



**LETTERS**  
**FROM AURA-PONT**  
**2011**

**NEW CZECH PLAYS**

Dear friends,

The seventh issue of our e-mail Newsletter for 2011 brings synopses of seven Czech plays, staged but yet untranslated into English.

As usual, we also present winning plays from this year's anonymous Alfréd Radok Playwriting and Konstantin Treplev Awards Playwriting Competitions.

In the new issue of our Letters you will also find information about new translations of the plays introduced in our earlier bulletins.

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

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## **NEW PLAYS**

**Petr Zelenka**

### **ENDANGERED SPECIES**

(OHROŽENÉ DRUHY)

4 M, 2 F

The play from contemporary Prague shows the world of advertisement and business of pharmaceutical giant companies.

The world-wide renowned photographer and past exile Jiří Čejka, known as Jeremy (60),

is lately out of luck. Nevertheless, he still hesitates before accepting a job offer from the newly established advertisement agency Pitch Productions to work with them on a scenario for a campaign for the multinational pharmaceutical company Delete. In fact, the offer is at first refused by his wife Jana who points out that such a job would be against Jeremy's principles. Nevertheless, the efforts to find better care for Jana's father who suffers from Alzheimer make Jeremy accept the lucrative offer.

The screenplay for the spot presented by the very young copywriter Pavel and the producer, forty years old Eva, captivates Jeremy despite his earlier warnings this kind of work wouldn't be a "love affair" for him. His enthusiasm is dampened by the explanation of the two about workings of advertisement tenders. The tender result obviously depends on the decision by the company's director of marketing. Jeremy "by chance" finds out that the man is his old friend and a classmate from the time of his high school studies, a homosexual Jan Šustr. He seeks him out in a transvestite cabaret of which Jan is a sort of sponsor (he is also sponsoring a newt in the Prague ZOO) as Jan's boyfriend Hanka appears there dressed as the famous 1960s singer (and later dissident) Marta Kubišová. But the relationship of the two is going through a crisis and Jeremy is Jan's companion during a journey of a self-destructing drinking night.

Jeremy wins the campaign order for the Pitch Productions. At a dinner, organized for Jan, he introduces his classmate to Jana who shows specialist interest in the Cogitamin medicine being promoted. Jan shows his sponsoring tendencies again and organizes an excursion for the erstwhile chemistry specialist Jana to the company's research department. On the other hand, he surprises Jeremy by claiming he did not vote for the script by Pitch Productions that in fact upsets him and it was his colleagues who decided on the commission. He's trying to make Jeremy terminate the Pitch Productions collaboration and to work directly for him. Jeremy refuses, but to no avail: Pitch Productions loose the commission anyway and Jeremy refuses the work out of solidarity with his young colleagues.

Moreover, Jana tells him that the drug promoted is suspect for dangerous side-effects that could lead to outbreak of some brain illnesses. Jeremy does his own research and tells its results to Jan who keeps referring him to successful tests. Despite Jana's protests (in the meantime, she got a position with Delete Company), Jeremy starts fighting the corporation; hesitantly at first but after being encouraged by Pavel, the whole issue gets on the level of a professional campaign. They organize a visual action that gets extraordinary attentions from the media: a giant paper pill blocks the D1 Motorway, the Czech transport "artery". The battle centred on

Cogitamin peaks with press conferences. Delete Company offers the journalists substantial catering, but Jeremy's conference has a stronger effect as Pavel brings Jana's father in a wheelchair to demonstrate possible consequences of the medicine. This misuse of a member of her family makes Jana decide to leave Jeremy.

Jan's former friend Hanka also joined Jeremy's campaign; he gives an interview to a popular weekly that gets Jan in trouble. It becomes clear that Jan invested his own money into future production of the medicine. Jeremy is not ready to take this into account. When he gets the news of the death of the newt he sponsored, Jan asks for the body to organize the animals private cremation but gets burned during it. Was it an accident? Before that, Jan unsuccessfully tried to woo physically Jana who'd admitted she'd fall in love with him.

