



**LETTERS
FROM AURA-PONT**

2007

NEW PLAYS BY VÁCLAV HAVEL

AND OTHER CZECHS AND SLOVAKS

Dear friends,

The third issue of our E-mail Newsletter 2007 brings first of all information on the new Václav Havel play and on its June 2008 World premiere in Prague. You can request the text from us straight away either in Czech original or in Paul Wilson's English translation. Translations into other main languages are also being prepared or finalized.

On the other hand, last year also brought first productions of several other Czech and Slovak plays and musicals represented by the Aura-Pont. Beside the plays by well-known Czech authors such as Milan Uhde, Karel Steigerwald and Arnošt Goldflam you will find award winning texts by young playwrights from the Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition and three remarkable Slovak plays that were a great success on stages in the Czech Republic.

There is also news about recent translations of some older Czech plays.

We can provide you with texts and/or more information about these plays – please write or phone us!

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

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VÁCLAV HAVEL AND OTHER CLASSICS

Václav Havel

LEAVING (ODCHÁZENÍ)

A play in five acts

11 men, 6 women, 1 voice

Václav Havel's first play after twenty years touches on the household of Dr. Vilém Rieger, retiring from politics. It is plain that the former chancellor's electoral period has come to an end and that a question mark hangs over his continued residence in the government villa surrounded by a large cherry orchard. It is equally plain that neither Rieger nor those around him, under the firm control of Irena, a friend of long-standing, have neglected to provide for themselves. Meanwhile, his broader family deviates only marginally from its customary course. In addition to Irena, the "family" is made up of her unassuming friend Monika, realistic Granny, the domestic help Osvald, and Rieger's younger daughter Zuzana, permanently engrossed in electronic communication with her own generation. Other figures however saunter through the villa: the journalists Jack and Bob, working for the ubiquitous daily *Fuj* (Fye), who have come to subject Rieger to an all-embracing evaluative interview. Bea, a young writer, brings the book she has written about Rieger to show to her hero. Hanuš, Rieger's former secretary, is conscientiously compiling an inventory of the villa to protect Rieger against any suspicion that he might be intending to hang on to this or that item of state property. Meanwhile, Hanuš's former secretary Viktor gradually and unobtrusively turns into Rieger's link with the governmental establishment assuming power. The new government is represented by the Vice-Chairman, Vlastík Klein, by all accounts an astute businessman with the fate of the villa very much on his heart. However, for the most part it is the gardener Knobloch who keeps Rieger informed ("Lads down pub was talking 'bout removal..."). The catastrophic news is soon confirmed: Rieger's family have to vacate the house.

This news sets off the visible collapse of Rieger's "court", a collapse which has been under way for some time. Rieger's older married daughter Vlasta offers her father a roof over his head – naturally, on condition that Rieger transfers his property to her family. The secretary Viktor complies with Vlastík Klein's request by turning a trunk containing old private documents over to the "inter-ministerial commission for history", after Rieger had given orders for it to be burnt. On top of that, Vlastík Klein comes up with a "business proposal": Rieger will be allowed to rent the villa back on the understanding he will give his support to the new government through the media. He has just one day to think it over.

It turns out however that Rieger's personality itself is disintegrating. Whilst for the interview he recapitulates the principles and achievements of his politics, his current language and his buck-passing reaction to Irena's factual notes are proof that the chancellor is now powerless and that he had abdicated his former role of a statesman. Not even his private life bears examination: for example, he forgets the anniversary of his relationship with Irena – and worse still: is caught by Irena in Bea's embrace.

The pace of events soon speeds up: a court order is delivered to Rieger ordering him to move to "a village one hundred versts from here". Vlasta rescinds her offer of accommodation. Instead of publishing the interview provided, the *Fuj* journalists print fictitious details of Rieger's private life. Irena wants to throw herself off a cliff, but Monika holds her back. Viktor accepts a position in the office of the new government. Osvald is ready to work as a domestic help with the neighbouring Ragulins, but keeps on falling asleep at all the wrong moments. A storm breaks out, in which Rieger momentarily turns into a mad King Lear tormented by a phantasmagorical whirlwind of characters and rejoinders. At the end of this he is arrested, led away and ridiculed: it turns out that the details of his intimate correspondence, kept in the incriminating trunk, have already

become public property.

The following day the shattered Rieger returns home after having “signed something” for the police. The carriage to take him to the village is waiting, and Vlastík Klein has come round with his own business plans which involve taking possession of the villa. Zuzanka provides some hope for Rieger: they could all take refuge with her French friend. Even he however immediately becomes an object of attention for the police. Klein offers Rieger a way out: he can have a job as adviser to an adviser to an adviser of the new government – in fact, as adviser to the former secretary of his former secretary. The press campaign against Rieger gathers pace. It is time to make a public announcement. In a long, typically Havelesque and logically brilliant closing monologue, Rieger defends his decisions. To become adviser at a time when world events are being managed by omnipotent advisers is not humiliating at all; for Rieger, it represents an honourable opportunity to continue his life’s work. His speech is interrupted only by the last of the faithful, including Irena, abandoning the former Chancellor. In the end, he can only look on as his previous admirer Bea begins to circle round her new idol, Vlastík Klein.

In *Leaving*, Havel – as in his earlier play *Redevelopment*, completed twenty years ago – constructs an artificial (and sadly entertaining) theatrical world. The ironic settling of accounts with the departing first post-Communist political establishment and the caustic view of the rise of the subsequent real-capitalist generation is permeated with playful references to Chekhov’s *Cherry Orchard* and Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. The theatrical quality of the text is underlined by the constant presence of the author’s Voice, adding directorial instructions and an ironic commentary on his own dramatic methods and their limits.

The World Premiere of the production, directed by David Radok, will take place on June 6 at the Na Vinohradech Theatre in Prague. **The draft English translation by Paul Wilson has just been completed.** The negotiations are currently underway for the play to be translated into several major languages.

Václav Havel (* 5. 10. 1936)

As the son of an entrepreneur and master builder, Václav Havel was, for political reasons, barred from higher education by the Communist authorities. Instead, he took an apprenticeship in a chemical laboratory and graduated whilst employed, later working as a stage hand, assistant director and dramaturge at the Theatre on the Balustrades. In his twenties he started writing for literary and theatre magazines, but it was not until 1967 that he was able to graduate in dramaturgy from the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. His plays *The Garden Party*, *Memorandum* and *The Increased Difficulty of Concentration* introduced a new spirit onto the Czech Theatre and later the international stage. In the summer of 1968 he spent several weeks in the USA. In 1969, after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies, he was – as a leading cultural representative of the Prague Spring – barred from both public and cultural life and completely silenced. With his new plays, including *The Beggar’s Opera*, *Largo Desolato*, *Audience* and *Private View*, published and produced abroad but not in Czechoslovakia, with his essays, manifestos and his everyday attitude, he became the natural authority for independent movements in Czechoslovakia and a leading representative of international culture. He was imprisoned several times by the Communist regime, on the last occasion in 1989. Following the “velvet revolution”, of which he was the best-known representative, he was from 1990-1992 President of Czechoslovakia and from 1993-2002 President of the Czech Republic. In a television questionnaire in 2005 he was voted the third greatest Czech in history, an exceptional achievement by international standards: in no other country holding this kind of popular referendum has a living individual achieved such a high ranking.

