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Czech collections of the Theatre Research Institute at Ohio State University

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Nena Couch Czech Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at Ohio State University

History

The Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute and the Department of Theatre at Ohio State University have had a decades-long history of involvement with Czech theatre. Early interest by George P. Crepeau (theatre faculty member and later Associate Provost for the University) and Russell T. Hastings (the founding scenic designer for the Master of Fine Arts Programme in Design and a theatre faculty member) brought the first OSU experiences with Czech scenography. Crepeau took several groups of theatre students to Europe, with the primary purpose of attending the Prague Quadrennial. Preparation in advance of the tour included study of the work of the major Czech scenographers. An early proponent of the Prague Quadrennial, Professor Hastings introduced his design students to the European influences he brought back from that event. Hastings arranged at least one exchange of Czech design students, and himself participated in the demonstrations in Wenceslas Square in November 1989.

The first Czech acquisitions in the Lawrence and Lee Institute collections were theatre posters and print materials brought back by Crepeau; however, the first original stage designs were received in 1998 when donor Paul Stiga bid at a Sotheby's auction in New York City on behalf of the Institute for a number of Czech designs, including work by Josef Jelínek. While these pieces are as yet unidentified in terms of the larger works for which they were created, they clearly demonstrate Jelínek's expressiveness, and formed a significant beginning for the Institute's Czech design collection. Since that time, collections in Czech design and theatre



František Tröster. Scene Design for *The Winter's Tale*. National Theatre, Prague, 1965. From the Collections of the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.116.

belonging to the Institute have grown in tandem with activities and initiatives undertaken by Ohio State University that include study tours to the Czech Republic, residencies by Czech scenographers on the OSU Lima and Columbus campuses, major touring exhibitions of Czech design art, symposia, and use of collections in teaching. Acquisitions and activities alike are made possible through the support of Ohio State University Department of Theatre, the University's Libraries, the Lima campus, and the generosity of a number of private donors.

1998 proved to be the year that Czech theatre became a programmatic area for Ohio State University. With the research interests of Joseph E. Brandesky and the strong relationships he has forged in the Czech Republic, the OSU Department of Theatre had the opportunity to begin to build from that date a structure for on-going exchange. In his capacity at the time as Rector of the Academy of Performing Arts, scenographer Jaroslav Malina facilitated a bilateral exchange agreement with the purpose of creating exchanges of faculty and students and cooperation on collaborative activities. In the autumn of 2000, Malina was guest artist in residence at Ohio State University Department of Theatre, designing Tennessee Williams's *Orpheus Descending*. Malina had previously designed productions for Ohio State University's Lima campus – including Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1994), Beaumarchais's *The Marriage of Figaro* (1997), and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* (2004). In the spring

of 2002, OSU theatre lighting designer Mary Tarantino went to Prague to teach a master class in lighting. In the autumn of 2004, Petr Matásek was guest artist in residence at Ohio State University's Columbus campus, where he held workshops for theatre design students and conducted a walking tour of *Metaphor and Irony 2*, an exhibition of Czech scenography. The most recent residency of a Czech scenographer was that of Jan Štěpánek, who was on the Columbus campus for a week in the autumn of 2010, working with theatre design students.

