “Polské divadlo výtvarné narace”, p. 100.

⁸ T. Lazorčáková – J. Roubal. *K netradičnímu divadlu*. Praha 2003, p. 44–45.

drew inspiration, for example, from theatre concepts by Tadeusz Kantor and Jerzy Grotowski. In order to reach an understanding of the context and in particular the specific aspects which influenced Czech theatre, one needs to be aware of both concepts with their primary principles. As of the middle of the 1950s, Tadeusz Kantor had continued with his works in the preceding avant-garde concepts in Poland and in his theatre Cricot-2 in Cracow where he tore apart the outdated structure of the staging shape. In his projects he provoked, and along with his colleagues who shared his opinions (the members of his troupe, primarily artists, journalists, writers and actors), manifested the shift of theatre towards a so-called “annexation of reality”.⁹ In Kantor’s concept everything which participated in the stage action (people, things) became “an actor”.¹⁰ Gradually other principles were implemented into his experiments – improvisation, installations, deconstruction of any “materiality of actors and things”,¹¹ and theatre-happenings. Kantor’s work aimed with its programme towards an instability, playing with illusions and conventions and their surprising transformation. This eventually led to the destruction of illusion and a baring of its mechanism, to the creation of a so-called zero situation.¹² In his most renowned play *Umarła klasa* (*The Dead Class*, 1975) Kantor combined a living actor with a mannequin and with the fragments of things which symbolized the individual periods of the life of the “character”. He created a heterogeneous world of actors, things and pictures which reshaped constantly, nothing was stable in it, reduced gestures appeared in it, as well as motion clichés which created images of death; flashes of memory in the intangible fragments of childhood, maturity, life rituals and emotions. The theatre created by Kantor was balancing on a “*line between the two worlds, the living and the dead, the conscious and the unconscious. Both worlds mutually pervade and this facilitates the connection and meeting of the dead and the living.*”¹³

Jerzy Grotowski was the second artist who formed Polish and consequently also European and world theatre. Starting in the 1960s in his Theatre Laboratorium in Wrocław he examined the relationship between the actor and the spectator. His work was interested in the limits of physical acting with a return to ritual, authenticity of being, while simultaneously involving the spectator as a co-participant and a witness to the theatre event. “*The witness is standing somewhat aside, he does not want to intrude, he wants to be there, to see what is happening, from the beginning to the end. He wants to remember it, the picture of the event has to stay in his mind.*”¹⁴ Grotowski was particularly interested in the actor and his work. He created an entire system of physical exercises in his troupe. In these exercises he made use of methods by Stanislavsky and Mejerchold, as well as traditional theatre techniques in the Middle East, Indonesia, and Japan. He also wanted to intentionally eliminate all the established gestures and movements. The concept of poor theatre which is inseparably connected with Grotowski’s theatre concept drew inspiration from personal experience and the physical and voice capacity of the actor. It led to authentic action which draws from inner impulses which are cultivated through a system of practice, through exercise. Grotowski’s rehearsing developed physical abilities, as well as mimic, gestural abilities and rhythmic feeling. It was important to manage everything precisely, to maintain discipline and keep focused. These aspects helped the actor make use of the impulses for the motivation of his own physical actions. Realizations of paratheatrical events are also connected with these experiments which to Grotowski served as a support for the authenticity of a theatre

⁹ J. Hyvňar, *Herec v moderním divadle*, p. 198.

¹⁰ Compare *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 241; quotations from Z. Osiński. *Grotowski a jego Laboratorium*. Warszawa 1980, p. 116.

which should, in his opinion, return to its roots, to its primary communicative function. “*It is not theatre which is so essential, it is something completely different. To cross the border between you and me, to go to meet one other so we do not get lost in the crowd, or in words, [...]*”¹⁵ The paratheatral projects which were realized by Grotowski in the Institute Teatr Laboratorium in Wrocław as of the end of the 1960s climaxed with the Univerzita výzkumů Divadla národů (University of the Research of the Theatre of the Peoples (1975)) which was attended by 5,000 people from all around the world who joined together in a number of workshops and projects.¹⁶ They experienced the openness and the naturalness of the meeting, the dialogue concept of the theatre as an event, the creation of a new relationship between actors and spectators with a space which is the model of an “open theatre”.

Last but not least is the fact that both concepts were created with a faith in the renewal of the theatre on the aesthetic as well as the ethical level. The authenticity of the works and expression even pushed the troupe to stay true, to express personal topics and attitudes toward life, society and religion.

The Inspirational Impulses of Polish Theatre Concepts in Authorial and Studio Theatres in Moravia and Silesia

The creative activities of Grotowski and Kantor can be classified as the second theatre reformation the influence of which can be seen in the formation of small theatres in the 1960s. Their works represented a break away from the traditional perception of the function and structure of the theatre format and in connection with the existence and work of small theatres in a primary non-theatrical form. This meant making use of irregular spaces (cellars, clubs, foyers), where the theatre form as a natural meeting between the audience and the actors in a common space was prominent. This was a very important impulse which supported the perception of theatre as a natural act of communication and strengthened the knowledge of theatre as a reflection of the real, not ideologically constructed, world.

At the end of the 1960s the use of irregular spaces as a programme experiment helped bring about a second theatre reformation in the Czech theatre. This was primarily a new wave of interest in physical theatre. This was an alternative to the rejection of the officially valid, and by the ruling regime enforced, aesthetic norms. From the theatrical point of view, it was a means of rejecting the word, of an interpretation of a text as the only possible form of theatre. Theatre thus returned to its roots, to the principles of theatre as a visual form of perception. While searching for forms of expression, theatre artists often returned to the principles of improvisation which drew inspiration from the tradition of *commedia del' arte* as well as from non-European forms of cult theatre. The first experiments with the form of physical theatre began to emerge. This type of theatre was based on visual perception, similar to theatre in the Middle East, Indonesia and Japan. In addition, experiments with open air projects occurred. These were frequently among student and amateur troupes and often hovered on the boundary between the visual arts and theatre, or were connected with conceptual art and concrete poetry. Simultaneous with the introduction of anthropological aspects, the actor was perceived as a human being functioning not in a role but actually existing here and there, as the only author and interpreter of the topic. The theatre was transformed into an open space in which the actors along with the audience created a community based on a unified language, identically perceived elements (space, time,

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 251; quotations from J. Grotowski. *Texty 3*. PKS, Praha 1990, p. 223.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 253.

motion, and word) and on mutual experience.¹⁷ In a parallel fashion, the phenomenon of street theatre slowly came into existence and also performing art which was connected with a return to ritual origins, to dancing and motion.

Also worthy of mention are the theatre experiments which represented their first meeting with the principles of physical theatre for the Czech theatre artists along with the audience and which also brought the inspirational influences of the aforementioned Polish theatre concepts to the theatre context in Moravia and Silesia. Firstly, mention should be made of the ensemble Quidam from Brno established in 1966 as an amateur student theatre. Their interest in surrealism became evident at the beginnings of their activity. An emphasis was placed on the visual aspect *Modrý jelen* (*The Blue Stag*, 1967). In the second phase with the arrival of Petr Oslzlý it was the line of physical and motion theatre influenced by Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and Grotowski's Poor Theatre which was the anthropological concept of theatre which returns to the concept of the human body as a tool and a theme which became prominent. This line is primarily represented by the legendary play *Archimimus*¹⁸ which was first performed at the 8th International Festival of Student Theatre in the autumn of 1968 in Zagreb.¹⁹ Petr Oslzlý was the main performer and a quite detailed description of the performance found in *The Sunday Times* talks not only about the atmosphere of the authenticity of the physical acting, but also about the aspects of the theatre event as a moment of meeting, a mutually experienced being in space. In *The Times* this event was also described as an event that can be interpreted as political theatre reacting in a natural way to the August invasion of Czechoslovakia:

*When the play began the actor dragged and writhed in pain along the lower aisle to the stage. There he was attacked by a group that was speaking in chorus. Throughout the whole play he was tortured by the others. He was dragged on the stage, thrown on the floor, torn with the ropes that were tied to his ankles and wrists. The ropes were being pulled in four directions. He (P. Oslzlý, author's note) played with a self absorbing intensity: his trousers were torn apart, sweat was flowing down his bare torso and his hands were stained with blood, because the ropes cut deep to his flesh. At the end of the play he went again to the bottom part of the theatre house where he was hanged by the arms on the beam above the door. The atmosphere before the performance was tense. When the performance ended the audience exploded with a hysterical applause that changed into rhythmical chanting "Dubček – Svoboda". All the Czechs were crying. The political opinion of the audience was not in any case connected with what the play narrated. The play was simply a violent (emotional) attack on the emotions which ended in desperation.*²⁰

Among the other projects by Quidam the adaptation of the Biblical topic (*Osmihran*, *The Octagon*), or the provocative performance *Tápající apostata* (*The Fumbling Apostate*) can be

¹⁷ Compare K. Braun. *Druhá divadelní reforma?*, p. 77–98.

¹⁸ Mention should be made of the fact that Petra Kohutová, the author of the text *Divadelní skupina Quidam: Přehled činnosti v letech 1966–1972* emphasizes another source of inspiration for the staging of *Archimimus*. It was the work of the American ensemble Living Theatre. She argues for the then limited knowledge of Grotowski's concept. In contrast, Jan Roubal in his study *J. Grotowski – jedna z inspirací Bílého divadla* points out that in the 1960s Grotowski represented an undeniable authority even in the Czech context (albeit primarily among initiated people and people seeking out something). Apart from the theatrologist Jan Kopecký, who with his students visited Wrocław in 1967, he mentions Jana Pilátová who in 1970 in the magazine *Divadlo* (*Divadlo*, No 3, p. 30–44.) summarized her experience from her one-year internship in Teatr Laboratorium. Compare F. Hrdlička – Z. Bratřovská a kol. *Zpráva o Bílém divadle*. Jinočany 1998, p. 58–59, p.75–81.

¹⁹ Compare F. Hrdlička – Z. Bratřovská a kol. *Zpráva o Bílém divadle*, p. 54–61.

²⁰ *The Sunday Times*, 1968. Quoted from M. Pšenička. *Konkrétní divadlo a skupina Quidam*. Master's Thesis, FF MU, Brno 2002, p. 88–89. The play had its Czechoslovakian première in 1970. (Author's Note).

included. These experimented with human nudity (1970) and were played on the occasion of the photographic exhibitions of Petr Jer's works in Blansko and Krnov. With the staging of *Poslední bitva krále Sardanapala* (*The Last Battle of King Sardanapal*, 1972) which the reduction of the word and an application of an emphasis on motion in a ritual form, the ensemble ended its existence.²¹ As of 1969 the group had strived to achieve a professional status. However, due to the onsetting 'normalisation' period, Quidam's work was prohibited and consequently the ensemble officially ceased to exist in June 1972.

Aspects of physical theatre and the model of an anthropological perception of theatre along with the creative activity of Petr Oslzlý consequently found its way to Divadlo Husa na provázku (Theatre Goose on the Rope)²² which starting in the middle of the 1970s welcomed impulses of European theatre as it often participated in festivals abroad. They first performed at the Festival Mondial du Théâtre Experimental in Nancy (1975) where the troupe presented their version of the play *Commedie dell'arte* and where it participated in the international open air project. The ensemble had cooperated regularly with the legendary Polish alternative companies since 1975. In connection with the preparation of the play *Červený smích* (*Red Laughter*, 1975), Petr Oslzlý participated in a workshop of Teatr Ósmego dnia in Poznań (The Theatre of the Eighth Day) and attended the University of Searching in Teatr Laboratorium (The Theatre Laboratory) of Jerzy Grotowski in Wrocław. As of that year friendly and creative relationships with members of the student ensemble Teatr 77 (Teatre 77) from Łódź become apparent.²³ Co-projects followed: in Poznań the project with Teatr Ósmego dnia and in Wrocław where the theatre Divadlo (Husa) na provázku participated in the 1st Meeting of the Open Theatre and Art in 1978. In Wrocław the troupe participated with other European ensembles in the establishment of the project *Naděje* (*Hope*, 1978)²⁴ which according to Oslzlý became an important moment for the consequent international cooperation "because of its activity in the international movement of alternative theatres and primarily because of the series of international projects which the theatre initiated and even co-created over the following years".²⁵ The project was characterized as a chain of street events based on communication, improvisation and openness. The development of the programme of the ensemble had according to Petr Oslzlý the important aspect of self-consciousness. The continuation of cooperation in the 1970s was marked by the project of Divadlo (Husa) na provázku and Teatr 77 from Łódź called *Wiosna ludów* (*The Spring Nations*, 1979). Peter Scherhauser, Petr Oslzlý, Zdzisław Hejduk and Andrej Podgorski cooperated on the direction of this project. The script, the visual aspect and the music to the play was also carried out in Czech-Polish cooperation. Particularly important about the project was the mutual theatrical testimony which touched on a historical analogy (the revolution in 1848 was the topic) of the events in 1968 which resulted in a generational reflection on issues of democracy and freedom.²⁶

²¹ Compare F. Hrdlička – Z. Bratršovská a kol. *Zpráva o Bílem divadle*, p. 58–61.

²² Divadlo Husa na provázku began to perform in Brno in 1968 as an amateur group of professional actors, students and artists of different professions. They worked in Dům umění (The House of Arts) where the ensemble was allowed use of the empty exhibition (Procházková síň, The Hall for Walks). Due to the change in the political situation in the then Czechoslovakia in 1969 the ensemble was forced to accept the name Divadlo na provázku under which it performed throughout the normalization period. We therefore use in the text Divadlo (Husa) na provázku. After 1989 the ensemble returned to its original name (Author's Note).

²³ Compare P. Oslzlý (ed.). *Divadlo Husa na provázku 1968/7/–1998 – kniha v pohybu. I.* CED, Brno 1999, section 1978 (unpaginated).

²⁴ Apart from the Polish theatre Teatr 77 and Teatr Ósmego dnia troupes from Sweden, Greece, Argentina, Italy, USA, and France participated in the common project.

²⁵ Compare P. Oslzlý (ed.). *Divadlo Husa na provázku 1968/7/–1998 – kniha v pohybu. I.* section 1975.

²⁶ Despite the prohibition by Czechoslovakian authorities which applied to cooperation between Divadlo (Husa) na provázku with Teatr 77 the international project *Wiosna ludów* had its world première in Łódź in Poland

Worthy of mention is the fact that from its beginnings the theatre Divadlo Husa na provázku drew inspiration from the aspects of the second theatre reformation, from the concept of an irregular dramaturgy as formulated by the initiator and creator of the theatre, Bořivoj Srba, and simultaneously from the search for a new stage approach. This included the laboratory ensemble verification of distinctive approaches and experiments with space and acting which returned to the roots of theatricality and histrionism, to the authenticity and communicativeness of the stage projects, with a programme emphasis on the dominant function of the creative process. In connection with the impulses that the ensemble absorbed during their meeting with the creative processes of the Polish and other foreign alternative theatres, there can also be justifiably seen a stimulus from the specification of the programme solutions of the ensemble in 1981. Here an emphasis was placed on common staging projects with ensembles that shared their opinions and expression, on the street and open air stagings and events, on events and meetings of a boundary theatre/paratheatre nature, on open play projects and workshops.²⁷

The ensemble continued with the collective projects and open air productions in the 1980s. Following the example of European alternative companies, they developed their programme principles of street theatre and mutual work. The ensemble began to experiment with unique stagings-performances and paratheatre events. The paratheatre event *Divadlo v pohybu* can be mentioned from this period which took place in irregular intervals starting in the 1970s (1st year in 1973) at various places in Brno (e.g. the Bishop's Garden of the Moravian Museum on the Krautmarkt (2nd year in 1982), on the terraces of the Kapucin Gardens under the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul (3rd year in 1987)²⁸ and was organized by the theatre with an international and interdisciplinary overlap, the theatre Divadlo (Husa) na provázku. For example in 1973 the project was designed as a sort of "art carnival". Bishop's Garden was filled with variable stages, the stalls became display areas with installations of art works (e.g. an exhibition of Aleš Lamra's paintings), concerts took place, and stagings were performed, as well as happenings which presented the activities of the theatre through posters, decorations and songs from the play. The event was primarily designed as a meeting with the aim of bringing together people, ways of thinking, artistic opinions and views of the world in 1978. A major emphasis was placed on drawing the audience into the world of theatre which can reflect reality and influence the thinking of people.

Another typical feature in the works of Divadlo (Husa) na provázku was linked to the anthropological aspects, this being the revitalisation of the works based on the principles of the histrionism with circus elements (long before the term "new circus" was invented) or the search for specific architectural locales as later specified by the term "site specific" (places such as abandoned factory halls, squares, interesting cultural and natural sites, castles, parks etc.).²⁹ This

at the festival Spotkanie teatrálne, its west European première in Stockholm at the 1st International Meeting of Independent Theatre. Its Czechoslovakian première took place in January 1980 at Dům umění in Brno. Compare *Ibid.*, section 1979.

²⁷ Compare *Ibid.*, section 1981.

²⁸ The project *Divadlo v pohybu* was put into practice by Divadlo Husa na provázku in the years 1973, 1982, 1987, 1993, 1998, 2004, 2007, 2009. Each year was an original concept connected to the space and the events presented, attractions and projects. All these things were interconnected via the use of open air, openness, communication, thematic up-to-dateness, multitypological and a multigenre character with a socially ethical appeal.

²⁹ Apart from the open air activities in the interwar avant-garde, theatre artists in the first half of the 20th century and the experiments by Joan Brehms in the late 1940s the experiments that can be integrated with the line of "site specific" are connected with the line of artistic happenings, action art between the 1950s and 1960s which are connected with the names Vladimír Boudník and Milan Knížák, in the 1970s in Moravia with the happenings by Tomáš Ruller who cooperated with Divadlo Husa na provázku. Compare D. Václavová – T. Žižka a kol. *Site specific*. Praha 2008.

development was also connected with the model of the “open theatre” as in the sense of open communication and led to other internationally interconnected activities. In the 1980s these were represented by the projects *Together* inspired by Comenius’ Labyrinth of the World, which was carried out in Copenhagen in cooperation with Teatr 77 from Łódź and other foreign ensembles in the former factory hall Valseverket (1983), or at the close of the 1980s *Mir Karavane* which was put into practice in cooperation with Compagnia du Hasard from France, the clown theatre Licidei from St. Petersburg, the Polish Teatr Ósmego dnia, the Argentine-Italian group Teatro Nucleo, the Dutch group Dog Troep (The Dog Mess) and Academia Ruchu from Warsaw (The Academy of Noise, 1989).³⁰ These involved searching for the roots of theatricality, transcultural meetings of ensembles in various countries, diverse discussions, workshops, happenings, paratheatrical events, and international projects. Divadlo (Husa) na provázku participated in these over the twenty years of the normalization period with these primarily all being with a search for the possibilities of theatre as a personal experience, searching for the meaning of meetings and being. The permanent introduction of aspects of Polish alternative theatre and its anthropologically rooted tradition not only in the theatre context in Moravia but also in the theatre consciousness of Czechoslovakia should also be mentioned in this context. This is an aspect which can be seen in the works of Divadlo Husa na provázku at present as well.

Another authorial and studio company claimed allegiance to the “open theatre” concept. The company HaDivadlo (HaTheatre, 1974) worked in Moravia in the 1970s. The ensemble was established in Prostějov and from its amateur beginnings, when only the director and the script editor (Svatopluk Vála and Josef Kovalčuk) had the status of professionals and the ensemble consisted of amateur actors and students, HaDivadlo created over only a few seasons a distinctive theatre language which was based on the poetics of the poetry theatre of the previous decade as well as on impulses from European theatre alternative companies.³¹ HaDivadlo with its initial works, similarly with Divadlo Husa na provázku, confirmed the gradual transformation of the way people viewed the function of theatre. It shifted the emphasis onto the perception of theatre in its category of theatricality which permits the formulation of a new theatricality as opposed to the “literary character” of theatre and the perception of theatre as a game in interaction with the audience drew attention to the fact that apart from the aesthetic categories theatre is a part of an anthropologically-sociological defined act and drew attention to the aspects of theatre as a process, event, communicative act and symbolic interaction.

It should be mentioned that among the aspects which partook in the gradual change of the programme orientation and poetics was also the inspiration from the Polish alternative theatre with its basis in Kantor’s and Grotowski’s concepts. This was as early as 1975 at the 1st meeting of the open theatre and art in Wrocław where Kovalčuk, Vála, and a member of the amateur ensemble, Jan Roubal, first came across the elements of open theatre that emphasized liberal thinking, creativity, and the unconventionality of the alternative stream of theatre. They learned about the works of world alternative theatres and primarily with the most distinct Polish ensembles such as Teatr Ósmego dnia from Poznań, Teatr 77 from Łódź and the Warsaw Academia Ruchu. Josef Kovalčuk described the experience from the performances of the foreign and Polish ensembles at the festival as a meeting with a broad-mindedness of opinion and aesthetic values and in retrospect valued it as a turning point in the thinking and course of the theatre.³² Over the course

³⁰ More about the international projects of Divadlo Husa na provázku in P. Scherhauser. *Divadelné projekty DHNP*. Bratislava 1996.

³¹ In its first seasons the ensemble played in the classic theatre room of Národní dům in Prostějov. AS of 1977 they performed in the variable space of the presentation room in Národní dům. After they moved to Brno they performed in Dům umění, since 1988 in Klub ObKS on Šelepova street.

³² J. Kovalčuk (ed.). *Bylo jich pět a půl*. Brno 2005, p. 39.

of the 1970s, Kovalčuk observed Polish theatre in its experimental line. He learned many facts from a publications by the theatre theorist Kazimierz Braun. These were unavailable in Czechoslovakia and he consequently obtained them during his travels abroad with the ensemble and also thanks to his good connections. Under the influence of such impulses experiments with the motion plan, the implementation of elements of physical, comically arranged theatre in the play *Kubula a Kuba Kubikula* (*Kubula and Kuba Kubikula for the first time*) and the struggle for a shift amongst the ensemble to an irregular space, i. e. a space unlimited by theatre technique and the classical semi-circular horizon division of an actor and a spectator, appears in the work of HaDivadlo. Since the beginning of the stagings by HaDivadlo, the theme of conflict between a creative individual with the power of political representatives and the search for positive certainties in a world which has lost stable values can be observed. These are the topics that interested the audience intensely in the 1970s. To express this topic the play directors, mainly Svatopluk Vála and Arnošt Goldflam, and the dramaturgist Josef Kovalčuk created authorial scripts which were composed as collages of various texts, including texts by the ensemble members. They performed them on stage in a synthesizing composition of a textual and non-textual expressional elements. As of the beginning of the 1980s when the ensemble moved to Brno the dominant emphasis in HaDivadlo shifted to the collective authorial process of creation. The topic and its symbolic scenic form were the basis for the process. “*It is not the word which is important, it is the stage, atmosphere, feeling, consonance*”³³ said the dramaturgist Josef Kovalčuk. The play *Bylo jich 5 a ½* (*There were 5 and ½ of Them*, 1982) was one of the highlights of HaDivadlo. This play was created through improvisation, games and “self-games”. It also confirmed the further shift towards a non-topical theatre of feelings. The ensemble built upon the previous titles *Panoptikum* (*The Freak Show*), 1980, *Hra bez pravidel* (*The Game without Rules*), 1981. The inspirational influence of Polish theatre was prominent in the stagings, primarily Tadeusz Kantor’s concept with the emphasis on the creation of the scenic picture via physical action and figurines which represent the actor’s alter ego, the expression of the emotional world through motion, the fragmentary form, the intimacy of the message and sharing. Also in this case the targeted movement towards an authorial so-called personal acting can be observed. Such elements as “being yourself” on the stage and relating personal topics, the atmosphere of meeting and consonance could be seen at the centre.

In the 1980s HaDivadlo was also involved in street projects which were aimed at the transformation of the perception of theatre and its function. Instead of an aesthetically normative artefact, street projects provided an authenticity of the meeting, breaking barriers in thinking, provocation, violation of stereotypes and the very important message that theatre is not disconnected from reality, but instead reflects it. It is in a permanent dialogue with it and this dialogue is extended to the audience as well. The members of HaDivadlo carried out the first street action happening in Prostějov in 1983. It had no specific title and script. It was compiled of blackouts and songs from the plays of the ensemble. The stage properties and costumes from older plays were also used. The actors moved between the passers-by, they shouted their lines, creating an unforced atmosphere of the mutual communication. Up until this point they had been unknown in the provincial town. Shared projects with Divadlo (Husa) na provázku and other studio ensembles followed. The co-project *Cesty* (the title *Cesta /The Way/* – subtitle *Křižovatky /Crossroads/ – Jízdní řády /Timetables/ – Setkání /Meetings/*, 1984) was one of the most prominent. It is important to understand the fact that for the Socialist countries of that time (which also included the Czech context) the anthropological dimension of theatre productions was primarily

³³ J. Kovalčuk. “HaDivadlo 74–96.” in: J. Kovalčuk – M. Černoušek. *HaDi 1996 (hry, studie, scénáře, dokumenty)*. Brno 1996, p. 283.

connected with asking questions, an analysis of the state of society and the inner conscience. In an atmosphere of growing socio-political tension at the end of the 1970s and 1980s the studio theatres in Moravia at this time took over a significant social function with a moral appeal that with its importance exceeded the aesthetic dimension of their works.³⁴

Act-studio³⁵ from Ostrava is another ensemble worthy of mention. At its establishment (1967) this ensemble drew inspiration from Jerzy Grotowski and his principles of the theatre of ritual. In their first plays its founders Jan Číhal and Petr Nejedlý emphasized physical expressiveness. The play *Těla (Corpses)* which is a collage of verses by Russian symbolists and Biblical texts with an emphasis on the cult of the naked body was a good example of this. When it was staged for the first time at Wolker's Prostějov (1969) it completely shocked the audience. The members of the ensemble also became the initiators of the display by the theatre Generace (Generation, at the former Dům kultury (House of Culture) in Vítkovice) where the ensemble Quidam from Brno took part in 1970 with its play *Archimimus* which strongly influenced the further course of the ensemble. Jan Číhal was connected with other amateur activities in the 1970s which relentlessly sought out all meetings with the inspirational principles of the anthropological theatre stream. He partook in the workshops of Teatr Laboratorium, visited Polish theatre festivals where he saw Odin Teatr, and was in touch with the Prague Bílé divadlo in which František Hrdlička, Miloš Horanský, Václav Martinec and others were employed.³⁶ The foundations of Act studio Bílé divadlo (The White Theatre) were established in 1982 in Ostrava. Its members took part in the International Student Festival of the Open Theatre in Wrocław in the 1970s. They adopted many inspirational impulses of the physical and ritual theatre from there. From the theatre of the same name in Prague they also adopted the form of inspirational meetings-workshops which they decided to organize regularly. They would invited persons from other alternative companies which experimented with physical expression (Petr Oslzlý, Václav Martinec). The visual-motion project of Bílé divadlo was part of a workshop in 1983. It was inspired by the prose of the Polish writer Tadeusz Nowak called *Jablko pro krále – jablko pro kata (An Apple for the King – an Apple for the Executioner)* which was followed by the series of etudes, physical exercises and improvisation.³⁷ Since its beginnings Bílé divadlo from Ostrava promoted Grotowski's concept of poor theatre, theatre of physical action and existential expression with an emphasis on communicativeness, the shared existence of the actors and the audience in the space of the theatrical event.³⁸ Bílé divadlo primarily developed open air projects and happenings in this direction. *Bílé sny (White Dreams, 1984)* was one of the first projects to be created on the basis of folk songs collected by the Moravian ethnographer František Bartoš and the collector František Sušil. Its première took place in Senohraby near Prague on the river Sázava. The project was also presented in Ostrava,

³⁴ It is no coincidence that it was as apart of the Prague evening performance of *Rozrazil I/88 (O demokracii)*, 17/11/1989 that direct participants of the Prague student demonstration on Národní třída street had their place at the performance. Members of Divadlo Husa na provázku and HaDivadlo were also among the first initiators of the theatre strike.

³⁵ The ensemble played in Dům kultury in Vítkovice.

