



**LETTERS**  
**FROM AURA-PONT**  
**2009**

**NEW CZECH (and SLOVAK) PLAYS –  
TRANSLATED AND UNTRANSLATED...**

Dear friends,

The fifth issue of our e-mail Newsletter for 2009 brings synopses of 9 Czech and Slovak plays, translated into English recently – including COMING CLEAN by Petr Zelenka, now available after its successful premiere at Stary Teatr Narodowy in Cracow.

As usual, we also present successful plays from this year's anonymous Alfréd Radok Playwriting Competition.

In the new issue of our Letters you will also find information about other new Czech plays. For the first time this issue presents plays by young authors – Petr Kolečko and Dodo Gombár – both translated and untranslated.

We can provide you with texts and/or more information about all of these plays – please write or call.

We are looking forward to hearing from you,

Jitka Sloupová, Michal Kotrouš

Theatre Department

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## Translated plays

**Petr Zelenka**

**COMING CLEAN (OČIŠTĚNÍ)**

M 6, F 7, 1 boy, extras

Coming Clean, the latest play by Petr Zelenka, currently the most popular contemporary playwright in Poland, was commissioned directly by the Narodowy Stary Theatre in Cracow. „Stary“ had exclusive right to produce the play for 18 months. That means that another production, be it in the Czech Republic or elsewhere, could not open before May 27, 2009.

The main plot follows the story of the writer Jacek. Jacek has a guilty conscience because he had committed a crime: “in a sudden craze” he put to sleep, and then raped his friends’ eleven year old son. The second story line is that of a slow downfall of a TV talk-show called Coming Clean in which popular and respected celebrities confess to their sins. That’s where Jacek’s publisher sends his author after the latter opens his heart to him and tells him about his crime and how he suffers as consequence. Every little bit in the media counts and can help sell Jacek’s latest book. After some inner struggle, the protagonist applies and tells well in advance all those having played a role in his crime about appearing on the show. When he leaves the TV studio, he is ready to bear consequences of his past action. He is surprised when nobody reacts – he finds out the show was only recorded, and another pre-recorded instalment was broadcast on that night. Seemingly favourable incidents begin to push the hero on a downward spiral towards deadly emptiness and cynicism. In the end, the show never goes on air (the show’s editor is divorcing its presenter). Coming Clean is discontinued. Jacek is by then very well settled in TV milieu thanks to his lawsuits over the failure to broadcast “his” instalment and produces a new talk show called Wet Sponge that is both more cynical and rougher. At the party celebrating the new show’s success he is telling his own story pretending it to be a plot of his new novel, but he comes against a harsh moral judgment: a story whose hero doesn’t want to be cleansed does not deserve to be written. In today’s world of slumping media any scandal quickly becomes a tool for advertisement market and its advertisement values completely overshadow any moral dimension. Jacek’s crime goes unpunished.

The Czech premiere should take place at Jihoceske divadlo (South Bohemian Theatre) in Ceske Budejovice in February 2010.

**Polish version by Krystyna Krauze. Translated into English by Stepan Simek.  
Translated into Russian by Xenia Sakharnova.**

**Arnošt Goldflam**  
**DOLLS AND DOLLIES (ŽENY A PANENKY)**  
F 6

At the beginning, the new play by Goldflam pretends to be a probe into the life of a family made up of several generations, and exclusively of women. A seven-year old girl opens the play with a monologue introducing the audience to her dolls. But the grotesque, fake-motherly relationship she has with the dolls will soon introduce a darker theme of the play – the theme of power pecking order inside the family, manipulation linked to the hierarchy, and changes in these relationships as people get more mature and older. The “conversation” is gradually joined by the girl’s teenage sister, cynical and rough, and their senile great-grandmother. The old woman is being chased away together with her weird stories about the old world by the mother of both girls who keeps venting her anger on her. But the mother herself is treated roughly by her own mother – the grandmother, obviously a woman at the peak of her power, is an “indispensable” ruler of the family.

