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Pavel Drábek

## 'A Great German Pickelhäring and a Beheaded Virgin Saint'

*Johann Georg Gettner und das barocke Theater zwischen Nikolsburg und Krumau (J. G. Gettner and Baroque Theatre between Mikulov and Český Krumlov)*. Edited by Margita HAVLÍČKOVÁ and Christian NEUHUBER. Brno: Masaryk University, 2014. 262pp. ISBN 978-80-210-7526-9. Available at <<https://is.muni.cz/obchod/baleni/85501>>.

There are stories of discovery behind this book – and the treasure found is hidden in its pages. In 2011, Christian Neuhuber (University of Graz, Austria), who co-edited the volume with Margita Havlíčková (Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic), discovered a manuscript entitled *Die Heylige. Martýrin Dorothea. Componirt vnd aufgesezet Von Joh<sup>ann</sup> Georgio Gettner à Gettersberg. Poet<sup>a</sup> Laur<sup>eatus</sup> Caes<sup>areus</sup> manu p<sup>ropria</sup>* ('The Holy Martyr Dorothea. Composed and laid out by Johann Georg Gettner of Gettersberg, the Imperial Poet Laureate, in his own hand), deposited in Solothurn Central Library (*Zentralbibliothek Solothurn – Manuscripts Collection (Handschriften)*), Sign. S. 344). Another discovery, made by Miroslav Lukáš (a doctoral student at Masaryk University), was the remaining decoration of a seventeenth-century court theatre above the ceiling of the library at Mikulov Castle, South Moravia. Yet another set of discoveries – a joint effort of Margita Havlíčková, the independent theatre scholar Bärbel Rudin, and Miroslav Lukáš – were the archives of the prolific theatrical activities by Johann Georg Gettner, a famous Pickelhäring of the era, and his companions, who operated within the aristocratic networks of the Viennese court. These are the three main pillars of the co-authored volume

that I review here, which is revelatory in its finding and will have significant consequences for the understanding of German Baroque theatre between Prague and Vienna in the late seventeenth century. The five contributors to this book are the four named above plus Matthias J. Pernerstorfer (Don Juan Archive, Vienna, co-editor with Alena Jakubcová of the outstanding encyclopaedia *Theater in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien*, Vienna, 2014). Each brings a different perspective and research methodology to the study of Baroque theatre, concentrating here around the practitioner Gettner.

The core of the book is a critical edition of *Die heilige Dorothea* – J.G. Gettner's stage translation of Thomas Dekker and Philip Massinger's popular play *The Virgin Martyr*, performed at the Red Bull Playhouse in London in 1620 and published in 1622. As Bärbel Rudin demonstrated in her 1980 article 'Virgin Dorothea and the Artisans' Holiday' (*Fräulein Dorothea und der Blaue Montag*), in A. J. Bisanz and Raymond Trousson (eds.). *Elements of Literature: Contributions to Research into Fabric, Motifs and Themes (Elemente der Literatur: Beiträge zur Stoff-, Motiv- und Themenforschung)*, Vol. 1. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1980: 95–113), this play, alongside Dekker's *A Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599) and

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William Rowley's *A Shoemaker, a Gentleman* (ca.1637; printed 1638) enjoyed a long and varied life on the German stage of the seventeenth century – along with Robert Reynolds's performance of the *Tragedy of the Martyred Dorothea* (*Tragoedia von der Märtherin Dorothea*) in Dresden in 1626 and in Cologne in 1628, Hans Schilling offering it in Prague in 1651 and in Dresden in 1655 (Rudin 100), and following mentions of the play in Würzburg in 1667 and then in Rothenburg in 1671, in which city *The Holy Martyr Dorothea* (*Die H. Märtyrin Dorothea*) was performed by the High-German Players' Company (*Hochteutsche Compagni Comoedianten*) with their *kurzweilig* (diverting) *Pickelhäring*, followed by 'a Ballet with 6 Dancers' (*ein Ballet von 6. Personen*; Rudin 102). Other versions followed with the hagiographic tragicomedy eventually entering the folklore of the region – as Julius Feifalik (1833–1862) documented in his wonderful *Volksschauspiele aus Mähren* (Folk Plays from Moravia, 1864).

