

THE REPERTOIRES OF SLOVAK AND SLOVENIAN THEATRE HOUSES AND THEIR PRODUCTIONS OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN AUTHORS (1945 – 1970)



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Abstract: This article is a comparative review of performances of Western European and American authors in Slovak and Slovenian theatres in the two decades after World War II. First, we present a short historical context, comparing the political systems and cultural policies of both states. We define the importance of the selection of works for the repertoire(s) and then parallel them to the main characteristics, authors, and dramatic texts prevalent in that period. Second, we highlight the particularities of staging of the Western European and American authors in both cultural spaces, evaluate their importance, and explicitly determine the fundamental differences between the two theatre spaces and performing arts in the socialist system in general. Third, we expose the similarities and differences in the quantity and diversity of authors. This is done on the basis of the performances by institutional theatres, recorded in the repertoire databases of the respective countries. Everything deviating from the norm is located in a separate chapter, as a phenomenon, where we are looking for the reasons for (not) performing certain authors or poetics. The article functions as a review of the period, and seeks to shed light on theatre production in the Central European cultural area during the undemocratic socialist regime, regardless of basic differences between the two political systems.

Key words: repertoire, Western European authors, Slovenian theatre, Slovak theatre, performances

I.

The characteristics of the repertoires of the Slovenian and Slovak theatres in the first two decades after the Second World War coincide as well as diverge in many ways. The biggest challenge is to find a common denominator for the two different artistic-cultural areas. The definitions of the performing arts are frequently impossible to determine because of their changing nature, but we will examine the similarities and differences between the theatre institutions, according to the repertoires and staging of Western European or American playwrights. Formal (and legal) institution of theatres is similar in both cases, mostly because of the same Central European concept of theatre (which is strongly linked to the German model and tradition) that establishes permanent ensembles, a repertoire system, state founding and funding, and assigns governance structure of theatre houses. Strongly related to these, there is also a weak (or non-existent) autonomy of art and artists in undemocratic regimes.

The repertoire policy is formed depending on many factors: the type of theatre, sort and size of the target audience, ensemble, and also on the political regime (system) of the State (cultural area) in which the theatre works. The individual parameters which define the basic repertoire policy of the theatre institution are also various committees and councils that control the work of a theatre. In public institutions, also

in the field of culture the socialist system appointed the Communist Party members. Further, other individuals were also appointed as members of the council and staff representatives by the government in each institution.

The production of institutional theatres with their repertoire decisions shows various, social and art-related problems of the era in which it works. The time after the Second World War in Europe was determined by two political poles: capitalist (Western) and non-democratic (socialist, Eastern). Relationship of the politics to performing arts is similar to that division, but we will not expose it in this article. However, we need to highlight the differences between the two types of socialist system, which were established in the art and public spaces of the analysed countries and cultural backgrounds.

Discussing the relationships in the institutional theatres in time after the Second World War must be assessed in relation to the social and political events of the selected period – i.e. the time window. While exploring repertoire decisions and staging of Western European and American playwrights, it is necessary to expose the political moment, because the State and its machinery either explicitly or implicitly affect the formation of the repertoire and also the performance aesthetics.

The post-war period of the Slovak theatre is described in the article *The artistic and non-artistic reasons for the manifestations of generationality in Slovak theatre in the second half of the 20th century* by Andrej Maťašík. Maťašík described the comparative outline for the historical time of the chosen time window in Slovakia (then part of The Czechoslovak Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) by two basic events:

“The issue of researching Slovak theatre in the second half of the 20th century has been fundamentally influenced by the social frames of artistic production in that period. There were two key events that caused the change of the initial paradigm of artistic activities. The first of these was the Communist Party’s seizure of power in post-war Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and the second was the occupation of the country by Warsaw Pact military forces in August 1968.”¹

The argument for the chosen time window for the Slovenian situation is similar to the Slovak circumstances. It has the same starting point – the end of the Second World War, and it is concluded by the appearance of student movements in the years 1968-1969. It is ending by the period when the experimental and neo-avant-garde performance practices had occurred. In Slovenia: with the establishment of the Eksperimentalno gledališče Glej [Glej Experimental Theatre] in the beginning of 1970.

The main difference between Slovenian and Slovak socio-political situations is the influence of the Soviet Union. The Yugoslav authorities soon began to distance themselves from the Stalinist concept of socialism. Meanwhile in Slovakia “The Soviet Union 9/4/1948 Czechoslovakia, as in other European countries under its direct influence is transformed into communist countries – the countries of people’s democracy”².

So while Yugoslavia remained in a kind of soft intermediate area between the West and the East, the Czechoslovakia found itself in a real Eastern bloc, which afterwards resulted in a cultural policy, different to the one in Yugoslavia. The Slovenian

¹ MAŤAŠÍK, Andrej. The artistic and non-artistic reasons for the manifestations of generationality in Slovak theatre in the second half of the 20th century. In *Slovenské divadlo*, 2013, Vol. 61, Special Issue, p. 85.

² NEČAK, Dušan – REPE, Božo. *Oris sodobne obče in slovenske zgodovine*. Ljubljana : Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za zgodovino, 2003, p. 187. ISBN 961-237-046-X.

(then Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia) situation can be similarly described by two main events. The Communist Party came to power in 1945. In 1948 the conflict with the Informbiro started. On the other side of the timeline: student demonstrations (with the occupation of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana). This was followed by a politically very strict period in the 1970s when the Party tried to maintain the power with its last authoritarian impulses. The diversity of situations can be seen in the late 1960s, when the so called "Prague Spring" brought a little hope and was violently repressed by invading armies led by the Soviet Union that consequently resulted to more severe repression. At that point may the ends of our chosen periods be compared to each other. Mostly because of their political and discourse power, irrespective of openness, success which is in Yugoslavia only apparent, as already mentioned, followed by a more rigid 1970s.

The events around the "Prague Spring" in the European context were described in *Oris sodobne obče in slovenske zgodovine* by Božo Repe and Dušan Nečak. When Yugoslavia was gradually turning towards the West after the affair with Informbiro and moved away from Stalin and his policy, "Czechoslovakia has not been under a global de-Stalinisation and the democratization process until 1968."³ The reason for this was the "Prague spring" in Czechoslovakia, where the new leaders granted the citizens more civil and nationality rights, carried out centralization, federalization of the country and introduced an economic reform. However, this shift did not last long, because it was followed by military intervention as early as August 1968.⁴ The authors point out that in that year Europe was full of reformist, mostly student movements (Germany, France, Yugoslavia, etc.). Therefore, the year 1968 becomes synonymous for such political movements.

