

'The Roaring Twenties': Theatre of the Early 2020s

The original Roaring Twenties [...] was the birthplace of new art and art-forms [...]. It was a time of liberation with a background of increasing authoritarianism and nationalism. The likeness to current times has been raised, but there are also major differences [...]. The [current. – E.Š.] internet age is a time of increased connectivity as well as of immense separation and polarisation [...]. The new generations have not known pre-internet days. We are entering and writing a new chapter. What is the roar of the 2020s? (LIDBERG 2022)

The term 'Roaring Twenties' refers to the period after World War I, which was marked by wealth and economic prosperity; questioning of social, gender, and racial boundaries; and a surge of scientific and technological discoveries (e.g., radio, TV, sound film, aviation, cars). The period is also characterised by heightened creativity and innovation in art, which is epitomised in various avant-garde movements (such as Constructivism, Surrealism, Poetism), as well as innovative approaches (semiotics, structuralism, Marxism, phenomenology, etc.) to the study of social, cultural, and artistic phenomena. Recently, some voices have drawn parallels between the 1920s and 2020s in terms of art, fashion, economics, and the euphoric and hedonistic; as well as a post-traumatic atmosphere in society linked with war experiences, the experience of a pandemic (Spanish flu/COVID-19), interest in social, political, gender and racial questions, and the role of technology.

This appealing parallel has been thematised in various works of art and events. These include, for example, musical soirées organised in several European cities referring to 'The Roaring 2020s'; an exhibition from October 2021 to April 2022 at Museum Kranenburg (Bergen, Netherlands) entitled *The Roaring Twenties*, focusing on the parallels in art, fashion, and design between the 1920s and 2020s; or Pontus Lidberg's performance *The Roaring Twenties*, 'a poem' exploring the spirit of our times with the theme of 'isolation, group dynamics, and the need for connection' at its centre

(LIDBERG 2022). This production was created for the *Montpellier Dance Festival 2022* and is currently on tour in Danish cities/theatres.

This *Theatralia* issue aims to explore the spirit of 2020s theatre/performance or, to use Lidberg’s expression, to examine ‘[w]hat [...] the roar of the 2020s’ is (LIDBERG 2022). This volume poses the following questions: What are current trends in theatre/performance? Is the parallel between the 1920s and 2020s justifiable in the fields of theatre/performance? To what extent are current theatre/performance practices original, and to what extent do they rely on their precursors (not necessarily only those from the 1920s)? Does current theatre/performance reflect gender and racial issues, as well as other topical issues, such as globalisation, interculturalism, migration, extremism, populism, manipulation, etc.? If so, in order to reflect on these issues, do artists seek support in history? Do they allude to or search for inspiration in previous historical periods and/or works of art?

The issue does not aim to offer a complex answer to these questions; that would be impossible, as we are at the beginning of the 2020s. Rather, it aims to open these questions and reflect on as well as contextualise current theatre/performance practice, which has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, as well as by recent global conflicts and their consequences.

The two essays in the main section Yorick explore the specificity of current theatre/performance from different perspectives. **Nenad Jovanović’s** study ‘Playing For and Against the Microphone: The Theatrical Soundstage, the Cinematic Meeting Interface’ searches for a parallel between early 1920s talkies and the ‘Zoom-style’ theatre productions which have appeared since the COVID-19 pandemic’s onset in 2020. Jovanović’s text focuses mainly on the aesthetic aspects and artistic innovation which sound and streaming bring into the realm of film, theatre, and performance. The next study, ‘Playing a Tyrant – Rethinking an Autocrat in Asya Voloshina’s *Antigona : Redukcija*’ by **Yana Meerzon**, focuses on Voloshina’s and Bertolt Brecht’s adaptations of Sophocles’ play (the former written in 2013 and staged in 2014 and 2020 in Russia; the latter written and staged in Switzerland in 1948). Meerzon analyses how both authors adjusted this renowned tragedy to the particular artistic, social, and political contexts of their times in order to express their disagreement with oppression, manipulation, populism, and warped morals of their states and state leaders.

