

PRAGUE AROUND 1800: JOSEF BERGLER'S DESIGN
OF THE MAIN CURTAIN FOR THE PRAGUE THEATRE
OF THE ESTATES, A DOCUMENT OF ITS TIME

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Applying the tools of art history to the design of the main curtain for the Prague Theatre of the Estates (Ständetheater) as submitted by Josef Bergler in 1804, reveals a fitting Bohemian example of the great importance of the arts for the propagation of the ideas of enlightenment. The present contribution proves that the project reflects political and societal developments taking place in Bohemia around 1800. Using an allegorical image code, Bergler's design seeks to strike a balance between paying proper homage to the Habsburg dynasty and referring to the patriotic self-confidence of the Bohemian Kingdom. The design, commissioned by the Bohemian diet on September 15, 1804 on the occasion of an Imperial visit to the theatre, may be interpreted as a statement of the way the Bohemian state saw itself around 1800.