³⁶ The ensemble which was established in the early 1970s represented an alternative line of Czech theatre which was connected with the transfer of the tendencies of the second theatre reformation to the Czech theatre context. It aimed at ritual theatre, a laboratory way of creativity with a psychological, anthropological and social overlap. The members drew inspiration from the concepts of P. Brook, J. Grotowski, and E. Barba. The ensemble contained both amateurs and professionals; František Hrdlička (1970) and Z. Bratršovská (1972–1976) were the leaders of the ensemble. The members included Václav Martinec, Miloš Horanský and Ján Sedal. In the structure of the normalization period the ensemble represented an unofficial line of theatre activities.

³⁷ J. Číhal. "Bílé divadlo Ostrava aneb Zkoumání lidského údělu." in: *Divadla svítící do tmy II*. Praha 2007, p. 162.

³⁸ T. Lazorčáková – J. Roubal. *K netradičnímu divadlu*, p. 80; also J. Dvořák. *Alt. divadlo*. Praha 2009, p. 39; J. Roubal. "Bílé divadlo jako posedlost vůle a představa." *Divadelní noviny* 2002, No. 11, p. 14.

on the former Masarykovo náměstí (Masaryk Square) with an onlooking audience. A three meter high figurine was its most prominent element. There were typical efforts to remove the borders between theatre and reality in its expression. Another open air project by Bílé divadlo, *Máj* (*May*, 1985), based on a poem by K. H. Mácha was also performed on the bank and in the water of the pond in the park in Klímkovice near Ostrava.³⁹ That same year the motion study *Tristan a Izolda* (*Tristan and Isolde*) also had its première. This study experimented with nudity, with elements of the aggressive-expressive expression in connection with the metaphor of stage properties. The projects which scenically reflected the social situation had an extraordinary message in connection with the ethical and socio-political dimension of the individual projects by Bílé divadlo. A performance which was created with a display of non-traditional theatre in Valašské Meziříčí entitled *Antigona* (*Antigone*, 1986) should be mentioned where even the participants of the performance took part and which dealt with freedom of speech and conflict with power. Also worthy of mention is the collage *Faust* (1987) which was inspired by the verses of the poet Paul Valéry, the Elizabethan playwright Marlowe, and prose works by the Latvian author Zariņš and the Polish writer Krzyszoń. The members of the ensemble drew attention to the aggressiveness of power and the lack of freedom via an analogous picture of Nazi ideology and its practices. The open air project was based on the expressiveness and the roughness of the actor's performance and the interconnectedness of the naturalist and symbolic elements (grilling chicken and bandaged corpses of the actors).⁴⁰

After 1989 Bílé divadlo enriched the tradition of open air projects with other prominent street events with elements of happenings, performances and action art. The play *Červený kohout letí k nebi* (*A Red Cock Flies to Heaven*, 1991) can be mentioned as an example. This is a mystical story which is presented as a ritual initiation ceremony. It contained the motif of a journey and a realization. Apart from the character of the village boy, it was full of bizarre characters of gravediggers, a crazy Mary with angel wings, wedding guests with animal masques, the devil with everything accompanied by village music. The shape evoked the atmosphere of a village festival. The character of earthiness was supplemented with fire and a living cock.⁴¹ Among their other projects were *Ty, který lyžuješ* (*You, Who Are Skiing*, 1997), *Opilý koráb* (*A Drunken Sailing Ship*, 1999), and the provocative happening *Poslední večeře* (*The Last Supper*, 2001). This biblical topic became a scenario for a street meeting by the actors with random onlookers who became the participants of the last supper and the crucifixion. Many paratheatre events in which Bílé divadlo uses the principles of laugh culture, elements of folk celebrations and carnivals as well as ritual and mythical returns to prehistoric form of theatre-ceremony can be classified with the tradition of theatre events which are connected with an examination of the various possibilities of theatre meetings and an exploration of the so-called "public space" in which the audience along with the actors become authentic participants in the visual event. Bílé divadlo adopts the work with the open space and the idea of a mental way in the form of eternal pilgrims, the hallucinatory atmosphere of the unknown, the principle of surprise and destruction, and the principle of work starting in the "zero situation" from Kantor's theatre concept. At present Bílé divadlo represents one of the most prominent ensembles from the line of the street happenings, open air events which is most importantly a meeting of actors and their audience. Evidence of their close connection with Polish theatre not only consists of frequent guest appearances in Poland, but also the dramaturgy. The play *Z toho obrazu už nikdy neodejdu* (*I Will Never Leave that Picture Again*, 2005) was one of the projects by Bílé divadlo which was inspired by the texts of Tadeusz Kantor

³⁹ Compare P. Němečková. *Bílé divadlo Ostrava*. Master's Thesis. Olomouc 2007.

⁴⁰ J. Číhal. *Bílé divadlo Ostrava aneb Zkoumání lidského údělu*, p. 164.

⁴¹ Compare P. Němečková. *Bílé divadlo Ostrava*.

and Czesław Miłosz. In its visual concept which was close to spirituality it resembled Kantor's play *Umarla klasa*.⁴² The ensemble did not allow the space to limit them. Their performances were presented in the open air, on squares and indoors as well. The unusual construction of a carousel was a prominent feature in their performances. It symbolized the never-ending life cycle. They also used live music to create the atmosphere of a fair and also distributed food to the audience.

As the last example of the ensembles connected with North Moravia and Silesia we should mention the amateur ensembles of the 1970s and the 1980s which worked in the border town of Český Těšín. These included Teatrzyk (The Theatre) and the follow-up Teatr imienia Majora Szmauz (The Theatre of Major Szmauz). Here the influence of Polish theatre was undeniable. The ensemble members were of Polish nationality. They were mostly students. The ensembles participated in festivals in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Its members participated in workshops and courses which were organised by Polish lecturers. They drew inspiration from the concept of the theatre of Jerzy Grotowski and Tadeusz Kantor and also from the tradition of Polish alternative companies (among others one could name Teatr 77, Teatr Ósmego dnia and also Teatr Provisorium (The Provisorium Theatre), Scena Plastyczna KUL (The Plastic Company KUL), Kalambur (The Pun), Akademia Ruchu, or the activities of the centre Gardzienice, etc.). The poetics of the stagings of the aforementioned theatres which can be related to the context of Czech theatre as well as the Polish minority showed certain aspects which have already been mentioned: authenticity, elements of physical theatre, the theatre of masques, grotesqueness, absurdity and the theme of national identity. Teatrzyk worked in Český Těšín over the years 1975–1980. It focused on amateur actors who participated in the annual training camps and workshops (e.g. the so-called IKRA – Internatowy Kurs Reżysera i Aktora). It was here where the members met with Polish students and alternative companies and with their poetics. They also absorbed the specific principles of Polish theatre. It should also be stated that in exactly the same way the studio theatres were perceived in the Czech context as being not only an artistic alternative and opposition but also an opposing attitudinal and political space, in Poland this analogical function was represented by alternative theatres and primarily student theatre companies. Teatrzyk with its poetics aimed at collective creative work and authenticity. Professional actors and directors, e.g. Marek Mokrowiecki and Karol Suszka, were involved in the management of the theatre. Their work was typified by an attempt to connect elements of motion (physical) theatre together with a theatre of poetry and personal statement. In terms of dramaturgy they tried to create a new, untraditional and personalised interpretation of the classics of Romantic and Modern Polish literature (Adam Mickiewicz, Julius Słowacki, Bolesław Leśmian), local prominent authors (Wilhelm Przewczek) and their own works. Among the most noticeable authorial projects were *Kozubowa* (1976) which was created through collective improvisations and served as self reflection on the positions of the members and the theme of national identity. As concerns the dramaturgy, the members of the ensemble focused on Polish literature and their own authorial dramas (*Drumla /The Jew's Harp/,* 1978; *Przygody Sindbada Żeglarza /Sinbad's Tales/,* 1979).⁴³

In 1984 the ensemble Teatr im. mjr. Szmauz built upon the work of Teatrzyk. At the head of the ensemble stood successively Urszula Kurek, Zbigniew Czudek and Janusz Klimsza. The first phase was characterised by a collective authorial work which dramaturgically drew inspiration from Polish literature. A worthy example was the play *Lokomotywa (The Locomotive,* 1984) which scenically interconnected fragments of a children's poem by the Polish poet Julian Tuwim. After projects such as happenings, artistic-theatre events and authorial plays which were also created by Urszula Kurek and Zbigniew Czudek which were characterised by a distinct stylization, a firm

⁴² Compare V. Ptáčková. "Divadlo života a smrti Tadeusze Kantora." *Scéna* 16 (1991) 2, p. 7.

⁴³ Compare T. Lazorčáková – J. Roubal. *K netradičnímu divadlu*, p. 165–166.

stage shape and dramatic detailed work the ensemble presented the play *Marx International* (1989). This play expressed the degeneration and nonsensicality of the ideological regime of the day through happenings and the creation of a picture of passive grotesque Beckett-like characters. The work of the ensemble culminated in the early 1990s with the plays of the director Janusz Klimsza. Primarily a dramatization of Kafka's *A Country Doctor* (1992) showed the clear inspirational influence of Polish theatre beginning with Tadeusz Kantor and ending with Józef Szajna. The form of epically "narrated" theatre used the attributes of modern Polish theatre language. Apart from the existential overlap which was narrated through surrealist images, it was based on the engagement of the human body and a symbolic play with things, on a blending of the world of the living and the dead, of the past and the future. Another Klimsza play *Kometa (The Comet)*, (1995) should also not be forgotten. This was a theatre adaptation of a text by the Polish-Jewish writer Bruno Schulz. In his works he reflects the specific atmosphere of the area of Halič of his day where a blended Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish culture could be seen.⁴⁴

The Influences of the Directorial School in the Professional Theatres in Moravia and Silesia after 1989

The previous brief historical overview was intended to point out certain distinct aspects of Polish theatre. The aspects were implemented prior to 1989 primarily in the alternative line of the Czech theatre culture. In specific cases (Divadlo /Husa/ na provázku, HaDivadlo, Bílé divadlo Ostrava) they became part of the contemporary poetics of the ensemble. Intersections of the aspects of Polish theatre can also be seen in the line of professional theatre, chiefly after 1989 when Czech theatre opened up to those artists who came from the former amateur sphere and also to foreign directors (Polish ones including). Regarding the set topic, there will be a focus on Polish directors who have worked repeatedly in theatres in Moravia and Silesia since 2000. Their plays display certain identical features which draw inspiration from the hinted Polish line. These features are the aspects of an expressive theatre with the tragic-grotesque two-way mirroring, with an emphasis on the appeal, with a tendency of a mystical overlap and simultaneously a figurative, emotionally tense reflection of the world.

André Hübner-Ochodlo, the director, artist, actor, chanson singer and founder of Teatr Atelier (The Theatre Studio) in Sopoty, began to appear on Czech stages in 2000 when he adapted the play *Vlci (The Wolves)* at Divadlo Petra Bezruče in Ostrava. It was inspired by the script of the Polish author Agnieszka Osecka which was created on the basis of an original prose piece by Isaac Singer (Czech première on 28th January 2000). Hübner-Ochodlo was involved in the modification of the text and was also the author of the stage setting and costumes. The prose piece itself contained the traumatic topic of emigration and a search for identity which was accented by the authorial modifications and the stage setting. The play thus related the personal topic of the director himself. He was of German origin, graduated in Poland and worked in Russia. He claimed an allegiance to the Polish-Ukrainian-Belarusian-Halič tradition of Judaism. A figurative language was typical for it. The dark stage setting consisting of broken window frames evoked a desolated place with a narrow fore-stage for the fatal meetings of the characters. The upper-stage consisted of a floodlit area for the ever-present interpreters of the Jewish prayers. The play was based on a contrast between the tension and the tragic experiences, on the pathetic gesture and expressive physicality, on tense emotionality and the authenticity of the actor's expression. Monotonous and thus urgently sounding prayers served as a counterpoint. Although it was an

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 163–164.

intimate story of a man between three women, it also reflected the dominant theme of Polish theatre, the fate of the Jews, the Holocaust and dispossession.

André Hübner-Ochodlo has returned to Moravian theatres regularly since 2000. He dramatized the play *Cinzano* (a text by the Russian playwright Ludmila Petruševska, staged by Divadlo Petra Bezruče with the Czech première on 30th January 2004). In this play he showed the hopelessness of people who are down and out in a grotesquely tragic setting. The existential and psychological dimension of the play interconnected with an absurd level in an unusual symbiosis which referred to the recent and present reality not only in the Soviet lands but also analogically in the lands of the former Eastern Bloc.

After appearing as a guest in Národní divadlo (The National Theatre) in Brno where he staged a play by a Swedish playwright Lars Norén entitled *Démon* (*The Demons*, 29th September 2006), this being an intimate drama about relationships transformed into a stylized, expressive acting, André Hübner-Ochodlo returned to Divadlo Petra Bezruče in Ostrava for the third time. His play *Prolomit vlny* (*Breaking the Waves*, 1st February 2008) was staged. Together with the dramaturgist Iлона Smékalová, he modified the original film script of the cult film of the same name by the director Lars von Trier. The naturalistic, emotionally aggressive story once again dealt with the theme of dispossession, a mystical overlap in dialogues with God as well as the theme of sacrifice which was shown in the play with an unusually acute pathos. Over the following seasons he cooperated with Komorní scéna Aréna (The Chamber Theatre Company Arena) in Ostrava where in a swift sequence he staged the plays *Happy Days* (Samuel Beckett, 10th January 2009) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Edward Albee, 24th January 2009). Another play of his in Komorní scéna Aréna met with the greatest response. This was a staging of a play by George Tabori *Jubilee* (18th September 2010). In Hübner-Ochodlo's version of this play there are dominant themes such as the Holocaust and German Nazism with recollections of WWII as well as the theme of contemporary Neo-Nazism accentuated in the character of the Nazi Jürgen who wakes up the dead among Jewish tombstones. The stage atmosphere of ghostliness, the rear layout with the tombstones in the mist, the stage covered with rotten leaves, the deathly make-up of the actors, the artistic symbolism of the costumes, all this was interconnected with the absurdly comic revival of tragic individual fates and the grotesque expression of the physical acting. The characters in the hands of the actors (Alena Sasínová-Polarczyk, Vladislav Georgiev, Tereza Dočkalová) were transformed into bizarre marionettes, the living "figurines" of the dead who without any bitterness and with a self-ironic distance narrate their own tragic stories. The German-Jewish-Polish traumas are omnipresent in the play and connect the past and the present, the dead with the world of living in this "gloomy farce"; precisely the intentions of modern Polish theatre traditions. The play consequently became a provocative statement as an enormous emotional and moral attack on the audience.

Andrzej Celiński is one of the Polish directors who produced his own work in the last decade in theatres in Moravia and Silesia. He most frequently stages plays by contemporary playwrights such as the play *Ústa Micka Jaggera* (*The Mouth of Mick Jagger*) by the Polish writer Doman Nowakowski (Divadlo Petra Bezruče (Petr Bezruč's Theatre) in Ostrava, world première on 10th May 2002). The theme of Polish history was transformed here into a reflection on generational trauma and frustration seen in a Polish-Czech overlap. In this case, however, it evoked the atmosphere of all of Central Europe during the era of the totalitarian regime in the general dimension. The play was captivating with an authenticity of interpretation, unusual work with space and light, and in a way with the cathartic impression for the specific generational group of audience. Celiński inclined to grotesque, non-mystifying stories which he presents as a psychological probe into the souls of individuals which simultaneously uncover the ties between the past and the present, the ghostliness of the connection between reality and inner fantasies

and visions. The remarkable play *Merlin. Jiný příběh* (*Merlin. Another History*, 13th September 2004, Czech première in Komorní scéna Aréna) by Tadeusz Słobodzianek and *The Pillowman* (in Národní divadlo moravskoslezské /The National Theatre Moravian-Silesian/, 29th October 2005) should also be ranked with this circle. A text by Martin McDonagh, the Irish rough school playwright, was dramatized by Celiński in an exceptional and contradictorily accepted staging which was based on the grotesque, even parodic hyperbole, emphasizing the absurd level of the cruelty of a family micro world. The interconnection between the ghostly fictional world of the hero and the past which unavoidably influences the present, the symbolism of the scenic images and also the expressiveness of the actors' expressions were typical methods with aspects of Polish direction. This was primarily achieved by the performer playing the main character, Jan Hájek. His emotional appeal was practically unbearable and it was exactly the counterpoint-like connection between grotesque black humour with cruel visual images which met with refusal by traditional audiences. On the other hand, it was accepted by the young audience which appreciated the provocativeness of the impression on the official stages. Among the other plays by Andrzej Celiński, were stagings such as *Misery* (Divadlo Petra Bezruče, 3rd February 2006), *Marie Sabina* (27th March 2007), and *Dangerous Liaisons* (Národní divadlo moravskoslezské, 16th February 2008).

Janusz Klimsza is the last personality who represents a specific level of contacts between Polish and Czech theatre. He is a director, actor who graduated from acting school in Wrocław, Poland and from theatre direction at DAMU in Prague. Within the context of Czech theatre, he is perceived as a Czech director with Polish origins. He adopted aspects of the Polish theatre tradition in the amateur sphere of alternative Polish theatres in Český Těšín where he began to work in professional Polish companies after 1989. His work was later primarily connected with Divadlo Petra Bezruče and Národní divadlo moravskoslezské in Ostrava. Out a number of plays of various genres which were created not only for stages in Ostrava but also for theatres in Prague, Olomouc and other cities, it is of interest to notice, with regards to the defined topic, the transfer of traditions of Polish theatre which in Klimsza's work is connected with both the poetics and the dramaturgical selection. He continually integrates Polish dramatics into the Czech context. Over the last decade this has been represented by his noticeable stagings of the plays of Stanisław Grochowiak (*Chłopcy /The Boys/,* Národní divadlo moravskoslezské, 17th October 2000), by Tadeusz Słobodzianek (*Prorok Ilja /Ilja, the Prophet/,* Komorní scéna Aréna, 11th September 2000), by Witold Gombrowicz (*Ślub /The Promise/,* Komorní scéna Aréna, 19th February 2006).⁴⁵ From a broader point of view certain dominant themes can be distinguished in his stagings, these being an interest in outsiders, characters from the periphery, individuals on the fringe of society who are dispossessed and non-integrated. Accentuated topics include the theme of the inner world of these characters, their fierce struggle with outer circumstances, with the mystical overlapping of individual fates and with a focus back on existential questions. It is not a coincidence that in most of the distinguished Klimsza stagings the Polish themes go beyond the broader contexts of the intercultural traditions of the Moravian-Silesian region. This can be seen for example in the aforementioned staging of *Prorok Ilja* by Tadeusz Słobodzianek. This story of a self-proclaimed prophet is set in the atmosphere of the Polish-Belarusian border, in Werszalin.⁴⁶ Klimsza trans-

⁴⁵ Janusz Klimsza also has an interest in both world and Czech drama (O. Wilde, F. G. Lorca, J. N. Nestroy, T. Williams, J. K. Tyl, L. Stroupežnický), as well as contemporary texts (D. Drábek, V. Klimáček) and drama (M. A. Bulgakov).

⁴⁶ Werszalin is also a place connected with a theatre ensemble which was established by Piotr Tomaszuk and Tadeusz Słobodzianek. They drew inspiration from the folk traditions of myths and continued in the legacy of Grotowski's theatre. Compare D. Krautschneiderová. *Obraz společnosti v současných polských divadelních textech*. Master's Thesis. FF UP, Olomouc 2010, p. 150–151.

lated the play and transposed the original slang which used Polish, Ukrainian and Belarusian language to the stylized Ostrava dialect. He set the play in a “folk” scenic image with the rudimentary stage setting covered with straw, realistic stage properties and a hen running about. He complemented it with folk music and Orthodox chants and prayers.⁴⁷ In this poetics of the magic realism, he (as a director) focused on the careful guidance of the actors, on the emotional authenticity of the interpretation, on the uncovering of the existential topics, rituality, and the theme of national self-reflection. Simultaneously, via a projection of photographs he disrupted the rudimentary character of the scene and interconnected the provincial story from the past with the contemporary threat of fanaticism and false prophets in the form of global terrorism (it is not a coincidence that the date of the première of the play coincided with the anniversary of the attack on the WTC in New York).

Gombrowicz's *Ślub* (Komorní scéna Aréna, 28th January 2006) and the play *Brenpartija* (Komorní scéna Aréna, 31st October 2009) rank among the most distinctive of Klimsza's directions. He was in the first case inspired by Gombrowicz's complicated multilayered text creating a compact intimate drama touching on existential traumas and a philosophical reflection of the world without God, insecurities and irrationality in ourselves as well as the absurd deformation of the world, searching for a steady point and escape into surreal visions. The play drew inspiration from the atmosphere of the contrast between the dream images and rough real situations, absurdly grotesque elements and focused acting from which the dominant topic of identity emerged. The play *Brenpartija* was different in terms of its atmosphere but analogous in terms of theme. It was created on the basis of a text by Tomáš Vůjtek which drew inspiration from the prose of Věnceslav Juřina concerning the country of Halda. This play confirms Klimsza's inclination to reflection on the intercultural aspects of the Moravian-Silesian region and the sources of the Polish theatre language. The tragic-grotesque world of the peculiar characters who are completely down and out was inspired by the period of the First Republic. The cathartic effect of Klimsza's play is achieved, however, by the levels of authenticity of the homeless people, outcasts, desperate men who are pictured in an overlapping interconnection with the present world, in the two-way refractive atmosphere of grotesquely tragic, absurd and poetic visions. The rough micro world on the cinder heap is connected with a search for a real God, with the mystical personification of the god of alcohol in the personification of Death. The symbolic visualisation and bitterly ridiculous tone aiming at the chilling realization of hopelessness, the counterpoint of the language levels in which the Silesian dialect alternates with the Polish, German and Jewish languages are only some of the features of the play in which the suggestive, to detail plotted acting is predominant (this being typical of Klimsza's style).

In the works of the aforementioned directors shared features of the Polish directorial school can be found: an emotional appeal, a distinct scenic visualisation, an emphasis on physical and expressive acting and repeated Polish themes which comprise a tendency towards national reflection and a blending of the past and present, frequently even the sphere of intercultural connections related to the atmosphere of Central Europe.

If we connect both lines which study aspects of Polish theatre in the Czech theatre context, it becomes evident that the influence of Polish theatre has been significantly reflected not only in the line of studio and authorial theatres in Moravia and Silesia and in their early works where they can be considered one of the most prominent factors participating in the enforcement of the model of “open theatre” in the Czech theatre context, but also in the sphere of repertoire theatres and the intimate companies where over the last decade the permanent and inspirational handing over of the individual principles of Polish theatre and its traditions via the works of

⁴⁷ Ibid.

specific directors can be observed. In this regard this serves as evidence that the Central European tradition of the movement of theatre concepts is still alive and well in the Czech theatre context in the early 21st century.

film and radio|

Andrea Hanáčková

Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the Faculty of Arts,
Palacký University Olomouc

Josef Branžovský and Critical Reflection on Broadcast Journalism over the Years 1970–1989

Abstract | Broadcast journalism, mainly documentary, radio sequences and features, was evolving differently in both parts of former Czechoslovakia. Český rozhlas (Czech Radio), had its facilities in the Study Department, first and foremost in the person of the theorist Josef Branžovský, whose knowledge of modern trends was comparable with his European colleagues. When he was forced to leave after 1969 and the Study Department was closed, it meant not only a loss of continuity within the studio, but also a general decline in documentary broadcast production. The period of disintegration continued throughout the entire normalization era up to the middle of the 1990s. This text includes an overview of J. Branžovský's professional life as well as the story of thirty years of Czech and Slovak radio features and the way in which it was reflected in the press.

.....

Motto:

There is a need to renew the Study Department activities in their entirety, collect the remnants of the library which was destroyed, find the remnants of the Study Department publications which are important for the education of the editors and also for the studies at the faculty. A memorandum on this subject, which we have sent to the Civic Forum and which still remains unanswered, is enclosed.

Josef Branžovský, 8th January, 1990¹

It is the end of 1989. The political scene is in ferment, and not only that. The people who have been forbidden to work for twenty years, whose careers have been interrupted, who could not publish their works, are mobilizing. The members of the Civic Forum of Czechoslovak Radio have received a statement from former Study Department employees who define the twenty-year gap between the high level of Czechoslovak educational broadcasting, as well as its critical reflection at the end of the 1960s, and the present state of broadcast theory and research. They are calling for immediate rectification and are offering their services.

It should be stated in the beginning that they or their followers have not received any answer up to this day. Therefore, the following text is also a contribution to the debate on to what extent a research and study department, primarily gathering impulses from universities and from abroad, can be beneficial and whether it is possible to regard the radio in today's world as a medium capable of providing education both inside, as an institution, and outside, to broad audiences.

¹ "Mám dva podněty..." (*I Have Two Suggestions...*) Inside material. J. Branžovský's estate Box 23/4, file 33/23, 1 page, a copy. Dated 8th January 1990.

It is remarkable that a number of propositions expressed specifically in the 1960s are still valid although a number of requests raised by the theorists of the 1960s have not yet been met by the radio.

Through the excellent example of theorist Josef Branžovský, this text intends to reveal the level of the reflection of Czech broadcast journalism at the end of the 1960s and the role played by the Study Department. I am going to explore in what ways the situation in Slovakia resembled or differed from the situation in Bohemia and how the Prague and Bratislava offices diverged in their understanding of broadcast journalism after the political purges at the end of the 1970s. I will attempt to demonstrate that while the Czechs stagnated in a search for a kind of *pata-form*, a genre pastiche in the form of a so-called “theatre of fact,” the Slovaks were working persistently on improving the genre of preference in the rest of the world, the feature, with concentration and ongoing reflection. This development necessarily marked a new start for the radio in the changed political environment after 1990. The topic of critical reflection in the Czech environment was elaborated only in the area of radio drama² while criticism of journalistic broadcast programmes only appeared in outline and for a limited period³. Data from the estate of Josef Branžovský, Josef Kolář and František Gel, three key figures of the Czech radio sequence and educational programme production, have yet to be processed. Similarly, the history of the Slovak feature editorial office and more than five hundred of its programmes broadcast between 1977 and 1989 remains unresearched.

1 Josef Branžovský and the Renaissance of Critical Reflection in Radio

The professional story of the Josef Branžovský (1909–1992), one of the most important Czech theorists of journalistic and educational broadcasting, the greatest promoter of the genre of feature and an expert on foreign radio production, particularly on German production, begins in the 1940s. When he worked as a teacher in the Ostrava region, he kept detailed notes of his literary, film, philosophical and also media studies. As early as in the years 1940, 1941 and 1942, he was contemplating the relationship between drama, film and epic, examining the pitfalls of radio adaptations, analysing such terms as composition, act and discontinuity. These are the words which can be found in the headings of the individual pages in his notebooks, as well as slogans such as “*The sound creates the atmosphere.*”⁴ Apart from his own observations, reflections and excerpts from books, there are also direct quotes and newspaper clippings.

It is not clear when Branžovský obtained all the valuable foreign publications which were found in his estate. At that time he might have had the key publication by Lance Sieveking *The Stuff of Radio* (1934)⁵, containing a number of arguments about the role of radio at that time within the context of the first parallel attempts at television programmes, as well as examples of scripts of the first features (*Kaleidoscope I and II*, *The End of Savoy Hill* and others). Branžovský also knew the German publication by R. Arnheim *Radio* (1936)⁶, as well as one of the first books

² A. Štěrbová, *Rozhlasová inscenace. Teoreticky komentované dějiny české rozhlasové produkce (The Radio Play. Theoretically Guided of Czech Radio Production)*. Olomouc 1995.

³ A. Hanáčková, *Český rozhlasový dokument a feature 1990–2005: Poetika žánrů (Czech Radio Documentary and Feature 1990–2005: Poetics of Genres)*. Brno 2010.

⁴ Branžovský's notebooks in an A5 format, written on squared paper and differentiated with colours, are stored as a part of J. Branžovský's estate. Box 22/6/16/0. Quote from a notebook dated 1942.

⁵ In Branžovský's estate stored as item 16/5.

⁶ Branžovský apparently read it in English, in his estate stored as item 11/5.

summarizing the texts of radio plays: *Das Horspielbuch* (1938) by Payué Kriegler⁷. He also probably studied Kožík's *Rozhlasové umění* (The Radio Art, 1940), which has been an inspiring work up to the present time.

Branžovský began to work in the radio, first as an editor and later as the director of the lecture department of Ostrava radio, soon after his return from the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1945. He remained faithful to the issue of education even after he moved to Prague. From 1952 he worked as the director of the Department of Science and Technology and in 1963 he began to work in the newly established Study Department of Czechoslovak Radio.