In the Slovenian territory, on the other hand, at the end of the Second World War, people's government under the leadership of the Communist Party demolished the entire opposition and the Informbiro affair happened. This began to move the country away from the Soviet Union and its cultural model. The differences between the two visions of socialism began in 1948, when the deterioration occurred after three years of friendly and allied relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. A near decade-long period with almost no direct political and cultural contacts followed.

When it comes to the Slovenian performing arts, the fifties were the time when the practice was faced with an aesthetic turn that led from the aesthetics of social realism to more modern approaches. What is especially important is the intense confrontation with dramatic creativity that came from the West, from capitalism. Moreover, the theatre space began to move away from the political structures (if not openly, at least in the underground activity) and became more independent, engaged and critical.⁵ We characterize this period by its increasingly intense opening towards the West, which is most clearly noted in the field of culture and art. Because of the blockade of the Eastern Bloc (Soviet Union), the only possible way out of isolation led towards the direction of (silent) cooperation with the West. However, the Party still preserved

³ Ibid, p. 222.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For more information refer to ANDRES, Rok. Theatre productions by West-European authors in the 1950's in Slovenia: reception and response. In *Divadlo v obdobju hodnotovne krize : zbornik referátov z XII. mednarodnej Banskobystricke teatrológijske konferencie v cykle Dnes a tu*, 2015, p. 269. ISBN 978-80-89555-60-4.

ensorship on all the levels, but had to be operated secretly, because any direct interference with artistic processes and freedom of creation would probably generate a deterioration of relations with the Western allies.

II.

Before we look closely at the similarities and differences between the two cultural spaces, it is necessary to be aware of the difference in population (and consequently, the number of theatres and theatre events), which puts all these facts in a certain perspective. The Slovak part of Czechoslovakia in the 1950s had an average of 3.5 million inhabitants, while Slovenia (as part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) in the same period had a population of approximately 1.5 million. Theatre production in Slovakia was consequently larger (broader), but the Slovenian one was smaller (more dense). Lower production prospects and the size of the country could have had a consequence: less audience and reflection. However, the analysis of the repertoires revealed that Slovenian production was even more modern, more in touch with European flows. On the other hand, this can be attributed to the permeable borders, a less severe censorship, and to the fact that the position of Slovenian culture within the state of Yugoslavia was rather pro-Western oriented.

The big difference between the both spaces at the time was the number of theatres per capita. Consequently, that means a different accessibility of theatre arts. The differences between the two countries are obvious, but the number of staged performances and the titles of new, modern, Western texts did not vary a lot. The most visible difference was (not) staging the existentialist and absurd drama.⁶ To make the situation more comparable, only institutional theatre houses were included in this selection. Experimental and off-scene theatres were intentionally left out. Non-institutional scene is established as an example of the implementation of something new and ground-breaking. Our research is built with the awareness that it is precisely through non-institutional productions that contemporary thought, as well as the staging and dramatic principles slowly migrate into the institutional theatre.

In 1945, the new government in Czechoslovakia decided to establish a new theatre house (the so-called *Dedinské divadlo* [Village Theatre]), which aimed to promote a new social order and its agricultural policy. The institution of several other theatre houses was not big or had stable ensemble but now it can be seen as image of that time. The situation can be compared to the establishment of associations called "*Svoboda*" and the accelerated development of amateur and semi-professional theatre groups in Slovenia. Perhaps the most significant move of the Soviet authorities was the capturing of the *Slovenské komorné divadlo* [Slovak Chamber Theatre]⁷ in Martin by Czechoslovakia People's Army. They renamed it to *Armádne divadlo* [Army Theatre], and used it to perform for the military, which was stationed in the city

⁶ This statement is regarded only for West European and American authors. In both countries we can find some domestic authors who grow from the tradition of the existentialism or absurd. Or were their followers. On Slovak stages we can find some Polish authors and a great number of domestic. The situation was similar also in Slovenian theatres.

⁷ *Slovenské komorné divadlo* was founded in 1944, then renamed in *Divadlo Slovenského národného povstania* in the period 1. 1. – 6. 10. 1951. Then as mentioned became *Armádne divadlo* since 6. 10. 1951 and again *Divadlo Slovenského národného povstania* since 1. 9. 1960.

(not only for Slovak, but also for Czech soldiers).⁸ No such cases could be found in Slovenia area, but there were similar trends of transforming theatres rather than eliminate them. The network of theatres in Slovenia did not spread excessively (in the 1945 some of the amateur theatres transformed into professional or semi-professional ones), except for the establishment of two important institutions in Ljubljana (Mestno gledališče ljubljansko [Ljubljana City Theatre, abbr. MGL], 1951 and Slovensko mladinsko gledališče [Slovenian Youth Theatre, abbr. SMG], 1955. Also, in accordance with the ideological construction of Nova Gorica on the western border Primorsko dramsko gledališče [Primorsko drama theatre, abbr. PDG], 1955. On the other hand, in the fifties the theatres in Postojna (1954), Kranj (1957), Koper (1957) and Ptuj (1958) were abolished.

The similarities between the two situations are also reflected in the artistic production itself. It should be pointed out that the Slovenian theatre production was caught in the aesthetics and practices derived from the socialist conception of art. However, due to less pressure from the authorities it was less exposed to direct dictations. Therefore, only a Slovak source is quoted here:

“After 1948 politics, not art, became the most important elements in theatres. Suddenly, artistic intent had to be decided by the State (via its authorities and organizations); the government now assigned theatres the role of architects of socialism and carriers of the state ideology. Slovak stages started to depict themes like nationalisation, transformation to cooperatives, or the birth of the socialist man. But despite the increase in the number of theatres and theatre companies, no increase in the quality of art took place – theatres started to resemble one another, losing their artistic distinctiveness. Stages were dominated by uniformity and socialist realism became the only allowed method of creation. Most theatre productions communicated the socialist ideology and therefore were highly schematic, formalist and dogmatic.”⁹

The most obvious difference is the very image of the repertoires of respective theatres, as in Slovenia (regardless of the model of self-management) direct censorship did not occur in such a manner as it did in Slovakia:

“Unnaturally and compulsorily, Slovak theatre started to incline towards the Soviet model, mostly in dramaturgy, direction and acting. The totalitarian communist regime (1950s and 1960s) introduced censorship in theatre which took over the control of the repertory, bringing about an absence of freedom in artistic expression, which deformed the natural development of artistic creation”.¹⁰

The turn away from the Soviet structures in the Slovak theatre space started at the end of the sixties. The situation was similar to the turn that happened after the Informbiro affair in Slovenia. The two situations were even more alike in the same period, when new (modern) theatre forms and genres (mime, small stages form, musical, Slapstick, absurd drama and model) appeared.¹¹ In the meantime, Slovenia saw the appearance of neo-avant-garde and experimental theatre groups (which have their

⁸ For more refer to MAŤAŠÍK, Andrej. The artistic and non-artistic reasons for the manifestations of generationality in Slovak theatre in the second half of the 20th century, p. 87.