Milan Uhde

MIRACLE IN THE DARK HOUSE (ZÁZRAK V ČERNÉM DOMĚ)

SELECTED REVIEWS:

We first pointed out this extraordinary play in the last year issue of the Letters from the Aura-Pont. After the success of its world premiere we would like to return to the play by quoting some of the reviews:

Milan Uhde: *Miracle in the Dark House*. Prague, Theatre Na zábradlí. Opened on March 9, 2007, as a part of the Czechoslovak Spring project.

*One would have expected a political theme rather than a dark comedy about an unhinged family from Milan Uhde, a playwright who is a former dissident and also a former Culture Minister from the post-Velvet Revolution period. The *Miracle in the Dark House* that opened at Prague's Na zábradlí theatre doesn't leave out the political connections, though it gets to them inconspicuously through a story about family inheritance. (...) Uhde's play is set in the nineties, just after the takeover, but its protagonists are going back to their past almost obsessively. Two brothers and their wives gather in a thirties' family villa where their old parents and their unstable sister live. There is a strong tension between the father, a stubborn DIY enthusiast clinging to the house almost pathologically, and his wife. One of the sons is a former dissident, the other a nomenclature police informer: their contrasting positions in the past lead to them hating each other. Their mad sister (played convincingly by Magdalena Sidonová) is just one single step away from the suicide but her parents refuse to put her into an institution. Out of the banal squabbles and violent confrontations, a ghost of a family mystery emerges that goes back to the Nazi occupation.*

The tragicomedy reflects "the bigger history" through the history of a small family from the end of the 1930s all the way to the 1990s, so there is no shortage of important themes, including the holocaust trauma.

*(...) Uhde's grotesque play presents an effective image of the Czech society, unbalanced by a series of political tragedies and reversals. At the same time, it poses a question about a link between the past and the present. The production of *Miracle in the Dark House* is a success.*

Saša Hrbotický: Milan Uhde surprises with a family grotesque, *Hospodářské noviny* 20. 3. 2007

*Uhde never made any secret of the fact that his play has autobiographical motives (it's not the first time he's done that – the playwright already used his extraordinary family in his play *A very quite Ave Maria*). That's why we can see in the Thomas Bernhard-like unsupportable family a sort of image of Uhde himself. One of the sons, the eternally critical Dušan (played by Igor Chmela), also a former government minister, does not give anybody – including himself – a break. The play is set on a Summer Sunday evening when all the family members gather in a family house to find out – what exactly? The solution to all the traumas, problems and misunderstandings that have been going on for many years is still far away. The squabbles go on – who's going to get the house, will the daughter called Šárka finally get the necessary psychiatric treatment for her illness, will the two brothers find a way to talk to each other.*

The director, Juraj Nvota, uses discreet means to create a highly conflictual environment with an almost tangible tension flowing through it. Then he lets in well timed elements of absurd probes and grotesque comedy. We have the impression that each word on stage

demands at least some kind of reaction. This keeps happening, and it's best done by the character of the father, Eduard, performed by Jiří Ornest. He enjoys playing a marasmatic and despotic old man who terrorizes his wife, ignores one of the sons and openly dislikes his wife. The family keeps trying not to antagonize him, but small rebellions soon start to flare up.

Jana Machalická, An insupportable family after Uhde, *Lidové noviny*, March 22, 2007.

Is it a bourgeois morality about mending the damaged family relations? Of course it is, but that's not all. It's also a message saying that a real remedy cannot be achieved by technical means only, and a parable going far beyond a framework of one family's oppressive atmosphere. The playwright brings his own problems to the stage not only figuratively but also literally: his play is made up from his own life's tissue.

(...) Reconciliation, mending not at some misty and non-committal future, but now and here. It would be futile to examine the question, whether Uhde's play has a more Jewish or more Christian ethos. Admitting to the guilt, forgiveness, change of mind – the playwright knows what's behind these words and what they actually mean, and so do his characters.

And thanks to the outstanding acting by Marie Spurná and Jiří Ornest we get the message of the Miracle in the Dark House unabridged and not impoverished.

Josef Mlejnek: Milan Uhde rattles a successful skeleton, *iDnes.cz*, March 27, 2007)

Karel Steigerwald

HORÁKOVÁ VS GOTTWALD – A WEEK OF MIRTH

(HORÁKOVÁ X GOTTWALD – TÝDEN VESELOSTI)

5 men, 2 women, a Chorus

Karel Steigerwald's play (its subtitle *We'll kill a woman, they'll be scared witless, they'll get used to it*), is the third part of a project by the playwright and director Miroslav Bambušek called *Persecution.cz*. The project consisted of 6 productions and rehearsed readings; most performances were held in the industrial setting of the former aluminium foundry in Prague-Holešovice. The common theme of all the productions was the *injustice in history* and the *preservation of historical memory*. The project aimed at unveiling the causes, motives and consequences of human suffering, inflicted on both the Czechs and the Germans by the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, the displacement of the Germans and then the communist regime.

In the four sequences of *Horáková vs Gottwald* – Arrest, Interrogation, Trial, Execution – we follow the fate of Mrs Milada Horáková and the development of one of the first and the most cruel miscarriages of justice under the communist regime. Milada Horáková (1901 – 1950) was a Czech lawyer and politician. After the 1948 Communist putsch she resigned her seat in the parliament and left political life. In 1949 she was arrested by the Communists and accused of high treason and espionage. In 1950 she was sentenced to death in a show trial (together with the so-called Milada Horáková group) and later executed. The sentence, signed by the first Communist president of Czechoslovakia Klement Gottwald (1948 – 1953) roused indignant protests from the democrats in the whole world. Gottwald as the individual bears main responsibility for the arbitrary lawlessness and reign of legal terror of that period.

In the play we observe Milada Horáková's fate, but the production also recreates at least in part the atmosphere of the time, the mechanisms of arbitrary justice and, in a metaphoric

image, the fate of the Communist president Klement Gottwald.

Karel Steigerwald does not present a realistic picture of either Milada Horáková, Klement Gottwald or anybody else, his play is no verbatim drama or documentary. Nonetheless we are confronted with authentic characters and real events (Milada Horáková's arrest first by the Nazis and subsequently by the Communists, her husband's escape from Czechoslovakia, Gottwald's role in the miscarriage of justice, unsuccessful appeals for clemency for Horáková's by prominent personalities from all over the world including Albert Einstein, and, at the same time, in Czechoslovakia countless petitions demanding her death...) The author, using dramatic hyperboles and metaphors, tries to present the essence and predominant traits of communist atrocity during early fifties. As a result some characters (such as the outstanding left-wing director E. F. Burian who became an ardent Communist after the war) are treated as symbols of their time. The way Steigerwald portrays them is not based on historical facts.