In the mid-1680s, while serving as the company principal at the Eggenberg court theatre in Český Krumlov, Johann Georg Gettner translated into German and edited several English plays, including *King Lear* (lost), *Romeo and Juliet* (extant), James Shirley's *The Coronation* (extant) and, in 1685, Dekker and Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr*. By the 1680s, the English comedy as a style was long past its heyday; French and Italian plays were ruling the stages and the saloons of the day. Besides, all the English plays had been performed in German-speaking Europe previously. Gettner's patron, Johann Christian Eggenberg, however, had a liking for the old style – safe in the backwater

of Český Krumlov. The discovery of Gettner's manuscript thus fills in a gap, turning a seemingly marginal title into a central piece of the seventeenth-century repertoire. Christian Neuhuber accompanies his critical edition with a richly researched essay on the prehistory of Dorothean hagiography as well as on other related variants – the 1722 scenario (or *perioch*, or 'Programm', as Rudin calls it) by Johann Paul Stengel, printed in Nürnberg under the title *The Victory and Triumph of the Great Emperor Diocletian, or The Beheading of the Virgin Dorothea* (*Der Sieg und Triumph des grossen Kaysers Deocletiani. Oder Die Enthauptung der Fräulein Dorothea*). Another version edited by Neuhuber in the volume is the remarkable puppet play by Wanguly – *The Beheading of Saint Dorothea* (*Die Enthauptung der Heiligen Dorothea*) – from a mid-nineteenth-century manuscript.

Bärbel Rudin – as ever meticulous and painstaking in the thoroughness of her archival research – itemises the itinerary of Eggenberg's Players (*Eggenbergische Comoedianten*) on their final fatal tour of 1695–1697. The company was led by a duo of principals, Johann Carl Sammenhammer (ca.1648–1728) and Johann Georg Gettner von Göttersburg (ca.1645–1696), who found his death outside Basel's guildhall in December 1696 – after a performance of a Faustus play and some drinking, Gettner tripped on his way out on the steps, and died a few days later as a result of the injuries sustained. Rudin supplements the historical accounts gathered from numerous regional archives with contextual and dramatic links – pointing out the confirmed repertory pieces that the

company performed on their tour, namely: the perennial hagiographic box office hit *A Tragedy entitled The Contest between Heavenly and Earthly Love in the Two Martyrs and Blood Witnesses of Christ Rogatiano and Donatiano* (TRAGOEDIA Genandt. Der Wettstreitt Him- lisch- Vnd Irdischer Liebe In den zweyen Märtyrern vnd Blutzeügen Christi ROGATIANO Vnd DONATIANO). Rudin's discussion outlines the continuities of repertoire beyond the lifetime of the theatre company – in the court theatre culture of the early eighteenth century. The detailed itinerary of the tour offers detailed access to the everyday reality of an early modern travelling theatre company.

Miroslav Lukáš brings details of the early (1600–1800) history of the theatre in Mikulov (German: Nikolsburg), a border town on the road from Vienna to Brno. Lukáš gives a detailed discussion of the court theatre that was built at the Dietrichsteins' Mikulov castle between 1612 and 1618. The theatre was in operation until 1719 when it burnt down and was refurbished as a library – the form it has, until today. The loft above the present stucco ceiling, however, still retains remnants of the original decoration of the theatre (photographic illustrations are reprinted on p. 188). Lukáš dedicates a section of his essay to school drama activities and public processions (which were organised by the Piarist school and the Capuchin order, respectively). All of this connected with the patronage bequeathed by the house of Dietrichstein – from Adam von Dietrichstein (1527–1590) and from the influential cardinal Franz Seraph von Dietrichstein (1570–1636), the Bishop of Olomouc (German: Olmütz) and the Governor (*Landshaupt-*