Jeremy's campaign wins overwhelmingly: Cogitamin is taken off free sale. Although Jana admits Jeremy was right, she refuses to return to him. Nevertheless, they go together to see Jan who's recovering from his personal crash – not only has he lost big amounts of money but also he was sacked from Delete.

Thanks to the success of his campaign, Jeremy is offered a high position at another multinational pharmaceutical company; this time he doesn't hesitate to accept it. A year later, Jana, Jeremy and Jan meet before Jana's father's funeral; he finished his days in a sanatorium in Austria thanks to Jan's money. Jana and Jeremy agree to have a problemless divorce.

The latest play by the most successful contemporary Czech playwright had its world premiere on November 24, 2011 at the Nová Scéna stage of the Prague National Theatre.

*Once again, Zelenka's play is treating the existential theme with enough originality. (...) Zelenka wrote one of the most ambivalent texts that emerged in the last time, and it is well able to irritate quite forcefully. His play opens, in general quite "seriously", a range of problems linked to the complexity of today's existence while questioning these issues, playing with them and putting them in an ironic perspective and context. The author chooses the absurd environment of an advertisement agency as a condensed parallel to the contemporary world in general. (...)*

*Although there is no shortage in the play of mad people, alcoholics, drug addicts and old people "with Alzheimer", Zelenka claims we all are endangered species nowadays. And one doesn't feel here any undercurrent of a cheap Leftist rhetoric. We longed for freedom, and we'd got it. But the new freedom brought with it some new addictions and habits.*

Jana Machalická, Lidové noviny, November 28, 11

*Zelenka's witty dialogues, cleverly written and full of paradoxical punch lines, are aimed intentionally and accurately at the laughing audience's diaphragms.*

Marie Reslová, Hospodářské noviny, November 30.11.11

*In this way, Zelenka's texts in general and Endangered Species in particular, with their playful approach to the treatment of reality, remind of works by some authors writing in English, mainly Tom Stoppard and Martin McDonagh. But the specific humour is Czech and original. (...) The title of Endangered Species, in a typically Zelenka's way, offers plenty of different interpretations and, as the story progresses, we find more and more of them. Whether the talk is of a rare newt species of the fire salamander whom Jan sponsors in Prague ZOO and whose death is almost fatal for him, or of the humankind in various incarnations – such as the dying off of the*

*individuals who still had not lost their natural instincts and feelings, of the whole middle class, of the erstwhile wide band of the grey zone between successful conformists and losers by conviction and, in global perspective, of the whole of the mankind.*

Jana Soprová, Český rozhlas 3 – Vltava, November 28, 2011

*Endangered Species is a multilayered play that successfully explores the depths despite an agreeable outer façade. Zelenka's text is exceedingly well thought through. It is full of references and allusions not only on the story level but also in using music. Even the lines that are seemingly banal often implicate many other meanings. Not to speak of humour, often escalating into absurdity.*

Zuzana Drtilová, MFDnes, November 28, 2011

**Milan Uhde / Miloš Štědroň**

**LEOŠ, or, YOUR MOST FAITHFUL**

(LEOŠ aneb TVÁ NEJVĚRNĚJŠÍ)

Variable casting, doubling (for instance, 8 M, 7 F)

Three visions of the composer Leoš Janáček (as a boy, as a young man and as an adult) and six women (Marička, Amálie W., Mrs Sch., Zdenka, Gabriela H., Kamila St.) on the ground plan of notebooks of very laughable loves are discovering their hearts, longings and disappointments... The direct commission from the Goose on the String in Brno and a collaboration by the composer Miloš Štědroň and Milan Uhde led to this musical and dramatic production about Leoš Janáček's life in the specific poetics of the famous experimental theatre in Brno that opened on November 11, 2011.

From the well-known and less well-known historical facts, the authors create the image of the genius' private life framed by the tragicomical and fateful ascent by the composer to the hill in Hukvaldy side by side with his young Muse Kamila. The dramatic scenes mapping Janáček's private troubles, his laughable loves are set against the fragments of his genius music.

The third level of the text is a "scientific" argument by two academics about the place love played in Leoš Janáček's music...