⁹ ČIRIPOVÁ, Dáša (ed.). *Theatre.sk – made in Slovakia*. Bratislava : Divadelný ústav, 2013, p. 22. ISBN 978-80-89369-61-4.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 23.

¹¹ Ibid.

origin in student groups). Along with poetry events and happenings, they marked a whole generation of artists.

We will now discuss on the main performances of the Western European and American authors that were exceptional as dramatic texts, stood out, brought new perspectives on processes of creation into the artistic cultural space and were introspective of society. The selected examples are of prominent authors or of those that are outstanding in a world context.

If we compare the repertoires of Slovenian theatres in the forties and fifties, we can notice some significant differences between them. First, when it comes to the authors from the West (the capitalist origin and beliefs), the biggest difference is in not staging (or at least staging a much smaller amount of) the texts of Soviet authors, who were constantly present in theatres in the years after the liberation. The most commonly staged authors were 1) American playwrights Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill, 2) French playwrights Jean Anouilh, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, 3) representatives of a new born generation of angry young men such as John Osborne, 4) playwrights from the German-speaking environment: Bertolt Brecht, Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Max Frisch. In the absence of domestic female authors an important place in this period was taken over by Colette Audry and Lillian Hellman.

A detailed analysis of the theatre repertoires in the Slovak part of then Czechoslovakia and of Yugoslavia (more precisely: the Socialist Republic of Slovenia), revealed a multitude of similarities as well as differences. These findings show the image of the theatre and the society of the period when the Cold War started and increasingly established the division between the East and West.

Fundamental changes in the repertoire of Slovenské národné divadlo [The Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava, abbr. SND] started in 1964. At that time many young and promising artists joined ensemble and artistic management, led by director Pavol Haspra "and in their repertoire there appeared productions which would have been unimaginable a few years before, starting with a play by Arthur Adamov *Jar 71. roku* [Spring 71]."¹² During this period there happened a multitude of modern staging of Bertolt Brecht, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Dario Fo, Tennessee Williams and others. If we draw parallels with Slovensko narodno gledališče Drama Ljubljana [Slovenian National Theatre Drama Ljubljana, abbr. SNG Drama Ljubljana] (the only institution in the Slovene tradition with a position comparable to SND in Bratislava), the situation in the 1960s was similarly pro-Western. The director of SNG Drama Ljubljana during the seasons 1961 – 1968/1969 was Bojan Štih, who was significantly important for the arrival of new principles of performing contemporary Slovenian plays and new Western works on the national stage. The staging of *Rhinocéros* by Eugene Ionesco at the end of the season 1960/1961, predicted rich repertoires for the following seasons that brought plays by Tennessee Williams, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, John Osborne, Max Frisch, Edward Albee, Albert Camus, Dario Fo, Arthur Miller and others.

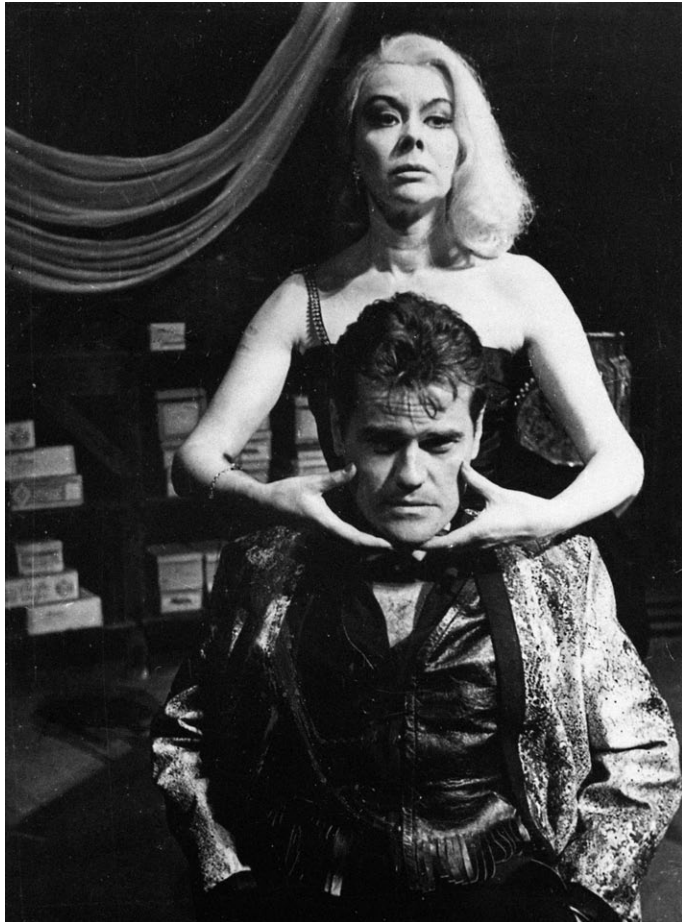
¹² MAŤAŠÍK, Andrej. The artistic and non-artistic reasons for the manifestations of generationality in Slovak theatre in the second half of the 20th century, p. 90.

III.