A Doll is the sixth character of the play; in her monologues she meditates on her existence condemned to immobility and represents the essence of female powerlessness and dreaming. The five women go through situations brought in by family life and dominated by common meals. But, with the same spontaneity, they look into basic situations of life as such. Birth, illness, death (love is conspicuous by its absence) are seen through the perspective of five differently skewed attitudes to life. The relationships keep escalating in rough dialogues and contrasted soliloquies and litanies, prose morphs into verse, song and dance resulting in physical duels. The play featuring excellent characterization through language hovers on a thin border between reality and the Surreal, between slapstick and horror. Arnošt Goldflam in top form.

The premiere of the play took place in March 2009 at the Divadlo v Řeznické (Theatre in Reznicka Street) in Prague.

**Translated into English by Eva Danickova.**

**Josef Topol**  
**END OF CARNIVAL (KONEC MASOPUSTU)**  
M 11, F 3, 11 mummies  
A play

Topol’s most famous work and the theatrical event of 1964. Directed by Otomar Krejča, play appeared in the National Theatre which was - at the time - contemporary. As well as being a realistic story about the love of a young Prager, expelled from college, and a country girl, the daughter of the last private farmer in the village, it was also a tragically strong parable about the huge change in thinking and feeling which was gradually coming about in Czech society in the fifteenth year after the communist putsch.

Together with the "ploughing up of barries" as the traditional slogan of the unhappy period of collectivisation went, the centuries-old moral order also disappeared, the

basis of country society, nature and natural relationships. Just like the Lenten mummers, people put on masks so that they could merge with others and relieve themselves of their own responsibility.

The play had a very successful revival in Prague last autumn (Transteatral Production at the theatre DISK, directed by Stepan Pacl).

**New translation into English by Gerald Turner. Translations into French and German are also available.**

**Petr Kolečko**

**BRITNEY GOES TO HEAVEN**

M 4, F 2

Five dead people meet in an intertemporal interspace. They are bored, don't understand each other, don't know where they ended up or where they are going. Each of them deals with the situation in his or her own way. Britney Spears rehearses new elements for her dance creation – but she lacks an audience; under-age soccer fan Hool keeps smoking and giving Nazi salute, beating everybody up and waiting for “one hundred skinheads with their saxophones”; the alcoholic failed mother Marie tries to put together a Holy Family; a mafioso called Bruno uses routines from psychologic interrogations shooting left and right; Kolben the worker fulfils his deepest and most intimate dreams and gets away scot free... But all of these characters aim to get to Heaven. During their “stay” each of them goes through various therapies, both group and individual, led by Gabriel the Angel, and finds gradually out they are all involved in a quirky reality show with promotion to Heaven at stake. The play begins.

How far are these “people” ready to go in order to win? Which means do they plan using? How can Gabriel the Angel deal with all this? Will he succumb to the “divine” Britney and let her seduce him? Will he let her organize a concert of doom for his “boss”? Will he be able to resist Kolben the Worker's blackmail? Will the Holy Family of Marie, Hool and Bruno fall apart due to circumstances? Who will stay in the game, who will be thrown out? And who has the paperwork related to the “truth most right”? The play was staged with resounding success at the Petr Bezruč Theatre in Ostrava in 2005, it was translated into English and presented as a rehearsed reading by the Immigrants Theatre in New York in December 2007. A rehearsed reading in Polish translation took at the Teatr pod Ratuszom in Poland in March 2007.

**Translated into English by Kristina Molnárová and into Polish by Agnieszka Pátá-Oldak.**

**Petr Kolečko**

**THE GODS DON'T PLAY (ICE-)HOCKEY (BOHOVÉ HOKEJ NEHRAJÍ)**

M 6, F 2

An Industrial Comedy

Tomáš is a full back in a local extra-league ice-hockey team famous for his tough and unyielding approach. In his private life, though, he is a very sensitive, poem-writing man. Kristián is a folk singer neither very well known nor successful. He is in fact a

total opposite of Tomáš: he tries to write lyric songs but is very cynical in his personal life. One day they both meet in a bar, become friends after an initial quarrel, and their lives are changed. Moreover, an 18 year old Gypsy called Žaneta gets involved in their lives...

A comedy with some elements of Ancient Greek tragedy is set in the milieu of the lowest classes in an industrial town in the North of the Czech Republic. The first draft of the play commissioned for the Činoherní Studio Theatre in Ústí nad Labem had a successful rehearsed reading at the Petr Bezruč Theatre in Ostrava.

