

*Divadlo v české kultuře 19. století [Theatre in Czech Culture of the Nineteenth Century]. Hrsg. v. Jiří Kotalík.*

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This book of essays on nineteenth-century Czech theatre originated as a number of papers which were delivered at a symposium in Pilsen from 10 to 12 March, 1983. It was organized by the Institute for the Theory and History of Art of the Czech Academy of Sciences in conjunction with the National Gallery of Art in Prague. This sponsorship explains the strong emphasis given to the relationship between the theatre and the visual and plastic arts in the period of the National Revival.

The book consists of twenty-six essays on a range of topics. Jiří Kotalík, the editor of the volume, focuses on the popularity of Shakespeare's plays in Bohemia as reflected in the visual arts from Karel Purkyně's illustrations in the 1860s to Jiří Trnka's puppet film of *A Midsummernight's Dream* in 1959. Many essays concentrate on the establishment of the National Theatre as both an expression of nationalist aspiration (František Černý: "The Idea of a National Theatre") and as a real event in 1881 and in 1883 (following the destruction by fire of the original building). Other contributions give due weight to the significance of Pilsen as a centre of theatre and opera: Antonín Špelda examines the repertoire of the Pilsen opera-house from its foundation in 1868. Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* was performed (with original Pilsen folk costumes) in 1869, only three years after receiving its première in Prague. Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* was staged as early as January 1887 and led to many subsequent productions of his work, including the Czech première of *Tannhäuser* a year later.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the collaboration between theatre and art criticism in this volume is the theme of "theatricalization" which emerges in the culture of the Czech bourgeoisie at this period. Václav Erben perceives a theatrical principle in the monumental sculpture of a civic artist like Myslbek whose statues of Czech mythological figures on the Palacký Bridge in Prague (Libuše and Přemysl, Lumír and Lied, Ctirad and Šárka) form a plastic counterpart to the Zelenohorský (Grüneberg) and Královédvorský (Königinhof) Manuscripts as well as Smetana's operatic hymns to Czech nationalism (see Bořivoj Srba's essay on the staging of Smetana's *Libuše* in the National Theatre productions of 1881 and 1883). Jana Ševčíková and Jiří Ševčík discern a dramatic paradox in the architectural forms of the nineteenth century, a contradiction between authentic and inauthentic existence in which the motif of the theatrical

mask – as a carnevalesque motif and as a deeper expression of chaos (Georges Bataille) – plays a crucial role. Eva Stehlíková examines the ceremonial and theatrical elements in the Tyrš *Sokol* gymnastic movement of the 1850s and 1860s. Mojmír Otruba and Miroslav Procházka take the theme further in their contribution on theatrical elements in four stories by J. K. Tyl.

As Jiří Dvorský points out in his preface, the relationship between theatre and politics in Bohemia has always been a crucial one. For the Czech *obrozenci* of the nineteenth century, theatre was a means of transmitting political opinions; for the writers of the Baroque (Comenius) the world of politics was, conversely, understood and allegorized as a theatre. This volume of essays demonstrates that the classical relationship between theatre and the *polis* was a powerful vehicle of nineteenth-century bourgeois national self-definition as displayed in the theatre itself and in the theatrical props of the city as a whole.