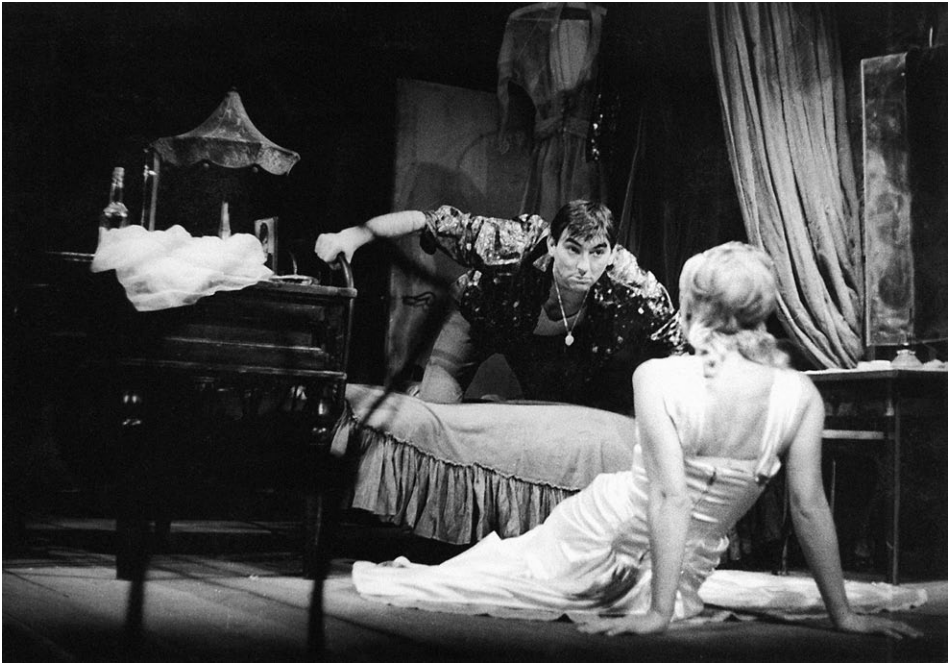
When certain authors appear frequently, review of the performances of the Western European and American authors on Slovenian and Slovak stages is divided by their nationality. However, cases where performances occur once or could be understood as a phenomenon, are presented at the end of this chapter, irrespective of the author's nationality.

United Kingdom and United States

In the period after the Second World War, in addition to the already existing strong presence of Anglo-Saxon playwrights, American drama began to emerge more intensely. The most frequent authors were Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. On the Slovenian stages, Eugene O'Neill remained popular, while in Slovakia we note only two stagings of his plays.



Tennessee Williams:
Orpheus Descending.
Duša Počkaj (Carol
Cutrere), Lojze Rozman
(Val Xavier). SNG Drama
Ljubljana, premiered on
15 May 1960. Direction
France Jamnik. Photo
by Vlastja Simončič.
Slovenian Theatre
Institute Archives.



Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Štefan Kvietik (Stanley), Viera Strnisková (Blanche). The Slovak National Theatre Drama ensemble, premiered on 28 November 1964. Photo by Jozef Vavro. The Slovak National Theatre archives.

The strong presence of American authors on Slovenian stages marks the considered period, especially if we compare how much contemporary American authors have been staged after the independence in 1991. As already stated, the main representatives were Williams and Miller. Staging Williams followed: *The Glass Menagerie* (1953, MGL; 1957, Gledališče Koper [Koper Theatre]; 1970, Akademija za gledališče, radio, film in televizijo [Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, abbr. AGRFT], *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1953, Prešernovo gledališče Kranj [Prešeren Theatre Kranj, abbr. PGK], *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958, Drama SNG Maribor; 1965, MGL), *The Rose Tattoo* (1960, MGL), *Orpheus Descending* (1960, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1961, SNG Drama Ljubljana) and *The Night of the Iguana* (1969, Drama SNG Maribor).

On the Slovak stages we also traced a strong presence of Tennessee Williams: *Orpheus Descending* (1961, Krajské divadlo Trnava [Regional Theatre, abbr. KD Trnava]; 1964, Štátne divadlo Košice [State Theatre Košice, abbr. ŠD Košice]; 1969, SND Bratislava), *The Glass Menagerie* (1961, Divadlo Slovenského národného povstania Martin [Theatre of Slovak National Theatre, abbr. DSNP Martin]), *The Rose Tattoo* (1964, Divadlo Jozefa Gregora Tajovského Zvolen [Gregor Tajovský Theatre, abbr. DJGT Zvolen]), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1964, SND Bratislava; 1965, Divadlo Petra Jilemnického Žilina [Peter Jilemnický Theatre, abbr. DPJ Žilina]), *Summer and Smoke* (1966, ŠD Košice; 1966, Krajské divadlo Nitra [Regional Theatre, abbr. KD Nitra]), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1966, DSNP Martin), *This Property Is Condemned* (1967, Vysoká škola múzických umení [Academy of Performing Arts, abbr. VŠMU]), *27 Wagons Full*

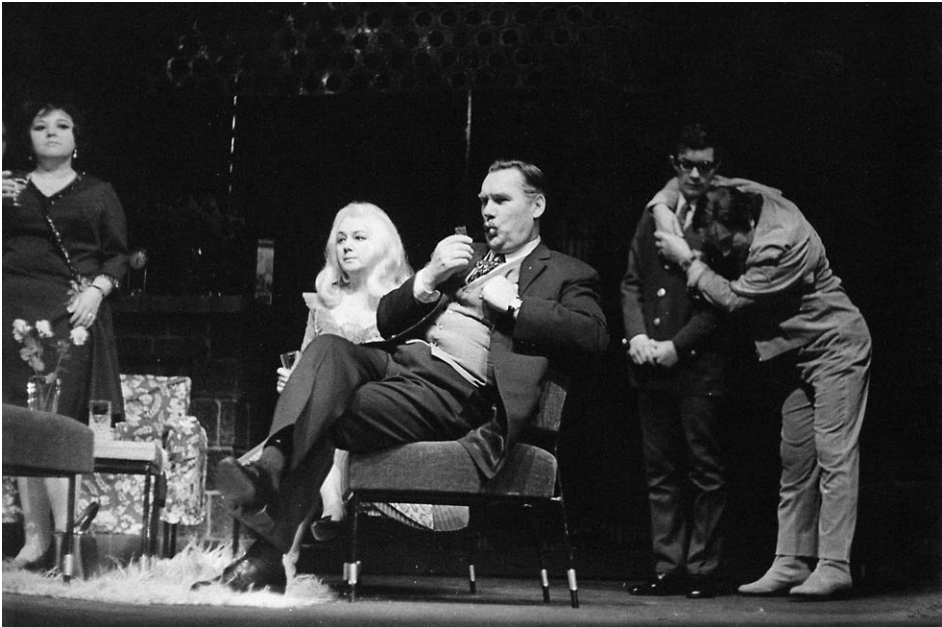


Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*. Polde Bibič (Pozzo), Janez Albreht (Estragon), Stane Sever (Vladimir), Branko Miklavc (Lucky). SNG Drama Ljubljana, premiered on 13 January 1968. Direction France Jamnik. Photo by Marjan Pal. Slovenian Theatre Institute Archives.

of *Cotton* (1967, VŠMU), *The Night of the Iguana* (1968, DSNP Martin), *Period of Adjustment* (1968, DJGT Zvolen) and *Kingdom on Earth* (1970, KD Nitra).