The play was also developed during International Residency for Emerging Playwrights, organized by The Royal Court Theatre in London in July/August 2008. The world premiere took place in December 2008 at the Činoherní Studio Theatre in Ústí nad Labem.

**Translated into English by David Short.**

**Petr Kolečko** (\*1984)

*Studied dramaturgy and playwriting at the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU) in Prague. Since early years of studies had worked on various plays. His first play staged in professional theatre was Without Orientation, opened in Theatre Na Prádle, Prague in 2004. He finished his studies with play Love, Dude in DISK Theatre, premiered in December 2007. Another of his plays, a one-act The Golden Ring of Jan Tříška has been performed at Theatre Rubín, Prague, one of the main avantgarde stages in Prague, since winter 2007. For the last two plays the author was nominated for Evald Schorm Prize, the prize for young authors in the Czech republic.*

*The author also works with the Czech radio. His modern classical tragedy The Gloom of Points was shot by Czech radio in 2006. He is also a member of the writers team of series called Life is a Dog created by Czech radio. Has experience with television, where he was a storyliner of a TV Series The Street. At this moment he writes for department of Programme for Youth of the national Czech Television.*

*Besides theatre the author also works in music. During the years 2003-2005 he was a member of a Brit pop group The Slots, having played saxophone. Now he occasionally works as a lyrics writer for Czech groups, writing lyrics both in Czech and English.*

**Radek Malý**

**FEELING OF A NIGHT TRAIN (POCIT NOČNÍHO VLAKU)**

M 2, F 1

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

**Translated into English by Tomáš Liška.**

**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 Train* is his first play.*

**Dodo Gombár**

**BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HER (MEDZI NEBOM A ŽENOU)**

M 2, F 1

The prologue introduces the audience to the play's game principle. A Stagehand finds a theatre scenario on the stage and starts reading it giving life to both the Man and the Woman characters. At the same time he becomes a sort of a guide to the action, a lyric commentator and prime mover of the twelve scenes in the play stylised to represent the twelve months of a year. The series of the scenes/sketches is linked together by declamatory texts of the Stagehand who – in a couple of poetic lines – sketches the mood of both the individual month and the love conflict.

The scenes map different conflicts between men and women, real and bizarre, as seen from different angles. The individual months of the year help create a parable of the development of the lovers' relationship, its beginning, development and destruction. Sometimes it's a happy love, sometimes it's a split and parting, sometimes it's a young couple and sometimes an older one. The mood of the month in question is mirrored in the scene: January represents birth of love, February a conversation of the lovers in bed, March is a pantomime of the Man and the Woman on a bench in park etc. The themes and motives of the Apple of the Original Sin, sex, and doubting love on the one hand; and its invocation and worship on the other hand, with the plot of some of the scenes interlinking to the others. The finale of the play finds the Old Woman and the Old Man going to bed not because of sex but to get some sleep – as the year comes to its close, is it supposed to be the Eternal Sleep?

**Translated into English by Danica Haláková.**

**Dodo Gombár**

**THE THIRD AGE (TRETÍ VEK)**

M 5, F 4

The play with its subtitle "The Images of Generations" was shortlisted for the Alfréd Radok playwriting award for original playscript in 2002. It is a bitter comic farce about several generation now getting to their "turn of age".

A sometime popular actor Jan Dolina, now retired and turning more and more to drink, is being questioned by Egon, a boyfriend of his daughter who wants to do a feature program on him. The interview is set in a retirement home where Dolina is locked with a gay musician, Arnošt. The consent was given secretly by Egon's friend Dušan, a psychologist working in the home. The only motive for Jan Dolina to speak into the dictaphone is to find reconciliation with his daughter Tamara: he's sure open communication with her boyfriend will have a positive influence on her. The psychologist Dušan expects a baby with Egon's former partner Tereza but does not consider their relationship to be something stable and fixed.

The mosaic, composed in an almost "Chekhovian", many layered way out of the interlinked fate of the characters is complemented by both the dysfunctional relationship of Egon's parents unable to communicate with each other for many years now, and the nurse Magda who is romantically involved with Dušan.