Exhibitions have been an important element of the academic programming that brings Czech theatre not only to Ohio State University, but also to other venues in the United States. Brandesky has now curated three major touring exhibitions that have appeared across the country. With Helena Albertová, Brandesky curated *Metaphor and Irony: Czech Scenic and Costume Design 1920-1999* (which toured in 2000-2001, provided an overview of the styles and periods, and included work by Vlastislav Hofman, Josef Jelínek, Jaroslav Malina, Miroslav Melena, Jana Preková, Marta Roszkopfová, Simona Rybáková, Otakar Schindler, Jan Sládek, Zuzana Štefunková, Josef Svoboda, and Jan Vančura). In 2004-2005, Albertová and Brandesky again collaborated on *Metaphor and Irony 2: František Tröster and Contemporary Czech Theatre Design* (which examined the work of Tröster and his legacy through his students and their students, including designs by Tröster, Helena Anýžová, Jan Dušek, Marie Franková, Karel Glogr, Petra Štětínová Goldflamová, Sylva Zimula Hanáková, Dana Hávová, Jaroslav Malina, David Marek, Petr Matásek, Marta Roszkopfová, Kateřina Štefková, Jan Štěpánek, Egon Tobiáš, Jana Zbořilová, and Ivo Židek). The popularity of these exhibitions resulted in publication of the volume *Czech Theatre Design in the Twentieth Century: Metaphor & Irony Revisited* (University of Iowa Press, 2007) edited by Joseph E. Brandesky – a book that includes full essays by Věra Ptáčková, Dennis Christilles, Delbert Unruh, and Marie Zdeňková (major studies that were of necessity reduced for the exhibition catalogues), as well as an essay by Brandesky, biographies of the designers included in the volume, and an invaluable CD-ROM of over one hundred and thirty images.

The third exhibition curated by Brandesky was *Jaroslav Malina: Paintings and Designs* (which toured the United States in 2009-2010). In conjunction with the Columbus appearance of the Malina exhibit, a symposium, 'Jaroslav Malina: Crossing Paths in Painting and Design,' was sponsored by the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute and the Department of Theatre. Speakers included theatre scholars Delbert Unruh and Dennis Christilles, scenographer Markéta Trösterova-Fantová, Ed Valentine (from the OSU Department of Art), and convener Brandesky.

The Czech collections at the Lawrence and Lee Institute are used for teaching in



Jaroslav Malina. Scene Design for *Její pastorkyňa* (Jenufa). Act I. Divadlo F. X. Šaldy, Liberec, 1967.
From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.35.



Jaroslav Malina. Scene Design for *Oidipús vladař* (Oedipus the King). Temple. National Theatre, Prague, 1996. From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.36.



Kateřina Šteřková. Costume Designs for *Fernando Krapp mi napsal dopis* (Fernando Krapp Wrote Me a Letter). Julie; Juan, and Fernando Krapp. Theatre Labyrinth, 1992.

From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.109a+b.

a variety of contexts including theatre design and research methods classes, as well as classes offered through the Department of Slavic and East European Studies. In addition, every eighteen months to two years, a course on *Czech Theatre and Culture* is offered by Brandesky in preparation for going abroad. Attendees visit the Czech Republic for a study tour that includes visits to theatres and cultural and historical sites of importance both in and outside Prague, and, every four years, the opportunity to attend the Prague Quadrennial.

Designs

Following first receipt of original Czech costume designs in 1998, collection curator, Professor Nena Couch, has subsequently acquired in consultation with Brandesky original designs by Czech scenographers methodically and regularly. A special opportunity came by virtue of the first *Metaphor and Irony* exhibit: a medical doctor in Sweden came across an Internet reference to the exhibition. In 1965, the doctor had attended *Jiráskův Hronov*, the annual amateur theatre festival in Hronov, named in honour of Czech novelist and playwright Alois Jirásek. Theatre friends he met at the festival introduced the doctor to Jan Sládek at the *Realistické divadlo* (Realistic Theatre) and Sládek gave him some sketches. The doctor returned to Prague in 1969 or 1970 and again received a gift of sketches from the scenographer. Of the thirty-seven designs in the collection, five are scenic designs and the remainder are costume designs, all of which Professor Couch was able to acquire for the Lawrence and Lee Institute. The few scenic designs demonstrate Sládek's use of light, drapery, 'arcades, grills, and graphic articulation' (PTÁČKOVÁ 2007: 30) cited by Věra Ptáčková as hallmarks of his work. It is interesting to note that the costume designs are often not so much costume designs as studies of the actors in their character roles. With research and the help of Vlasta Koubská, some of the productions represented in the Sládek collection have been identified to include A. N. Ostrovsky's *I chytrák se spálí* (There Are Enough Common People for Every Wise Man) at the *Malé realistické divadlo* (Small Realistic Theatre), 1945, director: Jan Škoda; *Othello* at the *Realistické divadlo Zdeňka Nejedlého Praha* (Zdenek Nejedlý Realistic Theatre), 1963, director: František Laurin; J. N. Nestroy's *Byt k pronajmutí* (Flat for Rent) at the *Realistické divadlo Zdeňka Nejedlého Praha*, 1963, director: Jiří Dalík; Eugene O'Neill's *Smutek sluší Elektře* (Mourning Becomes Electra) at the *Realistické divadlo Zdeňka Nejedlého Praha*, 1964, director: Karel Palouš; Rudolf Piskáček's *Perly panny Serafinky* (Pearls of the Virgin Seraphim) at the *Divadlo Josefa Kajetána Tyla Plzeň* (J. K. Tyl Theatre, Pilsen), 1965, director: Miroslav Doutlík; and Jaroslav Vrchlický's *Soud lásky* (The Trial of Love) at the *Realistické divadlo Zdeňka Nejedlého Praha*, 1968, director:

Karel Palouš.

In addition to Josef Jelínek and Jan Sládek, other scenographers whose work is represented in the collection include Helena Anýžová, Jan Dušek, Marie Franková, Jaroslav Malina, Petr Matásek, Marta Roszkopfová, Kateřina Štefková, Zuzana Štefunková, Jan Štěpánek, Egon L. Tobiáš, František Tröster, Marketa Trösterová-Fantová, Jan Vančura, Ladislav Vychodil, Jana Zbořilová, and Ivo Židek. Whereas a few of these artists are represented by only one or two pieces, for most, several to numerous works are held in the collection, providing students and researchers with the opportunity to study a range of work by individual artists as well as by a number of Czech theatre scenographers.

The Jarka M. Burian Collection

The papers of Jarka M. Burian, the foremost scholar writing in the English language on Czech theatre, offer a tremendous resource for researchers interested in Czech theatre. The collection is the gift to the University of Jarka and Grayce Susan Burian.

The Burian collection contains the research papers, posters, programmes, photographs, taped interviews with Czech theatre artists, books, and other materials assembled by Burian as well as some of his own family materials relating to *Sokol*.¹ From the 1960s, Burian was involved in active scholarly research. He wrote five books, many dozen articles and numerous studies published in the United States as well as abroad, most of them dealing with Czech theatre and international design. In recognition of the significance of the subject of his scholarship, over his decades of research he received support from numerous organisations including the United States Department of State, the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (Fulbright Programme), the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the United States National Endowment for the Humanities, and the State University of New York, Albany to pursue his work in the field of Czech theatre. He also received in-country assistance from several Czech ministries, and significant research assistance from the *Divadelní ústav* (Czech Theatre Institute), the *Divadelní oddělení, Národní muzeum* (Czech National Museum Theatre Department), the *Kabinet pro studium českého divadla* (Department of Czech Theatre) and many

1 The *Sokol* movement was a Czech youth sport and fitness initiative founded in Prague in 1862 by Miroslav Tyrš and Jindřich Fügner. Whilst it began as a fitness initiative, the *Sokol* developed to include education through lectures, debates and field trips. It also engaged with the arts as part of a programme intended to provide for the physical, moral, and intellectual life of the nation.



Jan Sládek. Unidentified Scene Design.

From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.78.



Jana Zbořilová. Scene Design for *Žebrácká opera* (The Beggar's Opera). Municipal Theatre in Most, 1994.

From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.140.



Jan Štěpánek. Sketches for *Ostrov pokladů* (Treasure Island). Jihočeské divadlo – Loutkohra (also called *Malé divadlo*), České Budějovice, 2006.

From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.155.



Jan Štěpánek. Scene Designs for *Gazdina roba* (The Farmer's Woman). Uherské Hradiště Theatre, 2000.

From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.164.

individual actors, directors, choreographers, designers, playwrights, and other theatre professionals.