In comparing the two lists, it is obvious that the Slovak staging of Williams is presented in greater diversity, which can almost certainly be attributed to a greater number of spectators. At theatre institutions we can notice certain and specific risks in the Williams presence in the repertoire. In Slovenia, theatres were repeating mostly the same three plays: *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and *The Glass Menagerie*.

Like Williams, Miller's dramas focused on intensive staging. The themes of social stratification and the character of the ordinary man, his role in the wheels of the system, were placed in the forefront, as well as a direct criticism of the society... These characteristics exist in socialist society on two levels: as a critic of capitalism and socialism and as self-reflection or criticism of the West with its own medium. Miller's staged plays were: *All my Sons* (1950, SNG Drama Ljubljana; 1950, Drama SNG Maribor; 1968, PDG Nova Gorica), *Death of a Salesman* (1953, SNG Drama Ljubljana; 1961, Drama SNG Maribor; 1962, Slovensko ljudsko gledališče Celje [Slovene People's Theatre Celje, abbr. SLG Celje]; 1963, Slovensko stalno gledališče [Slovene Permanent Theatre in Trieste, abbr. SSG Trieste]), *The Crucible* (1955, SNG Drama Ljubljana; 1965 Drama SNG Maribor), *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1956, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *A View from the Bridge* (1956, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *After the Fall* (1965, SNG Drama Ljubljana) and *The Price* (1969, MGL).



Edward Albee: *Everything in the Garden*. In the front Eva Krížiková (Louise), Zdena Gruberová (Cynthia), František Dibarbora (Perry). The Slovak National Theatre Drama ensemble, premiered on 7 February 1970. Photo by Jozef Vavro. The Slovak National Theatre archives.

The Slovak theatres staged Arthur Miller in similar quantities as Slovenian theatres. This reflects not only its performative quality, but also local interest in the themes and content, even for the socialist regime of the Soviet type. The staged plays were: *All my Sons* (1949, Slovenské divadlo Prešov [Slovak Theatre Prešov, abbr. SD Prešov]; 1949, SND Bratislava), *View from the Bridge* (1959, SND Bratislava; 1965, KD Nitra; 1965, Maďarské oblastné divadlo Komárno [Hungarian Regional Theatre, abbr. MOD Komárno]), *Death of a Salesman* (1960, ŠD Košice; 1967, DSNP Martin), *The Crucible* (1962, Krajské divadlo Spišská Nová Ves [Regional Theatre, abbr. KD Spišská Nová Ves]; 1963, KD Nitra; 1966, SND Bratislava; 1968, MOD Komárno), *After the Fall* (1964, SND Bratislava) and *The Price* (1969, SND Bratislava). In the timeline of repertoires two time gaps are particularly noticeable. The first gap occurred from 1949 to 1959, with Miller not reappearing until 1959 after his play *All my Sons* was staged in 1949. The other gap lasted for a longer period: from the staging of *The Price* in the SND Bratislava (1969), Arthur Miller was staged again before Czechoslovakia leaving the USSR, at the height of the “Velvet Revolution” on December 1st, 1989 (DJGT Zvolen), and then twice more in 1991.

In the article *Theatre productions by Western European authors and the 1950's and Slovenia: reception and response* we already discussed performing John Osborne plays in the 1950s. For a parallel comparison with Slovak cultural space, the Slovenian staging of Osborne were: *Look Back in Anger* (1958, SNG Drama Ljubljana; 1966, AGRFT), *Epitaph for George Dillon* (1959, Drama SNG Maribor), *Luther* (1962, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *Inadmissible Evidence* (1966, MGL). In Slovakia, at this time, they performed

only one: *Look Back in Anger* (1967, SND Bratislava). We suppose that the performance happened in the “Prague spring” spirit.

The star of post-war American drama and founder of the American absurd drama Edward Albee was on Slovenian stages presented by: *The American Dream* (1963, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1964, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *The Zoo Story* (1966, AGRFT), *A Delicate Balance* (1969, SNG Drama Ljubljana) and *Everything in the Garden* (1969, MGL; 1970, Drama SNG Maribor) In Slovakia: *The Zoo Story* (1964, Divadlo poézie [Poetry Theatre], Bratislava; 1964, DPJ Žilina), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1965, SND Bratislava) and *Everything in the Garden* (1970, SND Bratislava).

A surprising fact from Slovenian and Slovak stages of the analysed period is the extraordinary frequency of staging the works of British playwright George Bernard Shaw. This can be attributed to his political disengagement, as well as the continuity and predictability in playwriting. As a writer of comedies that focused on pointing out the anomalies of bourgeois society was popular among the audience and at the authorities that didn't recognise him as problematic influence. His declared “socialist” political orientation definitely helped. But in the selection of Western authors in the repertoires, we recognize his presence more as an abnormality and barely as a conceptual artist or author of modern drama with a strong influence on the development on the domestic arts.

Staging the playwright Lillian Hellman is particularly interesting, due to the general lack of female authors. The number of performances in Slovakia (10) deviates significantly from the Slovenian (3), where her writing seemed to garner insignificant interest. The deviation is recorded also with the staging of plays of Norman Krasna, which appeared three times in Slovakia and nine times in Slovenia. Statistically speaking, John Boynton Priestley was extremely desirable on stages in both nations. In the Slovak repertoires, he had eight performances and in Slovenia he had eleven. Similar to G. B. Shaw, we consider Priestley's dramatic art to be thematically unmoving and less powerful. These examples are represented only like information, which shows a strong presence of Anglo-Saxon and American creativity in Central European space.

German-speaking area

During the decades after the Second World War Friedrich Dürrenmatt was among the more popular staged authors in Central Europe. In the Slovenian theatre was most staged in the sixties: *Der Besuch der alten Dame* ([The Visit] 1958, MGL; 1960, SNG Drama Maribor), *Romulus der Grosse* ([Romulus the Great] 1962, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *Die Physiker* ([The Physicists] 1963, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *Der Meteor* ([The Meteor] 1966, MGL) and *Die Wiedertäufer* ([The Anabaptists] 1968, MGL).