The author lets the menagery of his characters sink all the way to the very bottom of their relationship and their will to live: Arnošt attempts a suicide; Egon's mother leaves his father for Dolina getting "revenge" for his old misdemeanour; both Dušan and Egon have to deal with their tired relationship to their partners... The ending is utopic: they find strength to fight their own egoism, and even Egon's parents find the way to each other. It would seem nothing more stands in the way of a Third Age of love and understanding.

**Dodo Gombár**

**HUGO KARP** (HUGO KARAS)

M 9, F 4

*(The author recommends that each actor should play several characters.)*

A personal accounting of the protagonist just about to enter "serious life". Fragmented images from both his childhood (the relationship between his father and mother, his grandfather's death) and coming of age (his "gang", first love, drug experience) flick in front of his eyes.

The play features strange, unsentimental but emotionally charged images full of sarcastic perspective and smiling bitterness. The through line is defined by saying goodbye and leaving... The death seems to play the lead role in Hugo's life. The Chekhovian mood of the trees being felled and loss of the old certitudes is expressed by contemporary language where the light conversation and strong language cover the anxiety and incertitude of one's own existence.

The play won the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize at the Alfréd Radok Awards 1999 (the 1<sup>st</sup> prize was not attributed that year).

**Translated into English by Katarína Slugeňová-Cockrell.**

**Dodo (Jozef) Gombár** (\* 1973 in Trnava /Slovakia)

*He graduated as a director at Bratislava's College of Performing arts (VŠMU) in 1998. Before that, in 1996-97, he spent on attachment at the Circle in The Square Theatre School on Broadway in New York, USA, where he directed a production of Tell Me About Birds. Already during his studies he received a range of directing awards at several student and international festivals. After graduating he became the artistic director of the Martin (Slovakia) and Zlín Theatres; the latter position was discontinued unilaterally by the managing director in the summer of 2009. In the meantime he worked as a free-lance director at several theatres in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Italy.*

*Dodo Gombár also made his mark as a playwright. His play Hugo Karas won the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize at the Alfréd Radok Awards 1999; the play was then translated into English, published in the anthology called Slovak Contemporary Drama, in 2002 it was produced in England in Huddersfield, and adapted for radio and broadcast by the Slovak Radio in 2006. His text A Third Age was shortlisted for the finale of Alfréd Radok Awards in 2003, and A House without God in the same competition in 2008. His play, Between Heaven and a Woman was also acclaimed internationally.*

**Echoes from the Radok Competition – the winning entries of the Alfréd Radok  
Playwriting Competition 2008**

**Vladislava Fekete** (Slovakia)  
**SHORT CUTS** (KRÁTKE SPOJENIA)  
M 6, F 4

The **winning entry** of the anonymous playwriting competition for Alfréd Radok Awards 2008 is based on the author's personal experience: similar to her hero female character she grew up inside Slovak minority in Serbian autonomous province of Voivodina. Since the years of her studies she lives in Bratislava.

The character, called simply She in the script, maintains contact with her closest family using the "short cuts" offered by modern communications technology – phone calls, text messages and e-mails, similar to many inhabitants of the so-called "civilized" countries. Nevertheless, in the play these shortcuts link the characters removed hundreds of miles from each other. At first, they represent a superficial network which only gradually reveals the worlds of individual characters and their stories in both flashbacks and present-time scenes.

She goes through a painful process of splitting from Him, her partner married to another woman unable to solve his complex life situation. At the same time, she has to listen to the unending reports about things happening every day in the life of her mother completely immersed in the life of the Slovak minority in Voivodina. She also plays the role of a confidante of her homosexual friend Milija who goes through a crisis similar to hers, only he is somewhere in the British Islands. And finally she functions as a life anchor for her fifteen year old niece and for the Serbian family of her friend Dara that fell apart under the stress of war trauma.

During on the few face to face meetings, both friends agree saying: "If only we knew it would end this way... We would never be born. We would refuse this! We would fuck this kind of life in the maternity ward already." She has her suitcase ready all the time under her bed – the only problem is she does not fit in it herself...

The play opened as soon as 6 May 2009 at the South Bohemia [Jihočeské] Theatre in České Budějovice; the production was directed by Petr Štindl.