*Uhde's script is very well crafted and open to creative theatrical staging. It treats the theme of the great composer with many paradoxes and layers, with the necessary ambivalence and, finally, with humour. (...) The text also goes well with the musical shape of the production, both in original variations and quotations. The music sounds without interruption which, surprisingly, is not to the detriment of the play and keeps the production in emotionally charged mood. It also proves that the musical tradition still exists at the Goose on the String Theatre and that it is not just an empty notion.*

Jana Machalická, Lidové noviny, November 16, 2011

*The celebratory ode about Janáček was broken and an old lonely man remained on the stage. His forbidden emotions are coming to the surface through resonant images. (...) In an effort to avoid a clichéd biography form, an absorbing story emerged quoting love affairs of a musical genius, uncouth in his relationships with women. Six episodes, six femme fatales. And the bitterness of love. (...) The playwright Milan Uhde presents in this untraditional work one of his best plays so far, while the composer and musicologist Miloš Štědroň makes the best of his perfect knowledge of Janáček's work. The producing team linked to the talented Goose on the String ensemble created a new musical and dramatic form; an enthralling and slightly scandalous shorthand showing Leoš Janáček himself as vulnerable, erring and rebelling against everybody, and most of all against himself.*

Markéta Stulírová, deník.cz, November 22, 2011

**Karel František Tománek**

## **WANTED WELZL**

A play with a life at stake

7 M, 6 F

The eighteen scenes of the author's latest text written for the well-known and critically acclaimed Dejvické Theatre in Prague depicts fragments from the final phase in the life of the legendary real-life character of the Czech adventurer Jan "Eskymo" Welzl whose life is inextricably linked to the Far North.

The audience is following the individual episodes as peculiar fragments of an old movie in slow motion. For instance, the initial metaphorical sequence that runs for several minutes shows Eskymo Welzl walking across a lake with a large bundle over his shoulder probing with a spike attached to a stick to see whether the ice is strong enough to support him.

A couple of sequences later we find ourselves in the familiar Western-movie dramatic world of gunmen: the cold-blooded avenger Bradley pursues and kills a merchant who devastates the lives of native Inuit hunters by alcohol and destroys their traditions. A drunken Eskymo who just exchanged skins for drink slits his wife's and his daughter's throats and blathers something about rainbow fish in the Dead Lake. The slick Sheriff is only interested in money the cheating businessman selling the drinks leaves at her lover's place. She is a prostitute named Jane who with a poker face and with the gun pointing at her head plays for her life and offers herself to Bradley... Welzl happens to enter this Western bloody pulp story more by chance but ends up as both its protagonist and its tragic winner.

Beyond the concise style of the dialogues in Tománek's text, the production featured a pronounced visual style in which the reviewers found elements of comic strips, Westerns, Jim Jarmush movies and Robert Wilson's productions.

The play, directed by Jiří Havelka, opened on March 28, 2011, at Dejvické Theatre in Prague.

*The dialogues' austerity pruned down to theses, each line topped by another punch line that is as austere and pared. And a slow pace with pauses during which one can hear the noise of scrap iron in the heads full of heavily grooved brains. All of this, together with Natálie Steklová's costumes, after all, reminds us of the style of that most important of the Western movies – Leone's Once upon the Time in the West.*

Jiří P.Kříž, Právo, 29 March 2011

*Thanks to the concise character of its storyline, to the type of its exaggeration and to its (black) humour, Tománek's script reminds of the comic strip bubbles or the captions in a silent film. Its atmosphere links it for instance to Jim Jarmusch's cult movie Dead Man or Sten Nadolny's novel The Discovery of Slowness. To the stories that try, in a simple, symbolic and entertaining way, to capture the relationship between human life and the natural order on the one hand and the moment of their deadly and in its own way suicidal mutual remoteness on the other.*

Marie Reslová, Hospodářské noviny, 1 April 2011

*So go yourself to have a look at the frozen time dragging slowly, and then suddenly the ice breaks; go and listen to freezing dialogues and a parade of actors who do not perform as quicksilver jumping up and down but are like frosted sculptures as though made of ice.*

Pavel Brycz, Divadelní noviny, 27 June 2011

**Leo Egerstein / René Levínský**

## **BURNING HEART**

(PLANOUCÍ SRDCE)

5 F

This feminist family drama explores the surface on a woman's body that is free for tattooing. Tattoo as a blue full stop closing life so far and as the initiation to a new destiny. Tattoo as a hippie uniform and a pyjama for a tired lady. The memories and present intermingle in the play about age-old punk girls who are still looking for freedom, independence and freedom.