In the 1950s, Branžovský primarily worked on a cycle entitled *Radio University*, although he still followed new foreign literature on radio drama and features. He knew Val Gielgud's selection of BBC radio plays from 1946, as well as the American radio features of Norman Corwin⁸. To understand Branžovský's later journey and his leaving the radio after 1969, it is necessary to know that even at that time, his pro-European and humanistic nature became apparent. The Department of Science and Technology was in the immediate neighbourhood of the Department of Marxist-Leninist Propaganda and they were both subordinate to the Central Department of Political Broadcasting. According to Rostislav Běhal, the department was successful in avoiding party orders and bans, because it was possible to leave political activities to the "neighbouring" responsible department and concentrate on the original educational function of radio, i. e. keep the general audience well-informed about the newest scientific findings⁹. It should also be mentioned that under Branžovský's direction Czechoslovak radio broadcast the finest sequences of František Gel, who had already been partially paralysed by his illness at that time and also deprived of his job as a reporter by the Communist regime. Branžovský recognized Gel's potential not only in the sphere of education, language knowledge and diligence, but primarily in his art of storytelling and extremely radio-oriented sense of composition. He later collected Gel's eighteen radio sequences in an anthology.¹⁰ This provided excellent material for his later reflections on features – German features he knew from theoretical works and compilations resembled Gel's work in Czechoslovakia in many aspects.

During 1950s, the form of the feature was primarily established thanks to the Hamburg school, represented by Ernst Schnabel, Axel Eggebrecht, Alfred Andersch and Peter von Zahn. Branžovský based his analyses on their works. The radio periodicals published several German features, as well as theoretical reflections. It was the German-speaking area which was reflected on the most frequently in the 1960s. One of the first references to the feature in an internal radio periodical comes from 1956. In an in-depth study, a particular German feature was examined. It was "*Life Starts Too Early*" by Peter Coulmas, which deals with the education system in Germany.¹¹ The tone of the article is not quite clear. On the one hand, the feature is disparaged with reference to its ambiguous or even opposing definitions. On the other hand, it openly admires

⁷ In Branžovský's estate stored as item 18/1.

⁸ The above-mentioned publications are part of Branžovský's estate. Val: *Radio Theatre*. London 1946. J. Branžovský's estate, no. 18/1. Corwin, Norman: *Untitled and Other Radio Dramas*. New York 1947. J. Branžovský's estate, no. 16/1.

⁹ E. Ješutová, et al, *Od mikrofonu k posluchačům (From the Microphone To the Listeners)*. Z osmi desetiletí Českého rozhlasu (From eight decades of Czech Radio). Praha 2003, p. 266–268.

¹⁰ J. Branžovský, *Sborník rozhlasových pásem F. Gela. 18 reportážních výprav do hlubin přírody a historie (Anthology of Radio Sequences by F. Gel. 18 Reports from the Depths of Nature and History)*. Praha 1965.

¹¹ The author does not state the original name of the programme and the translation is extremely liberal, it is probably the programme entitled *Das Leben beginnt zu früh*, which premiered on 4th May 1955. Source: B. Steiherr, *Nachtstudio Teil I: Sendeunterlagen 1948 bis 1959*. Bayerischer Rundfunk Historisches Archiv. 2009. p. 28. <http://www.br-online.de/content/cms/Universalseite/2009/08/18/cumulus/BR-online-Publikation-ab-05-2009--116156-20090817132145.pdf> (13th January 2012).

the high aesthetic values of the programmes and concludes with imaginary applause for this “highest art of montage.” The text shows his knowledge of the context of German production and German media studies, as well as elaborate terminology and criteria designed for the assessment of this sub-genre.¹²

In June 1961, *Zápisník* (The Notebook), a bulletin of the methodology and research department of the Czechoslovak Radio in Bratislava, produced extensive material, a translation from O. H. Kühner’s book *Hörspiel, Funkerzählung, Feature*.¹³ Careful reading reveals the characteristics of the “Gelien sequence” in the description of the German feature in the 1950s. Kühner also recommends a particular number of “speakers” and their particular roles. At present, a radio programme compiled in such a manner is regarded as too academic, far from life and conventional. According to an original testimony by Peter Leonhard Braun, a younger colleague of the above-mentioned founders of the German Habsburg school, such a radio programme sounded obsolete and conventional even to his contemporaries.¹⁴

In the lead paragraph of the above-mentioned article in the Slovak periodical, there is also a call for a polemic with a text of the same dating, which was published in a magazine entitled *Rozhlasová práce* (Radio Work) in Prague.¹⁵ It is therefore evident that feature was discussed, although only sporadically, both in the Czech and Slovak environment.

Branžovský monitored the development not only by subscribing to various magazines and anthologies, but also purchasing books or their photocopies on films. A cookie box from Branžovský’s estate contains black film rolls with unique publications which are currently the only available copies in the Czech Republic. Branžovský knew new German plays and features from the edition *Norddeutscher Rundfunk Hörspiele und Features* and the fundamental publications by A. Andersch, H. Schwitzke, F. Knilli and M. McLuhan. He also kept a close watch on literature through the media, among which BBC ranked first in the 1960s.¹⁶

It would be appropriate to provide a detailed description of Branžovský’s intense self-study in the field of radio plays, documentaries, features and methods of journalistic work. It reveals an unusually large scope of interests, an ability to follow and interconnect modern radio trends in journalism and topical issues in stereophony, original radio plays and the expanding possibilities of radio as a medium. No one in *Český rozhlas* knew as much as he did, it was unnecessary. In the Study Department, where he moved as a deputy to the head Jiří Lederer, as well as in the

¹² Poznámky o programové tvorbě ‘feature’ (Notes to the Programme Production of ‘Feature’). (author not stated). *Bulletin Metodického kabinetu* vol. 15. Praha 1956, p. 93–102.

¹³ *Čo je to feature? (What is Feature?)* *Zápisník*, metodicko-výskumného oddelenia čs. rozhlasu v Bratislave. Na okraj programovej práce za mesiac máj – jún 1961. Mesačný bulletin metodicko-výskumného oddelenia Čs. rozhlasu v Bratislave, vol. 5–6. Bratislava 1961, p. 74–76.

¹⁴ Peter Leonhard Braun described that time very vividly: “Radio documentary was in fact a litany recorded in the studio by a broadcaster, that is, narrative dramaturgy in a journalistic or literary style, probably close to a report or essay. Its main task was simply to convey the information. The exciting potential of the radio was either generally unknown or ignored. The radio documentary acted only as a talking head which lacked everything ‘down there’: chest, belly – and most of all, genitals.” A. Hanáčková, *Antologie světového rozhlasové feature (1974–2004)* I. část. Překlad The Collection of The International Feature Conference. (Anthology of the World Radio Feature, part I. Translation of The Collection of The International Feature Conference.) *Svět rozhlasu*, vol. 17, 2007, p. 68.

¹⁵ A text entitled *Ten umí a ten zas tohle* (One Can Do This, One Can Do That) was published in *Rozhlasová práce*, vol. 1. 1961.

¹⁶ They are, for example, the following publications: E. Schnabel, *Ein Tag wie morgen*, 1947; K. Walter Kingson – R. Cowgill, *Radio Drama Acting and Production. A Handbook*. New York 1950; P. F. Lazarsfeld, – H. H. Field, *The People Look at Radio*. Columbia University 1946. J. Branžovský’s estate 22/6/16.

quarterly Studies and Reflections, each worker had their special topic.¹⁷ Branžovský was well versed in broadcast journalism and its overlapping with literature and feature as well as in the issues of broadcast education and the possibilities of presenting science and technology via sound.

The aim of this text is not to present an overview of how Branžovský's view of feature developed. In the context of the convergence of journalism and literary work, a brief analysis of his theoretical works has been carried out by Jiří Hraše.¹⁸ Hraše kept in touch with Branžovský and consulted him about a number of publication outputs as well as about minor reflections on the situation at the time in radio broadcasting.¹⁹ He reminds us of the key terms of Branžovský's reflections which were based on literary and film theory (character, montage, discontinuity). Minor quotes illustrate what Branžovský's view of broadcast journalism of the 1960s was. His examples and knowledge of the foreign production were very much needed and he gladly accepted the incoming so-called "problem programmes" as heralds of the reborn Czech journalism, which formally complied with the newest trends of German or English features. "We are getting down to the heart of the matter," Branžovský wrote in 1964. "In our country documentary sequence lies outrageously idle and its political capital remains criminally unexploited. [...] Our documentary sequences [...] do not see the focus in an authentic radio, i. e. sound documentary, the power and persuasion of which is unparalleled in radio."²⁰ He also critically assesses the way of managing the authors and operating means and provides a detailed description of the system of royalties from premières and rebroadcasts of programmes among the radio stations in Hamburg, Stuttgart and Frankfurt. Branžovský was apparently angry with the rigid system and the tone of anger can be felt from the following lines. "Why don't we talk about Socialism with a modification of the old slogan: Let's do only what pays off for Socialism. And also, let's post people where they can be most profitable for Socialism."²¹ Within the context of the last sentence, it is bitterly ironic how the Socialist regime treated and where it "posted" Branžovský and his colleagues from the Study Department, whose tireless publication and research activities enabled them to reach the European level. They were mostly forced to retire with an old-age or disability pension or to emigrate.

Branžovský also provides insightful analyses for Czech authors. The style characteristics of the two documentary sequences commemorating the anniversary of the Munich Agreement and the ensuing occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939 is still very inspiring.²² He analyses the work with archive material to the minute detail, as well as the role of the written text, the work with audio details, contrasting and confronting the facts. It should be pointed out once again that Branžovský remains unmatched in his thoroughness and preciseness of judgement, as well as in his ability to interconnect the context of Czech production with foreign trends. The end of his analysis is almost prophetic.

More anniversaries will come and there is a danger that we will repeat the old facts, arguments or footage, if it is still available, for the tenth, twentieth time, only slightly modified. Of course, it is not about changing the historical facts or making up new ones. It is about abandoning the point of view from which we are looking at the events, looking at them from a different angle, fresh and original,

¹⁷ The Study Department operated in Czech Radio over the years 1960–1970, for basic information see E. Ješutová "Od mikrofonu k posluchačům", p. 325–326.

¹⁸ J. Hraše, Branžovského analýza publicistiky a literární pořady. (Branžovský's Analysis of Journalism and Literary Programmes) *Svět rozhlasu* 12, 2004, p. 34–39.

¹⁹ The proof is their mutual correspondence, which is stored among J. Branžovský's estate, box 23/4, file 32/23.

²⁰ J. Branžovský, Dvakrát o pásmu aneb nešlo by to u nás také? (Twice About Radio Sequence, or Can We Do It Here as Well?) *Rozhlasová práce* 4, 1964, p. 59

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²² J. Branžovský, Once again about the documentary sequence. *Rozhlasová práce* 6, 1964, p. 81–85.

*which allows the contours to emerge anew and distinct. Even the tragedy of Lidice, if described with the same words for the hundredth time, with the same facts pointed out again and again, will no longer be emotionally exciting for the audiences.*²³

This is exactly what happened not only with the tragedy of Lidice,²⁴ but also with all the other anniversaries which my generation of “Husák’s children” was fed with over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. The programs of the festivities and the colours of the flags and ties were identical every year, as well as the broadcast speeches, the poems chosen for reciting and the choice of words in general.

In 1965, Branžovský’s article *Mluv, abych tě slyšel (Speak, so I Can Hear You)* was published in *Divadlo*, a popular magazine of the day which is still regarded as prestigious.²⁵ In the article, Branžovský discusses aspects of sonority and broadcastability, as well as both the physical and creative possibilities and the limitations in the ability to hear and also to “see” what one hears. He thus follows up on the studies of his colleague Václav Smitka, who dealt with the psychological and sociological aspects of broadcast perception in a number of articles in the 1960s and after that also in the 1990s. The way in which Branžovský discusses the broadcast sound indicates his wide experience as well as the providence of a critic who rightly felt that radio should take a course towards a greater emphasis on imagination and the emotional effect of sound as a basic means of expression.

*I personally feel that in radio, about the important thing is not so much the evocation of specific images, the nature of which is after all individual and subjective to a large extent, but rather the important objective fact; the power of broadcasting sound strangely oscillates between a specific image and an unlimited world of possibilities. It is not so much about specific visual images, it is more about the latent possibility to imagine anything, which far exceeds the dimensions of reality and is as frail and unreal as desire and dreams.*²⁶

Over the years 1964–1966, the broadcasting periodical *Rozhlas ve světě (Broadcasting in the World)* offered several views on the feature and also complete scripts of features from abroad. Branžovský published anthologies of sequences by F. Gel, J. Kolář and L. Vaculík, and writes down the history of the Czech radio sequence and the Czech radio play. He was engaged in a quantitative analysis of educational programmes, edited the anthologies from *Rozhlasová žatva (Radio Harvest)*, translated and contributed to the periodicals *Rozhlasová práce (Radio Work)* and *Rozhlas ve světě*. The twenty volumes of the quarterly *Studie a úvahy (Studies and Reflections)* holds a special position within the context of broadcast periodicals. It was published between the years 1963–1968 with its mission being to improve the background for broadcast production. From the beginning of its activity, the editors also paid attention to the issues of mass communication and mass culture, to the sociological and psychological context of broadcasting and to

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁴ An outstanding testimony about the gradual historical diminution caused by using the tragedy of Lidice for propaganda is told by the entire project and the preamble to the plan of the citizens’ association *Rozeznění 2012*. The association was trying to find a new perspective on what happened in Lidice and offer a new type of experience, living through the fate of the people who were killed during that one night. Cited from the website: www.rozezneni.cz/ (13th January 2012).

²⁵ J. Branžovský, *Mluv, abych tě slyšel*. *Divadlo* 10, 1965. The study was also published in: *Sborník rozhlasové teorie 3 (Broadcast Theory Almanac 3)*. Praha 1996, p. 5–23.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

topics on the boundary between radio, theatre, film and literature.²⁷ It would seem that the massive amount of work and still better formulated opinions on both Czech and foreign broadcast productions should have helped Branžovský and his colleagues from the Study Department (in its heyday, there were 14 employees) fill the long years of silence and inactivity when nobody was interested in their work.

Zdeněk Bouček relates about how close Josef Branžovský was to the elite of world documentary production and how he instinctively discovered the most progressive stream of feature development, thanks to the geographic and linguistic proximity.²⁸ He claims, without citing his source, that around 20th August 1968 in Prague, Branžovský was to meet Peter Leonhard Braun. Braun had won Prix Italia twice, he was a promoter of stereophony in journalism and was also the founder of the acoustic feature. At that time, he worked for the German station Sender Freies Berlin, after having spent several years at the BBC. “Upon Braun’s arrival in Prague, another visitor, armed to the teeth, came unexpected and so it happened that the two men were never to meet again and their journeys parted,” states Z. Bouček without further details. Branžovský’s estate contains Braun’s programmes dated as far back as 1965. Branžovský was familiar with all the key features of this German experimenter and up until now respected guru of world radio documentary production, even though he probably only read scripts. A number of them were working versions typed on a typewriter, while others were published as books.²⁹ A detailed knowledge of German feature of the 1950s helped Branžovský understand what it was Braun stood against and how he understood feature in a completely new way.³⁰

We still do not know how Braun and Branžovský managed to get in contact by correspondence, however, it is clear that their meeting was very inspiring for both of them. Braun knew British, French, German as well as Polish and Serbian authors and their individual broadcast endeavours and experiments. Branžovský had a vast theoretical background, great language skills, a clearly defined terminology and the ability of prompt analysis. He found great potential in Braun and his new appreciation of the sound and his courage to venture into “non-radio,” more “visual” themes, which gave the radio documentarists completely new means of expression. Branžovský mentioned all these observations in his probably most successful, mature and compact article entitled simply Feature, again published in the magazine *Divadlo*.³¹ In this paper, he summarised the results of his ten-year studies and showed, mostly using examples from abroad, the direction Czech radio journalism should take if it wants to be a match for the best.

²⁷ For detailed information about the periodical, see for example B. Dokoupil, *Studie a úvahy*. <http://www.slovníkceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=220> (13th December 2011).

²⁸ Z. Bouček, Josef Branžovský a feature (Josef Branžovský and Feature), in: *K rozhlasové historii a teorii: Sborník příspěvků z jarního semináře 2001 (On BroadcastHistory and Theory: Collection of Papers from the Spring Seminar 2001)*, Praha 2001, p. 19–22.

²⁹ They were the following works: *Hühner, Catch as Catch Can, 8.15 Uhr Op III Huftplastik, Hyänen, Unlaub in Cornwall, Debut in Bayreuth, Pariser Filigran, Londoner Abend*. Among the documents I also discovered a book with an inscription by Braun himself, although completely illegible. The only legible part is Herr Branžovský and the date 12th January 1973. J. Branžovský’s estate 11/1/65,72.

³⁰ It is also reflected in another citation from Braun’s memoirs: “We learned how to describe reality better, in an acoustic way rather than verbally. We forgot about the typewriter and we used new documentary tools instead. We wrote with microphones, cassette recorders, scissors and an audio mixer. It was very exciting to leave the studios and offices, the traditional and technically binding slavery, and enter the open free radio documentary space. [...] A portable tape recorder allowed us to leave our settled existence and become nomads and hunters at the same time, with a microphone instead of a gun. My God, that feeling of freedom! We no longer wrote about a thing, we recorded the thing itself.” (A. Hanáčková, *Antologie světového rozhlasové feature (1974–2004) I. část. Překlad The Collection of The International Feature Conference. Svět rozhlasu 17 (2007)*, p. 68–69.

³¹ J. Branžovský, Feature. *Divadlo*, 10 (1969), p. 60–66.

The paper and in particular its conclusions are extraordinary from the terminological point of view, in particular in the way it embraces the unusual and unused word feature. In the conclusion, the author calls for gradual implementation of the new term. He believes that feature can find its place among other names for radio genres, as did another word from literary theory which has a similarly broad meaning – *feuilleton*.

“It does not matter that it is boundless in terms of topic and domain. You can write feuilletons about anything, without any specialization. Nevertheless, it is still a kind of narrative or description with particular and distinctive attributes, which help everybody identify this genre without a second thought.” It should be mentioned that this was another one of Branžovský’s initiatives which has yet to be fulfilled. Perhaps at least the youngest generation of students today has shaken off their shyness when pronouncing the English word feature.

The above-mentioned study was an unintended highlight of the works of this critic and theorist of the feature. The well-known political events following the “Prague Spring” dealt a fatal blow to J. Branžovský’s personal and professional life, as well as to the fate of the entire elite of critics, theorists and authors at the Czech Radio.³² In 1968, the quarterly *Studies and Reflections* was discontinued, the Study Department was dissolved in April 1969³³, and in 1970, Josef Branžovský was forced to retire.

The attitude of the “new”, “normalized”, “purified” radio to one of its most educated people is best illustrated by a brief correspondence at the end of the following year of 1971. Branžovský asks the Czech Radio head office for permission to study archive materials from the 1930s, namely the sequences of F. K. Zeman, Josef Waltner and others and wants to see the Czech radio yearbooks and conference proceedings, probably to use them for his studies on the Czech radio sequence.³⁴ He received a four-line reply at the beginning of January 1972, stating that permission to borrow or copy archive material for study purposes was only granted to institutions.³⁵

2 The Beginning of Normalization in Czechoslovakia

“For the ideological assertiveness, for the diversity and perfection of the form, for the effectiveness and persuasiveness of the Czechoslovak Radio broadcast,” states the conclusion of a national seminar for radio employees in 1973.³⁶ The masses of delegates sitting behind long tables, a scene so often repeated in film newsreels, are the new faces of the Socialist, fully normalized medium. Radio has been purified. Those who had not been expelled from the party and therefore deprived of the chance to continue their work and who had not emigrated or retired, had probably fallen prey to one of the many coercive or screening events, which were carried out systematically and thoroughly in the radio. Meeting points of artists and people of humanistic education as well as any potential for liberal ideas, were naturally dangerous for the Communists. A detailed descrip-

³² For a detailed description of these events and their specific personnel, programme and institutional results, see for example E. Ješutová *“Od mikrofonu k posluchačům”*, p. 338–345.

³³ This is quoted by Jiří Lederer, the head of the department at the time, in an inside text. Another source states that the day the Study Department was dissolved was 1st December 1970 (Ješutová *“Od mikrofonu k posluchačům”*, p. 600).

³⁴ A letter addressed to the Czech Radio Headquarters, Prague 14th December 1971. Box 23/4, file 32/23. Copy of the letter on tracing paper.

³⁵ A letter addressed to Josef Branžovský, Prague 4th January 1972. Box 23/4, file /32/23. Original of the letter on letter head paper, signed by Antonín Navrátil on behalf of the secretariat of the director of Czech Radio.

³⁶ *Celoštátny seminár pracovníkov Čs. rozhlasu o feature (Modra-Harmónia 30.–31. 10. 1974). Materiály zo seminára. (National seminar of the workers of Czechoslovak Radio regarding the feature. Material from the seminar.)* Bratislava 1974. p. 3.

tion of the personnel purges and the consequent training of “new cadres”³⁷ clearly indicates how brutally the work of many people during the 1960s was devastated. Branžovský, Lederer and many other radio workers ended up on a list with a monstrous name: “*Unified central register of representatives, exponents and bearers of right-wing opportunism and organizers of anti-party, anti-socialist and anti-Soviet campaigns and events.*” The list was compiled between the years 1971 and 1973 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Being on the ill-famed “blacklist” meant a prohibition of activity and many other forms of civic, labour and political discrimination and criminalization.³⁸

Let us return to the radio journalism and its theoretical reflection. One of the commitments ensuing from the above-mentioned seminar was to convene a conference on feature. The conference took place a year later and its proceedings are, from today’s point of view, a gloomy reading. In the presentation by the main foreign guest, Wolfgang Rödel from East Germany, the feature is already divided into socialist feature and imperialistic feature. The Western European authors were accused of “*a tendentious orientation against the establishment of democratic social structures*” and also “*anti-communism, based on a falsification of history.*”³⁹ While later texts contain political paragraphs which look as if they were inserted only afterwards, as a courtesy to the regime, the purely pro-regime choice of words is clearly visible in the presentations at the seminar on feature in 1974. They make a point of criticizing past era.

“*The factor conditioning the current need for Socialist feature is the necessity to overcome all the consequences of the long-time activity of right-wing journalism in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s,*” claims Josef Skála in a discussion. He says the authors “*flooded the public with fragments of various minute facts that were often made-up*” which was “*an intentional manipulation in favour of reactionary powers*”. They also often used “*the feature of purely western concept.*”⁴⁰ The speech of Vlastimil Brtěk⁴¹ is, in fact, a relevant contribution to the reflections on the theoretical definition of the genre of feature. He emphasizes the role of the author subject. Nevertheless, the entire text is so filled with Socialistic ideology of prosperity, emphasizing the propagandistic and promotional role of feature to such an extent that the other problems of production and the genre are completely suppressed. To illustrate the perversity of the ideological approach to a radio genre, I quote a part of speech by comrade Brtěk:

Feature as a child of bourgeois radio cannot promote capitalism.

It cannot be ablaze for it.

It can only be its advocate, give reasons, explain things from the bourgeois point of view, to look critical as well, but to present this criticism only as an improvement to the capitalist system. Feature cannot go further in the west.

We understand feature as a certain kind of ideological weapon. A weapon itself is a classless object. It becomes a class object at the moment when somebody takes it in his hand and it depends on who and when and whose interests he begins to defend.

³⁷ E. Ješutová “*Od mikrofonu k posluchačům*”, p. 351–357.

³⁸ The list of the radio employees who were included on the ‘blacklist’ is available, for example in Ješutová “*Od mikrofonu k posluchačům*”, p. 395.

³⁹ W. Rödel, Úvahy o rozhlasovom feature, in: *Celoštátny seminár pracovníkov Čs. rozhlasu o feature (Modra-Harmónia 30.–31. 10. 1974) (Reflections on Radio Feature)*. Bratislava 1974, p. 5–24.

⁴⁰ J. Skála, *Koreferát na Celoštátnom seminári pracovníkov Čs. rozhlasu o feature. (Supplementary Paper at the National Seminar of the Czechoslovak Radio Employees about Feature)* Ibid., p. 63–64

⁴¹ Vlastimil Brtěk changed posts and functions several times between the years 1947 and 1991, most often working as a head or chief editor. He is an author of nearly ten theatrical titles. See R. Běhal, *Kdo je kdo v sedmdesátileté historii Českého rozhlasu (Who is Who in Seventy Years of the Czech Radio)*. Praha 1992, p. 46.

It is the same with our feature.

[...] *The origin of feature in western radios had its causes. And they were far from being only creative and formal. I do not want to claim that the feature is the fruit of the agencies of the imperialistic intelligence. On the other hand, we have indicated that the feature was created as an objective natural necessity for fulfilling the social function of the radio, regardless of the social system.*

[...] *Something else is more important. What can we in the Socialist radio do with this type of programme, how can we use it?*⁴²

One of the references within the discussion reveals that the participants of the conference heard *Řetěz (Chain)*⁴³, a programme by Jan Vít. This programme will serve as an example of the situation in which first-class Czech feature found itself in the first half of the 1970s. In a parallel fashion, we can examine a Slovak programme from the same year, a work by Ernest Weidler, *Deník vidiackého lekára (Diary of a Country Doctor)*.

For his documentary sequence, which was the subtitle of the programme, Jan Vít chose to reconstruct the story of Petr, a badly burnt boy who survived a fatal accident and managed to come back to life with the help of various unknown people, skin donors and experts – doctors. Vít used the chain as a metaphor, while the story itself is rather a means to render another authorial message. “...I was trying to find the true meaning of this story, a meaning which would emerge only through revocation, through the cold principle of epoch-making, the millions of seconds invested into a single person are ineffective, but the true meaning must be seen in the attitude of people who understood that they had to act ‘now’ /.../, people who do all they can for the world, without a single word.”⁴⁴ From today’s perspective, it is a modern acoustic feature which was created in authentic environments: a city, a hospital, an ambulance, a children’s playground, a factory, streets, a printing office, with the use of the noise of life support, heartbeat and clock ticking, with a number of respondents whose replies are edited to follow the storyline, while the narration is taken over by the character of the narrator and the authorial notes. The programme competed in the annual documentary section of Prix Italia and according to internal testimonies, only narrowly failed to win. It would have been the first victory of such an extent on the international scale in the history of Czech documentary production. Jan Vít, a young and promising radio employee⁴⁵, was interested in the phenomenon known as “radio-verité” even during his university studies and the way in which he thought about broadcasting was very close to his peers from western Europe. However, he never made another equally successful feature in the following years.

About a year earlier (1973) Slovak radio broadcast the feature *Diary of a Country Doctor* by Ernest Weidler, who was at that time an experienced author having worked in the radio since 1957.⁴⁶ Weidler spent several weeks in Oravská Lesná, like Vít, and through the collecting method he gradually built up a portrait of a country doctor and his large family. Apart from

⁴² V. Brtěk, Referát na celoštátnom seminári pracovníkov Čs. rozhlasu o feature. In: *Celoštátny seminár pracovníkov Čs. rozhlasu o feature* (Modra-Harmónia 30.–31. 10. 1974). Bratislava 1974. p. 35–36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁴ Jan Vít: *Řetěz*. Premiered 23rd July 1974 on the channel Praha. Josef Branžovský’s estate. Box 23/3, item 1/74, file 30/23. s. 44, probably part of an intended larger collection where running pagination was used.

⁴⁵ At the time when Vít made his documentary *Řetěz*, he was 25, a fresh graduate from the Faculty of Journalism of Charles University where he was writing a doctoral thesis on drama genres in radio.

⁴⁶ Weidler is perceived as a great personality in Slovakia not only in the context of the history of Slovak documentary and feature, but also as the presenter of the popular programme *Na modrej vlně* (On a blue wave, broadcast over the years 1961–1990), an active participant in the restored religious life and broadcasting after 1990, the programme deputy director of the radio (1990–1994) and President’s adviser (1994–1997). His features and the distinctive path he paved when he explored this genre without contact with other countries are perceived as norm-setting for the current form of Slovak feature. Source: *Entry Ernest Weidler*. <http://sk.wikipedia.org/>

reports from his medical practice and interviews with the family, Weidler also chose a wide array of supremely artistic elements including reciting and both popular and classical music. The result was not only a report on the work of a doctor in a remote part of Slovakia, but also a kind of mental image of the region of Horní Orava. The programme was praised at the competition of *Rozhlasová žatva 1973*.⁴⁷ Journalist Hana Gregorová followed the development of the production of the Slovak feature office and one of her journalistic characteristics of Ernest Weidler describes very aptly the generally preferred authorial style in feature.