**Eva Prchalová**  
**LADDER CROSS-STITCH – a Folk Song** (AŽURA – das Volkslied)  
M 2, F 2  
Tragicomedy about understanding

*"I thought God created us so that we would understand each other."*

The starting point of this play seems to be well known in drama. Two young couples meet in a small flat and, during a more or less formal conversation over a drink, their relationship get more and more complex while the forgotten problems between the characters come to the fore. In an apartment somewhere in Germany, Ina starts a conversation with her husband Jan (both are Czechs in their thirties, she is a fragile woman, he an educated, principled man) and a mixed nationality couple of the forty years old German Uve and his new French attractive and regal girlfriend in her

thirties, Claris. Jan had invited Uve, his workplace colleague and friend, not realising he would also bring Claris whom neither Ina nor Jan know personally. As Ina only speaks Czech and cannot understand a word of what the others are saying, this fact alone could bring about a series of scenes full of embarrassing and forced dialogue.

But it is misunderstanding itself that constitutes almost Kundera-like wit of the piece. The ironic subtitle calls the play a “folk song” – as each of the characters keeps “singing” his or her own tune. Ina only understands her husband, they speak Czech together and she is unable to get used to life in Germany. Jan and Uve speak in German, Uve and Claris speak in French as Claris has no German. Of course, the audience hears them all speaking in Czech language the play is written in. Over a glass of wine, a conversation full of hypocrisy, misunderstandings and failures to communicate evolves. Uve talks loudly to Jan about Claris being a one-night stand acquaintance presuming neither Claris or Ina understand him. Uve and Claris mistakenly think Ina is a painter while she only kills time cross-stitching. Jan thinks Ina is trying to get used to life in Germany while he is at work whereas his wife just sits around at home full of melancholy. Uve has to go to see his wife unexpectedly and tries to solve the situation by talking to Jan in front of his lover he is deceiving.

While Ina suddenly leaves to go somewhere else and Uve had left to talk to his wife, the play turns on its head: Claris surprises Jan by telling him she can speak German and is just enjoying the lies by Uve who ignores the fact. Gradually we find out Claris and Jan had had a relationship some time ago in Paris; the relationship brought about a child (Jan did not know about its existence until now), something Ina desires in vain for such a long time. Uve finds out about Ina’s deception, and leaves angry probably to join his wife. Jan finds out about Ina’s cross-stitching and sends his wife to bed. Finally, Jan and Claris go away to look at their baby while Jan brings along a piece of Ina’s ladder cross-stitch.

One of the walls on the stage serves for projection of words in four languages that are being contested by the script, such as Love, Friendship, Trust, Tolerance, Faithfulness and Understanding...

*The script won the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize at the Alfréd Radok Competition for the best original Czech or Slovak play for 2008.*

**Daniela Fischerová**

**TWELVE MANNERS OF DISAPPEARING or A MAGICIAN** (DVANÁCT ZPŮSOBŮ MIZENÍ aneb MÁG)  
M 6, F 2 (or M 5, F 3)

In her latest play, the prestigious playwright Daniela Fischerová (who entered her script into the Alfréd Radok 2008 Playwriting Competition stylishly under the pen-name of Jan Frank) plays with her theme of stage illusionism both in the storyline and the form of her play.

The lead character of the play, Viktor, is performing at yet another stage of his tour with his assistant Stella. It soon transpires it is the same town where Viktor’s beloved mother abandoned her son thirty seven years ago. Viktor never recovered from the

loss and remained a child looking for protection from women. The only pillar of those that remains is Stella, his outspoken helper onstage.

But his fateful town also brings a fateful encounter: Viktor falls in love with a young kleptomaniac called Iris. He saves her from being arrested, and under the influence of love starts demonstrating real or imaginary ability for real magic. Objects and people, that were formerly subjected to Viktor's and Stella's trickery, start to disappear really and to reappear unexpectedly soon afterwards. These phenomena are not just the result of Iris' incurable illness. Iris is even able to replace Stella who gets sick in Viktor's production forcing the stage magician to choose between the two women. At this stage, it becomes apparent that Viktor is not only using stage illusion but based his whole life on it. Iris is not in love with Viktor, Stella is not a woman and – as the enthusiastic spectator of Viktor's shows, the Criminalist, explains, it was not of her own free will that the mother abandoned her thirteen year old son at the time... Out of the twelve manners of disappearing the mother taught him so many years ago, dying was the last one. But Viktor is able to defend himself from this one in the end.