The character of Gottwald himself is not a genuine historical portrait of the politician. As the critic Vladimír Just says, the character is "a quintessence of Bolshevik and populist – affable, jovial, primitive, but above all, a gutless weakling". The play ends with his ironic message:

"We really quashed you, didn't we? But I certainly did not think that after these forty years you would be once more helping us to power..." This ending points out to the support still enjoyed by the Communist Party in the Czech Republic. The size of this support, Mr Just noted, is the measure of the chronic moral disease of the Czech society.

Presented as a part of the Perzeuce.cz project – La Fabrika, Prague, directed by Viktorie Čermáková, dramaturge Miroslav Bambušek, press night on March 19, 2006

Karel Steigerwald (*1945)

Karel Steigerwald studied dramaturgy and scriptwriting at the Film Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. He worked as a scriptwriter and dramaturge at the Barrandov Film Studios from 1973 to 1979, when he was fired for political reasons. He then began an important collaboration with the theatre director Ivan Rajmont at the Drama Studio in Ústí nad Labem; the theatre produced most of his plays, written specifically for the company, during 1980s, although some of them were banned during President Gustáv Husák's era of "normalisation". From 1988 to 1993 he worked at the Na zábradlí Theatre as author and dramaturge, from 1991 he was the theatre's artistic director. He currently writes current affairs comments for national dailies (*Lidové noviny*, *MFDnes*). Karel Steigerwald has written a number of stage and radio plays and several movie scripts. Satire, caricature, exaggeration, parody, and ironical distance are characteristic for his work.

SELECTED REVIEWS:

Steigerwald is not creating a realistic portrait of Horáková, Gottwald or anyone else. As with his history based plays such as Actresses (Herečky) and Grief, Grief, Fear, the Noose and the Pit (Hoře, hoře, strach, oprátka a jáma) he uses real history to create a new fictitious reality aiming to show – and in the best places showing – through a hyperbole, the „actual“ reality, in this case crimes of Communism.

Vladimír Just, *Divadelní noviny*

The sign for the word versus or against is not appearing in the play's title by chance. There is no space for questions in the text, the play is delineated clearly and sharply and for a long time it would seem as a black and white morality. The Good (Horáková) and Evil

(Gottwald) are two clearly separated worlds: maybe it should be said that the Evil looks more grotesque than fiendish and the Good is not unalloyed virtue, more of civic decency... The text is closer to the popular theatre with martyrs and their hangmen as opposing forces.

Kateřina Kolářová, *Svět a divadlo* 4/2006

Arnořt Goldflam

FROM HITLER'S KITCHEN (Z HITLEROVY KUCHYNĚ)

6 one-act plays

Six mini-stories linked by the character of Adolf Hitler sum up to a slightly unorthodox perspective on the most famous of the villains in the world history. Goldflam's grotesque apocrypha are a clear parody of the current wave of docu-dramatic reconstructions of Hitler's life and end; they remove any demon-like qualities and present him as a completely private person with goals and desires that are ordinary, bizarre, and sometimes a little bit scary.

- 1) *Hitler and Stalin meet (by pure coincidence) at a train station in Brno* (3 men, 1 child) – Two young men are changing trains at Brno train station sometimes between 1910 – 1915. The trains are supposed to carry them towards fulfilment of their dreams. Each of them finds inspiration in the projects of the other. At the same station, a little Jewish boy from Hungary is lost; his name is Georg Tabori.
- 2) *Hitler and the Family Well-being* (1 men, 1 woman) – Hitler and Eva Braun are talking the future of their relationship while eating an SS cake and listening to Heydrich playing violin on a gramophone record. Hitler promises to Eva he'd end the war quickly and victoriously, "while her biological clock is still ticking", and he'd get married to her and to make her a child in a mass ceremony in Leni Riefenstahl's style. Miss Braun calms down and both go to a family celebration to Goebbels family.
- 3) *A Love Romance* (2 men, 1 woman) – Last war days in Hitler's bunker. Hitler sings a love song, regrets never having become an actor and decides to write a book of his jokes – *Mein Witz*. He's distracted from dictating his testament to a secretary by the news a delegation of 88 Czech Virgins arriving to be impregnated by the Führer in the same way as women from other defeated nations. When the naked Hitler gets ready to welcome them, a cow appears at the door.
- 4) *An Ordinary Day* (1 men, 2 woman, 3 children) – Eva Braun is preparing a vegetarian lunch for Hitler complaining she has not as much fun with her partner as she used to. She urges Hitler to invite the miraculous doctor Mengele to Berlin to have a look at his shaking hand. Miss Braun has to go to Mrs Goebbels to borrow some onions. While the women are having a chat, Mrs Goebbels prepares couple of margarine breads for her children and Miss Braun returns home. Hitler wants to manage so many more things before the end – sorry, before his lunch.
- 5) *Playing the Death Game* (5 men, 1 woman) – The bunker again: Goering, Goebbels and Himmler jealously needle each other while putting down claims for Hitler's succession. Hitler calms down their fighting and organizes a drill in eating Czech sweets with poison. Instead of sweets, he offers them real poison and his mates die in terrible convulsions. Hitler enjoys his April's Fool joke; dancing a South American dance, he plans his overseas trip.
- 6) *Ende gut, alles gut* (1 man) – A carnival in South America. Old Hitler, called nowadays Adolfo Esperanza Muñoz reminisces about the success of his South American exhibitions and feels sorry to have spent "so much time on politics all these years ago." He specializes in paintings of Indians and half-breeds; his fiancée is also a half-cast.

She has plenty of temperament, unlike late Eva; she calls him "tiger". Hitler sees a scorpion and beats it to pulp with his stick while shouting obscenities in German. Soon afterwards though he's smiling again at the vision of an evening swim in the sea: Life is beautiful, Leben ist schön.

A brand new play. First rehearsed reading by the author took place on July 12, 2007, at the Goose on the String Theatre in Brno. The world premiere will be at another Brno theatre, HaDivadlo/HaTheatre, on November 10.

Arnošt Goldflam (*22. 10. 1946)

Graduated in theatre direction from the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) in Brno in 1977. Whilst studying, directed and played with the satirical theatre Evening Brno and after graduation was briefly employed there. From 1978 to 1993 worked with the Theatre of the Haná Region in Prostějov, which after moving to Brno changed its name to HaTheatre. He helped to create the poetics of this theatre, working there as director, actor and author. He is presently a free-lance director working in theatres in Prague, Brno and Hradec Králové, writes plays, teaches at JAMU; and occasionally acts in film.

Goldflam has written more than forty plays and dramatisations. His plays can be divided into two groups: in the first he follows a (non-illusory) theme of the conflict of generations and tries to capture the "spirit of history"; in the second he pays attention to the banal situations of life, exaggerating them and taking them to extreme positions. Characteristic for him is a feeling for embarrassment, grotesque realism and satiric exaggeration.