The play takes place during the last 24 years, and sometimes even before that, in Germany, Bohemia, Chile, on the sea and on the land, under the moon and under the sun, on a boat and on a motorcycle, in a hotel, in a pub, and in a snooker hall. For the protagonists, the men only exist as memories. As the years go by, they try to figure out together all the things they can and want to leave behind and what they should meaningfully keep alive. It even sometimes appears they might find it in the end although they are not young any more.

The play was written for the West Bohemia Theatre in Cheb where it had its first production in October 2009 under the title *Nawratilowa, Szymczykowa* (after the actresses who performed it); the *Nejhodnější medvídci* [Most Kind Teddy Bears] TC produced it as *Doubkova hole má* [Doubkova My Stick] at the Prague NoD /Roxy venue where it plays since October 2010.

### **Translated into French.**

*A text about a strange friendship, about love and also about the passion for tattoo and desire for “a different life”, first through the monologues by the protagonists, later through the dialogues, exposes complex fates of the two women and also of the daughter and the nanny of one of them. The troublesome character of their fates contrasts with the simple and light way both of the storytelling and of the manner the director Zdeněk Bartoš tells it.*

Tereza Siegllová, Svět a divadlo 5/2010

*One can speculate that – besides purely theatrical qualities of Levínský's texts – the dramaturgy in Cheb was attracted both by the Czech-German character of the author's work and by the half-hidden but persistent “engagement” of the author's writing, securely removed from the mainstream of the theatre work and of the general moods.*

*Levínský proved even when commissioned, he can write a solid and extremely playable text neither himself or the theatre need to be ashamed of.*

Vladimír Mikulka, Divadelní noviny 9/2009

### **Arnošt Goldflam**

#### **WOBBLY BOARDS**

(VRATKÁ PRKNA)

5 M, 3 F

A comedy from the theatre world – nevertheless, a bit sad. The splendours and miseries of the theatre, seen through a perspective both ironic and self-ironic, both the outside and the inside view. The boards that represent the world – as they are called in the Czech theatre – are indeed very wobbly though, at the same time, very attractive.

These boards are a world where reality morphs into fantasy and dreams. The actors perform, sometimes consciously, sometimes involuntarily, as much on the stage as they do backstage and in their personal lives. But that does not mean they are not living it all through. On the contrary, they transfer their exacerbated, often hyperbolized feelings from theatre into everyday life.

It's exactly this life-long schizophrenia Arnošt Goldflam tells about with relish in his play. The actor Radek, his wife Eva with her lover of the moment, a young actor called Vlasta, form a love triangle surrounded by other characters of people linked to

the theatre – including very sceptical Jaruška, eternally waiting for the success that never comes, a naïve and sexy Liduška, a stage manager with an unfulfilled desire to get a role and finding self-realisation in a transvestite show, and a Napoleon-like director oscillating between attacks of creativity and powerless rage.

The play ends at the party following a successful premiere, with the usual social interactions featuring wine, women and singing. The situations from the play are intermeshed with personal relationships, and alcohol causes both unexpected conjunctions and notoriously well known situations linked to characters' self-obsessions, compulsive desire to confirm one's own talent, ability to charm the others and soul-searching monologues.

The play premiered on 8 April 2011 at the Studio Ypsilon Theatre in Prague.