*The script won the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize at the Alfréd Radok Competition for the best original Czech or Slovak play for 2008.*

**Dodo Gombár** (Slovakia)

**A HOUSE WITHOUT GOD** (BEZ BOHA DOM)

M 10, F 5

A play in five scenes

This is a drama about the strength of family solidarity and seeking both faith and meaning of life. The action is set to an unnamed Slovak village during the All Saints festivities (the theme of death is repeated in the play under many aspects). In the village everybody knows everything about everybody. In a shared house lives a family – besides the central personality, the father, who died recently there is a religious, loving and patient mother and her three sons. In the past, the youngest of them, thirty years old Marek, left a local girl Katka to enter a Catholic seminary to dedicate his life to God; now she is a single mother (Marek is not the father of her child). He fails and returns home for the All Souls' Day.

Here he meets his mother and his older brothers – a faithless, self-absorbed and odd sculptor Ondrej who prefers Halloween to the All Souls' Day. Ondrej is unable to forgive his brother the fact he took away Katka for him at the time and locking himself in his studio to produce wooden statues – that, ironically, are inspired by the Bible. The oldest brother, Richard, works as a railway driver and witnessed several suicides under the wheels of his locomotive. He lives with his wife Alžběta and his two children in a stale marriage without conflict, sometimes visiting the local pub where he sits around with Katka's father, the pub owner Gazda, the local drunk Koňas and the other train driver Švehla (who witnessed the suicides).

The religious protagonist Marek, who is also in a way telling the story of the play, looks for a meaning of life (the experience of the Roman Catholic seminary was just another stop in his life journey). He solves many of his problems in a row with Ondrej and is able to resist temptation offered by the seduction of Richard's wife Alžběta.

Nevertheless and despite all the conflicts, the family and the village represent for him a kind of security he keeps leaving to return to both as if caught in a circle.

But his short stay in his home house changes everything. Katka is wooed by a mysterious unfriendly stranger, Ondrej almost dies in the fire at his studio (although the sculpture of Crucifixion he made is not damaged by the flames), the suicide from the train is revealed as his childhood friend... Marek decides again to leave behind the village with the house and his family, he tries to move Katka to go and live with his crippled brother Ondrej who is obviously still in love with her, then he goes out into the wide world again... The family house that seemed Godless after the death of his father becomes the only fixed point not only in his own life.

*The script was shortlisted in the Alfréd Radok Competition for the best original Czech or Slovak play for 2008.*

**Josef Rubeš**

**THE DOMAIN (PANSTVÍ)**

M 3, F 2

Rich and Katcha, typical Prague middle class people with a notebook, bought a summer house and start to run it. Katcha was even presented with a tracksuit for her birthday... Rob, Rich's friend and subordinate comes to visit with his girlfriend Marie. The friends are slowly getting drunk, organize a swimming competition in the firemen pond while the women talk about them and the meat is grilled.

The action changes when an unknown 14 years old boy crashes his bicycle into Rich's car and bleeds. His injuries are treated and the boy is – almost against his will – put to bed and made spend the night in the summer house. He is drinking with the others and suggests that the house might not be safe. During the night, Rob and Katcha meet at the outhouse and the audience finds out they know each other for a while and there is still a spark going on between them. The boy wants to leave the place at any price but he is prevented from going away.

In the morning, Rob and Marie are getting ready to go home. Marie finds the boy in the larder where he had been sleeping. He is dead. Rob and Marie depart, leaving it to Rich and Katcha to call the police or the undertaker.

The text paints the atmosphere of a mysterious house contrasting it with the problems of the well-off summer-house owners from Prague and their guests. The dialogues show the generally flat life of the play's protagonists; only the sudden death of the boy who appeared out of nowhere brings a touch of a new and local problem. On top of that, the boy says a couple of mysterious lines in an (unknown?) language during the night...