After becoming Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York at Albany in 1992, Jarka Burian continued to pursue research in the Czech Republic. While a major focus of his work was on Czech scenographer Josef Svoboda, Burian wrote extensively on Czech theatre across the twentieth century as well as on the many theatre artists who contributed to the excellence of Czech theatre. His two most recent books, *Modern Czech Theatre: Reflector and Conscience of a Nation* (BURIAN 2000) and *Leading Creators of Twentieth-Century Czech Theatre* (BURIAN 2002) continue to be standards for English-speaking students and scholars alike.

The Burian collection includes not only material documenting theatre and performance, but also major cultural and political activity that the Burians experienced during the many years of their research leaves to Prague (including the events of the Prague Spring). The Burian book and periodical collection includes major Czech periodicals, playscripts (of Czech plays as well as Czech translations of foreign plays), publications on Czech theatre by major Czech writers, and significant publications on Czech history, culture, and politics, as well as books on Slovak theatre and art. The collection provides an excellent print resource, primarily in Czech, that had not previously been held by Ohio State University Libraries.

Burian's papers are extensive and include correspondence to and from Czech theatre artists and others, periodical articles on Czech and Slovak theatre and theatre artists, materials compiled by Burian on individuals active in theatre throughout the twentieth century, documentation of theatres both in and outside Prague (including an extensive collection of theatre programmes and posters dating from the mid-1960s onwards). Individuals included in numerous files (through correspondence or through documentation) are: Jozef Bednárík, Hana Burešová, E. F. Burian, Karel and Josef Čapek, František Černý, Jozef Ciller, Karel Dostal, Jan Dušek, Antonín Dvořák, Lída Engelová, Milan Ferenčík, Bedřich Feuerstein, Ladislav Fialka, Daniela Fischerová, Jiří Frejka, Josef Gabriel, Jarmila Gabrielová, Arnošt Goldflam, Jan Grossman, Václav Havel, Antonín Heythum, K. H. Hilar, Vlastislav Hofman, Jindřich Honzl, A. V. Hrska, Jiří Hubač, Fanny Janouschek, Jan Kačer, Dana Kalvodová, Jan Kopecký, Otomar Krejča, Miroslav and Ivo Krobot, Jiří Kroha, Jaroslav Kvapil, František Kysela, Ladislav Lajcha, Petr Lébl, Miroslav Macháček, Jaroslav Malina, Vladimír Morávek, Otakar Mrkvička, František Muzika, Jan Nebeský, J. A. Pitínský, Jaromír Pleskot, Alfréd Radok, Marta Roszkopfová, Evald Schorm, Jan Sládek, Ladislav Smoček, Karel Steigerwald, Josef Svoboda, František Tröster, Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich, Ladislav Vychodil, Ivan Vyskočil,

Josef and Adolf Wenig, František Zavřel, Jana Zbořilová, František Zelenka, Ivo Židek, Jan Zrzavý and others.

Prague theatre companies documented include: *Národní divadlo* (National Theatre), *Laterna magika*, *Divadlo Archa* (Archa Theatre), *Branické divadlo* (Braník Theatre), *Divadlo za branou* (Theatre of the Gate), *Divadlo E. F. Buriana* (E. F. Burian Theatre), *Divadlo v Celetné* (Theatre in Celetná), *Divadlo Járy Cimrmana* (Jára Cimrman Theatre), *Činoherní klub* (The Drama Club), *Dejvické divadlo* (Dejvická Theatre), *Divadlo v Dlouhé* (Theatre in Dlouhá), *Divadlo na Fidlovačce* (Theatre at Fidlovačka), *Divadlo v Karlíně* (Theatre in Karlín), *Divadlo Komédie* (The Comedy Theatre), *Křesadlo* (Tinderbox), *Realistické divadlo* (The Realistic Theatre), *Labyrint* (Labyrinth), *Spolek Kašpar* (The Kašpar Association), *Divadlo S. K. Neumanna* (S. K. Neumann Theatre), *Divadlo na okraji* (Theatre on the Edge), *Divadlo pod Palmovkou* (Theatre below Palmovka), *Divadlo v Řeznické* (Theatre in Řeznická), *Divadlo Rokoko* (The Rococo Theatre), *Semafor*, *Divadlo Švanda* (Švanda Theatre), *Divadlo na Vinohradech* (Theatre at Vinohrady), *Viola*, *Divadlo Jiřího Wolckra* (Jiří Wolker Theatre), *Studio Ypsilon* (Ypsilon Studio Theatre), *Divadlo Na zábradlí* (Theatre on the Balustrade), *Pražská divadelní agentura* (The Theatrical Agency of Prague), and others.