In the same time window in Slovakia we noted even more performances of Dürrenmatt: *Die Physiker* ([The Physicists] 1963, SND Bratislava; 1963, Divadlo Jonáša Záborského Prešov [Jonáš Záborský Theatre Prešov, abbr. DJZ Prešov]; 1964, KD Trnava; 1969, ŠD Košice), *Frank der Fünfte* ([Frank the Fifth] 1963, DPJ Žilina), *Herkules und der Stall des Augias* ([Hercules and the Augean Stables] 1963, SND Bratislava), *Nächtliche Gaspräch mit einem verachteten Menschen* ([Nocturnal Conversation with a Despised Person] 1964, Divadlo poézie [Poetry Theatre], Bratislava; 1964, DPJ Žilina), *Der Besuch der alten Dame* [The Visit] 1965, ŠD Košice; 1965, Nová scéna Bratislava [The New



Bertolt Brecht: *Mother Courage and her Children*. Drama SNG Maribor, premiered on 28 April 1962. Direction Fran Žižek. Photo by Mirko Japelj. Slovenian Theatre Institute Archives.

Stage theatre, abbr. NS Bratislava)), *Abendstunde im Spätherbst* ([Episode on an Autumn Evening] 1966, Divadlo poézie [Poetry Theatre], Bratislava), *Der Doppelgänger* ([The Double] 1966, Divadlo poézie [Poetry Theatre], Bratislava) and *Der Meteor* ([The Meteor] 1967, NS Bratislava).

Dürrenmatt plays were coming to Slovenian and Slovak stages shortly or relatively soon after the published release or premiere performance. One such example is *The Physicists* which premiered in Zürich in 1962, while being simultaneously published at Die Arche, a publishing house. The time interval was greater for other plays, for example: *The Visit* was published in 1958 and staged two years later at the Ljubljana City Theatre; it was later staged in Košice and Bratislava in 1965. The theatre artists also interfered with his other texts, while in Slovenia a great part of his later opus has still not been staged (plays written after 1968). Dürrenmatt's dramas focused on satire, ridicule, and analysis of post-war European society. By establishing a strong political context, his work enabled the individual, different view of the state of mind in the socialist state and theatre.

Another interesting example is the staging of the Swiss playwright Max Frisch. He did not reach Dürrenmatt's popularity, but he was at the same time represented on the stages of both nations. Frisch began playwriting at the end of the Second World War. Despite his significant opus, the Slovenian theatre history records only three staged texts: *Biedermann und die Brandstiefler* ([The Fire Raisers] 1959, MGL), *Andorra* (1962, SNG Drama Ljubljana; 1963, SLG Celje; 1963, Drama SNG Maribor), and

Don Juan oder Die Liebe zur Geometrie ([Don Juand and The Love of Geometry] 1965, MGL). Even on Slovak stages, enthusiasm of Frisch's dramatic creativity is not noticed, where only three performances were recorded: *Andorra* (1963, ŠD Košice; 1965, VŠMU), *Don Juan oder Die Liebe zur Geometrie* ([Don Juand and The Love of Geometry] 1964, NS Bratislava) and *Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz* ([The Great Rage of Philipp Hotz] 1967, Divadelné štúdio Bratislava ([Theatre Studio Bratislava]). But we noticed the same almost a ten-year gap between the dramas were written and staged in Slovakia or Slovenia (partially similar with Dürrenmatt). As exception we must expose *Andorra* (1961), his only staged drama from the 1960s. Other remaining staged texts were created in the early 1950s: in *Biedermann und die Brandstiefter* ([The Fire Raisers] 1953), *Don Juan oder Die Liebe zur Geometrie* ([Don Juand and The Love of Geometry] 1953) and *Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz* ([The Great Rage of Philipp Hotz] 1956). Of significant note here is that Max Frisch's plays are considered to be more engaging and having a clear political position than Dürrenmatt's plays. We could say they were even more modern (his poetics is closer to Brecht), these facts could be behind the reason why the staging compared with Dürrenmatt was on such lower density. But staging both authors probably had a reason in their critically distance towards German nationalism and nacism, so they were popular in both countries and in East Germany (Deutsche Demokratische Republik).

It may be surprising that Bertolt Brecht is included in the short list of German-speaking playwrights. A resident of Eastern Germany, Brecht should, at least because of his political orientation and activism, be among the more featured contemporary authors of the period. This was not the case, however, as his performances occurred just as frequently as other staged Western authors. His most important texts were written before the Second World War, from modern texts were staged: *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* ([Schweik in the Second World War] 1941 – 1943/1957) and *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* ([The Caucasian Chalk Circle] 1943 – 1945/1948). Thus, in our chosen period until 1970, in the theatres in both countries we can count 13 performances: *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* ([Schweik in the Second World War] 1958, SNG Drama Ljubljana; 1967, SLG Celje), *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* ([Mr Puntila and his Man Matti] 1956, Drama SNG Maribor; 1964, MGL; 1962, DJGT Zvolen; 1963, DJZ Prešov; 1963, SND Bratislava), *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* ([Mother Courage and her Children] 1962, Drama SNG Maribor), *Leben des Galilei* ([Life of Galileo] 1959, AGRFT; 1960, SLG Celje; 1958, SND Bratislava), *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* ([The Caucasian Chalk Circle] 1957, SNG Drama Ljubljana; 1963, KD Trnava), *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* ([The Good Person of Szechwan] 1956, MGL; 1962, SND Bratislava; 1964, Drama SNG Maribor). On Slovak stages we found two texts that not have Slovenian performance: *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus* ([The Trial of Lucullus] 1962, SND Bratislava) and *Die Frau der Gewehr Carrara* ([Señora Carrar's Rifles] 1962, VŠMU).

It is important to emphasize that most performances of Brecht took place in Ljubljana (7 of 13) or Bratislava (8 of 13), while the other performances occurred in in theatres across the countries. There was strong centralization in both countries, especially when we focus on performing Western European or American playwrights. Brecht is highlighted here to as an example. Such centralization likely occurred because of the pronounced intellectual structure that was gathered in the capitals and in the population size. This allowed greater fluidity in the dissemination of (largely pro-Western) new ideas and concepts. To confirm this hypothesis, we could analyse

available audience information and data for individual performance by authors in different theatre houses, however we cannot pursue such analysis for this article.