The Guest section offers an interview with **Spyridon Kotsovilis**, which describes the *Trojan Women* project (2021–2022), an innovative interdisciplinary approach to teaching an International Relations Course. The goal of the course was to lead students to perceive current problems related to wars through the lens of Euripides’ anti-war tragedy *Trojan Women*. In this respect, the interview relates to the theme of Meerzon’s study, that is the universal value of ancient plays, and their potential to reflect on the problems of contemporary time. The interview was conducted by **Martin Revermann**.

The section Spectrum contains two texts on different themes. **Gabriella Reuss’** study offers a close reading of Sándor Hevesi’s 1923 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Reuss introduces unknown archival material and reveals how Hevesi contributed to the innovative staging of Shakespeare’s plays on the Hungarian stage. In the subsequent

study, **Šárka Havlíčková Kysová** analyses the taxonomy of the scenography of Vladimír Jindra, a Czechoslovak theoretician, and places it within the context of Jindra's precursors (namely, Czech structuralists) as well as the context of current multimodal and cognitive approaches in studying works of art.

The Review section offers **Nenad Jovanović's** assessment of the book *Performance in a Pandemic* (2021) edited by Laura Bissell and Lucy Weir, which focuses on the current trends in theatre/performance (affected by COVID-19 pandemic), connecting it to the main theme of the issue.

In the Event section, **Šárka Havlíčková Kysová** reports on the symposium *The S Word: Stanislavsky's Last Words...* (11–13 November 2022, Prague), which explores the life and work of Konstantin Stanislavsky. Additionally, we would like to invite the readers to the next **Prague Quadrennial** exhibition taking place in June 2023 and draw their attention to the award for the best publication on scenography. Along with the list of competing titles, you will find a short commentary on the event and the books, competing or exhibited, from **Pavel Drábek**.

The section Archive presents two texts. In her article, **Eva Šlaisová** introduces what was previously almost unknown archival material – diaries of Czech theatre and film director and theoretician, Jindřich Honzl, which present an exciting testimony about inter-war and post-war artistic, cultural, and social life in Czechoslovakia. This text is followed by **Andrea Jochmanová's** biographical article on Czech stage and costume designer Inez Tuschnerová.

Although the main topic of the issue is the specificity of The Roaring 2020s' theatre and performance and its relationship to previous artistic and historical periods and works, a second 'side' theme (seen in the sections Spectrum and Archive) emerged in the course of the preparation of the issue. This 'side' topic deals with our 2020s knowledge of historical periods, namely of the historical Avant-garde (including the original Roaring Twenties), and the works of art of that period. Almost the entire issue thus offers, to a certain extent, our 2020s' perspective on history. In the Yorick and Guest sections, previous periods are perceived as sources of inspiration and parallels; artists and scholars, as well as teachers return to history to learn something about our times, to highlight similarities and repetitions, as well as shifts and distinctions. Texts in the Spectrum and Archive sections, meanwhile, reflect on our 2020s knowledge of historical periods, and present it as still incomplete, thus urging scholars to look back, revise, and re-consider. We hope that the readers of *Theatralia* journal find both these thematic fields interesting and inspiring.

Finally, we would like to thank the Department of Theatre Studies at Masaryk University in Brno for giving us the opportunity to edit this issue. We would also like to extend thanks to the editorial team of *Theatralia* for their support, cooperation, and assistance in various matters; to the authors whose texts were published and whose texts did not ultimately appear in this issue; and to peer-reviewers for their time and expertise.

Eva Šlaisová and Martin Revermann

Bibliography

LIDBERG, Pontus. 2022. Unfinished personal interview by Eva Šlaisová (30. 10. 2022).



Toto dílo lze užívat v souladu s licenčními podmínkami Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 4.0 International (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>). Uvedené se nevztahuje na díla či prvky (např. obrazovou či fotografickou dokumentaci), které jsou v díle užity na základě smluvní licence nebo výjimky či omezení příslušných práv.