Theatres outside Prague include ones in Bratislava: *Slovenské národné divadlo* (The Slovak National Theatre) and *Divadlo Astorka Korzo* (Astorka Parade Theatre); Brno: *Divadlo na provázku* (Theatre [Goose] on a String), *HaDivadlo* (Ha! Theatre) and smaller amounts of documentation on other theatres; Český Těšín: *Těšínské divadlo* (Český Těšín Theatre); Cheb: *Západočeské divadlo* (The West Bohemian Theatre); theatres in Zlín (formerly Gottwaldov); Hradec Králové: *Divadlo Drak* (Dragon Theatre); Jihlava: *Horácké divadlo* (Horácké Theatre); theatres in Karlovy Vary; Kladno: *Divadlo Jaroslava Průchy Kladno* (Jaroslav Průcha Theatre of Kladno); Liberec: *Divadlo F. X. Šaldy* (F. X. Šalda Theatre); Olomouc: *Moravské divadlo* (The Moravian Theatre); Opava: *Slezské divadlo* (The Silesian Theatre); Ostrava: several theatres including *Divadlo Petra Bezruče* (Petr Bezruč Theatre) and *Státní divadlo* (The State Theatre); Plzeň: *Divadlo J. K. Tyla* (J. K. Tyl Theatre); and theatres in Ústí nad Labem.

The dates of documentation vary according to the theatre in question, with the most comprehensive coverage being between the years 1980 and 2004. However, there are certain theatres such as *Divadlo E. F. Buriana* (E. F. Burian Theatre), *Divadlo za branou* (Theatre behind the Gate), *Činoherní klub* (The Drama Club), and *Rokoko* for which coverage is more extensive, starting with Jarka Burian's first research visits to Prague in the 1960s. The kind of documentation also varies from theatre to theatre, most usually consisting of reviews, clippings, flyers, programmes,



Marta Roszkopfová. Scene Design for *Romeo and Juliet*. Director Josef Janík. Petr Bezruč Theatre, Ostrava, 1988. From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.2.



Ivo Židek. Scene Design for *Largo Desolato*. Theatre on the Balustrade, Prague, 1990. From the Collections of the Theatre Research Institute at OSU. No. SPEC.CZ.DES.115.

and photographs; but for certain theatres, materials also include souvenir booklets, extensive brochures, statistical data, technical drawings, correspondence, and production schedules.

The Burian collection includes posters, the earliest of which are from 1963-1965 for productions at *Divadlo Jaroslava Průchy Kladno* (Jaroslav Průcha Theatre of Kladno) including *Macbeth*, *Tartuffe*, *Skleněný zvěřinec* (The Glass Menagerie), and *Král Lear* (King Lear). There are posters for late 1960s productions at *Divadlo Bez zábradlí* (Theatre without the Balustrade) and *Těšinské divadlo* (Těšín Theatre), 1970s productions at *Semafor* and *Divadlo za branou* (Theatre behind the Gate), 1980s productions for *Studio Ypsilon*, and 1990s productions for *Činoherní klub* (The Drama Club). The largest number of posters in the collection relates to 1970s and 1980s productions of the *Slovenské národní divadlo* (Slovak National Theatre). These last items are all beautiful graphic designs by the accomplished artist Čestmír Pechr.