*The script was shortlisted in the Alfréd Radok Competition for the best original Czech or Slovak play for 2008.*

**Pavel Trtílek**

**A NIGHT OF ARTISTS (VEČER UMĚLCŮ)**

M 4, F 4

comedy, farce

Radek and Monika are a couple of artists and snobs; they are preparing a party for their friends. While the theatre actor Radek dreams of a Saab cabriolet, Monika who loves taking pictures of their shopping together is looking forward to a nice safety rail around their house... The guests arrive: a passionate bee-keeper Martin, his wife Klára who gets quite drunk at the soiree while Monika shoots photographs, Lelek is a prolific poet writing superficial poems but able to market them well, while Evžen who works for TV is an acid critic of consumerism and kitch.

All those present gradually either fall asleep one by one (tired or bored) or faint; they have dreams mirroring their dreams, desires and complexes. Monica's dream, for instance, makes her into a successful ballet dancer (a favourite theme of the author) lauded by her mother... The mother indeed appears much later in the finale of the play coming into a house full of loud music and drunkards. She reproaches her daughter both her inability to achieve anything and her failures. At that stage, though, everybody is completely legless and the play peaks with a phone call informing Martin and Klára their house is on fire... The party ends, Radek and Monika are alone again.

The framing and alienating device of the play is represented by the theatre Cleaner: she talks to the actors while cleaning the stage (during the whole of the interval) and opens and closes the text by pointing out how ungrateful her own work is. The farce full of absurdist characters, scenes pitching reality against dreams, and dialogues is set in one room.

*The script was shortlisted in the Alfréd Radok Competition for the best original Czech or Slovak play for 2008.*

## And more...

**Radek Balaš, Ondřej Brousek**

**DINNER FOR ADELE (ADÉLA JEŠTĚ NEVEČĚŘELA)**

M 10, F 10

A Stage Musical Adaptation of the Czech Movie

The storyline of this musical both sends up cheap detective novel and pulp literature in general and goes on to point out graphically the major contrasts between Czech and American cultures.

The invincible private eye Nick Carter arrives to Prague to help solve a case that baffles local police. He is endowed with a brain of a genius – on his way from New York, he was able to learn effortlessly the Czech language – and the most sophisticated modern technology. But on the spot, especially over a couple of tasty beers in Prague taverns, he discovers that the ways of life in Bohemia are quite different from those in America. Will he be able to thwart devilish plots of the arch criminal Count von Kratzmar and to save the delicate flower of innocence of the delightful Květuška?

This parody of cheap trash detective novels first appeared in 1977 as a movie directed by the renowned duo of the comedy director Oldřich Lipský and his old collaborator Jiří Brdečka (who previously wrote for him several original storylines and screenplays including the Western spoof *The Lemonade Joe, or, a Horse Opera*, based on a WWII theatre production and extremely popular with Czech audiences). *Dinner for Adele* brought together many outstanding artists resulting in an outstanding film comedy that remains as fresh today as it was when first seen.

The stark contrasts between Czech and American solutions to individual situations in the plot drive the action with kind-hearted humour. The hyperbole showing these contrasts acquires new dimensions and new qualities in the current climate of “global Americanisation” of our world when compared to the time when the original movie was shot. The stage musical version thus offers many new opportunities for interesting updating of the script, as demonstrated on the two productions of the musical in 2008. The play was staged both at the Slovácké divadlo Uherské Hradiště and at the Theatre Broadway in Prague with enthusiastic acclaim from the press.

**Petr Kolečko**

**LOVE, DUDE (LÁSKA, VOLE)**

M 6, F 4

A teenager comedy with elements of a horror drama. A fresh text full of original one-liners shows a basic conflict between a punk and pop-music band on a joint tour. The action is mostly set in the backstage of a music club where the two groups (and the two different music worlds) are forced to coexist for production reasons. At the same time they are linked by the common hit song “The Pigs Are Coming” – albeit in two very different musical versions. The original “style” animosity has to take back seat when it becomes apparent that the (female) punk singer Tequilla’s sister lives with

the “diskant” leader Étien who was entrusted by the big boss, the manager of both bands, with looking after a beloved poodle. After a visit to her sister, the alcohol infused and depressions prone Tequilla falls in love with the said little poodle, speaks to him in Shakespearean blank verse and leads him out into the night. The mad action by Étien who’s trying to find the dearest possession of his boss takes an unexpected turn, with the emotional climax of both the sad dog and depressed Tequilla at the end. The cool-like punch line brings an Ancient Greek tragedy catharsis and a body on the stage.

