

## Resumé

In theatrical practice, comedy has long been considered an easy-going, simpler genre, intended primarily for entertainment. However, history has often convinced us otherwise. Just as the tragedian must have a flair for the specifics of the genre, the comedian - or, more accurately, the actor of comedic roles - cannot adequately portray his or her roles without a sense of humour, a feeling for punchlines, artistic detachment, and other expressive elements typical for comedy. In its research, Slovak theatre studies focus mainly on more serious themes, genres and theatrical productions; comics, comedy and comedians remain on the periphery of interest. Therefore, within the framework of the scientific project *Profilové osobnosti slovenského činoherného a operného divadla* [Profile Personalities of Slovak Drama and Opera Theatre], we decided to enter the under-explored territory. The collective of authors delved into the issues of comedy and humour on our theatre stages, both from the perspective of history and the present. They have attempted to chart the emergence of a 'simpler' genre and, in particular, to characterize through key figures of both the older and contemporary theatrical spectrum, whether this adjective is indeed adequate. The analyses of acting, directing and design personalities of drama and opera theatre and their comedic means are motivated by the ambition to define the meaning of comedy across the multilayered history of Slovak professional theatre.

The study collection named *Slovenská komika, komédia, komici* [Slovak Comic, Comedy, Comedians], contains nine papers from the eponymous scientific symposium, which took place on 23 May 2023 at the Institute of Theatre and Film Research, Art Research Centre of Slovak Academy of Sciences SAS. The texts are arranged in imaginary thematic units. The first three are devoted to emblematic personalities of the Slovak drama scene. Dagmar Podmaková provides a concise insight into the career of Marian Labuda, an actor who was regularly cast by directors in typologically limited roles because of his physical physiognomy. In the text the author demonstrates that his on-stage humour was not one-dimensional even in these roles, not relying on externality or coarseness of means. While the rich professional résumé of the legendary Marián Labuda is mainly associated with the comedy genre, his peer and colleague Božidara Turzonovová, on the contrary, initially encountered only dramatic, outright tragic roles. In his article, Karol Mišovic analyses several rare comedic creations that proved that the actress also harboured the potential of a unique on-stage comedian. Robert Roth is also an actor who does not tend to provoke laughter with his stage creations, but rather conveys intellectual polemics about the state of society to the audience. It was his artistic individuality that Dária Fojtíková Fehérová chose as an example of an exceptional comedic talent, who, however, was given the opportunity to use his genre talents only occasionally. His spe-

cifics as an actor are presented by the author in a trio of productions directed by Vladimír Strnisko, in which she focuses not only on specific acting means, but also on the mutual cooperation of two leading, albeit generationally distant, personalities of our theatre.

Miloš Mistrik's contribution presents in basic characterization lines a personality for whom comedy is not a secondary but a priority aspect of his lifetime work - Stanislav Štepka. His career, spanning over half a century, is so rich that it would be enough for a lengthy monograph. Therefore, the author did not choose to make an enumerative analysis of Štepka's specific artistic performances, but rather to characterise the acting and authorial specifics of the humour of a distinguished comedian whose work and its historical otherness transcended the borders of the Slovak region. On the contrary, Peter Himič has dealt with a personality that is largely overlooked in the history of our theatre, the director Oto Kатуša. He focuses on his work in Košice, where the dominant feature of his dramaturgical focus was the comedy repertoire. The paper not only provides an information-saturated profile of a personality who has unfairly remained in the background of theatre scholars' interest, but also geographically broadens the thematic axis of this study collection, as previous contributions have dealt with personalities working exclusively on the stages of Bratislava. Lenka Dzadíková also remained outside the capital, noting the uniqueness of the young director from Nitra, Šimon Spišák, who regularly reinterprets iconic fairy tales. As Dzadíková proves, his productions are not lacking in humour, which is understandable for both children and adults, while the director is also able to speak about current social problems in a non-violent way, even through the classic fairy tale motive. The author also introduces his productions about the tragedy of the Second World War, where he proved that comedy and tragedy are not as far apart as they may seem at first glance.

As the following two papers focusing on emblematic figures of twentieth-century opera direction demonstrate, comedy is not only related to the dramatic stage. Michaela Mojžišová presents a portrait of Július Gyermek, for whom the staging of comic operas did not mean a lowering of the quality bar, but an artistic challenge to work with different, often fresher and more original means of expression than in opera dramas. While Gyermek regularly staged comic operas on the stage of the Slovak National Theatre, his generational contemporary Branislav Kriška staged them only in his early years on the stage of the theatre in Košice and later as part of the teaching process at the Academy of Performing Arts. Unlike Gyermek, he was not inclined to this genre: the reasons why this was so and how he dealt with comedy in his productions are presented in Klára Madunická's contribution.

On the map of theatre studies there are still little explored areas - one of them is the field of scenic and costume design. Alžbeta Vakulová's contribution brings a valuable insight into the specifics of humour in costume design, taking as an example the

production of Ján Palárik's classic merry play *Drotár* from the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra. Through an analysis of the visual artistic component as a whole, as well as specific costumes, the author considers the collaboration of the designer Diana Strauszová with the directorial and dramaturgical interpretation of the play. She offers a probe into the historical clothing contexts and, in particular, considers the contribution of costumes to the comedic appeal of the popular production.

Not only nine studies confirm the well-known fact that comedy has been present in Slovak theatre from the professional beginnings of domestic dramatic art to the present day. Even nowadays, the audience's demand for hilarious plays, satire or comedy titles that take their mind away from the heaviness and gloominess of the current days does not subside. The published contributions prove that comics, comedy and comedians are an indelible part of the domestic cultural memory and artistic integrity of today. The study collection aims to show not only the quantitative but especially the qualitative side of Slovak theatrical humour. However, it does not claim the right of definitive closure of the issue; many topics still remain unopened. Many older and younger comedy actors from the Bratislava and regional scenes, as well as many theatres and chamber scenes dealing with satire and cabaret, would deserve a detailed teatrological analysis of their work. The study collection [Slovak Comic, Comedy, Comedians], represents only a small, but in many aspects representative sample of quality humour on our stages. Representative sample of the selected Slovak artists, drama and opera directors, actors, designers or entire theatre ensembles for which humour has become a basic means of expression. Creators who have proven that the genre of comedy, despite simplistic tendencies in portraying and thematising the world, is a complex and multi-layered area of creation, where comic reduction does not mean a reduction in the artistic value of the work, nor in the acting, directing or visual art.