LIST OF PLAYS (selection):

- / Biletářka, 1982, première 18. 2. 1983 Hanácké divadlo, Prostějov
- / Jeden den, 1983, première 18. 10. 1983 Hanácké divadlo, Prostějov
- / Červená knihovna, 1985, première 1986 Reduta, Brno
- / Agatománie, 1985, première 22. 4. 1987 Viola, Prague
- / Písek /Tak dávno.../, 1987, première 5. 3. 1988 HaDivadlo, Brno
- / Lásky den, 1994, première 8. 4. 1994 CED-HaDivadlo, Brno
- / Sladký Theresienstadt, 1996, première 1. 11. 1996 Divadlo Archa, Prague
- / Smlouva, 1998, première 14. 10. 1999 Národní divadlo, Prague
- / Modrá tvář, 1992, première 16. 4. 2001 Občanské sdružení Lucerna, Mladá Boleslav
- / Já je někdo jiný, 2001, première 25. 10. 2003 Klicperovo divadlo, Hradec Králové
- / Ředitelská lóže, 2003, première 10. 2. 2004 at the same time in Divadlo Komédie, Prague; HaDivadlo, Brno; Klicperovo divadlo, Hradec Králové (staged reading)

NEW TRANSLATIONS OF OLDER PLAYS

We would like to draw your attention to the new translations of contemporary Czech plays:

Michael Frayn - Petr Zelenka

DEPARTURES OF TRAINS (ODJEZDY VLAKŮ)

The last performance of Michael Frayn's play „CHINAMEN“

1 men, 1 woman

Petr Zelenka, a successful Czech movie director, has an advantage as a playwright: his texts are mostly results of a “social commission”. When asked to direct a play at the Astorka KORZO theatre in Bratislava, he decided on Michael Frayn's *Chinamen*. The one-act play was not long enough for an all-evening entertainment, and so Zelenka's fantasy went into overdrive (with Michael Frayn's permission). He was apparently inspired by another Frayn play. The farce *Noises Off!* follows both a comedy performed onstage and the decline of the acting ensemble backstage during the performances.

The protagonists of *Departures of Trains* are an Actress and an Actor, performing Michael Frayn's play *Chinamen*. They are ex-partners in real life, and – as it happens so often in life, total opposites with mutual attraction. The actress (played in Bratislava by Anna Šišková) is despite a fragile appearance a strong and rational human being who even in the mad acting profession would not lose the sense of reality. The actor (Vladimír Hajdu in Bratislava production) is one of Zelenka's “mad” characters, fighting bad luck and a grotesque inability to fit into the “normal” state of affairs. This is manifesting itself specifically in his forgetfulness of almost absurd dimensions. This quality adversely affects his professional work and becomes a source of funny theatrical gags, but at the same time makes him into a clown even in his personal life, and an outcast running around between different jobs: theatre, dubbing and moonlighting work such as recording train departures information for a train station tannoy. Zelenka thus manages to present a parable about our restless money-making existence through well chosen details, in a way similar to Frayn's original one-act play. The final coming together and parting of the pair of actors is made of the right dose of both sadness and hilarity.

Translated into English by Alžběta Šáchová. Please note: The play is not available for staging in the English speaking countries.

J. A. Pitínský

MOTHER (MATKA)

A social drama

4 men, 3 women

Mother is more of a social drama in post-modern quotation marks – the genre is shifted and ironized with historical hindsight. The configuration is almost archetypal; the cheerless past of workers' dens meets the pre-revolution reality of the decaying communist ideology which had once seemingly offered hope and salvation. Cause meets effect, and beginning meets end in a vicious circle of social demagoguery and abstract „revolutionary struggle“. The bearer of ideas about a brighter future is the workers' leader, Zoban. Parasite and soap-box orator, he comes to a working-class family when he wants a good meal, supplies Father with literature and employs Betty the maid as a leaflet distributor. The Mother sees

it as her mission to keep the family „traditions of my old mother“, imposing a strict order over the whole family without exception – they have to eat together, wear black, and if disobedient are locked in the cupboard, a family heirloom designated for the purpose. Zaban causes a revolutionary break in Mother’s „traditions“ by starting to eat before the others, and thus unleashes a series of peculiar „accidental“ deaths. At the end of the play, literally over a pile of corpses, Zaban and Mother seal a lethal new alliance of „revolutionary ideas and tradition“ with a passionate kiss.

The play’s strongest dramatic device is its language, which reflects the mental state of the characters to perfection. A conglomerate of decaying remnants of dialect, slang and politico-ideological jargon, it creates unexpected, highly precise and often funny constructions and associations. Pitínský also uses well-known quotations, ironically slanted and inserted into altered contexts. However, the play’s cruelty (many of its critics talk of cynicism) and the strange inner monstrosity of its characters – human mutants – prompt not only nausea and disgust but also a strange kind of sympathy. These are living beings, after all, deeply unhappy in their deviance.

German translation with the title *Die Mutter* by Eva Profousová.

Jan Antonín Pitínský (*30. 10. 1955)

Real name: Zdeněk Petrželka

From the end of the 1970s worked with the amateur group Unroadworthy Caterpillar; was one of the founders of the theatre companies So-So and Amateur Circle Brno, with which he worked as author and director from 1985 to 1990. Since 1989 has been working in the professional theatre. From 1993 to 2002 worked closely with the Theatre on the Balustrades in Prague. Drew attention to himself as a director by his fantasies for the stage. He received the Alfréd Radok Award for production of the year 1995 with his production *Sister Anxiety* (Dejvice Theatre, Prague), for 1996 with the oratorio for actors *Job* (HaTheatre, Brno), for 1998 with Henry Purcell’s opera *Dido and Aeneas*, which he directed for the Tyl Theatre in Pilsen, and for 1999 with Thomas Bernhard’s *Theatremaker* (Theatre on the Balustrade, Prague). As well as his own plays, he is author of numerous dramatisations, stage adaptations and collections of poetry. **In October 2007 he was awarded the yearly Award of Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic for Theatre, only as the fifth theatre artist in the new history of Czech Republic to achieve such honour.**

A high level of literary sophistication is characteristic of his dramatic work. Both in his text and his direction an interest in detail is apparent, and a musical sense which projects itself into the melody and rhythmatisation of language.

LIST OF PLAYS (selection):

Pineapple/Ananas, medium fox thriller 1959, 1986, première 17. 11. 1987 Ochoťnický kroužek, Brno

The Mother/ Matka, 1987, première November 1988 Ochoťnický kroužek, Brno

The Park/ Park, 1989, première 18. 6. 1992 CED – Divadlo Husa na provázku, Brno

Bulldog Play or Kicking the Cart/ Buldočina aneb Nakopnutá kára, 1992, première 18. 11. 1995 Klicperovo divadlo, Hradec Králové

Little Room/ Pokojíček, 1992, première 17. 5. 1993 Divadlo Na zábradlí, Prague

Sister Anxiety (Kissing in the Fields)/ Sestra úzkost (Polibky v polích), 1995, première 13. 5. 1995 Dejvické divadlo, Prague (using motifs from Jan Čep and Jakub Deml)

Christmas Creche/ Betlém, 1997, première 10.12.1997 Klicperovo divadlo – Beseda, Hradec Králové

TRANSLATED PLAYS:

The Mother/ Matka Slovak – Matka

The Little Room/ Pokojíček English – The Girls’ Room, Russian – Detskaja, Spanish - Camarín

Karel Steigerwald

MARTA PESCHEK GOES TO HEAVEN (MARTA PESCHEK JDE DO NEBE)

1man, 1 woman

Let the author explain: “This play could be told as an anecdote about a dirty old man who doesn’t want to let an unpleasant woman into a space he might be guarding. The woman tries different means to penetrate the forbidden space. The old man is defending it as well as he can. Somebody else might be telling the same anecdote in a slightly different way: the woman is actually dead and her goal is the Heaven. The old man is sort of a guardian of the Pearly Gates. Those with a little bit more knowledge could say the anecdote reminds of different stories about Bertolt Brecht. I am saying it is a dark tribute to the Twentieth Century. It’s clear from all of this that it must be a comedy – only a comedy can bear all these different silts.”