French authors

By far the largest gap between the theatre productions of the two countries is reflected in the staging of the French drama, especially the existentialist plays. Staging of Albert Camus in Slovenia: *La Peste* ([The Plague] 1955, Drama SNG Maribor), *Les Justes* ([The Just Assassins] 1956, MGL), *Caligula* (1963, SNG Drama Ljubljana), *Le Malentendu* ([The Misunderstanding] 1960, SLG Celje; 1967, MGL) and *Les Possédés* ([The Possessed] 1970, MGL). In Slovakia, only the staging of *Le Malentendu* ([The Misunderstanding] 1967, SND Bratislava) and adaptation of the William Faulkner's novel *Requiem for a Nun* ([Requiem pour une none] 1966, DSNP Martin) by Camus were performed.

Slovenian theatre artists showed an even stronger affinity to dramatic works (and philosophy) of Jean Paul Sartre. In the two decades after the Second World War eleven of his plays were staged there, while in Slovakia only four performances occurred and one play remained unproduced (*Les Mains sales* [Dirty Hands]). It is understandable that the following productions dominated in Slovenia: *Huis-Clos* ([No Exit] 1958,



Albert Camus: *Caligula*. Štefka Drolc (Casonia), Andrej Kurent (Caligula). SNG Drama Ljubljana, premiered on 14 October 1963. Direction Andrej Hieng. Photo by Vlastja Simončič. Slovenian Theatre Institute Archives.

Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Devil and the Good Lord*. Ctibor Filčík (Goetz), Martin Gregor (The Banker). The Slovak National Theatre Drama ensemble, premiered on 18 December 1965. Photo by Jozef Vavro. The Slovak National Theatre archives.



1969) and *Les Mains sales* ([Dirty Hands] 1962, 1964 and 1966). We can also find productions of *La Putain respectueuse* ([The Respectful Prostitute] 1954, PGK; 1960, SNG Nova Gorica), *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* ([The Condemned of Altona] 1960, MGL), *Les Mouches* ([The Flies] 1961, AGRFT), *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* ([The Devil and the Good Lord] 1965, SNG Drama Ljubljana) and *Morts sans sépulture* ([The Victors] 1969, SLG Celje). The Slovak performances were: *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* ([The Condemned of Altona] 1962, DNSP Martin; 1970, MOD Komárno), *Huis-Clos* ([No Exit] 1963, VŠMU) and *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* ([The Devil and the Good Lord] 1965, SND Bratislava). The differences can be seen at the first sight, unfortunately our research does not have time for further interpretations of the situation.

The total number of performances by Jean Anouilh on Slovenian stages depends on the selection. His creativity extended from various genres from drama to opera and plays for children or youth. The total number of the performances was 17, 15 of these were plays for adult audiences. That number makes him the most staged Western author of this period. From his extensive dramatic opus various texts were performed and most of them rarely staged twice. In Slovakia there were seven performances of Anouilh: *La Sauvage* ([The Restless Heart] 1947, ŠD Košice), *Le Voyageur sans*

bagage ([Traveller without Luggage] 1964, DJZ Prešov), *Le Bal des Voleurs* ([Thieves' Carnival] 1966, KD Nitra), *L'Invitation au château* ([Invitation to the Castle] 1968, NS Bratislava), *L'Orchestre* ([The Orchestra] 1968, Divadelné štúdio Bratislava [Theatre Studio Bratislava]) and *L'Alouette* ([The Lark] 1969, NS Bratislava). Dramatic creativity by Jean Anouilh is especially interesting, because of his slow passage from the existentialism towards the absurd over the years. In a way that is also similar to the transformation of the general poetics in some cultural traditions. In the French dramatic literature, for example, existentialist authors (Sartre, Camus and others) were eventually replaced by Ionesco, Adamov and Genet. In the Slovenian area we have met a great fascination with drama and philosophy of existentialism, which was later partially transformed and coexisted with the drama of the absurd (primarily through performance, then in the Slovenian drama). It is clear that Anouilh's plays fell under a similar development as the dramas and theatre arts in the Slovenian space. Such development could not have happened in the Slovak space at such extent. This is mostly because we did not find such strong presence of the existentialism or the absurd drama, at least not in the way we noted in Slovenian art space.

Outstanding phenomena

In the selected cultural contexts some authors particularly stand out, including those who never made it to the canon.

The example that attracts the attention at the very beginning of studying repertoires, is the staging of the text of Simone de Beauvoir *Les bouches inutiles* [The Useless Mouth], which was performed in the SND Bratislava at the end of 1947, just before the Soviet Union completely ruled the country. Another special phenomenon is the Dutch author Hans Tiemeijer with his drama *De Zaak A. D.* in 1954 (season 1953 – 1954 and 1954 – 1955) with five performances (SLG Celje, Mestno gledališče Ptuj [Ptuj City Theatre, abbr. MG Ptuj], PGK and SSG Trieste), while in the Slovak repertoire he did not appear. There was a reverse situation with the French author Armand Salacrou, whose later works were classed as French existentialism. On the Slovak stages he only appeared with the text *Une Femme trop honnête* [A Woman Too Honest] from 1953 (1964, NS Bratislava; 1964, KD Trnava). On the other hand, Salacrou staged five times in the Slovenian theatres in the fifties. Another outstanding example is the Brazilian playwright Guilherme Figueiredo (1915 – 1997), who was staged with six performances in a wide network of institutions in Slovakia (DPJ Žilina, SND Bratislava, DJZ Prešov, DSNP Martin, etc.), and was not recorded on the Slovenian repertoires.

A special chapter should be devoted to (not) staging of the most prominent playwrights of the absurd drama: Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco. We understand them as examples of slow (but real) cultural and practical influence passed from the West. The first performances Beckett's plays in the Slovenian space were *Waiting for Godot* and *Krapp's Last Tape* (both staged in SSG Trieste in 1966), but that was practically in capitalism, on the other side of the border. Before that, the *Krapp's Last Tape* was performed in SLG Celje (1963) and *Waiting for Godot* later on in Drama SNG Ljubljana (1968). During the 1960s *Happy Days* (1965, SND Bratislava) and *Waiting for Godot* (1968, Divadlo na korze, Bratislava [Theatre on the Promenade]) were staged in Slovakia. Afterwards Samuel Beckett was not staged on Slovak stages until 1990, which we can assign to the political censorship of the theatre of absurd. Mostly be-



Fernando Arrabal: *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria*. Janez Hočevar (Architect). SNG Drama Ljubljana, premiered on 20 December 1968. Direction Jurij Souček. Photo by Marjan Pal. Slovenian Theatre Institute Archives.

cause of the way in which it resonated in the Eastern Europe: as a political drama and a criticism of the undemocratic regimes. A similar situation also occurred with the staging of Eugène Ionesco plays. While his main works *La Leçon* ([The Lesson] 1958), *La Cantatrice Chauve* ([The Bald Prima Donna] 1958), *Les Chaises* ([The Chairs] 1960), *Rhinocéros* ([Rhinoceros] 1961), *La Soif et la faim* ([Hunger and Thirst] 1967) and *Le Roi se meurt* ([Exit the King] 1970) were staged on Slovenian stages in the 1960s, only two stagings occurred in the Slovak theatre space: *A tant qu'on veut* ([And the Same to You] 1967) and in the year 1964, when the evening of pieces from the works of world and Slovak authors took place in Divadlo poézie [Poetry Theatre] in Bratislava. There were no staging until the year 1991, similar to the case of Beckett.