*His sequences show a conscientious preparation which is also illustrated by a well-thought out and well-designed narration. And what is the most valuable thing? Weidler does not preach, he asks questions. He asks himself and the interviewees provocative and probing questions, but he also asks the listeners. They are disturbing questions, questions that stir up our conscience. He is not one-sided or monotonous. He influences all age groups and [...] probes the social and sociological structure of our society. Of course, he makes no claims to an unalterable judgement. Even his questions are formulated in such a way that they challenge possible one-sided opinions. Thus he manages to look at things in a way which is rarely employed in this sphere – inside and under the skin. That is why he is so disturbing.*⁴⁸

3 Indoctrination of Feature by the Ideologically Erroneous “Play of Fact”

The programmes we have reflected on so far illustrate the last surge of broadcast journalism in the Czech environment which was motivated, theoretically well-equipped and well-informed by foreign examples and not yet ideologically twisted. The following ten to fifteen years until 1989 were marked, however, by a steep decline in the quality of both production and theoretical reflection within broadcast journalism. Vladimír Remeš, who was the script editor of the A-Zet office, succinctly describes the situation in 1981. He summarises the critical opinions on radio drama and journalism from the second half of the 1970s as “*not particularly reliable, utterly random and insufficient*”. He sees the production at the time as a strenuous battle “*against the dead weight of inferiority, against banality of thought and formal insufficiency*”. He asks why after “*a decade of steep success, when Czech radio received many international awards and claimed worldwide recognition and respect, there was now a period of silence*”. Failing to give explicit explanation, he could mean the 1960s and the following period of normalization. He claims that the current drama, into which he includes arts journalism, can “*hardly think of any serious representation abroad*”, he even believes that it is not capable of carrying out its regular programme tasks. While asking his comradely critical questions, he unknowingly answers them saying “*in an atmosphere of creative unrest, constant tension and feverish waiting for a new work which would truly match the great contemporary demands on ideological influence in the arts broadcasting of the radio, it is very rare to achieve a professional performance*”⁴⁹. By these many words he describes the fact that after the institution of radio completely wiped out the reporter, author and the professional elite

wiki/Ernest_Weidler. (17th December 2011).; also a personal interview with E. Weidler and interviews with contemporary Slovak documentarists. E. Weidler and his personality are also explored in B. Balúchová's thesis.

⁴⁷ *Rozhlasová žatva 1973, dokumentácia o priebehu Žatvy a texty víťazných relácií*. Inside print, some pages are handwritten.

⁴⁸ H. Gregorová, *Odraz života v pravdivejšej tvorbe. K umelecko-publicistickým pásmam E. Weidlera a J. Piláta. (Reflection of Life in Truer Production. On Artistic and Journalistic Sequences of E. Weidler and J. Pilát.)*

⁴⁹ V. Remeš, *Hra faktu – nová možnosť dramatického vysílání rozhlasu? (Play of Fact – a New Possibility for Drama Radio Broadcast?) Rozhlasová práce 1 (1981), p. 27.*

in general, after it got rid of educated, knowledgeable and linguistically talented people who were capable of an immediate feedback regarding the broadcast programmes, it fell inevitably into a decay of unprofessionalism and ideological babbling about the Socialist functions of broadcasting. *“The number of talentless people has increased and the creative work is fully in the hands of clerks, who are undoubtedly very important for the operation, but lack imagination, sensibility, generosity and the ability to take creative risks,”* says Remeš, criticizing his own ranks.⁵⁰ Remeš himself reflects on the fact that in his newly created office for literature and theatre of fact which was transformed from the original A-Zet office in September 1977, he was reinventing the wheel and labouring to reach the original level, when he was delegated to act as the head of the office. He claims that as far as the radio drama is concerned, the radio produces the same amount of literary adaptations and realizations as in the 1950s. Proof of this is Remeš’s description of the way in which the radio works with stereophony, the first journalistic attempts at which were described by P. L. Braun in 1958, while it was employed on a regular basis doing exterior recordings in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1981, Remeš states that drama works are recorded in the studio monophonically. The reasons behind this again indicate a complete lack of professionalism and competence on the part of the people, not necessarily of the authors, who made decisions about the course and form of the radio.

The newly established office for literature and theatre of fact had two basic ambitions. It was firstly experimenting with a drama production which stems from authentic events and fates of people, but is created at the office desk in a purely fictitious way as an author’s work. The second basic direction had a preference for the reportorial method and field recording with real people, although there was a problem with the basic political task behind this newly interpreted “fičr” – as the English word feature began to be transcribed – that is, with its primary role as a teaching tool and an ideological weapon. Both these ways must necessarily have sounded unconvincing and incompatible, because they in neither case respected the reality but rather combined truth with lies and authentic lives with literary fiction⁵¹. Nevertheless, thanks to the ideological proclamations the office obviously did quite well, as early as in 1983, V. Remeš praised improved facilities, the increased time for the programme production and primarily the positive reactions and satisfaction on the part of the company committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CZV KSČ), which was, after all, essential for the functioning of any institutional unit in those days. *“It was the propagandistic use of the verbal broadcasting of the radio which was one of the most important principles,”* declares Remeš.

From today’s point of view, the way of thinking of the authors at the time seems beyond our comprehension, perhaps even hardly believable. Most precisely it can be described by another quotation. The authors truly continually worked on the question as to whether to let real people speak into the microphone, or whether their parts should be recorded by actors. On the one

⁵⁰ Valuable material for this statement can be found in the historical summary of how at the beginning of the 1970s those comrades, who quickly understood the new political situation and were able to notice the first wave of bonuses for proclaiming support for the restored Communism, improved their positions. The chart shows which of the radio employees signed the first release of the ill-famed declaration *Slovo do vlastních řad* (A Word to Our Own Ranks), published in the daily *Rudé právo* (The Red Right) on 17th May 1969. This declaration amounted to an approval of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet, German, Hungarian and Polish armed forces, rejection of the revivalist process within the Communist Party and society as a whole in the second half of the 1960s and a self-critical acceptance of responsibility on the part of journalists for the ensuing situation. The journalists from *Rudé právo* and later 350 journalists from throughout the country, who signed the declaration, pledged to carry out personnel purges and elimination of their disloyal colleagues. The chart shows that the positions of chief editors, studio directors and programme deputies were taken by former reporters, technicians, heads of minor departments of foreign broadcasting. E. Ješutová *“Od mikrofonu k posluchačům”*, p. 394.

⁵¹ E. Ješutová *“Od mikrofonu k posluchačům”*, p. 383–384.

hand, they praised the authenticity of the voice (*“rasping due to respiratory problems, sounding like a cracked bell [...] slow speech looking for the right words with difficulties, speech of a man with a clearly perceptible trace of Ostrava dialect”*), on the other hand they thought about *“how to prepare the authentic participant of the future story in advance to prevent him from giving an artificial impression to the whole structure. Even real, raw footage needs stylization, or else it opposes the dramatizing purpose.”*⁵² Similar oxymoronic sentences can be found in the articles of V. Remeš (*“an authentic experience modified by suitable stylization”, “stylistically adjusted self-supporting reportorial material”*). The culmination is a description of how the reporters of a particular play of the theatre of fact (it was a story of social maturing of a group of young workmen and technicians from the Prague factory Motorlet – the name of the play was *Wedding in Motorlet*, 1979) manipulated one of the former employees of the factory to play the mother of two teenagers in the programme. The author himself states that she had nothing to do either with the story or with the protagonists, who were not actors and played approximate reflections of themselves in a stylized adaptation. However, this woman

*...after the necessary adaptation – more of a psychological stimulation than a literary stylization, which the performer was not capable of at all – and to a certain extent also thanks to the thoughtful direction, in the end she performed in a way which fits perfectly the compositional purpose and with emotion and effect and action dynamics, which characterized the hard but justified actions of a working-class mum, who in her old age should have the right to live her own life! [...] A non-actor could take up this task only because she expressed her own experience through it – the truth.*⁵³

The programme itself was undoubtedly an ambitious attempt of Zdeněk Bouček and was even created in stereo. The wording of the accompanying texts clearly shows, however, the absurdity of all the steps taken by the office of the theatre of fact. The authors' satisfaction with such a false reality and the satisfaction of the contracting Communist Party of Czechoslovakia with the correct ideological impression led necessarily in a couple of years to a situation when in 1983 – as Remeš himself artlessly admits – not only *“executives and economic officials”*, but *“also ordinary people, ordinary citizens, low-level workers”* refuse to talk to the radio editors. Remeš sees it as *“a danger to the dramatic testimony of an authentic play from our Socialist reality”* but pragmatically, it rather shows fear and people's lack of interest in any kind of publicity in the deathly times of the Czech version of Socialism. In the text, Remeš also presents a summary of the most successful plays of fact over the years 1978–1982.⁵⁴

4 Reflections on the Slovak Feature of the 1970s and 1980s

Developments in Slovakia took a different course. The organizational structure of the radio was codified as far back as at the beginning of the 1970s. Apart from the centralized mechanism which was based on the divisions of the director general, the individual Main programme offices operated under the umbrella organizations of Czech Radio and Slovak Radio. Slovak Radio had an organizational structure that was very similar to the Czech one although its position was

⁵² V. Remeš, *Hra faktu – nová možnost dramatického vysílání rozhlasu? (Play of Fact – a New Way of Dramatic Radio Programme?) Rozhlasová práce 1 (1981)*, p. 32.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁴ V. Remeš, *Hra faktu – nesnadná cesta za zvukovou autenticitou, (Play of Fact – an Uneasy Way To Sound Authenticity) Rozhlasová práce 3 (1983)*, p. 46–58.

“organization much more autonomous within the asymmetrical federation”⁵⁵ It was a blessing in disguise for journalism and feature and for their theoretical and critical reflection. The “study department” functioned for a longer time than the Czech one. It was called the Methodology and Research Department and was active in reflections even during the 1970s. It published various works, sponsored critical works and provided at least minimum feedback.⁵⁶ It is no coincidence that two key anthologies of feature were published in Slovak and it is no coincidence that the terms *fičr*, *fičer* or feature never left the vocabulary of Slovak broadcast journalists and authors. Even the Office for Artistic and Documentary Journalism of Czechoslovak Radio in Bratislava (RUDOP) was established in order to make better features.

Similarly to the Czech situation, the fate of feature, problematic programmes, documentary production or any other marginal journalistic genres depended on the staffing of the key positions and on the extent of openness of the superior bodies to influences from abroad. Ernest Weidler attributed a key role to Emil Benčík, the chief editor of the Main Office of the Literary and Dramatical Broadcasting of Slovak Radio. Over the long nineteen years of his management (1971–1990), the feature established itself as a full genre, continually developed by at least four authors (apart from Ernest Weidler, also by Ivan Lehotský, Ilza Patkošová and Juraj Kulík). Benčík had one important prerequisite, an excellent knowledge of Polish and contacts he had made in Poland during his work as a foreign correspondent.⁵⁷ He regularly confronted the form of the Slovak feature with the progressive experiments of the Polish acoustic and reportorial feature, which was mainly represented by Witold Zadrowski at the beginning of the 1970s. According to E. Weidler, this fact did not earn any advantages for other members of the staff, as during the normalization era, they never travelled abroad to study feature.⁵⁸ Benčík’s experience and the ability to see beyond the borders of both the region and the country were essential for the awareness of the current developments in the genre abroad. This was one of the reasons why RUDOP was established. This was an office specialized in documentaries and features which produced 25 features over the first year of its existence. This fact is reflected in an article by Juraj Kulík which states that the authors had a meeting in Tonkovice where they analysed in detail the advantages and disadvantages of feature as a journalistic genre. According to the recorded discussion, they attributed the key role to the emotional influence of the feature: “*The authors endeavour to show events and processes in their complexity in such a way that the listener can sufficiently experience them. If we wanted to talk about the purpose, we could say that the author uses the three-dimensionality and originality to excite, to surprise, sometimes to move, to fascinate, to shake the people out of lethargy and indifference.*”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ E. Ješutová “*Od mikrofónu k posluchačům*”, p. 358.

⁵⁶ The Methodical and Research Department which operated in Slovak Radio as of 1953 was transformed in the 1980s into a sociological research centre which had very good statistical and sociological results and introduced relevant data in the scope of the Socialist public opinion polls primarily thanks to a dense network of co-workers – inquirers. The department remained even after 1989 and worked for example on the elections in 1992. Source: V. Draxler, – L. Judiak, *Slovenský rozhlas. Jubilejný rok 1996. (Slovak Radio. The Jubilee Year 1996)* Bratislava 1996, p. 80.

⁵⁷ He was a correspondent in Warsaw over the years 1958–1971. He was an editor at the same time of the monthly *Život* (Life) for Polish compatriots. More information about Emil Benčík here: E. Benčík, *Medailon osobnosti. (Portrait of a Personality)* <http://www.litcentrum.sk/39946> (13th January 2012); A monographical diploma thesis was also published: E. Herceg, *Emil Benčík – všestranná novinárska osobnosť. (Emil Benčík – a Versatile Journalist)* Diploma thesis. Bratislava, Katedra žurnalistiky Filozofickej fakulty Univerzity Komenského, 2006.

⁵⁸ From a personal interview with Ernest Weidler. Oral history Ernest Weidler, Bratislava 19th December 2011. A written record of the interview in the author’s archive.

⁵⁹ J. Kulík, *Feature po roku (Feature after a year)*. *Nové slovo*. 7th April 1977, p. 15. The meeting is reflected in another article by the same author: J. Kulík, *Dva pohľady na feature. (Two Views on Feature)* inside anthology *Feature ... 94*. Bratislava 1994.

In her thesis, Božena Balúchová claims that the radio authors worked with the feature in the second half of the 1950s and consequently only at the beginning of the 1980s.⁶⁰ This is only partially true, that is, if we are talking about critical reflections. For example, in 1977 the Slovak *Učiteľské noviny* (Teachers' News) published three texts on features made by RUDOP. They describe in detail the composition and the creative methods. However, they only speak strictly about "*an artistic and journalistic sequence*" and, probably with regard to the type of periodical, the author of the texts does not fail to emphasise the pedagogical and educational potential of the assessed programmes. The articles do not use any lofty expressions concerning building society, the morals of the Socialist people, the radio's need to serve or fight. Instead they manage to maintain a matter-of-fact tone, description and in many places even apolitical character, which, however, does not equal non-involvement or indifference to everyday things. This is also true about the texts which were during severe normalization connected with the value of human life, with an entity which was, along with the meaning of life, civil rights and morals, one of the often devalued concepts in the life of people in Socialist Czechoslovakia.⁶¹

It was certainly also thanks to the results and processes begun at the seminar in 1974 that three years later a specialized Office for Artistic and Documentary Journalism was established in Slovakia (January 1976) and an Office for Literature and Theatre of Fact in Bohemia (September 1977). It is no surprise in the context of the slow, even paralysed pace of normalization society, that there was a three or four-year delay (after all, a similar pace is also characteristic for the establishing of radio programme centres at the turn of 2010s). However, feature fans must wait for another seminar for another 8 long years.

In 1982, an article entitled *Chvála pásma (Praise of the Sequence)* announces the transformation of the Slovak Office for News and Curiosities into the Office for Artistic Documentary and Propaganda. It was not only about the change in the name, claims the author with the nickname of jbk, "*the focus has also shifted – now the new concepts of radio sequence, which are sometimes incorrectly and illogically called by the English word feature, are the priority.*" According to the author of the text, the impulse came from East Germany, where the radio employees "*in a rough ideological battle with the radio of the Federal Republic of Germany first recognized the force and effectiveness of pure documentary sequences*", which can make best use of the wide range of broadcast devices and "*make the most intense impression on the listener*".

The author also points out another two-day seminar, this time not about feature, but about a new type of programme of the Bratislava radio, the "new" sequence.⁶² It is hard to say what exactly the author meant. We have access, however, to an anthology entitled *Feature v rozhlasové praxi* (Feature in Broadcast Practice) dated 1983 which mainly shows a distinct weakening of the political tone, a number of new pragmatic impulses and reflections on the feature and information about particular programmes. *Fonozošit ("Phonobook")*, published by the Methodology and Research department of Czechoslovak Radio, was not available to the Czech researchers, as study material, it was only owned by the Slovak Radio Archive.⁶³ This also reveals the complete deletion of the term and awareness of feature from the minds and vocabulary of Czech radio employees.

⁶⁰ B. Baluchová, *Rozhlasový fičer v praxi (Radio Feature in Practice)*. Diploma thesis. Bratislava, Katedra žurnalistiky Filozofickej fakulty Univerzity Komenského 2008.

⁶¹ "Vzácný dokument" (A Rare Document), *Učiteľské noviny* 18th June 1977; "V znamení nádeje" (In the name of hope), *Učiteľské noviny* 3rd August 1977; "Člověk v strede pozornosti" (Man in the Spotlight), *Učiteľské noviny*, 23rd August 1978.

⁶² (jbc) Chvála pásma. *Práca*, 5th November 1982, p. 6

⁶³ *Feature v rozhlasové praxi* (Dolná Krupá, 29th–30th 1982) (Feature in the Radio Practice). *Fonozošit* vol. 61 – Materiály zo seminára. Published by Metodicko-výskumný kabinet Čs. rozhlasu as a study tool for radio employees. Bratislava 1983.

Štefan Dubček, the first chief editor of RUDOP, states in the introductory article to the anthology that the meetings and seminars dedicated to feature were held four times in the 1970s in Slovakia (1974, 1975, 1977 and 1979). The main article by Štefan Horský tells us that “*the radios of Capitalist countries flood the public with features to manipulate public opinion*”, but this ideological paragraph is nearly the only one in the entire text. What prevails are detailed analyses of particular programmes, summaries of definitions and the main characteristics of the feature and finally a call for a chance to go abroad, at least to East Germany. The indisputable role of the feature is confirmed by the conclusion of the article, “*Yes to feature, thumbs up to feature, praise to feature!*”⁶⁴ Emil Benčík emphasises the importance of authenticity and sound. “*Feature is written by the microphone*,” he says at a time when the authenticity of the radio documentary and its sound aspect form the main subject of discussions among acoustic feature authors all over the world. Another interesting contribution is the view of Ján Kamenistý, an external employee who illuminates the proportion of recorded features to the written ones. He claims that he recorded authentically only three features out of ten. “*In the other seven features [...] I had to rely on stylization of the facts, on working with an actor who substituted the authentic situation, evidence, testimony.*” Although he does not deny the success of such features among the listeners, he sees them as a emergency solution. He cannot refrain from complaining about the problematic work with the actors, who stylize their performance too much and are unable to stay informal. Popular actors lend credence and effect to the story, but it is still fiction. In the end, Kamenistý asks whether it is not better after all to do field recordings instead of “*pretending authenticity and cheating the listeners after all.*”⁶⁵ In this respect, Jan Vít was clear already in 1973. “*I prefer this authentic way of gathering material over the studio revocation, because it complies with my general authorial opinion on drama genres in radio [...]: capturing stories at the place of their origin, if possible, in the same locations and with the same subjects*”, says Vít to sum up his experience with many hours of recording in the city or in an operating theatre. “*It is the author’s humility before the great Homeric epic which is contained in life itself. That is why I let the microphone, despite all the activity in the form of selection, play the part of a silent witness.*”⁶⁶

Critical reflections on journalistic production in the 1980s remain rather random. Apart from the articles in *Učiteľské noviny*, a column entitled *Radio* can also be found in the daily *Nové slovo* (New Word). In short reviews, Nina Hradiská always discussed one feature by Ján Kamenistý, Ilza Klásková or Ernest Weidler. The reviews are dated from June to November 1985. An interesting, although probably unique, view of the question of genre is brought by Jan Novák who claims that “*the trend of the radio feature is slowly declining.*” Without grounding his propositions on any arguments, he believes that “*feature, despite its effort at higher art, gravitates towards a certain degree of sensation and exclusiveness, mainly in the choice of topics.*” If he had in mind, for example, the unique feature by Ján Kamenistý *Smrť na štadione* (Death at the Stadium) which dealt with the tragedy at the football stadium in Brussels, where on 29th May 1985 forty people died during a match between Liverpool FC and Juventus Turin, making it one of the worst sports tragedies ever, then yes, it might have been about a certain kind of exclusiveness.⁶⁷ However, within that same year, there were features about the life of a handicapped couple, about tourism in the Tatras, or reflections on people’s attitude to work, which are certainly not unique or exclusive topics.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 47.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

⁶⁶ J. Vít, *Slovo autora*. (Author’s Word) From the manuscript of the documentary sequence *Řetěz*. Josef Branžovský’s estate. Box 23/3, item 1/74, file 30/23. p. 45.

⁶⁷ N. Hradiská, a column in the section *Rozhlas (Radio)*, no title. *Nové slovo*, 21st November 1985.

⁶⁸ Reflections of these programmes can be found in the section *Rozhlas (Radio)* in the newspaper *Nové slovo* with the dates 6th June, 1st August, 5th September 1985.

Two summarizing texts after seven and ten years of the existence of RUDOP office were published in *Večerník* (The Evening Paper) by Juraj Kulík, who was one of the feature co-authors, a colleague and observer of the activities in the feature office. Unlike the newspaper journalists, in 1983 or three years later he did not hesitate to use the word *fíčer* (feature) in any case and write about representative examples of the 350 stories which were prepared by the office over the course of ten years. Where the head of a similar office in Czech complains about the internal relationships in the radio offices, lack of facilities and equipment, staffing restrictions and respondents uninterested in recording, Kulík describes the scope of interest of cca. five permanent authors, providing portraits of the most active authors and summarizing various non-ideological views on the feature.

Kulík sees the main strength of the feature in the author's opportunity "to look into the world of his peers, to enter such recesses and hidden places of people which, when revealed, help us complete, surprisingly well, the internal image of our peers." As an example, he cites the feature *Svedomie* (Conscience) by Ivan Lehotský which reconstructs a fatal car accident, where the culprit drove away and was tracked down only two years later. The author, in a fictitious scene, confronts the driver with the widow and in a strongly appealing fashion draws the attention to the moral imperative of guilt and acceptance of punishment.⁶⁹

Quotations from Kulík's reflections lead us directly to another retrospective text which was published by Ernest Weidler as a review of his best features and where he revealed some of his basic author premises. In the context of three features, which I will present at the end of the text, the notion which Weidler uses to help him choose the topics is particularly interesting. He claims that feature can be created in two basic ways. Either the author is inspired by the dictates of society and then individualizes it in a particular story, "or the other way round, he is inspired by minor or major impulses from everyday encounters and then distinctively generalizes them, giving them broader validity."⁷⁰

One of the last pre-November reflections concerning broadcast journalism, a series of articles by Hana Gregorová in the newspaper *Lud* (The People), corresponds to Ernest Weidler's principles, which he personally discussed with the author of this text. These parallels can be seen in several aspects. The articles demonstrate the common use of the word feature (or *fíčer*) in Slovakia throughout the entire period of normalization and also emphasise again the great demands placed on the feature as a synthetic, compositionally wellthought-out radio structure which combines both artistic and journalistic elements and makes them work. Last but not least, it emphasizes the authenticity and sonority of the feature.

Towards the end of the normalization era, the Socialist regime and the rule of one party, the Communist Party, Weidler introduced a trio of programmes that subsequently explore the phenomena of hypocrisy, thoughtfulness and cruelty. In the programme *Naše milé malé pokrytectvá* (Our Lovely Little Hypocrisies), Weidler combined the statements of people, reportorial footage and dramatic citations from Molière's *Tartuffe*. The detailed description of this programme reveals a considerable freedom in the office for artistic journalism, as well as in the individual programmes which were created in this office. According to Gregorová, the author of the feature portrayed a number of phenomena of late Socialism and pursued them critically: differentiated work bonuses allocated based on membership in ROH (Revolutionary Trade Union

⁶⁹ J. Kulík, Desať rokov nemusí znamenať detstvo (Ten Years Do Not Have to Mean Childhood), *Večerník*, 26th November 1986. J. Kulík, *Sedem (zväčša) úrodných rokov*. (Seven /Mostly/ Fruitful Years) taken from an inside text *Feature ...* 94.

⁷⁰ E. Weidler, Ako vzniká feature? (How is Feature Made?) *Rozhlasová práca* 1 (1987), p. 9–40.

Movement)⁷¹, the hypocrisy of parents towards their own children, supporting the omnipresent lie and differences in opinions presented at home and in public, hypocrisy in the support of the top-ranking, but in fact only spoiled athletes who in fact do not contribute anything to the sport itself and to young people in sports, boring theatre, basic common decency on the part of men towards women, etc.⁷²

The feature *Ohľaduplnosť naša každodenná* (*Our Everyday Thoughtfulness*) is composed in a fashion similar to most modern investigative features, the development of which is described in a simple manual by one of the most successful contemporary authors, German Jens Jarisch.

*At the beginning, there is a feeling, there is something I need to tell you. Sometimes I do not even know what it really is, I only feel that it must be told. Maybe I only want to share something. Or I want to make something clear. The programme which is created is then a story about this process. I strive for transparency. I do not want to tell a story which has already been made. I want to show how it is created. I like to give people the chance to form their own opinions.*⁷³

Eighteen years ago, Weidler used the same method. He examined the topic from all sides, he asked people in the streets and in selected places, he used particular situations in a reportorial manner, he took risks and staked himself in a dispute over thoughtfulness, using citations from the poetry of Milan Rúfus as a mere framework.⁷⁴

Another feature by Ernest Weidler discussed, entitled *Každý deň k sebe krutí?* (*Every Day Cruel to One Another?*), followed up on the previous programme on thoughtfulness and in a society-wide and across-the-generations spectrum it found various facets of contemporary cruelty and indifference. Despite the fact that Weidler also touched upon the insufficient management and organization of socio-political structures (education, individual ministries, non-conceptual construction methods, etc.), he primarily explored various types of cruelty within families and at schools.⁷⁵ It is consequently apparent that a number of Slovak features at the end of the Socialist era aimed at naming depressing moral and ethical phenomena, which were almost tangible in society and which at that time had completely corroded the basic pillars of human relationships in families and among close friends.

5 Josef Branžovský and Others after 1989

It is the end of 1989. Not only the political scene is in ferment ...

There are people coming to the radio offices who were forbidden to work for twenty years, whose careers were interrupted, who could not publish.

In the files with the personal correspondence of Josef Branžovský, there is a great deal of evidence about what those people did during the normalization period. “*Since 1969, I’ve been on*

⁷¹ ROH was a tool of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia for controlling the employees under the institutional cover of labour union activities.

⁷² H. Gregorová, Je pokrytectvo nevyhnutné? O umelecko-publicistickom pásmo Ernesta Weidlera (Is hypocrisy inevitable? Concerning the artistic and journalistic sequence of Ernest Weidler), *Lud*, 23rd June 1989.

⁷³ Citation from a personal meeting by the author with Jens Jarisch. Oral history Jens Jarisch, 2007. Copenhagen, Danish radio 2nd May 2007.

⁷⁴ H. Gregorová, O príčinách a následkoch nedostatočnej ohľaduplnosti. Nielen k umelecko-publicistickému pásmu E. Weidlera (About the Reasons and Results of Insufficient Thoughtfulness. Not Only About the Artistic and Journalistic Sequence of E. Weidler), *Lud* 5th April 1989.

⁷⁵ H. Gregorová, Odras života v pravdivejšej tvorbe. K umelecko-publicistickým pásmam E. Weidlera a J. Piláta. (Reflection on Life a in Truer Production. About the Artistic and Journalistic Sequences of E. Weidler and J. Pilát.)