German Translation with the title *Marta Peschek’s Himmelfahrt* – by Georg Escher.

More new translations:

Petr Zelenka: *Tales of Common Insanity* –

Translated into French (Histoires de la folie ordinaire) by Katia Hala

Translated into Croatian (Priče o običnom bezumlju) by Renata Kuchar

Translated into Slovene by Nives Vidrih

Petr Zelenka: *Theremin* –

Translated into German (Theremin) by Eva Profousova

SUCCESSFUL PLAYS FROM THE ALFRÉD RADOK PLAYWRITING COMPETITION

Pavel Trtílek and Jan Krupa

MY BEAUTIFUL WORLD (MŮJ KRÁSNÝ SVĚT)

1 man, 3 women

This shortlisted entry for the Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition 2005 is a loose sequel to Trtílek's play *The Last Dinner* looking at today's mad world from the perspective of the oldest generation. Here, too, the protagonists are retired women. This time there are three of them: originally Vilma invited more of them but different ailments and medical problems prevented most of them from coming over. Naturally, health is the most common conversation topics for Vilma, Bělka and Zdeňka. Their trouble with doctors is as tragicomic as their colourful shopping stories. Vilma is the best of the three – while she serves her friends unappetizing cheese straws and apricot juice, she's boasting about her shopping successes when buying various objects ordering them from catalogues and paying on delivery. Her bragging gets out of hand and becomes so absurd that it starts provoking unimaginable aggressivity in her visitors...

Rehearsed reading November 21, 2006 at Theatre in Dlouhá Street (directed by A. Goldflam)

Pavel Trtílek (*1977)

Studied dramaturgy at JAMU in Brno; wrote about fifteen feature and three short plays, of which eight were produced. He also translates from French and is currently working on a novel. His *Last Dinner* won the second prize in the Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition.

Jan Krupa (*1984)

Is studying French and literature at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Masaryk University in Brno. In the future he wants to concentrate on translating French drama.

Anna Grusková

SCHAULUST

3 men, 2 women

The action of this short text is set during a party after an opening night at a theatre. Five characters are meeting – an Actor, an Actress, an Audience Member, a Director and a Reviewer. These characters are not defined in detail; their function in the play is more that of abstract types. The play is a dream scene in which the notions of what an after-premiere party looks like become reality and what kind of frustrations move people connected to the theatre world. The individual characters in their monologues present their personal, intimate and professional doubts, failures, ambitions, lack of self-fulfilment, the authoritarian approach by the director, tangled emotions and feelings and desire for love. Associations of ideas are the building blocks of the play, the text is a filmic montage of

intervowen images.

Shortlisted text for the anonymous Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition 2005. The version of this play for radio was broadcast on January 23, 2007, on the Czech Radio 3 – Vltava.

Anna Grusková (*1962)

Dramaturge, director and actress. She graduated in Drama and Film Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Charles University in Prague and worked at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Theatre Institute and taught at the College for Performing Arts in Bratislava. Since 2001 she works full-time as a theatre artist – acting, directing, writing, translating and dramaturgeing. In the Dráma 2004 competition she was awarded a prize for the play *Nobodies and Nymphomaniacs* written in collaboration with I. Hrubaničová and V. Zboroň. In the same competition two years later she won 2nd prize with her play *The Female Rabbi*.

Iva Klestilová

SMILE, MOTHER (USMĚJ SE, MAMI)

3 women, 1 boy

Two worlds are confronted in a concise story – Věra, a Czech pensioner, goes to New York to live with her daughter and the daughter's family. Her good friend Maruška stays back home. Věra is hampered in her perception of the world by the traditional Czech ideas: there is only one right solution to every problem, and that your country will be your home regardless of the regime or economical conditions. Her daughter Anna is completely different – she feels at home in America with her husband. The husband is making plenty of money but did not come home for many months; nevertheless, they have several video conferencing conversations every day with at least five love declarations in each. Věra attacks quite rudely Anna's way of life and the American optimism which, she says, is in the end nothing but hiding the lack of satisfaction with life and refusal to let anything like sadness, grief or death into one's life. At the end, Věra's presence completely destroys Anna's careless security and happiness.

Czech production directed by Pavel Šimák opened on March 3, 2007 in the Theatre U Valšů.

Iva Klestilová (Volánková) (*4. 10. 1964)

In the 1980s a member of the Children's Studio of the Theatre on a String and of the amateur group Unroadworthy Caterpillar. From 1984 an actress with the HaDivadlo Theatre in Brno. Until 1989 worked on the scripts for all devised productions of the HaDivadlo Theatre. Returning from maternity leave she found there were few opportunities for actresses and began to devote herself more intensively to writing plays. Arnošt Goldflam, who determined the whole poetics of the HaDivadlo Theatre, had an influence on her early work. After his departure from the theatre she developed her own independent, feminist oriented work. She has been shortlisted for the Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition many times and won several awards: in 1997, 4th place for her play *All Saints*, in 2000 3rd place for her *Minach*, in 2003 2nd place for *Encroachment* and in 2003 3rd place for *3sisters2002.cz*. Since September 2004 she works as a lector for the dramaturgy department at the National Theatre in Prague.

In 2006 she returned to her maiden name Klestilová; the same year she had her biggest

theatre success so far when her play *My Country (Má vlast)* – a satirical take on the absurdity of current Czech politics produced by the Rokoko Theatre – won the first place in the theatre survey of the critics at the *World and the Theatre* magazine as a result, she won the Alfréd Radok Award 2006 for the best new Czech play. Also in 2006 she wrote a script for the special summer project The Shed at the Prague National Theatre. The play, called *Heroes*, became a basis for the production by the directing team nicknamed Skutr.

SELECTED REVIEWS:

The story of the old Věra, who goes to live with her sister in America, carries two or maybe three big themes: a mother/daughter relationship, the strength of friendship that can be kept at the distance, and finally the theme that's not negligible for Klestilová – that of the controversial appreciation of patriotism.

Luba Skořepová shines in Pavel Šimák's production as Věra, a common woman believing in the age-old family values and trying – not without pain – to impose on the mechanical and emotionally suffering marriage of her emancipated daughter (Martina Venigerová). Her Věra is moving through the Babylon of an American household fiercely, with humor and with defenceless misunderstanding. (...)

Smile, Mother is a fragile play that will both entertain you for an hour and make you think.

