

Dear readers,

The unifying line of this year's English issue of *Slovak Theatre* is represented by the current value-related theme. The published studies are a reflection of value decline or of their absence, but also of their current metamorphoses and the quest for a way out of the crisis.

Elena Knopová's study takes a glance at the shifts in the staging poetics and interpretations of Brecht's one-act play *Die Kleinbürgerhochzeit* [A Respectable Wedding] in the Slovak staging tradition. She portrays Brecht as an author through whom a battle for values was waged in both Slovak theatre and on European stages. The text presents professional reflection and audience reception of the productions analysed from the perspective of Brecht's requirements of theatre, which should be entertaining and informative at the same time. The authoress looks at the productions through the prism of casuistry and analyses how theatre professionals communicated through them different forms of appropriate/inappropriate behaviour and declining social morality. In the context of the most recent Slovak production (Slovak National Theatre, 2013), she draws attention to a shift in expert reflection, when the interest of critics and theatre professionals shifted from the evaluation of the artwork to the evaluation of the perceptual (im)maturity of the audience.

Through the multimedia installation *Bitte liebt Österreich* [Please Love Austria], which the German theatre artist Christoph Schlingensiefel (1960 – 2010) performed at the Wiener Festwochen festival in 2000, Martin Hodoň explores diverse strategies used by this controversially perceived artist, to highlight the deep-rooted xenophobic sentiments of part of Austrian society. "The orthodox anti-fascist Schlingensiefel does not moralise society by pointing out a malignant tumour, but lets the tumour speak for itself," Hodoň states, and then scrutinises the work in detail from various perspectives, examining the compositional techniques employed and their intersections across forms, genres and media.

Like the work of Christoph Schlingensiefel, who passed away early, the performances of his Italian contemporary Romeo Castellucci (1960) are often accompanied by stormy reactions from the audience. Michaela Mojžišová's study focuses on a specific segment of Castellucci's theatre output: productions of operas and works of music with biblical or religious themes. Contemporary theatrology presents Castellucci's works as a significant contribution to the current discourse on the relationship (or often rather conflict) between the creative freedom of the artist and respect for religion. Using four selected productions as examples, the authoress of this study deliberates the tenet that the intensity of his directorial interpretations lies not in their disgracefulness, but in the internal symbiosis of autonomous theatrical means. This is also why his productions have the potential to provide a cathartic experience, regardless of the audience's worldview or religious affiliation.

Contemporary music theatre is also the subject of a case study by Milan Hrbek, which, based on the analysis of a production of contemporary opera by the Slovak composer Miroslav Tóth, *Muž v skafandri* [Man in a Spacesuit, 2020], presents contemporary intermedia and intergenre tendencies in theatre production. The paper is an attempt to philosophically grasp one of the most obvious trends in which new technologies are used in theatre. According to the author, both the work and its production illustrate Baudrillard's proposition about the replacement of the real by the virtual: new digital technologies are here equal partners of live performers, i.e., they

do not only serve to enhance the spectator's experience, but stand at the centre of the recipient's attention for the entire duration of the work.

The following two studies are also primarily theoretical in nature. The philosophical essay by Jan Motal deals with the ideas about theatre and drama in the work of philosophers Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer in connection with the critique of language (*Sprachkritik*) at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The text focuses on the search for commonalities as well as differences between the philosophers, viewing their ideas through the current lens of the crisis of communication. It highlights the possible uses of their ideas today: it explores the functions of dialogue as a consensual negotiation, the language of drama as a mode of representation, but also performativity, or theatre, in which drama is individualised through the live actor.

Milan Hain's case study is a contextual insight into the phenomenon of star studies, with the ambition of a deeper and comprehensive understanding of the process of star formation. The author points out the limits and pitfalls of previous research and, using the example of the birth of Ingrid Bergman's star, extends the methodology of previous research to include other important and hitherto neglected aspects. He points out that it does not suffice to deal only with the films per se, the acting style, promotion or publicity, but that the collaborative process of Hollywood film production and the specialised work of a wide range of crew participants from different professions must also be taken into account.

The issue concludes with a historical study by Slávka Kopčáková and Pavol Zubaľ, devoted to the personality and dramatic work of the now little-known writer, aesthetician and playwright Tobias Gottfried Schröer (1791 – 1850). His writing and professional production, published under a pen name in a challenging socio-political context, is presented by the authoress in interdisciplinary connections, which makes this study a contribution not only to the history of literature and theatre, but also to the history of censorship in the former half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Michaela Mojžišová**