*disability pension, recently my heart has started giving me troubles again, but it has not influenced my current lifestyle. I mostly stay at my cottage where I mainly keep busy gardening and working in the house and I also study a bit and write (without publishing, of course),*⁷⁶ Miroslav Pátek writes in a letter to his friend also asking him for help with preparing his memoir and historical work *Rozhlasáci (Radio Employees)*⁷⁷: “You are probably the only one in this field who is capable of a broad enough view and who is not tied to rules, censorship and all those things that characterize the world of today.”⁷⁸ And a little later: “...I admit that there are not many people with such a knowledge of radio as you have (as you surely understand, I do not want to turn to those who are still radio employees, but who you can only be ashamed of).”⁷⁹ In the light of what is known about the normalization lives of Pátek and Branžovský, there is nothing in the tone of the letter to suggest any inappropriate flattery or profit-seeking servility. They were both in the same situation, without the possibility to publish their work, study or verify their results in practice, go abroad or communicate with living radio production.

These facts are reflected in a rehabilitation letter from 5th June 1990 in which the rehabilitation committee, after investigating all the circumstances of Branžovský’s leaving the radio, came to the conclusion that “*the reasons behind your leaving were definitely political and therefore, your case was a case of persecution for political views.*” Czechoslovak Radio used this letter to apologize for all the illegal sanctions and proclaimed “*full civic and political rehabilitation*”⁸⁰ for Branžovský.

The apology to Branžovský, signed by František Pavlíček, the central director of Czechoslovak Radio, brings an incentive to continue his work.

Branžovský began publishing immediately after the change in the political situation. In 1990, his essential collection *Hledání rozhlasovosti (Seeking Broadcastability)* was published. It is an anthology of texts of radio sequences, features and so-called problem programmes from the beginnings of the radio up until the end of the 1960s.⁸¹ It is a very useful publication with extensive examples of scripts or even complete texts, which are often the only evidence of the programmes which were erased and destroyed long before the book was published. With its knowledgeable comments and the comments of the authors, it is one of the finest reflections on broadcast journalism ever. Although Branžovský attempts to focus on the production of the 1970s as well in the last pages, it is evident that the publication should have been published around 1972 at the latest for it to become not only valuable historical material, but first and foremost an inspiration and theoretical platform for a new generation of authors.

Apart from publishing, Branžovský also attempted to play an active part in reorganizing the radio. He prepared suggestions for the meetings of the radio Civic Forum in the area of educational programmes⁸², he formulated and signed a Declaration of the employees of the former

⁷⁶ A letter dated Nová Kyselka, 15th May 1978, 23/4, file 32/23. Original of the letter with the signature and handwritten address, two pages. After a consultation with Ms. Eva Ješutová, the manager of the Czech Radio archive, the author was identified. It was Miloslav Pátek, real name Miloslav Panchártek, a long-time co-worker of Czechoslovak Radio (1947–1970), foreign correspondent, dismissed and forced to retire on a disability pension after 1969.

⁷⁷ Published in 1992 as a special issue of the magazine *Rozhlasová práce*.

⁷⁸ A letter dated Nová Kyselka, 28th March 1979, 23/4, file 32/23. Original of the letter with the signature and handwritten address, one page written on both sides.

⁷⁹ A letter dated Nová Kyselka, 15th May 1979, 23/4, file 32/23. Original of the letter with the signature and handwritten address, two pages.

⁸⁰ Rehabilitation letter, sender: Central director of Czechoslovak Radio, box 23/4, file 32/23. Original of the letter with the signature, one page on thick paper with logo watermark and gilded mark of the sender.

⁸¹ J. Branžovský, *Hledání rozhlasovosti*. Praha, Studijní oddělení Československého rozhlasu, 1990.

⁸² “*Mám dva podněty...*” Inside print. J. Branžovský’s estate. Box 23/4, file 33/23, 1 page, copy. Dated 8th January 1990.

Study Department of the Czechoslovak Radio.⁸³ His estate also contains a proof that he cooperated with certain authors, namely Zdeněk Bouček, who was the author of the radio documentary *Dík, Československo* (*Thanks, Czechoslovakia*) about a refugee camp in Zastávka u Brna and about the fate of primarily Romanian refugees. There is one page of precisely formulated comments on the preview of the programme, the author of which had the ambition to make features from the very beginning. Branžovský acknowledges it with pleasure, but makes references to Viennese features and their different way of working with sound and narration.⁸⁴

Branžovský was surely somewhat limited by his age, but still tried to publish the fruit of his twenty-year work in his forced domestic exile. He published an extensive text *O tzv. rozhlasové specifice* (Concerning the So-called Broadcast Particularity), this being a study⁸⁵ which he had been thinking about since the middle of the 1960s, as we can see e.g. in the text *Mluv, abych tě slyšel*. He provides a current reflection on foreign features in an extensive study entitled *Poučení z vídeňských featurů*⁸⁶ (*A Lesson from the Viennese Features*). His forty-year effort to establish the feature in the Czech environment is summarized in a fundamental attempt to systematize radio genres in a text entitled *Rozhlasové pásmo či feature?*⁸⁷ (*Radio Sequence or Feature?*). He managed to do all of that between the years 1990 and 1991. He was 83 when he prepared a summarizing work about the Czech pre-war and war radio sequence for publication.⁸⁸ He died on 25th November 1992, leaving an extensive archive and a number of unpublished works.⁸⁹ His work was immediately followed up by Zdeněk Bouček who had inclined towards the feature since the end of the 1980s, but who had lacked the possibility to compare his radio experience with other countries. When he was able to visit European radio festivals after 1990, he immediately took the opportunity and apart from the hands-on results, presented his observations in magazine articles.⁹⁰

The Slovak office continued after 1990 with the same skeleton staff. Ernest Weidler became more active both politically and as a citizen, Emil Benčík, on the other hand, boosted the authorial work. The range of topics in the journalistic production of the 1990s is also worth mentioning. Similar to the situation in Bohemia, it also involved a complex revision of the country's history which has been deformed by the Communists, rehabilitation of many figures of both political and social life and also reflections on current affairs and an attempt to define the time of rapid changes and the changing mentality of the society emancipating itself. These efforts are summed up in a valuable internal text *Feature ... 94*, where editor Ivan Lehotský assembled available critical reflections, organized an extensive opinion poll among his Slovakian colleagues and offered a summary of the broadcasted programmes. The basis of this text stems from the experience with hundreds of broadcasted programmes. In his foreword to the anthology Ivan Lehotský discusses some five hundred features which were created in offices that only changed

⁸³ *Prohlášení pracovníků bývalého Studijního oddělení čs. rozhlasu* (copy), file 33/23, copy, two-sided print.

⁸⁴ *Pracovní poznámky k poslechnutému pořadu Dík Československo – pásmo o rumunských uprchlících*. (Working Notes to the Programme Thanks Czechoslovakia – Sequence About Romanian Refugees). J. Branžovský's estate, box 23/4, file 33/23. One page on thick paper, handwritten date 28th February 1991.

⁸⁵ J. Branžovský, *O tzv. rozhlasové specifice*, in: *Sborník teoretických textů*, Praha 1990.

⁸⁶ J. Branžovský, *Poučení z vídeňských featurů*, *Rozhlasová práce* 1(1991), p. 1–56.

⁸⁷ J. Branžovský, *Rozhlasové pásmo či feature? Pokus o průzkum nezmapované pevniny*, Praha 1990.

⁸⁸ J. Branžovský, *Rozhlasové pásmo I. (Radio sequence I)* Praha 1993.

⁸⁹ Biographical data, both published and unpublished, are summarized by Rostislav Běhal in the publication *Kdo je kdo v sedmdesátileté historii Českého rozhlasu* (*Who Is Who in Seventy Years of Czech Radio*). R. Běhal, *Kdo je kdo v sedmdesátileté historii Českého rozhlasu* (*Who Is Who in Seventy Years of Czech Radio*). Praha 1992, p. 44.

⁹⁰ The practical and theoretical work of Zdeněk Bouček is explored by G. Albrechtová-Pályová, *Vzpomínka na PhDr. Zdeňka Boučka* (Memory of Zdeněk Bouček), *Svět rozhlasu* vol. 16, p. 13–22.

names, but the staff, their aims and the personal efforts on the part of individual authors trying to describe the society and individuals through the genre of the feature, remained the same.⁹¹

This anthology together with the material from the two important conferences mentioned earlier show the significant differences in the development of the genre of feature in the two radio centres in Czechoslovakia and the difference in the extent of creative freedom in Prague and Bratislava. Over the first half of the 1990s when in all probability only a few people in Bohemia could pronounce the word feature without feeling inappropriate, the Slovaks published a sum of their long-time work involving, unlike in the Czech environment, the entire normalization era and maintaining a twenty-year personal and creative continuity. The critical assessment thereof is a task for contemporary researchers.

⁹¹ *Feature ...94*. Inside material of Slovak Radio. Arranged by Ivan Lehotský. 8th December 1994. Archive of Slovak Radio, sign. N 6059, Úk 159, no pagination, the title page handwritten.

Vladimír Suchánek

Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the Faculty of Arts,
Palacký University Olomouc

The Hour between the Dog and Orion

Horizontality and Verticality in the Thematic Composition of Man as an Image of Transcendence in František Vlácil's Films: *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* (*The Legend of the Silver Fir*) and *Sirius*

Abstract | This study analyses the spiritual connections of two films by František Vlácil *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* (The Legend of the Silver Fir) and *Sirius* which he made at Gottwaldov Film Studio¹ in the period after 1969. The basic analytical approaches are the verticality and horizontality of the story's internal composition, the necessity for transcendence among human beings and the movement towards the meaning of human actions as a direction towards eternity. Both levels mingle and complement one other within the analyses of the spiritual principles which function within the context of the protagonists' behaviour or independent of it as an ethical-spiritual imperative, which exists on its own.

.....

Prologue. Death and Resurrection

On clear winter nights, when even dark sparkles with frost, two splendid constellations rise above the south-east horizon, the Greater Dog and Orion. The brightest star of the Dog constellation is Sirius and always rises loyally accompanying the Orion constellation who is widely spread amid stars and who has been bowed to by long-ago vanished civilisations. Accordingly, Eset follows her god, as a guardian of life and the mother of kings. Ancient mythologies claim that Orion, with its bright crown Betelgeuse, is a constellation which reminds us of the divine origin of humanity. And perhaps because this divinity cannot be questioned, man exists in his own shadow, as a being walking through his soul in the hour between the dog and the wolf. Not seeing due to his guilt that the constellations of gods with their fatal stars shine above his head. Orion, the one toward whom the ancient Egyptians directed their hope for eternal life, named him Osiris and considered him the aim of one's life, the Greeks considered him a hunter blinded for a committed sin. He searched, however, and was once again awakened through a found morning, always followed by his loyal dog Sirius. People remain blind, however, except for those who search for the dawn of light inside their souls or notice the shadow of a flying bird in front of them, raising their heads and seeing the rising star. Each individual should step out of his or her own shadow to become a star in the sky and accompany the gods as the chosen one, in the same manner as

¹ The entire title: Krátký film Praha, Gottwaldov Film Studio. (Author's Note).

Eset and Osiris walking side by side bound by their loyalty.² This requires, however, no less than courage of the spirit.

Twilight or J. S. Bach “*Jesu meine Freude*”³

František Vlácil’s hour between the dog and the wolf, the hour when light darkens without the stars being up as yet, came about in the middle of his primary creative period, these being undoubtedly the sixties and seventies.⁴ One of the most distinctive and talented Czech film-makers was forced to leave to the darkening of time and thus unknowingly metaphorically fulfil the last shot of his film *Adelheid* (1969), when the main hero Viktor Chotovický, having forfeited all hopes, walks by a wayside shrine towards a snow-covered mine field, towards a life abounding with unpredictability which can deform, break or even destroy him. It is as if he symbolically foreshadowed his further professional career. Moving towards an eclipse which might have come at any time, but still following God’s will. Vlácil looks in this darkened half-shadow for words as well as the sound of music which he could transform into images which are crystal clear and full of non-layered naivety. For it to come out of the most truthful and spiritually credible sources of a prayer for life and in the name of life. The one thing that is hidden behind the image, the one thing trembling in the most concealed recesses of a human being and towards which we huddle like powerless children. The one thing that is visible in children’s eyes when completely everything is lost and only an impassioned prayer spurting as a spring the purest is left, coming out of the essence so deep like the night sky covered with the cloak of the Milky Way. In those moments humility takes off into a cross of suffering and joy. It leaves to belong where it belongs. It is not trying to avoid it nor go around it. It begs humbly, with urgent passion and devotion. As a man who experienced hope in its entire painful deepness and bitter inevitability, but also in praise of beauty. Finally there is only the declaration, Johann Sebastian Bach: “*Jesus, my joy.*”⁵

The machinery of political normalisation, starting in 1969, began to suffocate everything that differed from the prescribed ideological key in even the smallest way. This took place on all levels of society. In this sense art felt this loss the most since it worked with artistic images, that is with metaphor, allegory, symbol and parable, which were able to conceal generalising and critical images. The entire Czechoslovakian New Wave was eliminated and with a “silent non-recommendation” not only directors were prohibited from working, but also screenwriters, dramaturges, actors and directors of photography.⁶ After an extraordinary creative boom which secured Czechoslovakian film a fixed and clear place amongst the most respected world cinemas, a downfall came about which also touched Vlácil as a flow of nothingness.

² Viz J. Black – A. Green, *Bohové, démoni a symboly starověké Mezopotámie*. Praha 1999, *Encyklopedie antiky*. Praha 1973, p. 269., H. Owusu, *Egyptské symboly*. Praha 2003, p.143. M. Eliade, *Dějiny náboženského myšlení I*. Praha 1995, p. 234–284. V. Zamarovský, *Bohové a hrdinové antických bájí*. Praha 1965, p. 303.

³ Motet No. 3 in E minor “*Jesu, meine Freude*”, BWV 227, (approximately 1723–1735), for a four-part mixed chorus. Used in the film “*Adelheid*” as a fundamental musical and semantic aspect.

⁴ S. Přádná – Z. Škapová – J. Cieslar, *Démanty všednosti. Český a slovenský film 60. let*, p. 12, J. Žalman, *Umlčený film. Kompletní vydání*. Praha 2008, p. 292–299.

⁵ Part of the text from the motet: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised Christ from the dead, will raise your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom. 8, 9–11).

⁶ B. Ptáčková, “Hraný film v období normalizace (1970–1989)” in: L. Ptáček (ed.), *Panorama českého filmu*. Olomouc 2000, p. 157–193.

František Vláčil (1924–1999) was working at filming the screenplay *Zjevení (Revelation)* about a mother-to-be, written in collaboration with Vladimír Körner, after finishing his film *Adelheid* (1969) in the studio⁷, and was at the same time trying to make a film based on the ballad novella *Stín kapradiny (Shades of Fern)* by Josef Čapek. Both projects were stopped by direct intervention of Ludvík Toman.⁸ At the turn of the year 1972, Vláčil's name was associated with the screenplay *Výstřely (Gunshots)* in Marienbad. The director was very eager about this project for he saw it as an opportunity to show the roots from which the Nazi regime grew in the thirties. Management of the relevant unit led by Vojtěch Trapl urged for Vláčil to become the director of the film. However, the central dramaturge assigned the material to Ivo Toman, a film-maker with an incomparably lower creative potential. After his further creative attempts were given the red light, as well, Vláčil found a sanctuary outside of Barrandov, at Krátký film.⁹

He was far from being alone in this period. A number of colleagues (e.g. E. Schorm, V. Chytilová, D. Vihanová, V. Hapl, and others) found themselves in the protective net of the director of Krátký film Praha, Dr Kamil Pixa¹⁰, but remained working in Prague. Vláčil, in contrast, somehow subconsciously tended to return home, to Moravia. Far from the centre, at the border of the Beskydy Mountains at Gottwaldov Film Studio, the touch of his hands was, with poetic exaggeration, closer to the sky. Vláčil always silently hoped and believed in the help of his own heart. He walked his road with ever present thought of life's pain and sorrow of soul, with a mine field under his feet and the stars above his head. He was a paralysed Michal shooting at a dove, he was Mikoláš yearning for redemption, knight Armin dying of thirst in the midst of Palestinian sands as well as desperate Ondřej devoted to the Virgin Mary. As Chotovický he loses hope in unresponsive Adelheid, he was Fanda as well as Ondra in the hills of the Beskydy Mountains. He was also Doctor Meluzín, which gave him the right to sigh with him in the moment of death and birth. To utter the truth that every man so intimately feels within the pain of his heart. To whisper words into the drizzle of surrendering autumn as well as life in the weeping ringing of telegraph poles of our human way of the cross as an artist, who intimately touched the unknown with his every work: *"I have touched something – and I don't know what."*¹¹

Silence set in all around. But not the silence of tense awaiting, but the emptiness of a deserted house with the moaning of blinded window shutters. Everything around entered shadow. There was neither light nor darkness. Being resides in semi-darkness. It was after seven years, upon coming back with the excellent, yet unobtrusive film *Dým bramborové natě (Smoke on the Potato Fields)* (1976) that his sun rises once again. Although it is a polar sun that never ascends up to the zenith and soon begin to lower towards the dark horizon, the time that had passed cannot be called silence or loneliness or creative isolation. In the semi-oblivion of a provincial film studio,

⁷ Film Studio Barrandov Prague. (Author's Note).

⁸ Central dramaturge (censor) of the Film Studio Barrandov Prague, in charge over the years 1969–1982. (Author's Note).

⁹ Š. Hulík, *Kinematografie zapomnění. Počátky normalizace ve Filmovém studiu Barrandov (1968–1973)*. Praha 2011, p. 214–215.

¹⁰ This significant participant of the anti-Nazi resistance (imprisoned in the Mauthausen concentration camp), founder and high-ranking functionary of State Security, later a member of NKVD and KGB, criminal and brutal investigator in the 1950s, important agent of the Czechoslovakian Communist foreign intelligence (experienced an elite prison in Paris) and after 1968 the director of Krátký film Praha (which was comprised at the time of Gottwaldov Film Studio, where František Vláčil was allowed to work between the years 1973–1974) was an exceptionally controversial personality, who always worked "for three sides" and in the cultural and political fight as well as the fight for power after 1968 played a significant role in the history of the Czechoslovakian cinema of the normalization period. (Author's Note).

¹¹ See *Dým bramborové natě* (František Vláčil, ČSSR 1976).

far from the madding crowd, Vláčil made two exceptional films, *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* (1973) and *Sirius* (1974), and three excellent documentary essays¹². He is here, he is present, although being somewhat overlooked. His existence is separated to a great extent from the madness of the time and is naturally related in the cosmic principle of searching for oneself and heading towards the meaning of one's life rather than achieving success. Walking through his mine field as if he still hoped for a chance of survival, but with the knowledge of one's possible end in the flash of dazzling light. This all without any visible sidestepping or compromise in the approach to his own work.¹³ At this time Vláčil also focused on one of his basic topics, the return of man in his own direction towards oneself as an inseparable part of the spiritual order. Everybody, be it a child or an adult, experiences one's metanoia amid the cross of merciless realisation of life, spread out between the horizontal line of earthliness and the vertical line of love. Of a life offering only two alternatives, an eternity of truth or an end of failure. However, Vláčil knows that the end is part of eternity and death is its initial stage. It opens a topic of the inner being of man, as if being itself was an emanation of eternity and at the same time an immanence of subjective feeling related to it. His invention does not lose anything from its cosmic flow. But for that we have to start from the very beginning.

Poetics as a Concept of the Existential Awareness of Creation

If we consider the significance of his work within general connections of film poetic image, we always arrive to some degree at the essence of his subjective inner direction arising from both the topic and its adaptation and from the connection to the spiritual category of an art work as a whole. *“Those aesthetic relations which are highly subjective obtain objective values exactly through their own subjective nature. It is therefore absolutely necessary to perceive every artistic means of expression of every art form in its subjective originality. It is the only way to understand the objective freedom of semantic imagination related to this subjectivity.”*¹⁴

Vláčil did not close himself inside purely formal principles of work, nor create unrepeatable visualisations of real space-time for their own uniqueness. The uniqueness of the poetic image which he created arose from its irreplaceable connections between the vertical and horizontal being which was always naturally interconnected both with the main line of thought and with the bearer of this thought. To be precise, not with the main hero, but with the complex of links that created the hero and his inner and subsequently outer direction. That is how he built the basic structure of all his films including his feature debut *Skleněná oblaka* (*Clouds of Glass*) (1958).

He was a creator who did not reject classic and adopted ways of expression and formal structures of film image, but gave them a completely new content by inserting the laws of a poetic image.¹⁵ *“The essence of a poetic image lies in the way in which we proceed from an object that we know within one relation, to an object that we do not know within the same relation.”*¹⁶ In this context and within the relation of a perceiver and a work, basic connections of sensory perception of the inner visuality of a film image partially cease to function. It will be demonstrated that a poetic image in an art film is not an aesthetically perfect reality of mimetic parabola of being, but more likely its opposite. It is a reality highly incomplete and surprisingly open. It is a certain

¹² *Město v bílém* (*The Town in White*, 1972), *Karlovarské promenády* (*The Promenades in Karlovy Vary*, 1973) and *Praha secesní* (*Art Nouveau Prague*, 1974).

¹³ S. Přádná – Z. Škapová – J. Cieslar, *Démanty všednosti. Český a slovenský film 60. let*, p. 129–130.

¹⁴ V. Suchánek, *Topografie transcendentních souřadnic filmového obrazu*. Olomouc 2002, p. 164.

¹⁵ *Viz Dáblova past* (*The Devil's Trap*). (František Vláčil, ČSSR 1961).

¹⁶ A. F. Begišvili, *Filozofie a poezie (Filozofické problémy básnického jazyka)*. Praha 1979, p. 11.

kind of torrent or rather a spring of continuously developing aesthetic-philosophical relations which come to life more or less outside of genuine awareness of the space-time of existence. It is a certain strange type of being which realizes itself through its ability to be its own parable. If a film maintains all means of expression of all art forms in their original form, but provides them with a new content and thus becomes a congenial bearer of their inner essence, this inner essence of perception of being directly predetermines it to establish such aesthetic relations that cannot be made outside of it. And those hidden relations create a contextual network interconnecting everything into a single sense of being, existing as a spiritual level of aesthetic reality, whose inner essence can be called a poetic image.

Transubstantiation of Transcendent Being

In art film those processes are manifested the most outside of sensory perception of an image. This movement from the known towards the unknown is a movement made exclusively within the perceiver's creative participation, but originates within the essence of the poetic image, within the core of an art work. It is a certain kind of a co-creator which invites the unconsciousness of the participating viewer to engage their personal creative potential. In this way every film becomes purely subjective, a poetic revelation for everyone individually, as it is with every art work essentially. However, in film it is immensely deeper, because all well-known means of expression perceived through their traditional definition (e. g. actor, prop, setting, word or colour) change into actualities perceived highly visually, that is as imaginations of their essential sense. "*Symbol [...] denotes the essential core – the essence – of art works and demonstrates their potential to be – and not as it is with e. g. allegory – to only mean, the connection of infinity with sensory world. The symbol enables to overcome the difference of both ontologically diverse spheres of being. It enables to depict art work as a unified expressional whole that in its particular phenomenon immediately reflects universe in its whole ideally-real form.*"¹⁷

Although imaginative value is a result of all those correlations, it is always strongly determined by spiritual parabola of humanity in the sense of classic philosophical postulate: who am I, where do I come from and where am I going. That is how the real being of poetic image is created. Within us, the perceivers, but highly outside our sensory perception, although within connections to our senses. It is a paradox only apparent and more or less virtual. Transcendent reality as aesthetic principle is not located outside the beingness of man, but without any exception inside his essence. It is not outside of the subject, but is highly subjective. It is this transubstantiated essence of all means of expression of all art forms that is the revolutionary contribution of film art production in understanding the meaning of connections between the material and spiritual principle of human existence within the meaning of one's life. "*It is the imaginative essence of the single all-meaning and all-containing principle of aesthetic being. In the form as well as in the content of the existence of the poetic image. The film poetic image must be subjectively spiritual, otherwise it is not a film poetic image, because it lacks the transcendent dimension.*"¹⁸

Only with such interconnected relational applications of emotional, sensory and intellectual expressive connections, are poetic images able to create certain inner ways out in relation to the observed object. Art film is an example better than any with its formal and idea-based essence, the film poetic image. It is film which in its production focuses primarily on emotions and thanks to its exceptional ability to unite transformed means of expression within a film image, it provides us with those realistically recordable, that is intellectually processable emotions. It tells

¹⁷ V. Zátka, *Umění jako symbol vertikální transcendence světa*. Praha 2010, p. 97.

¹⁸ V. Suchánek, *Topografie transcendentních souřadnic filmového obrazu*, p. 165.

us something that cannot be defined in other art forms as precisely and in such a range. “*When analysing these cases we rightfully use the term emotive recognition if firstly: here something that is emotively unknown to us, becomes emotionally known, i. e. it gains a certain emotive coloration which the poet evokes. Something that is characteristic for every cognitive process and which must be present within it, is present here: in certain aspects unknown objects use those very aspects to become comprehensible, accessible.*”¹⁹ The spiritual level of František Vlácil’s work can be understood in this sense. It opens up well-known emotions which, however, are surprising due to their relations and connections, which we would not normally associate with those emotions. Let us proceed to look at this interconnection in the analysed films.

Both heroes, twelve-year-old Fanda from *Sirius* and approximately fifteen-year-old Ondra from *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* are unexpected intersections, receivers, and at the same time witnesses of what is happening in relation to themselves. Unconsciously, they return to themselves, through spiritual trembling which is difficult to describe, through the touch of transubstantiation, when blood and body are sucked out of them until that they are made sons, which means those, who they in fact are. Fanda through the unselfish death of a beloved dog, Ondra through recognizing sacrifice as a salvation of life. Thus in both cases blood and body, literally, without metaphors. Death is always a metaphor, however. With all the simplicity of those poetic images, it is a complex system created from various semantic and expressive elements which create a complex concept, which is able to “make visible” secret default aspects of existence encoded within a single term, the meaning of being.²⁰

Movement as a Basic Principle of the Spirituality of an Image

It is important to be aware of the fact that film movement with its three fundamental aspects (dynamics, staticity and direction) creates integrity. All three come out of and return back to a single essence. Such an existing complex primarily expresses sources which reveal and in a way define ethical and spiritual values. Those retrospectively define the meaning of the film image as a whole. In František Vlácil’s films these three aspects exist both separately in relation to individual actualities concerning the heroes and also in correlation, as a unity of pluralities. This makes them a complex of relations, not only a summary of the means of expression, but primarily a directed meaning of an inner spiritual movement that can be found within them as extrasensory reality. As a subjective macrocosmos which directs the hero without being perceived by him. As a sense that brings to this movement of the All a direction towards the All.

*“Art is an element revealing the very core – life – of the absolute in its fundamental determinations and manifestations. It is a privileged authority of revealing its dynamic movement and takes part in the process of aesthetic structuralisation and individualisation of the absolute. Art thus functions on two levels: enables us to reveal not only its general logical essence, but also to learn about its particular aesthetic existence and make it present.”*²¹

As those three expressive parts of movement mutually mingle with one other depending on the determining level of the primary hero’s being, based on a subjective feeling of inner direction, the being comes out of him as an emanation of his spiritual state at the same time. When one

¹⁹ A. F. Begiašvili, *Filozofie a poezie. (Filozofické problémy básnického jazyka)*, p. 17.

²⁰ See J. Blažejovský, “Od Hořických pašijí k nové spiritualitě. Kinematografické cesty k vyjádření posvátna”, in: *Teologický sborník*, 2 (2002) 8, Brno 2002, p. 7–19.

²¹ V. Zátka, *Umění jako symbol vertikální transcedence svět*, p. 103–104.

perceives the dynamics always being where the direction of the progressing spiritual movement of a scene towards positive values is, it is apparent that staticity is where this direction towards negative values resides. The feeling of dynamism (which also can be rest, quietening, outer inactivity) creates a direction towards harmony and the feeling of staticity anaesthetises the perception into chaos. If one accepts this concept, it is not that difficult to feel the dynamics and staticity of a film as a determining spiritual movement. However, it is only not about identifying these actualities, but about their interpretation. How they are manifested in particular contexts and relations and how they participate in opening a film's topic. When one talks of the dynamics and staticity of a film image, does not always concern movement. Within the context of the set and the observed causes of movement towards a meaning as such, the most important and only significant direction in human life is birth, love and death.