This is the play about young people living in the fake world of lifestyle magazines and TV soaps. Overwhelmed by the images of perfect happiness and true love they are unable to experience true love or perfect happiness anymore themselves. The relationships they start are all aimed at a specific goal: it is more important who I am seen with than who I do live with – in the same way it is more important how I look to who I am.

The play won the Evald Schorm Award for 2007 and was produced in the 2007/2008 season at the Prague Drama Faculty of Performing Arts stage at the DISK theatre.

**Petr Kolečko**

**A SOPRANO FROM THE SLAPY DAM (SOPRÁN ZE SLAPSKÉ PŘEHRADY)**

M 1, F 3

A play about a man who went out to buy milk and returned home with it. Will Láďa find somebody to listen to him? Maybe at the popular swimming place at the Dam of Slapy? Or are all the summer guests around in their local summer houses as deaf as everywhere else?

A young budding director wakes up in a strange bed after a night spent drinking. During his morning-after hangover he tries to figure out why he should have ended up in a flat of a passionate seventeen years old intellectual female. He would much rather disappear the French way but does not want to make impression of being reckless bastard. As a consequence, he keeps behaving in a civil way to the girl – but is unable to escape as he promised her a romantic weekend at her parent’s place at the Slapy dam. Finally he grits his teeth and follows his short-time acquaintance to her parents summer house.

The plot here is presented through looking into the mental process of the young man. He keeps commenting his actions by his comments (without censuring or auto censoring them) expressing his actual views of the problem, and sometimes using provocatively vulgar language adequate to both characters and situations.

The next act is an idyll for the girl and the real martyrdom for the young artist. The young man is haunted by the idea his partner does not understand him. She makes him go to a neighbour to get free milk. An old, half-deaf lady tries to explain her opera past to him and asks him to tell her something despite her poor hearing. The young director accepts as this is the only way for him to express aloud what he actually means. Both characters get together quite quickly – the old lady even makes an offer of sex unexpectedly, and without result. The visit ends with a conversation with a personified cow giving milk to the young director. The story is resolved by fairy

tale(ish) simple waking up of the hero and his acceptance of the young philosopher as a partner who will bring him both luck and happiness.

The play was premiered (in Tomas Svoboda's direction) at A-Studio Rubín in November 2008.

**Peter Pavlac** (Slovakia)

**THE RED PRINCESS** (ČERVENÁ PRINCEZNÁ)

M 1, F 2

A very black comedy about the past that is also ours.

Back in 1992 an extraordinary documentary movie was made mapping both the contemporary and past bizarre and dramatic life of Galina Brezhnev, Leonid Ilich Brezhnev's, the Soviet Russia's Communist leader's daughter. It was the only film she agreed to appear in. The documentary ended on the words: "We will come back to her".

Unfortunately, the follow up never happened – the reasons are anybody's guess. We know that she finally ended up at an anti-alcoholic department of a Moscow hospital where she died in 1998, abandoned by everybody, destroyed, friendless and without any attention from anybody.

Peter Pavlac's play explores the fictional (but not impossible) situation where a young ambitious filmmaker Oleg would approach Galina two years after the screening of the documentary mentioned (1994) to finish the work begun by the others. He arranges to meet Galina at her *dacha* (chalet) where he also meets her granddaughter Galya escaping there from her own home to find some sleep from an unending family curse. But, as the play shows, she's also trying to escape from herself and from her own failure to come to terms with her childhood based on the empty ideals as represented by her granddad Leonid Brezhnev. Galya is able to persuade Oleg not to betray her to Galina – she asks him to pretend she is his assistant, indeed, she herself is sure Galina would not recognize her.

She would not – it seems at first. From this moment on, a tragicomic clockwork is running pushing all of the characters into the abyss of their own past. Galina reveals the mysteries of her three failed marriages and her several dozen love affairs. But, most of all, she reveals her strange vulnerability she's trying to hide for years now behind alcohol. She reveals her attempts to escape and with them the depth of a strange fate tragedy of a woman who was mostly guilty because of the mere fact she was born Brezhnev's daughter.

First of all, the play is a brilliant opportunity for an actress aged 50 to 60. The world premiere of the production opened at Astorka-KORZO Theatre in Bratislava on 5 May 2009.