Radmila Hrdinová, *Právo*

Radek Malý

FEELING OF A NIGHT TRAIN (POCIT NOČNÍHO VLAKU)

2 men, 1 woman

Five dramatic studies exploring impressions of five carriages of a night train as metaphors for life both present and past. The dramatic analysis of a dysfunctional family, meaningless friendships, recurring monotonous first names or the conductor litany, and the poetic transformation of the wagon into a cattle car in the closing scene creates a strange and compelling universe coming together under the heading of “the feel of a train”.

Scene 1: Compartment for mothers with children. A Mother talks to her 29 years old son as though he is still 6 years. She's constantly comparing prices at gardening supermarkets while her The son tries to explain to his mother his girlfriend is pregnant and he is going to marry her. The mother is quite confused.

Scene 2: Dining Car. Pepan and Maru are finishing a meal in the Restaurant Coach; they are glad they can afford such luxury. They discuss their daughter who, being vegetarian, would not eat with them even if she was there. That's why Maru would like to have another child, a boy; she starts making plans for his career while Pepan protests. Because of the argument they miss their stop.

Scene 3: Rail employees' compartment: The Conductor makes comparison between a train journey and death. His monologue is illustrated by strange images of murderous violence and strange sexuality.

Scene 4: Smoking compartment. A father tries to make his daughter to move to sit with

him and her mother in the 1st Class compartment; he's ready to pay the difference in the ticket price. The daughter complains of her solitude, and reproaches her father of having hidden existence of a brother who disappeared when she was two years old. Then she leaves to try to find the brother.

Scene 5: The cattle car. A brother and a sister talk inside a cattle car: they have a long journey ahead. They are afraid of dogs and scared of the Conductor and hide from him under the seats. The wagon becomes a cattle car in a Holocaust train going to a concentration camp. When the Conductor finally appears, they see he is their father.

The play was awarded an honourable mention in this year's Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition 2006 and the Prize of the Czech Radio 3 – Vltava.

Radek Malý (*1977)

Graduated in both Czech and German studies from the Palacký University in Olomouc. He currently works as a translator and writer – he published three collections of poems and several books for children. He's also the author of textbooks on Czech language and literature.

As both a poet and a translator from German he won awards in several competitions (Literary Františkovy Lázně 2001, Jiří Levý Translating Competition 2000 and others.). In 2004, he represented the Czech Republic at the Leipzig book fair and was shortlisted for Lyricism Awards in Dresden. His poems were published in German-language – in Austria in the poetry magazine *Podium* (129/130, November 2003 translated by Christa Rothmeier; the issue was dedicated to Czech literature), and in Germany in the magazine *Signum* (Summer 2004, translated by Beate Smandek).

Feeling of a Night is his first attempt at writing a play.

Roman Olekšák (Slovakia)

A ONE WAY TOWN IN OPPOSITE DIRECTION (MESTO V PROTISMERE)

A Dramatized Traffic Jam

2 men, 2 women

Olekšák's play is written in free verse form reminiscent of German plays by authors such as Thomas Bernhard or Roland Schimmelpfennig. It tells the story of lack of communication and solitude, using metaphors of heatwave and traffic jam. The initial "realistic" dramatic setup is gradually eroded. The two potential relationships at the beginning of the play (Erik in a car and Simmi working at the phone exchange "Info Line" / the personnel officer Lena and the employee Artur she sacks) move into feverish visions of the protagonists. The characters comment on themselves and the story linking them quite arbitrarily moves more and more into the phantasy world. Their monologues begin to resemble action movie plots - the characters tell them directly to the audience without representing them onstage. The play ends in a total collapse of communication between the characters' unreal worlds.

The play was awarded the 3rd Prize in this year's Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition 2006.

Roman Olekšák (*1978, Poprad in Slovakia)

Director, playwright and translator, Roman Olekšák graduated from the College for Performing Arts in Bratislava and participated in the workshop of young European playwrights at the Bonn Biennial 2002. His play *Na konci chodby* (At the End of the Corridor) was shortlisted for the Alfréd Radok Playwriting Award plays in 2000; in 2001 his play *Něha* (Tenderness) won second prize in the same competition. Another play, *Ticho* (Silence) was premiered by the Slovak National Theatre in their 2003/2004 season and is still in the repertoire.

The play *Smajlíci* (Smileys) won the 1st Prize in the Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition 2004 (production at Astorka Korzo 90 Theatre in Bratislava, 2006, and published as a book by LCA KK Bagala, 2006).

His first novel, *Prime Time* (2005) will be published by the LCA publishing house in Bratislava.

He translated plays by Marius von Mayenburg, Urs Widmer and J. N. Nestroy from German into Slovak.

THREE MORE SLOVAK PLAYS

Roman Polák

THE CENTAURS (KENTAURI)

7 men, 5 women

The plot of this drama is set on several timescale and thematic levels and deals engagingly with both the recent, pre-1989, past and the present. The grotesque image of Slovakia is complemented by bizarre characters: the Centaur, whom only strange, spiritual Hercules can see, and Klára “the billionaire”. The theatrical environment is defined mainly by the diligent dramaturge Bobo and the unsuccessful Actor, who both went into business after 1989.

This is a pioneering play: it deals with the theme appearing extremely rarely on the Czech or Slovak stage – a personal inner conflict of an artist trying to readjust to the society after 1989 and the fall of the Iron Curtain is mixed up with a generation conflict between a father and his adult daughters. A fatal alienation inside a family is caused by the age difference as well as by the different life experience that cannot be transmitted. It would almost seem that the parents and children inhabit completely different and separated worlds.

The world premiere of this play took place in December 2006 at the Astorka KORZO '90 Theatre in Bratislava. The production was directed by the author. The play is currently being translated into German.

Roman Polák (*1957, Slovakia)

Graduated as theatre director from the College for Performing Arts in Bratislava under Miloš Pietor. From 1982 he worked at the State Theatre in Košice, from 1984 at the SNP Theatre in the Slovak town of Martin. The most successful productions from the Martin period represented the Slovak theatre at several international festivals. The productions of Marivaux's *Touching and Connecting* (1988) and Brecht's *Baal* (1989) were a big success at the Edinburgh Festival and went on to win the Guardian Award. Polák's 1992 production of *Macbeth* at the Shakespeare Repertory Theater Chicago was very well received by critics and audiences alike. Since the '90s, Polák has been working for TV and directing in the main theatres in the Czech Republic. Since 2006 he is the artistic director at the Drama Department of the Slovak National Theatre where he also directs. *The Centaurs* (2006) is his first play.

Pavol Weiss

FEMALE FRIENDS (PRIATELKY)

A play in two acts

1 man, 2 women

Two women meet in a city flat: both middle aged, around forty, one of them is married and already used to the monotonous home work and the stale love relationship, the other is single, constantly changing partners but trying to find both security and “peace at home”. The desperate efforts to find happiness and love is the thing they have in common. Their common past and common love experience separate both protagonists; the conflict is exacerbated by first woman's husband – a model of a successful manager trying unsuccessfully to hide his love affairs. Marriage and adultery, both women's life-long

“friendship”, loneliness and pain are the main ingredients of this play with its unusual perspective of love relationships and friendship among today’s “higher society”. The author depicts complicated inner states of his female protagonists with sensitivity, detachment and fine – although sometimes quite rough – humour, offering mature actresses exceptional acting challenge and opportunity.