Direction in a film cannot be mistaken with dynamics and staticity. Dynamics and staticity can be part of the direction, but do not have to be. Direction in a film is identical with the process of revealing a topic, clearing up the idea, coming closer towards the final image and mission of a film work. This means that the direction is in reality imperceptible by the senses, it cannot be pointed at and its course cannot be pragmatically described. Direction is the inner structure of a topic.²²

If the main protagonist is a single person through whom all values are created, then he or she also influences the essential course of movement within the development of the entire film. In the film *Pověst o stříbrné jedli*, however, the dynamics, staticity and direction are not closely connected with the being of the main hero Ondra. In this case every movement arises from the existence of a third man, from an unknown newcomer, the pine-cone gatherer Lojza – person in media res. The same holds true for the film *Sirius*, where this “person in the middle of things” and the source of movement is represented by the beloved dog, not Fanda. They come onto the scene so that both heroes return through their dynamics and direction to the essence of themselves.

Metanoia as a Resurrection of Itself

This strange return into the interior of one's existence is, within the context of the analysed films, applied as an unconscious entry into the innermost relations of one's subconscious which gradually reveals the meaning of existence as a journey of a spiritual act. Although for a juvenile, immature man still unclearly and incomprehensibly. It is about the familiar, endlessly repeated schema that in the European context is known as the return of the lost (prodigal) son.²³ Each main character is part of a system which is created by him, as he is both its initiator and at the same time the bearer of archetypal signs which naturally promote him to a hero.²⁴ He is the creator as well as bearer of relations, which within stories form spiritual space-time through which he returns in the realisation of metanoia to the essence of one's own existence. Through the personal experience of this journey they arrive at recognition and understanding of humility.

Our heroes are somewhat lost in ordinariness. Each of them is aware of their essence in a different way and more or less unconsciously, while resting in their immaturity, especially in relation to the space-time of their uniqueness. They are unable to understand the universe as a reflection of the image of eternity mentally or spiritually, because they have not grown up to the basic

²² V. Suchánek, *Topografie transcendentních souřadnic filmového obrazu*, p. 54

²³ Lk 15, 10–32; See H. J. M. Nouwen, *Návrat ztraceného syna*. Praha 2001.

²⁴ Meaning a hero in mythological context. See J. Campbell, *Tisíc tváří hrdiny. Archetyp hrdiny v proměnách věků*. Praha 2000.

recognition, they are still children. Despite the fact that they have entered a gate without time or space, that does not leave marks in mind or in memory. They enter unconsciously although logically into the underworld at a path of oblivion, although their journey over the River Lethe is pure curiosity of the spirit. They die away from something in order to be born into something. Their state is situated outside of an awareness of relations to reality and they are pervaded by the first signs of eternity. At those moments a star arises in their hearts. Their entire living being is bound by a feeling of something which will change their journey. They find themselves at the border between themselves and the senses. In this limitless place, where there is no time or world, it is as if even their memory has become lost within an awakened desire. The deepness of the calling towards oneself resides at a different level of being. There comes a moment when a feeling of the essence of one's life appears, in which "a different level of being" opens. The return journey is revealed by a third person, who seemed to stand next to them all the time, who was awaited although unknown. He reveals himself at a moment when the value he brings for them can be handed over, because it will be accepted. It is the quality that opens the archetypal relationship of their lives in connection to their return curve towards themselves. It is a moment of the birth of their own spiritual consciousness.

The long process of slow permeation (return) into the real relations of a person's being is the opening of the universe felt within himself. His awakening is full of questions: what was it, where am I wandering, why do I refuse, why do I accept, where is the sky and where the earth, what does a silver fir and the hell of betrayed love look like? What is betrayal, does death exist, where is my star, where does my sky shine and does it go down or come out? All of these are of course imaginary and more or less non-existent questions for a child's mind. However, they help us to break into the sense of a child's thought, whose essence is purity, loyalty, search and desire. All those unspoken tremblings full of pain from the unanswered, fullness of confusion, but also of the hot pulse of the unknown something, are to be inserted into life and clarified by that third one. From nowhere, without time, without name, without past and without future. As a blow of wind or angel's wings. Nobody awaits him, but he is known by everyone. He brings light that is lit within us so that it cannot be put out any longer. They are not and even cannot be parents, they point at values and arrange them in a way as they are meant to be, but the light into those values is brought by the third one.

The Verticality and Horizontality of the Child Hero

*"[...] the horizontal and vertical dimension of the world [...] – the limited world and the unlimited absolute – necessarily belong to and complement one another. Both dimensions organically unite within art, and art, because it captures and depicts the transcendent absolute within the immanence of the limited world, becomes a symbol of their unity."*²⁵

This is why the verticality and horizontality of movement can never exist on their own, they are inseparably interconnected by a single universal movement establishing the meaning of the entire work. It is its breath as well as pulse. This principle pervades Vlácil's entire production in the universal image of a woman.²⁶ What was only indicated in *Marketa Lazarová* (holy motherhood), continued in its entirety in *Údolí včel* (*The Valley of the Bees*) as Virginity. The individual who does not trust the power of Christ comes under the influence of his mother the Virgin Mary.

²⁵ V. Zátka, *Umění jako symbol vertikální transcendence svět*, p. 106.

²⁶ It is very similar, both in the concept and the emphasis on spirituality as it is present in Andrei Tarkovsky's films. A woman does not have to be accentuated as the main or important character, but she is present as a unifying principle that provides everything with a meaning. (Author's Note).

Stabat Mater Dolorosa. There is no greater sorrow than standing in the blood of one's own son. Lord of Vlkov! And it should have been completed perhaps with a film that remained only in the form of a screenplay, *Zjevení o ženě rodiče podle svatého Jana* (*Revelation about a Mother-to-be According to Saint John*). Vlácil's sovereign topic – the Marian one – never returned after this screenplay in such an accentuated conceptual scheme (although it can be very strongly traced in *Dým bramborové natě*, *Stíny horkého léta*, *Koncert na konci léta* as well as to some extent in *Hadí jed*). With the previous topics: *Marketa Lazarová*, *Údolí včel* and *Zjevení o ženě rodiče podle svatého Jana* one can even talk of a certain kind of “Marian triptych”, when Marketa brings salvation to Mikoláš and motherhood to Alexandra's son. The Virgin Mary in *Údolí včel* stands for the “spring of pure water and a bride, who serves a chalice of pure water” to the heart of Armin as well as Ondřej, and the woman in *Zjevení o ženě rodiče podle svatého Jana* is a beyond-real image of the double uniqueness of heavenly and worldly suffering, when it is not so obvious where the evil comes from which wants to swallow hope, but it is determined that only a woman can redeem this hope through her sacrifice. If one becomes aware of these connections, apparently discreet topics of spiritual nature also become evident in the two analysed films.

If one simplifies this substantially, a surprising connection can be uncovered in the sense of raising a woman into the depths of a spiritual being and also perhaps the possibility of opening with every one of his heroes a Jungian parable with anime in the male's principle of self-determination. This topic is also opened in the film *Holubice* (*The White Dove*) (1960) in bringing Michal closer to an unknown positive essence (to Susanne which he is not aware of at the beginning), through a white dove as a symbol of the always desirably awaited message about the existence of light. Michal is unable to understand this message rationally, but is guided in his own heart, which is sleeping, by the third one, who comes, who gives this message the meaning. The one who lives under the sky so that he would direct his heart into the vertical line of life and his eyes where they have always been directed, towards the sky. It is as if Vlácil was again opening the topic which he presented in his first film *Skleněná oblaka* (1958). After all, it is not about the sky, but about heaven, it is not about justification and apology for one's failure, but about the change of this failure into discovery of hope within one's own heart.

This does not mean, however, that in the following films the topic of a woman as the heart of hope ceased to exist as such. It became more submissive, however, still clearly flowing and trembling within spiritual space-time of a certain kind of “subconscious” of every film. As if it stealthily and invisibly pulled the threads of the coincidences of intertwining relationships from somewhere. It is the woman, as the omnipresence of hope, who stood in duration and every time seemingly discreetly, but quite firmly protected with her coat the hidden story of love which was taking place deep within the sources of all-embracing humanity. It is not important what “name” she is assigned. Hope, journey, love, desire or death. And in this sense she is definitely obvious as verticality in the horizontal direction of the hero's mind. This is what Marketa does in her relationship with Mikoláš in *Marketa Lazarová*, this is how Maria is presented, to whom Ondřej as well as Armin are devoted in *Údolí včel*. One can only speculate as to the image of a woman in the unfilmed screenplay *Zjevení o ženě rodiče podle svatého Jana* as to where Vlácil would have arrive at. It was similar in his other films.²⁷ Due to these reasons a woman seems to

²⁷ In *Dým bramborové natě* (*Smoke on the Potato Fields*, 1976), *Stíny horkého léta* (*Shadows of a Hot Summer*, 1977), *Koncert na konci léta* (*Concert at the End of Summer*, 1979) or in *Hadí jed* (*Snake Poison*, 1981). Woman exists as a reflection of the highest level of humanity. In the spiritual sense of the history of salvation she was created as the last one, that is as the top. As a revealed manifestation of the transcendent emanation of the human heart. It might be the highest level of the possibility of anima portrayal. In Vlácil's films, woman is always a decisive aspect which interconnects the entire meaning of what is happening at the given space-time and how the heroes act. One can recall the “Marian scenes” from *Marketa Lazarová* or *Údolí včel*, or the unforgettable

be the decisive element for understanding the relationships between horizontality and verticality in the concept of manifesting spirituality in his films.

Trees and Stars

The situation in the analysed films is seemingly different. In *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* it is as if the horizontality of life was not taken into account at all. It is missing from the system, seemingly it is not even projected into the minds of the main heroes. Everything is taking place vertically from the very beginning, despite the fact that the first shots open with a horizontal view through the car windscreen of a snow-covered mountain road in a forest glade. However, the entire space-time is portrayed as verticality, up and down the high spruce trunks up to the undulated hills of the Beskydy Mountains. And further, on the ridges spruce trees as crosses touching the sky and for those of an innocent heart, silver firs from which stars are born hanging in the sky like lamps. A naive image drawn on a piece of metal sheet is the key showing this verticality in the dimensions of the heart and the cross. A man after falling out of a tree lies horizontally on his back, lifting his hands towards the night sky with the stars sparkling high above over the tops of the magnificent silver trees. The calling of a man who is dying during a deep night under silver firs and watching how the stars are born from their tops. Somewhere there the star of our desire is hidden. That is where Orion, Betelgeuse as well as Sirius are.²⁸ Pinecone (or star?) gatherers have heights in their eyes, palms as well as hearts. All the directions of journeys, actions as well as words are always led vertically. As if this way was necessary for the search for an answer to never spoken cries. The fall is the horizontality of these people. The higher you reach, without love in your heart, the deeper the abyss. And it is love that forms the foundation of horizontality and it is definitely a woman. She walks discreetly through several shots in *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* as an omnipresent and natural actuality. And it can be only hinted at that she harmonises the flow of time and organises the space. She bakes Christmas cookies and thus prepares for the coming of the Son for her son. Advent. Rest. A silence that is permanent so that the heart can hear.

The mother in *Sirius* is a silent support, seemingly absent from Fanda's mind. She is nowhere, but still present with her protective coat so that she could redeem, like love. She interweaves the entire structure and merges with her son as the sky with a star rising since eternity. Here, for a change, the verticality is seemingly missing. Since the first shot, with the subtitles under it, the horizon is defined as the basic pillar of life lined in its hidden essence with sorrow and suffering, and man like Christ walks his journey with a cross on his shoulders.

There is always a sunrise at the beginning. A monorail meanders between lines of telegraph poles which frame the image as Golgotha. The track passes into the depth of space and the sky turns red. A man is approaching on the track. Hunched, he is slowly passing one pole after another and controls the tracks. The hammer sounds like a bell. Silently, in long intervals, ding-dong. It is the sound of a death bell. The road seems endless. The time length of the shot enables a transformation from the horizontal line to the vertical one. Man unconsciously climbs up along the crosses that have already served their purpose awaiting a new cross, the hammer rings against the iron of the road, ding-dong. And on the top is a house with a dog inside, a boy and a star in his heart. We are part of the All and have no choice but to conform to this ideal. This is why we allow the heart to sing of eternity. The unrepeatability of something painfully beautiful, which is far more truthful than all the stories of the world, which is inadvertently transferred from Vlácil's

role of the female principle in the films *Koncert na konci léta* and *Hadí jed*, where the theme is elevated up to the archetype of anima. (Author's Note).

²⁸ J. D. Barrow, *Vesmír plný umění*, Brno 2000, p. 149–218.

film directly into the consciousness of the viewer as astonishment over the truthfulness of life. As if Vláčil used this, perhaps subconsciously, in order to implement an old Schelling ideal of art, but not as an act of being, but as its own meaning: “*Art was a means of vertical transcendence of the world and its task was to reveal the supreme metaphysical foundation that precedes and determines it – the endless absolute, the absolute totality of everything that is, however, a totality designed [...] as dynamic, immanently on its own developing ideally – the real pre-principle of all being.*”²⁹ This is probably the spiritual trembling that fascinates us so much in his best films, dazzles with the power of exceptional poetics and binds with a fine and discreet spiritual depth. Both boy heroes experience the same awakening, the same pain and the same hope. Latent sleep, rise, fall, pain from failure and awakening into the heights of the depths of a heart of love.

Both films begin horizontally, on a journey towards one's own return to Golgotha, to have oneself crucified again. *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* is dominantly vertical. It leads Ondra up and up all the time as if this ascent was endless. But before he reaches the ridge of Beskydy, we spot a cross several times, a graveyard, a church with a crucifix and still the unknown, the someone, who has something that both drives Ondra away and at the same time desperately attracts him. The third one who brings revelation, who opens a heart which opens eyes and then the mind alone learns that a silver fir exists as love and above it there is a star flaming in the endless horizon of being. Meanwhile, Ondra is sleeping in the hour between the dog and the wolf. In the hour of non-being. At the moment when this star shines, he is alone and the heart wants so much to see its light, its sparkle. He ascends up to the final height, up to a treetop, and the abyss becomes pain. His fall is caught by the third one. And the descent continues to the bottom, towards a departure. Only now, when he learns that it is about something more than just trees and pine-cones, he spots the Tree that knocked him down, as if in a new way, for the first time and in the full glare of silver stars. He spots his own desire.

In *Sirius* the entire concept is based on the predominance of the horizontal perception of space-time. It is a constant movement along the horizon, where there is no up or down, but only within the surface. Even though Fanda walks every day from the city school up to a mountain cottage, his star Sirius descends towards him in the form of a dog, down to the valley of earthly life in order to show him how high he is and how deep his abyss is. The third one again, who comes so that his sacrifice would awaken the pain of birth of knowledge. A downfall enters his life. Silently and without ringing of the bell, the one that announced it at the beginning. It is as simple and quick as a gunshot. Sirius, the dog, became the star of the Dog. And this exact star is the vertical pole of the cross of his sacrifice, not knowing that it will make his being meaningful, even though it is present in his life as an immanent sign of silence.

Sirius – Death and Resurrection through Sacrifice

Telegraph poles along the sparkling railway track heading towards its vanishing point into a certain kind of perspective depth over a skyline that turns pink with the sunrise. Pain is still underage. The star is sleeping, because Sirius only comes out at night. From the middle of this infinity a man is approaching. The horizontal line collides with the vertical one in the very first shot. Telegraph poles as the way of the cross line the human journey with seemingly no direction. Ding-dong, the roundsman controls the tracks with a hammer. Iron on iron, heart on heart, like a death bell, like the bell of the last days, ding-dong. Slowly and with a hunched back he approaches as if he were carrying the weight of a wooden beam on his shoulders, the weight of the sky in the collapse of human failure. The war is on, redemption comes only afterwards. The

²⁹ V. Zátka, *Umění jako symbol vertikální transcendence světa*, p. 93.

figure comes closer and closer and the journey slightly ascends. He is alone, perhaps because man is able to bear supreme suffering and supreme pain only on his own. Nothing moves, the silence absorbs the ringing of the rail track and suppresses every movement. We are again in the hour between the dog and the wolf. It is exceptionally quiet with an extremely strong inner staticity within the emotion of a starting sunrise that on its own brings an unexpectedly strong dynamism. This discrepancy resides within the emotional conflict of the sensed verticality and apparent staticity, which looks like suffocating even with this sensed embryo of hope. Movement thus becomes a hidden hope more in the spiritual sense of the word. *"...now it is high time to awake out of sleep... The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."*³⁰

Fanda's vertical line is his daily ascent from the depths of a well up to the heights of the sky, up to his dog star, Sirius, the dog, and Sirius as a star descends down to his master. The sign which betrays him, the innocent one, also meanders on the vertical line while guilt remains upon the star in his heart which did not want to set. It is only his loyalty, however, (the transcendence of verticality) which enables Sirius to die for a repeated star rise.³¹ As a dog is used to hearing a whistle and run quickly and impatiently to its master (the star), so it sets off for its last run, towards the front of a gun barrel. His star does not want it to serve evil and that is why it sends it to serve a real star. Here the movement literally shatters into a volume of its opposite meanings. At the same time, with the tension of intense dynamics of the entire sequence, there is a strong feeling of paralysing staticity of the clash between unconditional trust (verticality) and the unexpected dodging (horizontality). In a spiritual sense the inner state of the situation comes back to the beginning, to the way of the cross, to a certain kind of prophecy which Fanda reads out of a star atlas: *"So at first Sirius, the greatest star of the Greater Dog and the most beautiful fixed star in the sky, will keep descending deeper to the horizon until in approximately six thousand years it will disappear below it entirely."*³² The liberated pain knocks down the most through recognising guilt out of necessity. A glance into the inferno before the rising Dog Star is a glance into the addressing of one's own death. There is no he and I, we are one. We are both the star that connects our hearts within the joyful pain of being.

Both Main Characters

Lojza and Ondra – *Pověst o stříbrné jedli*

The entire movement in this film is based on the verticality of the subjective feeling of movement not of the main character, but of the supportive one, the gatherer Lojza. It is as if his spiritual value walked around Ondra without touching him. Lojza is seemingly slow, a little phlegmatic man, who however, has a clear sense of direction. He is the source of Ondra's inner irritation, he fears him, hides from him in a graveyard on his journey from school. Along a cross, graveyard chapel, silence, suspended or missing time, touches of something that Ondra does not understand, but is attracted by. From the very beginning, when he sees Lojza for the first time through a closed window, he feels fear. He tells his mum: *"Don't turn on the light. [...] Mum, there's a strange guy in the yard."*³³ Fear and desire. Stiffening and dynamics. The path between them opens slowly. He has no idea that the one from whom he hides in the dark, brings him light. Once again this

³⁰ Rom 13:11b,12.

³¹ Compare V. Suchánek, *Topografie transcendentních souřadnic filmového obrazu*, p. 53–56.

³² *Sirius* (František Vlácil, ČSSR 1974).

³³ *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* (František Vlácil, ČSSR 1973).

well-known opposite of outer staticity and inner movement creates a strong tension and giant momentum which is transmitted from the inside out. Ondra slowly awakens from some kind of antenatal state into a birth. His light is finally lit and he can see that he, being at the bottom, is invited upwards. He does not know yet that a fall into himself is awaiting him and that the ultimate awakening will hurt him and he will enter his guilt, but he is already there. At the end of the film everything turns towards the inner which is true dynamism, which is strongly positive, as the hero heads towards the destruction of his own death at the end of his sleep. He spots a silver fir, the dawn of his life is approaching, he is at his utmost vertical line. At this moment there is no real space-time in the world, the landscape is vertical, Ondra is vertical, his real movement is vertical. There is only a spiritual direction. This all is happening simultaneously within three structures. Within a movement that represents the direction of the interior, within a spiritual dive which touches the embodiment into a myth, and within the mingling of the vertical and the horizontal, the place of the cross. Fear is transformed into desire, the horizon of the earth changes into a skyline of stars and the pain is the greater the more present the inner recognition of joy.

Sirius and Fanda – *Sirius*

There is once again a seeming paradox, but only on the surface. The great dynamics of the main hero from one side emphasized by his direction towards the goal, his own positive expression. At the same time this self-expression evokes a loss of inner movement till complete staticity, as the hero has lost the sense of his own direction at the moment when he had decided to kill a loyal, trusting animal. In addition, the relationships between horizontality and verticality mingle within both figures. With the dog it is the double uniqueness of the name, animal and star, one and the same. Ascent as well as descent. Sacrifice as well as resurrection. A journey through crosses towards a cross that he builds on his own so that he can wake up from it into the dawn of the star. Vláčil multiplies this parallel contrast between dynamics and staticity in Fanda's direction with the uncompromising emphasis on his age. It is the immaturity of a child which at the moment of the most painful fall matures into the recognition of joy connected to one's rise.

Time and Space

In both films, those two more or less philosophical and, to a great extent, aesthetic principles could be characterized as: time – necessity, space – desire.

With these inner dynamics and the staticity of time and space in the direction everything mingles into something more essential. For both heroes it is decisive to demonstrate desire and necessity, to hand over the direction of their life to the one who has ignited it and accept through this submission the pain of the eternal dream as well. This kind of understanding of time and space enables the author to express the coexistence as well as contrast between reality and hope, ideals and compromise. There are no limits. Time does not need to be defined by space and space by time, because the human subconscious never follows the laws of logic and the development of a story. We are in a non-time of eternity.³⁴

Everything that contains space-time in *Sirius* is absurd in a certain sense. Citations read out of an astronomical atlas by a child's voice, war, a quarry that is a setting in which dogs are being taken away, these resemble certain scenes of the inferno from Bosch's canvases. Also the grow-

³⁴ See V. Suchánek, *Topografie transcendentních souřadnic filmového obrazu*, p. 56–57.

ing fear, slightly blown away by the explosion of a German ammunition train.³⁵ This all fatally heads into a blind alley, from which there is no way out. Ondra does not hesitate for a moment in *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* whether he should cross the threshold of his desire, when he is entrusted with the time of his light. As a child he lives in eternity. Neither the past nor the future are the time or space of his existence.

A child does not perceive death as non-existence. Fanda as well as Ondra are ordinary care-free boys, they live in the here and now. Something shows them a direction, something calls them, they head towards something, up till the last moment when the now arrives. Only over the threshold of eternity. They look at the sky at the same time. And all of a sudden they spot what they saw at the very beginning. Two wished-for stars, as one rises for the other, as they embrace, as they become the only star of life. Because at the end, as at the beginning, there is always a dawn.

Epilogue. Pervading through a Cross

Pověst o stříbrné jedli

*“They said that man’s destiny is connected to a certain tree that accompanies him from the cradle to the grave. According to one legend he who does something kind and good will see silver trees.”*³⁶

Born and stopped time. Stars in the glade. Advent. Silence is entered by the Silence. Birth, embrace and hope. Mother is baking sweets and someone is coming. It is Christmas. An uninvited, but still expected guest. He is coming home. Where he belongs. Unseen and noticed as a visitor, the one expected at the table. A fall into an embrace and blood on the body as well as on Bosch heart. Firs as fingers reaching up to the sky light, up with the stars in the depths of adolescent eyes in the revelation of eternal joy and the spring of being. As a time healed which comes after the resurrection of eternity. And in the end there is always eternity, because of – the Birth.

Sirius

Up to a cross, to the end of heaven, a child walks incessantly its walk of the heart as if through the pureness of sorrow and birth. The principle of being in its palm the and the Dog Star up over the horizon. Out of love, over suffering and a mirror of tears that leads up to the soul. The glare of sacrificial death grows darker as the sun in its sunset, over the moment of twilight to a long, bloody flash of the cross before the arrival of darkness. In order that the ancient prophecy of resurrection which needs to be fulfilled be rendered true.

*“At the place of disappeared Orion and the Great Dog new stars and constellations will come out that will gradually begin to vanish as well so that in their place, after a certain time, measured out by the Earth’s ecliptic, Sirius with its stars begins appear once again.”*³⁷

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

Thomas Stearns Eliot “Little Gidding” (Four Quartets)

³⁵ The reality of the absurdity of the moment when the tragic can be comic, verticality is pulled down into horizontality and horizontality is understood as verticality, is a sign of the existence of connections, in which the Greek tragedy originates. Viz *Ostře sledované vlaky (Closely Watched Trains)*. (Jiří Menzel, ČSSR 1966).

³⁶ *Pověst o stříbrné jedli* (František Vlácil, ČSSR 1973).

³⁷ *Sirius* (František Vlácil, ČSSR 1974).

Luboš Ptáček

Department of Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the Faculty of Arts,
Palacký University Olomouc

Ideological Patterns in the Occupation Trilogy of Otakar Vávra *Dny zrady (Days of Betrayal), Sokolovo, Osvobození Prahy (The Liberation of Prague)* (1973–1975) on the Background of Czech Historical Films of the 1970s

Abstract | The aim of this text is to introduce those ideological patterns which were placed into the occupation trilogy by Vávra and draw attention to the similarity to the patterns used in the Hussite trilogy Jan Hus, Jan Žižka, Proti všem (Against All) and in his highly acclaimed film *Kladivo na čarodějnice (The Witch Hunt)*. In the occupation trilogy, Vávra foregrounds the role of KSC (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) in the critical moments of 1938 and during the anti-Nazi resistance movement. He accuses the politicians of the democratic parties of cowardice and of plotting against the Soviet Union. He criticises English and French compliance with the Munich Agreement. He presents Klement Gottwald in the context of a refashioned cult of personality. He points out the impossibility of a peaceful coexistence with the German minority.

The Function of Historical Film in the “Normalisation” Period

Film and television were considered an important tool of ideological practice in the “normalisation” period and was carried out in accordance with its grounding ideological text *Poučení z krizového vývoje*. The historian Kamil Činátl summarises the importance and binding nature of this official appraisal of the Prague Spring events and the ensuing occupation of Czechoslovakia by the five armies of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968.

*This binding interpretation of the Prague Spring and the ensuing process of consolidation represented the imaginary centre of the ideological discourse of normalisation. Other ideological texts also respected the authoritative position of Poučení and therefore acquired the status of commentaries. They dealt with its interpretation, further developed its ideas, applied the key positions to a specific environment, translated the findings into alternative genres, etc. Ideological discourse adopted the form of a memory of the time of the crisis. The figure of memory “learning from the past” constituted, under the pressure of political power, the collective ethos of normalisation.*¹

¹ K. Činátl, *Televizní reality normalizace a její ideologický kód (The Reality of Normalisation Television and its Ideological Code)*. P. Kopal, (ed.) *Film a dějiny 2. Adolf Hitler a ti druzí – filmové obrazy zla*. Praha 2009, p. 241–271, p. 241.

In its appraisal of the fresh events, the text of *Poučení* also drew on similes from ČSR history. In connection with this, it also mentions the German occupation during WW II, which it presents in absolute contrast to the presence of the “allied” troops from 1968.

*The allied troops entering our territory was an act and expression of friendship. The activity of these troops was aimed against the enemies of Socialism and at protecting Socialism. [...] Let us, in this context, consider Hitler's occupation, when the Fascists usurped the power of the state and part of the land, persecuted and murdered Communists and patriots, introduced bilingualism [...], closed the universities and established their administration with unlimited authority in every district and every region. The whole of our industry had to work for the industry of Germany [...]*²

In the name of the ideological positions of *Poučení*, historical film was considered one of the main tools of propaganda in the period of “normalisation”. In his overview text *Před XVI. Sjezdem KSČ (Before the XVI. KSČ Convention)* in which he evaluates Czechoslovak cinema in the period before 1968, the director of Czechoslovak Film Jiří Purš also emphasises the utmost importance of the genre.