*mann*) of the Moravian Margravedom and a great patron of theatre (see his passports for the English comedian John Green of 1617, or his 1630 correspondence with Giovanni Battista Andreini of the *Compagnia dei Fedeli*). Patronage continued with the Bishop's nephew, Count (*Fürst*) Maximilian II von Dietrichstein (1596–1655), and of course under Ferdinand Joseph von Dietrichstein (1636–1698), who was brother-in-law to Johann Christian von Eggenberg of Český Krumlov (German: Krumau) and who probably played a crucial part in Gettner's life and his *engagement* as theatre principal at the Eggenberg's Court Theatre at Český Krumlov. Lukáš's chapter documents key artistic activities in theatre, opera and music and demonstrates the ways in which Mikulov was a venue of numerous guest appearances of Baroque musicians, mostly of Italian origin. Lukáš traces these activities throughout the eighteenth century, giving a useful and instructive portrait of local performance history with contextual links to events in many European metropolises.

Margita Havlíčková presents another micro-history of immense consequences, analysing the relationship between early seventeenth-century school drama and professional theatre on the example of *A Representation of St Boniface [of Tharsus] his Miraculous Struggle and Praiseworthy Victory* (*Representation Von S. Bonifacii wunderbarlichen Kampff und Lobwürdigen Sieg*). Discussing in detail the German synopsis published in 1639 in Nikolsburg, Havlíčková traces homologies between this martyr play, performed for Dietrichstein's young sons Ferdinand and Maximilian, and the style of contemporary *comme-*

*dia dell'arte* and – very importantly – the structure of the later baroque dramatic monster genre known as *Haupt- und Staatsaktion*. The comic character of the *Representation von S. Bonifacii* – the Solomonic fool Marcolffus – shares features not only with Arlecchino of the Italian *commedia*, but also with the Pickelhering of English comedy. Another feature that the Nikolsburg piece shares with the English genre – one could add to Havlíčková's analysis – are the allegorical figures of the bad and good angel dressed in human clothes. This is a trait that the 1639 Piarist play has in common with Gettner's version of *The Virgin Martyr* – in the characters of the evil schemer Harpax and the good 'Engel'. Whether the Nikolsburg-born Gettner attended the Piarist college or not is yet no more than hypothetical. However, if he did so, the genre of the spectacular hagiographic school play that Havlíčková shows in the *Representation von S. Bonifacii* would have given him ample inspiration – and in a generic framework that would not be objectionable to the queasy theological milieu of a Europe profoundly traumatised by the catastrophe of the Thirty Years War.

The closing chapter of the book – Matthias J. Pernerstorfer's analysis of early eighteenth-century visual documentation of the indigenous amalgam of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* and the English tradition – reflects upon the topography of performance in the first half of the eight-

eenth century – in the aristocratic seats of the Imperial Councillor Friedrich Karl von Schönborn (1674–1746). Pernerstorfer interprets them as historical documents that have conserved the influences of the earlier theatre culture in the geopolitical region between Prague and Vienna. More than that, however, the architectonic iconography testifies to the significance of seventeenth-century theatre and performance in the self-fashioning of the aristocratic world, placing at the very centre of public life the professional theatre, which was made out of components of a similarly transnational nature as the aristocratic families themselves. In this way, theatre became a visual representation of this international and transcultural cultural and political influence and ambitions of the powerful of the time.

Margita Havlíčková's and Christian Neuhuber's *J. G. Gettner and the Baroque Theatre between Mikulov and Český Krumlov* is a significant and comprehensive monograph on the little-researched period of late seventeenth-century theatre in German-speaking Europe that spans the decisive influences of English comedy, Italian *commedia dell'arte* and early modern school drama, placing these within the network of contemporary aristocratic families and the theatrical, musical and architectural heritage that they helped create and that served as a bedrock for the developments that constitute our present-day cultural canon.

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