The world premiere took place on March 2, 2006 at the Astorka KORZO ´90 Theatre in Bratislava. The play was directed by Roman Polák. The play is currently being translated into German.

Pavol Weiss

BAJMANN BROTHERS

3 men, 2 women

Bajmann Brothers play is defined by the quote from Erich Fromm: “I am what I have.” Maybe it is thanks to this creed that the characters in the play – a family named symbolically after big American companies such as Warner Brothers – change into pigs swines, similar to those the family keeps and breeds. Nevertheless, the human pigs desire plenty but have nothing – and that leads to them being petty, superfluous, naïve, treacherous, plodding on trying to reach for a vision of the American Dream of successful businessmen such as Rotschilde clan, those who “started with little and gained unbelievably much”. But the Bajmann family keeps failing: Frenk Bajmann is “too simple” for business, his younger brother is an egotist and a smart aleck ready to rob his own family without any qualms. The youngest brother Marek’s position in the family is similar to his mother, sclerotic and always half-drunk; nobody takes him seriously, he is a simpleton, always manipulated, and first to run away from the stifling environment of the would-be family enterprise. The family members are ready to keep a dead father in the larder for several days to be able to collect his pension, they constantly try to figure out tricks to get the most of the family inheritance and swap partners. The chamber-sized world of total abuse and evil mirrors the modern entrepreneurial society of enterprising people who, while chasing after mammon, lose all their sense of moral values and all their humanity. In fairy tales, when a father dies, the sons manage the inheritance fairly and justly, trying to expand and use the wealth to have a nice life. In a naturalistic and cruel world of Weiss’ play, the worm of greed eats the family apple all the way to the core and leaves nothing but decaying rot of painful sadness.

The world premiere directed by Roman Polák took place on March 15, 2007 at the Astorka KORZO ´90 Theatre in Bratislava.

Pavol Weiss (*1962, Humenné, Slovakia)

playwright

Graduated from Prague FAMU (scriptwriting and film dramaturgy). He published in the magazines *Romboid*, *Smena na nedel’u* and on radio. After graduating he worked as marketing consultant and in advertisement. His first novel, *Let’s live, let’s see later* (*Žime, potom uvidíme*), showing the image of contemporary business milieu, was published in

2003. Both a novella *The Revenge (Pomsta)* and a short story *Dream&Reality*, written for a collection *Sex the Slovak Way (Sex po slovensky)* were published in 2004. His play, *Female Friends*, opened in 2006 at the Astorka/Korzo'90 Theatre, and his play *Família (Bajmann Brothers)* was shortlisted for the Dráma 2005 competition.

TWO MUSICALS AND A JOKE TO END...

Lukáš Hurník, Petr Čenský

THE ANGELS

Once upon the time there was – an Angel called Asbeel. But he was not your run-of-the-mill angel as we know them from the Czech classical fairy tales for TV or film: his hormones are rebelling, he is fed up with boring sterility and reactionary attitudes of the Kingdom of Heavens and wants to achieve something big.

Asbeel is currently going through his angel conscription service on the earth. He works as a guardian angel of a young female music manager, so he has plenty of opportunities to discover things and to learn some of earthly vices. When he returns to Heaven where everybody keeps singing psalms and Antonín Dvořák's Biblical Songs op. 99, where little angels are throwing ball at each other and where both St Cecilia and the Music Angel Israfel demand strict order, peace and virtuous life, he gets bored and causes a small riot. When St Cecilia and Israfel punish him for disorderly behaviour, it's a straw that breaks the camel's back. Asbeel decides to turn the tables on the Heaven and to prove only a cultural revolution can change desperate situation in the Heaven. So he goes to the music club called Hell to learn disco dancing and singing from the little Devils: he wants to apply their techniques to praising the glory of the God...

Will Asbeel manage to learn the style of the Hell? Or will he fall in love with one of the beautiful she-devils that are a-plenty in the place? Will he be able to prove his point to the Heavens in the end? Or is there another ending to the story?

Authors of the new musical/opera project **The Angels**, composer Lukáš Hurník and the librettist Petr Čenský, are trying to overcome the traditional line dividing serious music from the popular music. They open their theatrical world to both operatic arias and pop songs; opera singers meet and work on the same stage with the actors normally associated with musicals. It's not important whether you are grown up or little children, whether you like classical or popular modern music, there is something for everybody. It's a colourful, entertaining and sophisticated family production for everybody who likes good music, one never seen before. There is a disco show, a live concert, a symphony orchestra attempting to play like the Deep Purple, and you witness a big battle between the Heaven and the Hell.

Opening: June 1, 2006 – Prague National Theatre's Shed Project as a part of Prague Spring Festival, a co-production with the Children Opera Prague.

Lukáš Hurník

(*12.7.1967)

Composer

PhD from the Faculty of the Pedagogy at the Charles University. He is currently working as the editor in chief of Czech Radio Channel 3 – Vltava. He started his musical career as a bass-guitar player with the rock band Biwoy; he also created the whole of the repertoire for the group. Musically, he quotes Frank Zappa as his model. He later incorporated some of rock music elements into his composition *Hot-Suite* that won the First Prize at the international music competition in Tokyo in 1990. He won more awards at the composer competitions Generation and Jihlava. Style synthesis, fusing rock music with baroque and modern polyphony and cantilena with minimalist patterns is typical for Hurník's work. The most ambitious among his work is the

Globus Symphony for Percussion and Symphony Orchestra, written specifically for the Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie, now among repertory pieces of Brno based orchestra Dama-Dama and the musical/opera The Angels. His music is published, among others, by Editio Bärenreiter Praha and by the Czech Radio Publishing. Lukáš Hurník also promotes music popularization in both Czech Radio and TV. His feature programme *Da capo* had almost 300 instalments; he co-wrote several new music elementary school and high school textbooks, he is a columnist with the *Harmonie* magazine and he is the author of book on music *The Mystery of Music – Declassified (Tajemství hudby – odtajněno)* published by Grada.

SELECTED REVIEWS:

During the first three quarters of Lukáš Hurník's opera, The Angels, one feels as if entering a miraculous music world (...) ... (The libretto) offers a big opportunity for humour and irony both enjoyed with a particular gusto by the composer and the actors. The scene of the angels rehearsing a song by Dvořák and looking forward to the Maestro himself who will come to listen in the evening moves the piece almost in the area of black humour. (...) Our admiration and highest respect go this time to the Prague Children Opera creating an unforgettable performance in the roles of little angels and devils. One can only hope the five performances of the Shed Project will not be the end of it.

Josef Vlček: The Angels start with promise but end as an operetta, *Mladá fronta DNES*, June 12, 2006

Both the storyline and the music capitalize on the conflict between two unreconcilable music worlds, on the strife between the original values and the new ones, between the world of the old and young people, on the contrast between honest sincerity and noncommittal carelessness.

Hurník's music imitates very well the musical routines and delights by its invention and its wit once it moves towards the symphony music or persiflage. This production cannot replace a fairy tale to an audience of little children, but it could appeal to the bigger children and teenage audiences.