*We view the making of a series of works with historical and revolution themes as a positive phenomenon in our recent film production. Feature films and artistic documentaries such as Dvacátý devátý (1929), Dny zrady (Dny zrady), Sokolovo, Zlaté časy (Great Times), Smrť šitá na míru (Death Made to Order), Osvobození Prahy (Osvobození Prahy), Jeden stříbrný (One Silver Piece), Vítězný lid (Victorious People), Tichý Američan v Praze (The Quiet American in Prague), Stíny horkého léta (Shadows of a Hot Summer), Drsná planina (Rough Life at Planina), Zrcadlení (Reflection), Bouřlivé víno (Wine Working), Svítalo celou noc (The Day Dawned All the Night), Signum Laudis and certain others, as well as the documentaries Potomci a předkové (The Offspring and The Ancestors) series and above all its last film Semena nenávisti (The Seeds of Hatred) which had to do with the development of the workers' and Communist movement in our countries, with the chronicles of the fights against Fascism, with the liberation of Czechoslovakia and with its Socialist nature.*³

Purš does not mention his evaluation criteria. The audience response surely could not have been his yardstick, for the turnout to several of the above-mentioned films (see chart) was “disastrous”, under 100,000 people. The aesthetic norms were defined rather negatively, by rejecting the New Wave poetics and by a vague reference to the never-precisely-defined canons of socialist realism. Fidelity to the ideological requirements of *Poučení*, which were up-dated with the outcomes of KSČ conventions and the KSČ main committee meetings, were the only area where an evaluation was possible. Their information value was fairly empty and easily interchangeable. Until the arrival of Perestroika after 1985, it was also practically unchanging. The primary function of the documents was therefore not to reformulate and up-date the world view but to ritually confirm to the unchangeability of the party and state power structures. This vagueness, emptiness and rigidity were naturally reflected in the production of “normalisation” cinema. During “normalisation”, politically engaged historical films with historical and revolution themes focused on several chosen periods and themes from recent history:

² Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ (*Learning from the Critical Development After the Thirteenth Convention of KSČ*). Praha 1988, p. 10. (Editing and foreword by doc. Tomáš Slouka, CSc.).

³ J. Purš, “Our Film Before the Sixteenth Convention of KSČ.” *Film a doba* 1 (1981) p. 1.

The First Czechoslovak Republic 1921–1938 *Dvojí svět hotelu Pacifik 1929 (Behind the Scenes at the Hotel Pacific)*, *Rytmus 1934*, *Skandál v Gri-Gri baru (Scandal in the Gri-Gri Night Club)* and a critique of the bourgeois regime, social inequality and the origin and history of KSČ.

The Occupation 1939–1945 *Klíč (The Key)*, ...*a pozdravujte vlaštovky (Greeting to the Swallows)*, *Zbraně pro Prahu (Weapons for Prague)* the inability of the bourgeois democracies to secure peace, the repercussions of England's and France's betrayal, the German nation as a permanent threat to Czech statehood, the impossibility of cohabitation in one state with Germans, the selfless help of the Soviet Union in the liberation of the country.

The February Coup d'état 1948 and the 1950s *Vítězný únor (The Victorious February)*, *Kronika žhavého léta (A Chronicle of a Hot Summer)*, *Stíny horkého léta (Shadows of A Hot Summer)* the logical conclusion of pre-war and war events (the betrayal of the powers of the West, the selfless help of the Soviet Union), an unnecessary step towards building a just, classless society, fighting against internal and external enemies.

The Events of 1968 *Hroch (Hippopotamus)*, *Tobě hrana zvonit nebude (The Bell Will Not Toll for You)*, *Divoké víno, Tam, kde sídlí čápi (The Place Where the Storks Nest)*, *Za volantem nepřítel (An Enemy Is at the Wheel)* the dishonest intentions and confusion of the reformers, the shaming of honest Communists, the open interference of the West motivated by an effort to review February 1948.

The films about the times of the German occupation were best represented. The given time frame 1921–1968 (the founding of KSČ – the Warsaw Pact troops occupation) was only rarely disrupted. These were mainly films mapping out the history of the workers' revolution movement prior to the foundation of KSČ *Čas lásky a naděje (Times of Love and Hope)*, *Lupič legenda (Legend, the Robber)*, *Tajemství zlatého Buddha (The Secret of the Golden Buddha)*. Furthermore, it concerned three autobiographical films by important Czech artists which continued to be popular autobiographical films from the 1950s *Paleta lásky (Palette of Love)*⁴, *Koncert na konci léta (Concert at the End of the Summer)*⁵, *Božská Ema (Divine Ema)*⁶. *Noc na Karlštejně (Night at Karlštejn)* (Zdeněk Podskalský, 1973), a comedy musical set in the Middle Ages, was popular with audiences. An adventure trilogy set in the Neolithic period aimed at children and young audiences, *Osada havranů (The Ravens' Strongholds)*, *Volání rodu (Indivisible Clan)*, *Na veliké řece (On the Big River)* (Jan Schmidt, 1977) is also included in the list. Other popular historical topics of the 1950s (the Hussite movement, the nation's repression after the Battle of White Mountain) went unnoticed. Despite large promotional campaigns, compulsory screenings at schools, the costly films did not reach the audience's attention. In terms of film screenings for the retired, apart from Vávra's trilogy, only *Noc na Karlštejně* (1973, a historical musical comedy based on Jaroslav Vrchlický's theatre play from 1854, in which popular songs by the Czech pop music elite could be heard, gained a better audience response. Exceptionally, twisting history in this case did not serve the ideological patterns but comedy elements. In contrast, the comedy *Pan Vok odchází (Sir Vok Is Leaving)* (Karel Steklý, 1979), which followed *Svatby pana Voka (Sir Vok's Weddings)* which introduced the aristocracy and the clergy as a decadent class, was not particularly successful. There was a decent audience response to the politically engaged comedies set in the "heartly" Moravian countryside: *Divoké víno (Wild Wine)* (Václav Vorlíček, 1976) and *Náš dědek Josef (Old Man Joe)* (Antonín Kachlík, 1976). Nevertheless, in popularity and cinema turnout, these lagged behind those comedies and children's films which were not

⁴ Josef Mánes (1820–1871).

⁵ Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904).

⁶ Ema Destinová (1878–1930).

politically engaged: *Tři oříšky pro Popelku* (*Three Nuts for Cinderella*), *Dívka na koštěti* (*The Girl on The Broom*), *Jáchyme, hoď ho do stroje* (*Joachim, Punch Him into the Machine!*). Several cadres of the “normalisation” period (Vojtěch Trapl, Ivo Toman, Jaroslav Balík, Karel Steklý, Antonín Kachlík) but also important figures of Czech 1960s film (Karel Kachyňa, Jaromil Jireš) took up directing politically engaged films.

For contemporary purposes, the ideological and poetic mode of the 1950s was revived, having been adjusted to the situation at the time. *O moravské zemi* (*The Moravian Land*, 1977), a film about the collectivisation of the country, even deliberately created an antithesis to a highly acclaimed film by Vojtěch Jasný *Všichni dobří rodáci* (*All Good Countrymen*, 1968), which captured the events from between 1945 to 1968 in the Moravian countryside. In both cases, Radek Brzobohatý was cast in the leading part. The 1960s tendencies which brought a revision of recent history and innovative stylistic and narrative techniques were suppressed. Nevertheless, the 1960s genre of historical film did not offer a unified movement. It was instead dominated by an individual authorial approach. The WW II themed films referred to the negative aspects of the Partisan movement: *Smrt si říká Engelchen* (*Death Is Called Engelchen*) (Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos, 1963) and *Kočár do Vídně* (*A Carriage Going to Vienna*) (Karel Kachyňa, 1966). Through hints, they dared to cast doubt on the image of the Red Army: *Ať žije republika* (*Long Live the Republic!*) (Karel Kachyňa, 1965; and touched upon the post-war expulsion of the Sudeten Germans: *Adelheid* (František Vlácil, 1969). *Noc nevěsty* (*The Nun's Night*) (Karel Kachyňa, 1967), *Všichni dobří rodáci* (Vojtěch Jasný, 1968) and *Smuteční slavnost* (*Funeral Ceremonies*) (Zdeněk Sirový, 1969) point out the darker aspects of the collectivisation of the Czech countryside. The films about older history had an allegorical dimension. *Čest a sláva* (*Honour And Glory*) (Hynek Bočan, 1969) takes place at the end of The Thirty Years' War in 1647 where the main characters posed the same question as people after August 1968, whether there was any point in continuing to fight for freedom (of religion) after a lost war. *Kladivo na čarodějnice* (Otakar Vávra, 1969) used the Moravian witch-hunts of 1678 – 1695 to refer to the political trials of the 1950s and even in its chillingly prophetic vision announced the political purges of the approaching consolidation and “normalisation”.

At the same time, non-ideological films were produced. Apart from shallow comedies such as *Slasti otce vlasti* (*The Pleasures of the Father of His Country*) and *Svatby pana Voka* (both Karel Steklý, 1969, 1970), there were auteur films which focused on sketching psychological portraits of the protagonists, on capturing their inner experience and the existential aspect of being: *Démanty noci* (*Diamond of the Night*) (Jan Němec, 1964), *Marketa Lazarová*, *Údolí včel* (*The Valley of the Bees*) (both František Vlácil, 1967), *Spanilá jízda* (*The Nuremberg Campaign*), *Královský omyl* (*The King's Blunder*) (both Václav Daněk, 1963, 1968). We should add that the formal experiments of the New Wave film-makers were not, despite massive media campaigns, successful abroad and with their reputation as “anti-regime” films, very popular with the audience. The exceptions were *Marketa Lazarová* (1,251,048 viewers) and *Kladivo na čarodějnice* (2,657,920 viewers).⁷

According to Václava Kofránková, the New Wave historical films share inspiration in foreign poetics, “All the important New Wave works of the historical genre are characterised by a Bergman-esque-Bressonian approach to film (particularly the visuals and the sound) which is spiced up with a great deal of the authors' own creativity and by an enchanting, even if rather dark, poetics, be it Vlácil's work (*Marketa Lazarová*, *Údolí včel*), Vávra's *Kladivo na čarodějnice*, Bočan's *Čest a sláva* and *Spanilá jízda* or *Královský omyl* by Oldřich Daněk”.⁸ Echoes of the poetics also appear in

⁷ V. Březina, *Lexikon českého filmu*. Praha 1997.

⁸ V. Kofránková, *Spanilá jízda Oldřicha Daňka za novou tvář historického filmu* (Oldřich Danek's Crusade for a New Form of the Historical Film) in: *Film a dějiny* (ed. P. Kopal), Praha 2005, p. 99–106, p. 100.

...a *pozdravujte vlaštovky* from 1972, in which the daring of a “Bressonian approach” is balanced out by a watertight topic that fully corresponds to the new ideological requirements. Here we deal with a biographical film about Marie Kudeříková (1921–1943), a young member of KSČ, an active member of the anti-Nazi resistance movement with literary ambitions who extricated herself from the influence of her Catholic family.

Otakar Vávra

The Czech director Otakar Vávra (28th February 1911 – 16th September 2011) celebrated his hundredth birthday in 2011. His longevity has emphasised the social status of one of the most important figures of Czech cinema. His work and stance on matters outside cinema have been a living chronicle of Czech cinema and serve to illustrate its climaxes and falls. Vávra had his début in 1931 with the experimental film *Světlo prochází tmou* (*Light Travels in Darkness*) and produced films almost continuously up until 1989. In total, he shot 47 feature films whose premières were nearly always accompanied by considerable interest on the part of the public. The director was capable of promoting them with, for the times, fairly sophisticated advertising. Vávra’s undoubted film-making talents and hard work were complemented by an ability to capture the socio-political mood of the times to which he could tailor the ideological messages of his films. This instinct enabled him to shoot films in several different political regimes (The First Czechoslovak Republic, The Second Czechoslovak Republic, the Protectorate, the postwar democratic period 1945–1948, Stalinism, the liberalisation of Socialist society in the 1960s, “normalisation”). After 1989, this versatility initiated sharp debates regarding the director’s opportunism, conformism and even collaboration. Vávra’s opponents’ reproaches are summarised by his most prominent defender from the ranks of historians and theoreticians, Jaromír Blažejovský.

“No Czech film-maker has attracted as many slanderous attributes as Otakar Vávra: the classic of Czech adaptability (Jiří Cieslar)⁹, the Fouché of Czech cinema, *The Great Inquisitor*, the Pontius Pilate and a genius of the average (Vladimír Just¹⁰), the Salieri of Czech cinema (Milan Hanuš¹¹), a master of costume changing and the Rasputin of Barrandov (Pavel Melounek¹²), a villain and *The Spineless Makropulos Affair* (Jan Rejžek¹³).”¹⁴

Blažejovský stresses the rousing effect of the screening of Vávra’s films during the Warsaw Pact troops’ invasion, while he also defends the first part of the occupation trilogy.

When evaluating Vávra’s epic films, it would be fair to take into account the circumstances and the effect of their reception. The Hussite trilogy demonstrated its power to rouse people in a special TV screening after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact countries (if I recall correctly, I think it was the film Jan Žižka, not Proti všem, as Čornej writes). The première of Dny zrady in the spring of 1973 gave the impression of being a specific portrait of the almost forgotten democratic politicians of the First Czechoslovak Republic: Edvard Beneš and Jan Masaryk. Even the portrait of Klement Gottwald

⁹ J. Cieslar, *Kočky na Atalantě*. Praha 2003, p. 410.

¹⁰ V. Just, Od Emila Háchy k Václavu Klausovi (From Emil Hácha to Václav Klaus), *Lidové noviny* 17 (3rd November 2004) p. 14; Also, Pilátovy paměti? Otakar Vávra jako génius průměrnosti českého filmu (The Memoir of Pontius Pilate? Otakar Vávra as the Genius of the Average of Czech Cinema), *Literární noviny* 7 (1996) 37, p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² P. Melounek, Causa C (Otakar Vávra’s Case), *Reflex* 2 (1991) 20, p. 42–44.

¹³ J. Rejžek, Padouch i hrdinové ve Vladislavském sále (A Villain and Heroes in Vladislav Hall) *Lidové noviny* 17 (30th–31st October 2004) p. 1, 10.

¹⁴ J. Blažejovský, Dobové tance kolem života a díla Otakary Vávry (The Theatre of the Times with Otakar Vávra), *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis Facultas Philosophica Moravica* 6 (2008), p. 229–234, p. 229.

rendered by Bohuš Pastorek did not contradict how the middle-aged of the time recalled this leader. We can confirm the well-known observation by Jiří Menzel that Gottwald was portrayed in the film as a man with a rather dim intellect. The remaining two parts of the new trilogy did much worse...¹⁵

The two versions of the director's memoirs¹⁶, which apart from his recollections also contain the director's explication of his creative method used in the writing of the scripts and in the shooting itself, are interesting witnesses of Vávra's approach to his work. What is valuable in relation to this study are primarily his notes on the genre of historical film. The classic book *Otakar Vávra 100 let (Otakar Vávra: A Hundred Years)*¹⁷ contains Vávra's selected texts and interviews from 1935–2004, accompanied by essays by Jan Jaroš and Pavel Tausig and a personal account by Jiří Menzel. The study by Oto Horák, *Úskalí konformity (The Pitfalls of Conformity)*¹⁸, provides a well-informed and well-argued analysis of Vávra's work on the background of historical events with the author also drawing attention to the patterns applied in *Kladivo na čarodějnice*.

Vávra was not entering the period of consolidation and the beginning of "normalisation" with a positive cadre assessment report. Despite the fact that his most significant films from the 1960s, *Zlatá reneta (The Golden Queening, 1965)* and *Romance pro křídlovku (Romance for the Bugle, 1966)*, were apolitical, they were shot in the context of New Wave poetics. *Kladivo na čarodějnice* was an explicitly understood allegory referring to the political trials of the 1950s. For most of the young directors of the Czechoslovak New Wave, Vávra remained an undoubted authority from whom they learned the basics of the craft at FAMU. A student-produced short film *Nezvaný host (The Uninvited Guest)* (Vlastimil Venclík, 1969) made under Vávra's supervision as a final-exam film at FAMU, became a pretext for Vávra's punishment by the party. Vávra received an official party reprimand, was stripped of all leading positions (vice-chancellor, the head of the department of feature film directing) and was only allowed to teach theoretical subjects. According to Vávra, the main script editor at the time, Ivo Toman, refused to admit the projects presented by Vávra into production. This is why the director turned to Miroslav Fábera, the head of Barandov Studios, with whom he had already cooperated on the script for *Sokolovo* in the 1950s.

The Occupation Trilogy

Shared features with the Hussite trilogy do not only appear in the copying of ideological patterns. Vávra only chose ideologically safe patterns for his epic historical films. He managed to secure above-average funding¹⁹ for the production and promoted all the projects already at the time of their making. Films which were particularly expensive and long-awaited could not simply be dismissed by the censors or simply disregarded. The historian Petr Čornej mentions the following in relation to producing the Hussite trilogy.

For his times, Vávra was capable of securing his projects to an unprecedented degree, even in terms of promotion (The film-making was visited by journalists as well as by deputations of politicians. In interviews, Vávra often stressed the importance of the Czechoslovak People's Army without whose services he could not do without, etc.) Society's anticipation thus provoked, the enormous budget

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ O. Vávra, *Zamyšlení režiséra*. Praha 1986; O. Vávra, *Paměti aneb moje filmové 100letí*. Praha 2011.

¹⁷ Z. Pavelka (ed.), *Otakar Vávra 100 let*. Praha 2011.

¹⁸ O. Horák, *Úskalí konformity (The Pitfalls of Conformity)*. *Cinepur* 66 (2009) p. 32–39.

¹⁹ For instance, prior to producing *Sokolovo* he personally intervened on his own behalf with President Svoboda.

of both trilogies and the political safety of the topics provided both projects with a *de facto* success even prior to the *première*.²⁰

The ideological constructs of the occupation trilogy faithfully develop the positions of *Poučení* in a dramatic form. The director's motivation does not only issue from an opportunistic effort to comply with the contemporary political requirements but also reflects Vávra's persuasion, his creative attitude and his style of directing.

Manipulating History

With both trilogies and *Kladivo na čarodějnice*, Vávra proudly advocated historical accuracy. Čornej argues that Vávra being guilty of deliberate manipulation of history in the Hussite trilogy, where the director had to portray the portrait of Jan Hus as a neutral priest and had to meet the ideological requirements of radical historians. At the same time, however, he succeeded in pushing through a traditional revivalist image of Jan Žižka, even against the efforts of the ideologists of the time such as Josef Macek, whom Čornej terms "*the creator of a fresh Marxist (strictly speaking Stalinist) concept of the Hussite revolution movement*"²¹. Among other things, Macek considered Jan Žižka "*a representative of the so-called townsmen-aristocratic opposition, not of the revolutionary poor of the town of Tabor*."²²

A similar distortion of the historical facts in the occupation trilogy is consequently stated by Petr Koura.

*In agreement with the interpretation of history and the Second World War through the lens of the "normalisation" regime they created gross inadequacies and misinterpretations. Thus, the meeting about Fall Grunn in Hitler's chancellery on 28th May 1938, captured in the introduction, is in this chronologically-understood film depicted before Adolf Hitler's meeting with the Sudeten- German leader Konrad Henlein which in fact happened two month earlier. In Dny zrady, we find a number of similar manipulations. The number is actually higher in every following part of the war trilogy.*²³

Its social urgency, high turnout and subsequent categorisation among the censored and prohibited films overshadowed the problematic elements of *Kladivo na čarodějnice*. Ota Horák ranks the film among Vávra's finest works (he praises its psychological character, naturalism, music leitmotif by Jiří Srnka and the actors' performances). While he also criticises the film's unnecessary straightforwardness, small-mindedness and, above all, formal obsolescence, "*Formally and aesthetically, Kladivo na čarodějnice, given its place in Czech and world cinema, is a rather outdated work, mechanically quoting the canvases of the Flemish school in particular*."²⁴ The black-and-white narrowness of the film brings its effect into hopeless extremes. After his appointment, inquisitor Boblig is practically non-punishable and irremovable from his position. The brutal torture finally forces everybody to confess. The development of the trials and the attitudes of Boblig's seniors have been changed for the sake of escalation of the drama, while they have also

²⁰ P. Čornej, Husitská trilogie a její dobový ohlas (The Hussite Trilogy and its Reception). in: P. Kopal (ed.), *Film a dějiny 1.*, Praha 2005, p. 84–98, p. 84.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

²³ P. Koura, *Obraz Hitlera v českém hraném filmu (Hitler's Image in Czech Feature Films)*. in: P. Kopal (ed.), *Film a dějiny 2. Adolf Hitler a ti druzí – filmové obrazy zla*. Praha 2009, p. 90–91.

²⁴ O. Horák, *Úskalí conformity (The Pitfalls of Conformity)*. p. 32–39, p. 34.

been subjected to the simplification and orderliness of the revealed mechanism of the trials. Simplification, often developed into a position, is impressive and addresses a wide audience. Vávra here used the same technique as in both trilogies. He did not consequently consider the above-mentioned adjusting of the historical events as a violation of historical accuracy. In terms of meaning, *Kladivo na čarodějnice* may seem an antithesis of historical films of the 1950s but to emphasise this antithesis the same script-editing and directorial techniques were employed.

What adds to the similarity of the two trilogies is that the occupation trilogy already has its roots in the post-war years. In the first version of the memoir (1982), Vávra states that the writer Miroslav Fábera first brought his script for *Sokolovo* in 1949. The following year, a co-production with Mostfilm was arranged. As he recalls, Vávra consulted the production with Vsevolod Pudovkin, Mikheil Chiaureli and Anatoli Golovnya²⁵. In the end, the project was never completed. The experience he had gained, however, (particularly in shooting war scenes) was later used in the production of the Hussite trilogy. He consequently labels the occupation trilogy as a non-fiction film which reconstructs real events.

*In our opinion, it was impossible to capture this reality in any other way but in the form of an art documentary. This is why we chose not only authentic action and interviews with historical figures on the basis of historical records (doing that, we always compared two or three records from various sides) but, where it was possible, we also kept the original formulations of the particular sentences by these political figures. An undistorted rendering of the main characters' personalities, choice of the important moments typical for a particular situation and capturing the joint social changes were, however, a condition for success.*²⁶

Vávra also refers to historical authenticity in the occupation trilogy with the title after the credits, in a similar way as he does in *Kladivo na čarodějnice*.

Kladivo na čarodějnice: the texts used in the trials have been taken from authentic inquisition transcripts of the trials in Losiny and Šumperk held between 1678 and 1695;

Dny zrady: the utterances of historical figures are authentic;

Sokolovo: the historical accuracy of the particular scenes has been maintained and is based on historical documents, on memoirs by General Ludvík Svoboda and on the reminiscences of other participants in the Battle of Sokolovo;

Osvození Prahy: the situations and the dialogues of the historical figures are authentic.

The actual function of the realism of details skilfully hid the ideological patterns which differed from the true story in a number of areas, similarly to the Hussite trilogy. In an interview carried out in 1989, Vávra does not admit to any ideological deformations and defends himself stating that he wrote the scripts for the occupation trilogy himself as always²⁷. His words may be interpreted from two extreme positions: either a director, with a great deal of conceit, deliberately lied, even though he knew he could be very easily proved a liar but does not feel the need to recant his words, or he truly believed the ideas he presented, which would have required

²⁵ O. Vávra, *Zamyšlení režiséra*, p. 210–221.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

²⁷ "Do you mean you never got into a conflict with your conscience during your career? No, no, I didn't. And, I don't know why I should! (raises his voice) My films do not serve an ideology; I never allowed that. Because I have always brought my own subject; nobody tried forcing it upon me. And nobody did force it upon me." Obědval jsem s Goebbelsem rozhovor s Alenou Plavcovou (I Had Lunch with Goebbels: An Interview with Alena Plavcova) in: Z. Pavelka (ed.), *Otakar Vávra 100 let*. p. 129.

absolute self-centredness and ideological fanaticism. Although Vávra may have entered KSČ as early as 1945 of his own persuasion and taken an active role in the reform of the nationalised cinema industry, he always enjoyed living in style. He claimed to be an atheist, which is clearly reflected in the characters of the priests in all his historical films. He substitutes religion with a struggle for social justice (Jan Hus, Jan Želivský) or with philosophy (John Amos Comenius). The bad priest characters abuse their social authority as a source of wealth, power position or a tool for vengeance.

Another stable ideological element of Vávra's work is his understanding of being Czech which was connected to the fear and hatred of Germans as an immediate threat to Czech identity and national independence.

The basic ideological positions of the occupation trilogy:

The accented and twisted role of the KSČ: in critical moments, the KSČ managed to give precedence to the defence of the country over class struggle and allied with democratic parties against the threat of German Nazism. In fact, under Gottwald's leadership, the party always followed instructions from Moscow.

The restoration of Klement Gottwald: in connection with the renewed cult of personality, the leader of the KSČ was presented as an infallible and unflinching leader.

The role of the Soviet Union: Vávra magnifies the possibilities of military help from the USSR, while in fact the countries did not even share state borders. He blames Britain and France for diplomatic negotiations with Hitler, while he conceals the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact about not attacking from 1939 and the division of Poland after the German invasion of Poland in 1939.

The impossibility of cohabitation with the German minority in Czechoslovak territory. With his black-and-white portrayal of Germans as the arch enemy, Vávra returns to the attitudes of 1950s cinema. Emphasising the dangers of revanchism on the part of resettled Germans was part of the state propaganda of the time.

The failure of the politics of democratic parties: the politicians of democratic parties are presented as weak or plotters who first and foremost defend the interests of the Czech capital siding with Hitler.

The betrayal by the Western allies: above all, it was fear of the USSR and of the spread of Communism that led the political figures of Britain and France to sacrifice Czechoslovakia to Hitler.

Vávra differentiates and exaggerates the main positions regarding the leading role of the KSČ and the friendship and help of the Soviet Union. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the suppression of the Prague Spring, nobody believed in the intentions declared by Brezhnev's regime or by the home state and party bodies. The new international pact between the USSR and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic legitimised the invasion by the allied troops and the "temporary" stay of the Red Army in Czechoslovak territory.

In this black-and-white rendition, Communists and non-Communists, there looms a veritable portrait of President Edvard Beneš. Unlike the rest of the Czech political figures, Beneš was no coward. He consistently and decidedly tried to defend the interests of Czechoslovakia. Vávra presents him as a classic tragic hero who was beaten down by fate.

The patterns from the 1950s were modified. In the spirit of the restored cult of personality, Klement Gottwald²⁸ is depicted as an infallible and wise leader of the party and of the entire nation, who with a deadly precision anticipates future developments on the basis of the contem-

²⁸ Gottwald obtained the leadership of KSČ in 1929 and in the first half of the 1930s carried out several purges and at the same time initiated sharp arguments with the remainder of the political scene and the state apparatus.

porary events. In contrast, the second man of the KSČ, Rudolf Slánský (executed in the 1950s), and the chairman of the Czechoslovak reformist government in 1968 Josef Smrkovský, who was in the position of the deputy head of the Czech National Council during the Prague Spring. Jan Šverma, an intellectual who was the chief editor of the Red Law and died in the Slovak National Uprising, plays the role of Klement Gottwald's opponent inside the party in *Dny zrady*.

In *Sokolovo*, Gottwald speaks to a military unit in Buzuluk as a member of Parliament. In his speech, he refers back to the Hussites, which is accompanied by a large banner behind the speaker: "*In the manner of the Hussites, alongside the Red Army, forward!*" At the ensuing secret meeting of the Communist core (political party activity was prohibited in the Czechoslovak Army), he campaigns against the Beneš government in London.

In the final part, the role of General Vlasov's troops, which sided with the insurgents, is withheld. Furthermore, the highest political body, the Czech National Council, is introduced in nearly a caricature. Above all, it idly sits at meetings and cagily negotiates with the Wehrmacht headquarters. The uprising is directed by the KSČ under the decisive leadership of the City Mayor Vacek. The Soviet units rush to help Prague in order to protect the city from destruction and the people from extermination. (Given that the Russian headquarters followed Stalin's orders in 1944 and left Warsaw without help during its uprising in which the city was nearly wiped out, the main motivation behind the Red Army's haste was strengthening the sphere of influence that had been designated at the Yalta Conference.) The people of Prague always raise the Czech flag as well as the red flag of the USSR. Upon City Mayor Vacek's arrival, the crowd gathered in front of the Old Town Hall sings the Internationale. The arrogance of the majority of the German commanding officers is transformed into fear and cowardice. After the execution of 52 Czech Communists in the Terezin fortress (although there were also members of non-Communist parties) Vávra shows groundless and unrestrained executions of Czech civilians four times. Afterwards, the murdered civilians are always robbed of their valuables and food by the German soldiers. It is City Mayor Vacek who takes over the leading role from Klement Gottwald. In the film, Gottwald and General Svoboda only appear at the end, after the Czechoslovak National Front government flies in from Košice. The film further conceals the liberation of Plzeň by the Americans (it only mentions the beginning of the people's uprising in Plzeň). In the film's opening, a devastated Adolf Hitler is shown in a besieged Berlin but the return of President Edvard Beneš, who was pompously welcomed as victor by the people of Prague and who experienced his final political downfall only in February 1948 when he could not prevent the Communist coup d'état, is completely omitted. In contrast to the emphasis on the figure of Gottwald, the trilogy erases the figure of Stalin. *Dny zrady* speaks of the government and the people of the Soviet Union, which is personified by its ambassadors in the League of Nations and in Czechoslovakia. In *Sokolovo*, Lieutenant Colonel Svoboda negotiates with the authorised people's commissioner. In *Osvobození Prahy*, the portrait of Stalin may appear in the headquarters of Marshal Konev, who directs the

"The negativist politics had its climax in the spring of 1934, when, in relation to the presidential election, KSČ issued a leaflet *Not Masaryk, but Lenin!*, which was answered by the state apparatus with the issue of an arrest warrant for Klement Gottwald, Václav Kopecký, Josef Krosnář and Josef Štětka. He returned to Czechoslovakia early in 1936 thanks to an amnesty granted upon the occasion of the presidential election in December 1935. He immediately joined in the agitated activities of his party when he began a campaign against right-wing opportunism, whose main figures were supposed to be Jan Šverma, Rudolf Slánský, Otto Synek and Stanislav Budín. [...] Between 1936 and 1937, he partially worked in Prague and in the secretariat of the EKI in Moscow. He was primarily active in Czechoslovakia during the Munich crisis when the KSČ tried to pass its own concept of defence of Czechoslovakia." <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/klement-gottwald> (5th November 2011).