At this point we should point out that one of the main authors of the theatre of the absurd Arthur Adamov, appeared only once in Slovenian and Slovak stage, not only in the selected time period, but also until the present. His drama *Le Printemps '71* [Spring '71] was staged in the SND Bratislava (1962) and in the Drama SNG Ljubljana (1964). It is certainly an interesting phenomenon, at least according to his position in the world classical literature and also to his major innovation in playwriting.

Expectedly, the most staged Spanish playwright was Federico García Lorca. In Slovakia he was presented with ten performances (in Slovenia by seven, including the performances at Slovensko mladinsko gledališče [The Slovenian Youth Theatre]). Followed by the quite popular author Alejandro Casona. His works had nine perfor-

mances in Slovakia, and only four in Slovenia. And even then all the Slovene performances were his family drama *Los árboles mueren de pie* [Trees Die on Their Feet].

The difference can also be observed at the staging of the Spanish absurdist Fernando Arrabal. In Slovenian theatre he was staged three times, including: *Picnic* (1962), *Le tricycle* ([The Tricycle] 1968) and *L'architecte et l'empereur d'Assyrie* (1968, [The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria]). He has not been staged in Slovakia in the selected period. This also occurred with the postmodern German playwright Tankred Dorst, who was not staged in Slovakia, but had two performances in Slovenia (both times: *Die Grosse Schmährede an der Stadtmauer* [Grand Tirade at the Town Hall]). Another such example is the noticeable Irish author Brendan Behan. His *An Giall* [The Hostage] was staged on the stage of SNG Drama Ljubljana in 1963, despite the fact that he was an Irish republican. When he suddenly died a year later, the members of the Irish Republican Army were marching by his coffin (which could be his advantage for Slovenian authorities).

The historical tradition and geographical reasons partially link Slovenian theatre space to the Italian production and theatre practise. The Italian authors were relatively frequently selected for the repertoires, especially on the Western border and in SSG Trieste. Most of the performances were by Luigi Pirandello, whereas contemporary drama could be found in some seasons. The Slovak theatres had fewer contemporary Italian dramas, except for Pirandello, probably because of no direct contact with the country. In Slovenia Ugo Betti appeared five times, and only once in Slovakia with his popular *Delitto all'isola dell capre* [Crime on Goat Island]. Dario Fo, as the most prominent representative of the contemporary Italian drama was staged in a Slovak theatre once in 1963 with *Gli Archangeli non giocano al flipper* [Archangels Don't Play Pinball] (performed twice in Slovenia in 1962 and 1963) and *Pistole con gli occhi bianchi e neri* [He Had Two White and Black Eyed Guns] in SSG Trieste in 1964.

The two giants of modern British drama experienced a similar situation. Their first staging on Slovenian and Slovakian stage happened at the beginning of their artistic path. First, Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1967) and *The Caretaker* (1970) were staged in Slovene theatres, whereas *The Lover* (1966), *The Homecoming* (1968) and *The Caretaker* (1970) were performed in Slovakia. Second, Tom Stoppard had one performance of his texts, both times in 1969 with his breakthrough text *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (Ljubljana and Martin). Third, Peter Shaffer who began his career as a playwright in the fifties and appeared in Slovakia with his *Black Comedy* (four times). In the Slovenian theatres he was staged twice with his plays *The Private Ear* and *The Public Eye* and once with the *Black Comedy*. It should be noted that regardless of the age and work of these three authors, their presence in the repertoire is a phenomenon, since they strike abroad as young (not yet established) authors.

In the repertoire we can find many more examples of encounters with modern western playwrighting. We have already reviewed some of the best examples in this article; other noteworthy playwrights of this period include: Hella Wuolijoki *Niskaavuoren naiset* ([Women on Niskavuori] 1953, SSG Trieste), Arhur Kopit *Oh dad, poor dad, mamma's hung you in the closet and I'm feelin' so sad* in both countries. It is also important to mention staging the plays of Jean Genet at the end of the sixties. All our examples show that cultural spaces were fluid and open towards western innovations in the playwrighting and contemporary themes.

Synthesis

After reviewing performances in Slovakia and Slovenia the following logical conclusion is offered. When we think about the performances of the Western European and American authors there were no major differences between Slovak and Slovenian production, except for some special cases we mentioned. The similarity of the socialist (one-party) systems is crucial, because each, in their own way, regulated the theatre production and balanced the repertoire. Theatre production in Central Europe finds itself in a similar situation. A strong indicator is that the non-democratic systems after the Second World War worked from the same starting point in cultural policy, despite a pro-Western orientation in Yugoslavia. Some fundamental differences have been analysed in this article, but additional analysis is needed. Namely, a review of the critical receptions of the selected Western European and American playwrights should reveal differences or similarities between two countries/nations. Such a review would provide the insight into the actual position of official theatre critic and even performing concepts (how it had been staged, for example).

The importance of the message of a theatre performance must be judged in the perspective of time and space in which it was created. Undemocratic systems could regulate a progressive message, but as discussed in this article, certain authors or texts had greater success in expressing their message(s) and achieving a higher level of identification, and sometimes even mobilization.

A comparative study of two theatrical situations reveals the similarities and differences between both cultures. We have set a historic time and tried to identify it, placed it into theatre practice and repertoire creation. We found that there were some substantive differences (performing the existentialist drama and the drama the absurd), as well as major similarities, which proves that the Central European cultural space is much more homogeneous, even at a time when the Slovak theatre was located on the eastern side of the iron curtain.

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