Hurník knows how to imitate a musical routine and is witty, *HN.IHNED.CZ* 7. 6. 2006

Radek Balaš (libretto), **Ondřej Brousek** (music)

THE JUNGLE BOOK (KNIHA DŽUNGLE)

An original musical adaptation of the well-known book by Rudyard Kipling

18 men, 7 women

Comic scenes, entertaining music, acrobatics and dance – you will find all of these in an original production of the musical based on the well-known book of short stories by Rudyard Kipling. The musical was created especially for the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Pilsen by the composer Ondřej Brousek and the librettist, director and choreographer Radek Balaš. The authors bring to the stage adventures of a little boy growing among animals in the jungle in India and learning its laws. At the same time, the storyline is a fitting parable about the relationship between people and the world they live in. Ondřej Brousek's music has the best of the classical musical tradition at its core, but its sound sometimes courageously leaps to the most contemporary styles of hip-hop or street dance music. The

Indian jungle with its tough laws of nature is almost unexpectedly similar to the jungle of the contemporary human society, and the story is that of the humankind stretched as it is between nature and civilization. While the “adult” audience should be able to read our Jungle Book as a dramatic parable about looking for the roots of the humankind, the “children” audience should be thrilled by both the adventures in the storyline and comedy musical entries, and, of course, by the well known characters of Baloo the Bear, Bagheera the Panther, Shere Khan the Tiger and the Mother Wolf Raksha.

The musical opened at the J. K. Tyl Theatre on April 21, 2007 at its Chamber Theatre stage.

Radek Balaš (1965)

Director, choreographer and playwright, many-sided personality in the Czech theatre life. He first studied dance, mime and musical acting. After that he went on to graduate as drama director from Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) where he taught work on musicals for over ten years. He directed drama and world musicals, both classics and new – *Hair*, *Finnegan's Rainbow*, *My Fair Lady*, *Grease*, *Full Monty!* etc. He works as choreographer for leading Czech drama and musical theatres. He is also a successful playwright – he was awarded the 3rd Prize in Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition, his entry *The Captives of Dark* was subsequently produced in 1995. *The Jungle Book* is his first original libretto for a musical.

SELECTED REVIEWS:

The mood reminds of that of a rock concert where everybody applauds, whistles and shouts, there is a standing ovation at the end and already as they leave the theatre the enthusiastic audience members plan to come again at least one more time – such was the Saturday opening of the Jungle Book musical at the Chamber Theatre. (...) The Jungle Book is a musical in the real sense of the word: there are plenty of catchy tunes, intelligent and texts that – unusually for today's theatre – do not limp and good choreography. The music by young Ondřej Brousek is of musical sort, something unheard of in the current deluge of “songals” - musical plays with songs. Martin Kumžák conducting brought both the orchestra and the singers to the boiling point so that the music flows from the first bar over the proscenium and through the auditorium all the way through to the last rows on the balcony.

Markéta Čekanová, Operetta closes the season brilliantly with *The Jungle Book*, MF
DNES 23. 4. 2007

No doubt original adaptation of the Jungle Book, full of invention (...)

This production is not a prêt a porter musical but a very special magic show full of music. A long applause at the end, including standing ovation, was well deserved. (...)

The adventurous stories of Mowgli in the Indian jungle will resonate with children and young viewers while the adult audience will be able to interpret drama and humour of the production as a philosophical parable on human life. (...)

The Jungle Book at J. K. Tyl Theatre is a triumph of professional approach, talent and energy. (...)

Petr Dvořák, Mowgli and Jungle Animals Deserved a Standing Ovation, *Plzeňský deník*
23. 4. 2007

The creator of the project, the author of the book, the director and choreographer Radek Balaš concentrated mainly on Mowgli's personality and the emotions of the surrounding life. In his storytelling, he sharply draws archetypes of individual animal characters using typical Kipling symbolism. His directing surprises by its imagination, as a choreographer he brought in not only attractive dance and acrobatics elements but most of all precision of the movement. (...)

Vítězslav Sladký, Jungle Sounds Roar from the Stage, *Plzeňský deník* 2. 5. 2007

Alexandr Guha

A DENTAL RHAPSODY (DENTÁLNÍ RAPSÓDIE)

12 men, 5 women

You might remember a popular cartoon series *Once upon the time there was a life* in which cute blood cells loaded with oxygen travelled through the complicated network of blood vessels inside the human body and went through many adventures. The author of this play concentrates in the same way on the oral cavity: *Dental Rhapsody* follows the stories of the lower jaw. Eight white teeth and a moist tongue do not find much peace in their lives. A cold and elastic chewing gum robs one of them of his girlfriend – the filling – and opens the door to the devilish action of caries. Moreover, their day-long programme and struggle for survival depends on the common actions of the owner of the cavity – not only where the regular toothcare is concerned.

Owner of the mouth, The Girl, is expecting a romantic dinner with her friend – and so the cavity is threatened with the chosen partner's tongue and as a consequence our resilient heroes will have to deal not only with a bit stuck between the teeth, but also with other unfamiliar objects, of much unpleasant dimensions. And as if it were not enough, the breakfast chocolate starts its deadly work and caries can enjoy his/her position. A life and death duel is just starting...

Premiere in December 2005 by Lost Existence company.

Alexandr Guha (*1984)
Playwright and director

Alexandr Guha is reading culture studies at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Charles University. He's an actor, author and director of the Lost Existence (*Ztracená Existence*) theatre group, he's working with an original musical group VDP, moreover he is a performer with the Empty Smile association and with the theatre company An Advantageous Cow (*Výhodná Kráva*). He initialized and promotes the spiritual movement

of alkointellectualism. He works for the Music TV Óčko and also for the Pop Museum at the Chestnut (Kaštan) Culture Centre. He writes for several student newspapers. Besides the *Dental Rhapsody* he is linked as the author to the play *Private Parties* (Privátní mejdla) and montages *50-70-90* and *Let's get pissed!*

FROM A REVIEW:

It all starts with a very honest text developing brilliantly possibilities of language comedy and using a good idea: to look at life from the perspective of a body part. Besides many staging ideas and jokes (how would you stage an attack of the toothpick on the piece of food stuck between the teeth or rape of the tooth enamel by a chocolate storm?) the play is a great source of both humour and music directing. The ensemble is very much at ease with the revue format and thanks to witty dialogue, playfulness, flair, songs, dance and to the charming girls' routine the production reminds of the celebrated era of Czech "minor forms theatre". For that matter, the two hundred members of the audience who had reacted enthusiastically during the performance and gave the production a stormy applause at the end could hardly be made up of the condescending friends. Acting by all the members of the oral cavity group was very good; among them especially the student of the Prague drama academy DAMU Vojtěch Bráník Dvořák who played his character of nasty and malicious caries with such a measure of villainy and repugnance that weaker members of the audience from lower grades would definitely look for a toothbrush for prevention. Unfortunately, as the production is officially deemed unsuitable for under-18s, there will not be a TIE tour for elementary schools.

Jana Slouková, A Date through Oral Perspective, *houser.cz* 2.3.2006

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LETTERS FROM AURA-PONT

2007

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Editors: Jitka Sloupová and Michal Kotrouš.

Translation: Julek Nemann and Barbara Day.