Perhaps the most unique part of the Burian collection is the audiotapes. These constitute interviews conducted by Burian over many years with Czech theatre artists, as well as recordings of lectures and radio and television programmes related to Czech theatre, culture, history, and politics. Whereas there are the expected numerous recordings with Josef Svoboda and Ladislav Vychodil, there are also interviews with less-frequently documented practitioners such as Jozef Ciller, Daniel Dvořák, Milan Ferencík, Aleš Fuchs, Jan Grossman, Miloslav Heřmánek, Milena Honzíková, Jaromír Pleskot, Alfréd Radok, Jan Werich, Jiří Voskovec, Ján Zavarský, Ivo Židek, and others.

Other Czech Holdings

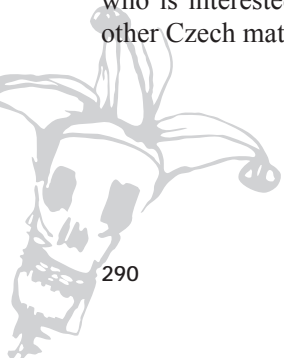
The generosity of other donors allows the University to continue to augment its Czech collections. Gifts from the estate of Mojmír Drvota included additions to the book collection and art posters. Faculty members from Ohio State University who travel to the Czech Republic bring back material to add to the collections. Paul Stiga donated interesting photographs by Karel Váňa of sets by Josef Čapek, Josef Matěj Gottlieb and Vlastislav Hofman – which show realised sets by these designers for productions at the *Národní divadlo* (National Theatre) and *Stavovské divadlo* (The Estates Theatre) in the 1920s and early 1930s, including: Karel Čapek's *Loupežník* (The Highwayman); *Caesar a Kleopatra* (Caesar and Cleopatra) by George Bernard Shaw; Ladislav Stroupežnický's *Naši furianti* (Our Loudmouths); G. A. Lortzing's *Car a tesař* (The Tzar and the Carpenter); *Cyrano de Bergerac*; *Recitační matinee na oslavu Josefa Svatopluka Machara a Antonína Sovy* (A Matinee to Celebrate the

Poetry of Josef Svatopluk Machar and Antonín Sova); *Blaník* by Gottlieb; Jaroslav Vrchlický's *Smír Tantalův* (The Reconciliation of Tantalos) and *Smrt Hippodamie* (The Death of Hippodamia); Stanislav Lom's *Žižka*; and Zdeněk Fibich's *Šárka* by Hofman.

Plans for the Future

Continuing to build the Czech holdings at the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute remains a collection development priority, and additions will be made with attention to adding the work of young Czech scenographers. Within the umbrella subject area of Czech theatre and culture, the curator also focuses on particular areas of interest as expressed by faculty and graduate students, so, for example, the acquisition of materials in relation to Czech puppetry to support a future exhibition is a current emphasis. Part of the significance of the collections is in the relationship of one part to another. As an example, the Lawrence and Lee Institute holds an original scene design by Marta Roszkopfová for a 1988 production of *Romeo a Julie* (Romeo and Juliet). In the Burian collection is correspondence in which the scenographer discusses what influenced her design choices for that particular production. Other examples include the original scene design by Ivo Židek for Václav Havel's *Largo Desolato* and scene and costume designs by Jana Zbořilová for Havel's adaptation of *Žebrácká opera* (The Beggar's Opera). For these productions, there is documentation in Burian's files for both scenographers as well as for Havel. Future collection development will strive to continue both acquisition of designs and supporting documentation for the productions and artists.

Because of the international nature of the collection, there is interest in collaborative development of a web portal that would enable the Lawrence and Lee Institute to share the rich Czech collections more widely in conjunction with collections held at other universities and institutes. In the meantime, the doors (both physical and virtual) of the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute are open, and the curators of the collections are ready to welcome anyone who is interested in exploring the designs, the Jarka M. Burian papers, and any other Czech materials that document the outstanding world of Czech theatre.



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