After the Munich events, Gottwald leaves for Moscow once again. The KSČ officially joins the anti-Nazi resistance only after the attack on the Soviet Union.

Prague operation, yet it is not Stalin who requires an official confirmation of the taking of the city but it is the Soviet Prime Minister.

The Directorial and Dramatic Design

In the occupation trilogy, Vávra resorted to a manipulation of historical facts similar to that in the Hussite trilogy. He also adjusted the facts for his ideological and artistic purposes. He, for that matter, also used this approach in the highly acclaimed *Kladivo na čarodějnice*. All the films use similar methods in terms of the scripts, script editing and directing. A tapestry of episodes put together from historical facts fits into an a-priori given ideological framework. Vávra presents history through a Hegelian-Marxist interpretation as a causal chain of reasons and results. What does not fit his picture is omitted or subordinated to “historical logic” above which he further places contemporary ideology (this is why Hitler appears in *Osvobození Prahy* but Beneš does not). The narrator’s words “*The Second World War began in Prague and also ended in Prague*” refers to the above-mentioned understanding of history, while they also emphasise the Czech nation’s hypertrophied and self-centred conviction about its unique role in world history. Vávra composes the trilogy as a whole and presupposes that the viewer is familiar with its preceding parts. The trilogy opens and ends with an extremely wide shot of Prague taken from Petřín. The narrator’s voice, prior to the credits on the background of period documentary photographs, summarises the events which took place between the particular episodes. In *Osvobození Prahy*, the documentary shots in the introductions to the first and second parts of *Sokolovo* are impressively shown in split screens and subsequently run through the entire film.

The impressive war scenes in *Sokolovo* and *Osvobození Prahy* are shot according to the patterns of 1950s Soviet cinema. Vávra shot the Battle of Sokolovo in a manner similar to how he did the Battle of Sutoměř in *Jan Žižka*, in an authentic setting. Although the Soviets offered Vávra the possibility of shooting in a village that had been marked for demolition, it topographically did not correspond. Vávra himself said that he had insisted on shooting in the inhabited Sokolovo, as he needed identical elevation.

The vertically ordered cross-section view of society shown here also refers to Soviet films of the 1950s. Apart from the main political leaders, fictitious people’s heroes in *Pád Berlína*, the characters of Johanka and Martin in the Hussite trilogy or the Horák family in the occupation trilogy appear on a parallel level. *Osvobození Prahy* ends with welcoming the Czechoslovak National Front at the airport. Similarly, Stalin is welcomed after landing in Berlin in *Pád Berlína*. Not only can the ideological patterns be inferred from the nature of the characters and the story but they are explicitly emphasised by the narrator’s long speeches and commentary.

“The Communists in the national councils of local administrations on factory boards were the driving force in the struggle for a new people’s democratic Czechoslovakia based on fraternal and equal unity of Czechs and Slovaks.” – from the narrator’s speech in *Osvobození Prahy*

“The Red Army hastened and finished the liberation of Czechoslovakia from the yokes of the Nazi occupation. It made it impossible for the Nazis to extend the war. The operation in Prague was one of the most impressive of the entire war. The Second World War began in Prague and also ended in Prague.” – the narrator’s final words.

Gottwald’s final speech, *“Friends and comrades, we thank you for liberating us. For eternity, we will keep our faithful friendship with the Soviet Union, sealed with blood. We will love the Soviet people, for it returned freedom and peace to us.”*

In the occupation trilogy, Vávra used an ideological pattern similar to the one in the Hussite trilogy. In contrast to the 1950s, however, its social importance changes. The ideology of the 1950s, although atrocious and fanatic, cannot be denied an effort at reforming the world and ridding it of social inequality. The seriousness with which it was formed and presented (and which, for instance, becomes evident in the struggle for the shape of the Jana Žižka character) cannot be denied either. The function of ideology in the “normalisation” period is characterised by Václav Havel in his *Moc bezmocných* (*The Power of the Powerless*) essay. Here, it meant only a nod to power, the mechanically enforced expression of loyalty to the regime, which was imposed by the USSR with the help of the occupying armies.

Ideologies, as a seeming means of relating to the world, offer man the illusion, that he is an identical, worthy and moral person and, thus, make it easy for him not to be just that, as an imitation of something ‘transpersonal’ and non-utilitarian which enables him to cheat his conscience and hide his true position and his shameful ‘modus vivendi’ from the world and from himself. It is a productive (but also somehow dignified) legitimisation ‘upwards’, ‘downwards’, but also ‘aside’, towards people and towards God.²⁹

In this sense, Vávra did not relate directly to ideology but hid behind the historical truth. After the occupation trilogy, Vávra made seven more films up until 1989, six of them being historical. He gained neither success with the audience nor artistic success again. Vávra also employed the above-mentioned artistically-ideological pattern of the historical film in other epic historical films on which he collaborated with Miloš V. Kratochvíl: *Putování Jana Ámose* (*Jan Amos Comenius*, 1983) and *Evropa tančila valčík* (*Europe Waltzed*, 1989).

The ineffectiveness of the propagandistic arguments presented in the occupation trilogy was revealed by the events of 1989 in Czechoslovakia. The KSČ lost in the first free elections in 1990, when the pact regarding the expulsion of the Soviet troops was signed. Leaning towards the defensive structures of the West was completed by joining NATO in 1999. Only the fears of a unified Germany still remained. *Česko-německá deklarace o vzájemných vztazích a jejich budoucím rozvoji* (*The Czech-German Declaration on Mutual Relations and their Future Development*), which addressed the events of the Second World War, was after long discussions passed by the Czech Parliament defying the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) and Sládek’s Republicans only in 1997. Over the following decade, societal fears of Germany completely abated, primarily thanks to mutually beneficial economic cooperation. The generations³⁰ which grew up after 1989 see the occupation trilogy as an extremely boring course of events about whose truth they are unconvinced. Its film form appears to them somewhat ungainly.

²⁹ V. Havel, *Moc bezmocných* p. 4. (downloaded in PDF from the Václav Havel Library, <http://www.vaclavhavel-library.org/>).

³⁰ Personal experience from seminars on “normalization cinema” (2007, 2011) at Philosophical Faculty Palacký University Olomouc and comments about the films on CSFD (a Czech film website, <http://www.csfd.cz/>).

reviews|

Review of *Dedicated to Jan Císař Ad Honorem: Anthology on his 80th Birthday*

Vladislav Kracík

EXNAROVÁ, Alena & JOBERT, Daniel, (eds.), *Janu Císařovi ad honorem: sborník příspěvků k osmdesátým narozeninám*. Praha, Nakladatelství Akademie múzických umění v Praze, 2012, 161 p. ISBN 978-80-7331-223-7.

In February 2012, the publishing house the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague published a book entitled *Janu Císařovi ad honorem* subtitled *Sborník příspěvků k osmdesátým narozeninám* (*Dedicated to Jan Císař Ad Honorem subtitled Anthology on his 80th Birthday*). The publications created in honour of the anniversary of Professor Jan Císař are based on contributions by 18 authors from the ranks of leading Czech academics and members of theatres, practitioners and theorists, concerned with professional theatre and amateur theatre areas. Daniela Jobertová, the head of the Department of Theory and Criticism at Prague Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU), is the editor. The illustrative photographs were made by Ivo Mičkal and Milan Strotzer.

Prof. PhDr. Jan Císař, Csc. (born 28th January 1932) is a prominent Czech theatre academic, script editor, theorist, historian and critic. In 1955 he was admitted to DAMU as a postgraduate student with a focus on the history of Czech and Slovak theatre, specializing in the history of Czech and Slovak theatre critics. He completed his postgraduate work with the dissertation *Formování české realistické kritiky v 19. století* (*The Formation of Czech Realistic Criticism in the 19th Century*), which he defended at the Faculty of Art of Charles University and which was later published in book form under the title *Život jevišti* (*Life for the Stage*). He was awarded the degree of associate professor in 1966 with his work *Divadla, která našla svoji dobu* (*Theatres Finding their Era*). In 1985, he was appointed a full professor. Prior to November 1989, he was head of the Department of Directing and Dramaturgy, then the Department of Drama Theatre and finally the Department of Theory and Criticism at DAMU (until 2010). He started as a script editor in the late fifties in Vesnické divadlo (the Village Theatre) named as of 1959 Státní zájezdové divadlo (State Touring Theatre). At the turn of the 1970s, he worked as the artistic director of Divadlo Jaroslava Průchy (Jaroslav Průcha Theatre) in Kladno and Mladá Boleslav and in the 1980s as script editor in Národní divadlo (National Theatre). The publications of Jan Císař are also considerable. He edited the magazine *Divadlo* (Theatre) from 1960 and was appointed editor of the newspaper *Divadelní noviny* (Theatre Newspaper) in 1964, later renamed as *Divadelní a filmové listy* (Theatre and Film Sheets). Starting in the 1960s, he has regularly published in numerous professional journals and daily press. Císař is also the author of several major books devoted to the theory and history of theatre (*Divadla, která našla svoji dobu /1964/ – Theatres Finding their Era*, *Teorie herectví loutkového divadla /1982/ – Theory of Acting Puppet Theatre*, *Proměny divadelního jazyka /1986/ – Changes in Theatrical Language*, *Vývoj divadelního jazyka /1990/ – The Development of Theatrical Language*, the two-volume *Přehled dějin českého divadla /2004/ – History of the Czech Theatre*). The versatile, intense and continuous activity of Císař in the sphere of amateur theatre is also essential. Starting in the 1970s, he worked in this sphere as a theoretician, lecturer, juror and reviewer of various performances.

The anthology *Janu Císařovi ad honorem* is divided into three basic parts. In the first part, entitled *Očima kolegů* (*From the Colleagues Point of View*) there are contributions from colleagues

of Císař, teachers from DAMU. There is a profile text *Fenomén Císař (The Phenomenon Císař)* where Jaroslav Vostrý summarises and meditates on the extensive work by Císař in the field of dramaturgy, teaching and theatre theory, continuously growing since the second half of the 1950s. In an attempt at grasping certain basic assumptions and peculiar features of activities by Císař, Vostrý also selects the main publications and crucial theoretical issues dealt with by Císař. The following contributions consist of Karel Makonj's recollections of his contributions to the theory of puppet theatre and its actors, Albert Prazak's discussion of a crucial role played by Jan Císař in changes in personnel and the art movement sphere in the Department of Stage Design at DAMU after 1968. Zdeněk Hořínek adds a general reflection on criticism to this mosaic and Josef Vinař along with Jakub Korčák contribute pleasant personal stories and memories of Jan Císař from the environment of the theatre faculty.

The second part of the anthology, entitled *Od amatérů s láskou (From amateurs with love)* gathers contributions from his colleagues in the field of amateur theatre. The long-time editor of Amateur scene Milan Strotzer maps the activities and merits of Jan Císař in connection with amateur performances, his contribution to amateur puppet theatre, and also mentions Císař's extensive lecturing activity. An undeniable asset are his publishing activities in amateur theatre periodicals *Československý loutkář (Czechoslovak Puppeteer)*, later *Loutkář (Puppeteer)* and *Ochotnické divadlo (Amateur Theatre) – Amatérská scéna (Amateur Scene)*. Strotzer also highlights the central role of Císař in the creation of a major publishing project *Cesty českého amatérského divadla – vývojové tendence (Paths of Czech Amateur Theatre – development trends)*. Last but not least, he reflects on the active participation of Jan Císař in several organisational associations and bodies involved in amateur culture. In the following contribution Milan Schejbal emphasises the role of the textbook by Císař *Základy činoherní režie (Basics of Drama Directing)* and *Základy dramaturgie (Dramaturgy Basics)* in the area of the education of amateurs. The second part is completed by personal memories and acknowledgements by other figures: Alena Exnarová, Luděk Richter and Alexandr Gregar. The third and final part is entitled *Poctění na počest i pro potěchu ducha (Honoured to Honour and to Please the Spirit)* and consists of short specialised units dedicated to theatre-scientific topics. Eva Stehlíková presents a contribution on the theatre of the Middle Ages in Bohemia, Jan Hyvňar presents an essay on the fate of the Czech-German actress Marie Pospíšilová, and Bořivoj Šerb contributes the essay *Blahosti knihkupecké a neblahosti recenzentské (The Graciousness of Booksellers and the Ungraciousness of Reviewers)* as a contribution to contemporary controversies caused by the publication of *Máj (May)* by K. H. Mácha. The anthology is finally completed by a selective bibliography of Jan Císař, compiled by Vít Pokorný.

The anthology *Janu Císařovi ad honorem* has primarily a dedicatory quality and function. The authors of the individual contributions are connected through a close working and personal relationship with the honoured person, and this relationship is often recalled and specified in the works. Although one of the primary functions of the Anthology is to summarise and to interpret objectively the undeniable merit and contribution of Jan Císař to Czech theatre as such, the individual reflections and summaries are primarily written on an overtly personal level, where respect and esteem predominate. As a closing part to the contributions, thanks or congratulations on his anniversary are often mentioned. The dedicatory function is also confirmed by one of the authors, Milan Strotzer. “*The anthology was prepared in a conspiratorial way so as to be a surprise for the honoured person. It truly worked. Up to the birthday party which took place on 1st February 2012 in Prague's Montmartre café with his fellow teachers and colleagues, the honoured person did not know what gift his companions and friends had prepared.*”¹

¹ M. Strotzer, *Janu Císařovi ad honorem*. <http://www.mistnikultura.cz/janu-cisarovi-ad-honorem> (16th November 2012).

It is a pity that the authors of the Anthology were content with “a gift of honour”. Particularly in the editorial part, there are various imperfections which significantly degrade the ambition of the resulting publication. In place of a prologue the editor, Daniela Jobertová, adds her personal memories of Jan Císař, a text analogous to the contributions in the anthology, thus an actual prologue is unfortunately absent. The reader lacks guidance on how to approach the publication, why to read it, and all this should, of course, be included in a prologue. A significant downside is the absence of an explanation for the employed division into three parts. Particularly when the part *Počtení na počest i pro potěchu ducha (Honoured to Honour and to Please the Spirit)* is made up both of texts that refer to the work and to the personality of Jan Císař, but also contributions which actually have little to do with Císař. Profiles of the authors are also missing, as well as of Císař himself. The publication recapitulates fifty years of continuous many-sided activities on the part of this person, but yet all the illustrative photographs were taken from one festival in 2004. And we could continue with a list of shortcomings that are signs of a sloppy incompleteness in the anthology. None of these criticisms, however, ultimately affects the high quality of the individual contributions, which is directly proportional to the fact that the authors are all excellent Czech academics and theatre artists. And it is precisely for this reason that it is eventually regrettable that the publication *Janu Císařovi ad honorem* lacks greater ambitions since a figure such as Jan Císař would undoubtedly deserve it.

Review of *Gustav Machatý. The Longing to Make a Film. The Person of the Director against the Background of the History of Cinematography*

Milan Hain

HORNÍČEK, Jiří, *Gustav Machatý. Touha dělat film. Osobnost režiséra na pozadí dějin kinematografie*. Brno, Host, 2011, 280p. ISBN 978-80-7294-366-1.

Despite being considered one of the most important figures of Czechoslovak Interwar cinematography by both specialists and the non-professional public, the creative work of Gustav Machatý has not been paid appropriate historiographic and analytical attention. Jiří Horníček, a historian in Národní filmový archiv (the National Film Archive) in Prague, has decided to combat these uncomplimentary conditions. Last year he extended two component studies published in the scholarly journal *Iluminace (Illumination)*¹ with his book entitled *Gustav Machatý. Touha dělat film (Gustav Machatý. The Longing to Make a Film)* with the ambitious subtitle *Osobnost režiséra na pozadí dějin kinematografie (The Person of the Director against the Background of the History of Cinematography)*.

The publication is divided into ten individual chapters, each of which is dedicated to either one or two films. The author discusses the directorial feats of Machatý² in chronological order and integrates them into significant historical events. The film *Švejk v civilu (Švejk as a Civilian)* from 1927, for example, is connected up with the tradition of Czechoslovakian provincialism, while the films *Ze soboty na neděli (From Saturday to Sunday)* from 1931 and *Načeradec, král kibiců (Naceradec, King of the Kibitzers)* from 1932 are related to the technological transformations connected with the beginnings of the sound era in the early 1930s. The contextual chapters focused on Czechoslovakian cinematography are based on Horníček's own dissertation *Miloš Havel a český filmový průmysl (Miloš Havel and the Czech Film Industry)*³. Each section aims at describing the production history of each film, "the context of its screening and the press feedback of the day. There is also a section in each chapter which focuses on the content and the formal aspects of Machatý's work."⁴ Horníček particularly concentrates on the complicated tension between artistic ambitions and business interests which was typical for Machatý's career.⁵

The indisputable contribution of this work consists of the use of the entire range of extant archival sources. Horníček carried out research in domestic institutions (Národní filmový archiv – The National Film Archive in Prague, Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví – The Museum of Czech Literature, Národní archiv v Praze – The National Archive in Prague), as well

² J. Horníček, "Machatého Extase. Historie vzniku filmu a některé aspekty jeho prezentace." *Iluminace* 14 (2002) 2, p. 31–44. J. Horníček, V mezích zákona (Hollywoodu). Gustav Machatý ve službách Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. *Iluminace* 18 (2006) 1, 45–58.

³ The discussion also includes the film *Dáma s malou nožkou (The Lady with a Small Foot, 1919)* which Gustav Machatý only participated in as a script writer.

⁴ J. Horníček, *Miloš Havel a český filmový průmysl*. Prague 2000.

⁵ J. Horníček, *Gustav Machatý. Touha dělat film. Osobnost režiséra na pozadí dějin kinematografie*. Brno 2011, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

as in foreign institutions (Margaret Herrick Library in Beverly Hills, University of Southern California in Los Angeles, Library of Congress in Washington, Filmarchiv Austria in Vienna) which allowed him to thoroughly describe the circumstances connected with the birth and screening of Machatý's motion pictures. Certain materials are inserted into the publication in the form of pictorial documentation (e. g. advertisements in the press from that time, the opening page from the contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer company) or supplements (in particular the diary of the accountant Morávek describing the shooting of the film *Extase (Ecstasy)* in Slovakia, and the documentary *Popis mé emigrace (A Description of My Emigration)*⁶ by Machatý himself).

In contrast, the analyses of the individual films are not particularly convincing, as there is neither an obvious methodological or terminological foundation. Horníček's observations concerning the topics, visual style and narration remain somewhat intuitive and vague, and should not be regarded as definitive and comprehensive. The references to other works of Czechoslovak and world cinematography (which were in some manner affiliated with Machatý's oeuvre according to Horníček) wherein the author always chooses only the canonical ones, perhaps to give weight to his claims and Machatý's artistic attempts, is not particularly useful⁷.

As has been mentioned above, Horníček uses those findings which are summarised in his dissertation *Miloš Havel a český filmový průmysl (Miloš Havel and the Czech Film Industry)* in the chapters concerning the Czechoslovakian film industry of the 1920s and 1930s. The author is unable, however, to make use of these sources in the sections summarising Machatý's work within other national cinemas, consequently, a number of the statements do not appear particularly knowledgeable. Horníček, for example, demonstrates a lack of sensitivity towards Hollywood self-censorship in the chapters concerning the director's anabasis in the U.S. when he speaks about the arrogance and "narrowness of the censorship officers and the working system".⁸ My final primary objection concerns the insufficient usage of existing literature dealing with the life and career of Gustav Machatý. A number of the previous reviewers⁹ have already drawn attention to the fact that although Horníček refers to the work of Christian Cargnelli, Jaroslav Brož and Myrtil Frída,¹⁰ he does not comment on them in any way, nor open up a dialogue with them.

Despite the negative aspects mentioned above, this publication by Jiří Horníček is an essential publishing achievement which improves the existing research through introducing a wide range of archive material and making it available and also owing to the critical evaluation of this archive material.

⁷ Published earlier as Machatý, Gustav. "Popis mé emigrace." *Illuminace* 20 (2008), 2, p. 177–184.

⁸ For example *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*, 1920 (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*), p. 52, is inevitably mentioned in connection with *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1926) and its alleged expressionist techniques. In the chapter about *Švejk as a Civilian* Ernst Lubitsch is mentioned (p. 70) and in the treatise about *Nocturne* (1934) Horníček even refers to later work by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (p. 157).

⁹ J. Horníček, *Gustav Machatý. Touha dělat film. Osobnost režiséra na pozadí dějin kinematografie*. p. 200. In connection with this it is surprising that the author draws the majority of the information about American cinema of the 1930s and 1940s from two sources, these being *Film History: An Introduction* by Bordwell and Thompson, and Douglas Gomery's book about the Hollywood studio system. D. Bordwell, – K. Thompson, *Film History: An Introduction*. Prague 2007. Douglas. *The Hollywood Studio System. A History*. London 2005. I would consider corresponding volumes from the series *History of the American Cinema* published in the years 1994–2006 by the University of California Press as a minimal source.

¹⁰ Zejména A. Batistová, Touha napsat biografii. *Illuminace* 23 (2011) 4, p. 135–139. M. Večeřa, Gustav Machatý – ďábel, který páchl celulózou. *25fps*. <http://25fps.cz/2011/gustav-machaty-jiri-hornicek/> (1st November 2012)

¹¹ J. Brož – M. Frída. Gustav Machatý, Legenda a skutečnost. *Film a doba* 15 (1969) 4, p. 190–201. J. Brož – M. Frída. Gustav Machatý, Gustav Machatý. Legenda a skutečnost 2. *Film a doba* 15 (1969) 5, p. 260–271. Ch. Cargnelli (ed.). *Gustav Machatý. Ein Filmregisseur zwischen Prag und Hollywood*. Vienna 2005.

Review of *The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring. The Dietl Era Under a Merciless Scrutiny*

Petr Bilík

BREN, Paulina, *The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring*. New York, Cornell University Press, 2010, 250p. ISBN: 978-0-8014-7642-6.

Paulina Bren is an American historian with Eastern European roots who is currently working at the small private Vassar College. In connection with her education and research aims which have been focused on post-war Central and Eastern Europe, Bren was led to the Czech normalization period after 1968: that is to the preconditions and causes of the transition within Czech society and the changes in its value scale.

The author's first book, *The Greengrocer and his TV*, was followed by a similarly focused work, *Communism Unwrapped, Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, published by the renowned Oxford University Press.

There are several reasons why Paulina Bren's career and her publication activities should be a subject of interest. Although *The Greengrocer and his TV* is her first major publication, Bren has drawn renewed critical attention to Czech history, taking into account specialised responses to it. Her work focuses on recent Czech history at least within the Anglo-American and German academic fields, where Central European Studies does not currently arouse a great deal of interest. She not only demonstrates her ability to set out a topic with universal relevance and elaborate on it, using a method which weds the aptness of the specialist with readability, but she also offers a fascinating view of local cultural history from a foreign perspective. Last but not least, Bren has embarked on research in a field which has not even been mapped out in detail in the Czech Republic itself.

Petr Bednařík and Irena Reifová have already dealt with the topic of television series from the normalization period. Normalization has also been thoroughly revived of late by Štěpán Hulík. This is the first time, however, that the topic as treated by Paulina Bren, has been dealt with in such complexity and scope of concentration. Paulina Bren's approach can be compared for instance with Hames's treatise on the Czech new wave where we learned considerably more about the socio-political context and which drew our attention to subtle details with universal relevance more than we could possibly observe from the writing of a Czech scholar. Similarly as Hames, who did not have the opportunity to view all that many of the series he actually wrote about, when publishing the first edition of his book, Paulina Bren cannot often precisely target the meaning potential of the material and grasp its resonance within the Czech area. She overinterprets and tends to neglect certain aspects, these beings areas the importance of which grew from the national consciousness, tradition or simply from the impact of the mentality at the time under the local conditions.

In her Post-Modern approach, Paulina Bren does not depict a linear history with its peak events, but instead narrates a story and assembles a mosaic of political, artistic and social functions which have significantly affected Czech society during the normalization period. She does

not perceive television production, which is her main focus, as a set of artistic artefacts, but as an essential component of a complex process of creation of social cognizance and individual opinion.

In the end, Bren does not evaluate television production per se, but its prerequisites and impacts on something we might refer to as “normalized Czech national feeling”. Similarly to *Gottland* by Mariusz Szczygiel, and with essayistic brilliance, the work observes the Czech landscape and the national character which we face and painfully identify with. As with Ripellin’s *Magic Prague*, here we are also witness to another story line, dependent on a specific genius loci, behind the rationally reasoned social story line.

Bren’s approach to observing the character of social and individual normalization is the most important stream of the book which hints at the author’s definite opinion. She makes primary use of two texts for this purpose: authentic *Poučení z krizového vývoje* (*Lessons Drawn from the Crisis Development in the Communist Party and Society*) and Václav Havel’s key essay *The Power of the Powerless*. In his essay, Havel introduces a normalized Everyman, that is a universal Czech type, a greengrocer without any political ambitions, broadened horizons and opinions. The greengrocer’s conformity is not only present in the cowardly gesture, well-known from the above-mentioned essay, but also in the acceptance of zero participation in public life and in a content and uncomplicated life within the normalized privacy.

Television, however, became the greengrocer’s favourite source of amusement; television as a propaganda juggernaut which combined political tasks with tame entertainment shows and series which according to Bren affected the lives and opinions of the Czech population far more significantly than any Communist congress or government regulation. During the struggle over the form of the television production, many people were dismissed. A number were warped and incorporated. Others thought of Czechoslovak Television as a great opportunity for doing their own business at the expense of truth and freedom for the entire nation. Manipulation became the major means of expression.

Paulina Bren does not exclude significant episodes from the development of television and Czech culture. Moreover, she includes seeming marginalia in her work which are peculiar for the period (Škutín’s letter to the director of Czechoslovak Television, etc.). She carried out extensive research and often surprises with her full range of minute observations. Among the popular series, she mentions those such as *Major Zeman* (*Major Zeman*), *Žena za pultem* (*A Woman Behind the Counter*), and *Inženýrská odysea* (*Engineer Odyssey*) wherein she demonstrates and illustrates Havel’s major theses, including those derived from *The Power of the Powerless*. In the very conclusion, Bren delivers an uncompromising condemnation of the main instigator of television entertainment, Jaroslav Dietel, who is perceived as an unscrupulous tool in the liquidation of Czech character.

Although we do not necessarily have to agree with the conclusion, which appears somewhat ahistorical and removed from various contextual relations, we are indisputably faced here with one of the few clear statements as to what was taking place in Czechoslovakia during the period of normalization and this without the need for defensiveness or compromise.

Paulina Bren and her *The Greengrocer and his TV* certainly do not relieve our conscience. They instead put our conscience to the test, and apart from a few exceptions, this test portrays us as no better than an embarrassing nation which resigned to a banal strategy of the carrot and the stick. She does so with a certain distance and empathy, together with an apparent sympathy towards our region and mentality and also with her ability to sharply evaluate. In order to reach her conclusions, Bren chose a clear strategy and was perfectly able to find her way within an environment which is somewhat strange for her.

I would like to express grateful thanks for such insights which provide us with other reflections than simply pulling the wool over our eyes.