*Actors perform, sometimes conscientiously, sometimes inadvertently, both backstage and in their personal lives as much as they usually do onstage. But it does not mean they are really experiencing it. On the contrary, exacerbated, often exaggerated feelings are transferred from the theatre into everyday life.*

*And it's precisely that long-life schizophrenia that Arnošt Goldflam is telling us about in his Wobbly Boards. One can see he is an author who is literally permeated by theatre, and more: he is a good observer of even the smallest bizarre details.*

Jana Soprová, Český rozhlas 3 – Vltava, 13 April 2011

*As a whole, Wobbly Boards is a charming and entertaining text that sees the theatre world and human souls with a slightly bitter, slightly mischievous, but also loving irony so typical of Goldflam.*

Radmila Hrdinová, Právo 11 April 2011

## **Arnošt Goldflam**

### **SILLY VERUNA**

(BLBÁ VERUNA)

6 M, 3 F

*„So why are we stupid, mom? Am I stupid too?“*

A melancholy comedy about the end of the old world order. A retired man, AG (this time inhabiting a young girl's body) reminisces about all the things people went through in Czechoslovakia during the Communist regime: how we learned to fly, to become invisible, to commit suicide, or, perhaps, how we came to enjoy retirement.

A young girl called Veruna takes us on a journey through her life. She shows us the era of the official 1<sup>st</sup> of May Labour Day celebrations including the parades (nevertheless, Veruna sees some animals from a ZOO taking part in them); but the world of her fantasy is all mixed up with that of the Real Socialism. Her father's and

her mother's monologues evoke the past time of their romantic love; but their joyful mood contrasts with the oppressive atmosphere of the period that appears as almost poetic only when observed from the flashback perspective of today. While another character in the play, Veruna's little classmate called Libor, tries to solve together with the protagonist various problems linked to his penis and to the ways various people pee, her father is forced to explain at his workplace the reasons for not waving pennants and little flags during the parade. Eventually, he ends up in a lunatic asylum for thinking that he had mastered the art of being invisible. At the asylum, he meets both a female singer in whom he sees a Russian popular male singer Vernyes, and a madman who believes he is Stalin. The father gets killed when he jumps out of the window believing he was able to fly quite easily...

Then the characters start multiplying: Veruna and her mother, trying to find a cure for their sadness, turn to a singing teacher of Socialist persuasion – none other than the singer we previously met at the lunatic asylum; she and her songs guide us throughout the whole storyline. As the time goes by, Libor and Veruna become teenagers and fall in love with each other, read banned literature (both Kafka as well as the “*Rapid Arrows*” comic books series for children from 1930s and 1940s). The reading of Kafka's *The Trial* becomes interwoven with reality: the Mother finds a new companion and Veruna keeps meeting friends who love banned books... The mother becomes a nurse in the asylum, looking after the madman, now old, who still believes he is Stalin and wants physically to destroy her. As the Father's former boss, now also getting old, walks slowly through the streets, Libor rather roughly splits from Veruna in a park... it is the end of their relationship, but also the end of a sad but somehow beautiful world of the past...

A melancholy, touching but also dark comedy about Czech past premiered in Brno at the Goose on A String Theatre, directed by the author in May 2010.

**Petr Kolečko**

## **AUTISTIC PEOPLE CLUB**

(KLUB AUTISTŮ)

7 M, 3 F

A comedy about a bizarre character of the world around us. A satire full of over-the-top humour and exaggeration is dealing with the abnormal character of normality and with the limits of genius – and more than that.

Little Hanička knows all the matches of the ice-hockey Olympics in Nagano including their timings and would like to become friends with the Czech team defenseman Jirka Šlégr. Thirteen years old Miki is a political commentator who plans eventually to become the prime minister. So far he had advised Jirka (Paroubek, the former Social Democrat leader), Mirek (Topolánek, the former Civic Democratic Party leader) and the Prince (Schwarzenberg, the current TOP09 Party leader and Czech foreign minister). Little Hyneček knows the production secrets for every alcoholic drink in the

world, including the new EU manufacturing standards, but is not permitted to drink. Little Jindříšek is an adolescent mostly interested in animals, preferably sheep. Karlík is disgorging information he gets from the Google. Pavel is trying to solve a crisis with his partner and, most of all, his work as an educator specializing in autistic people. Kamila can cook wonderful pasta with pine nuts and has just a minimum of cellulitis. The Grandma Olinka is working for the Albert supermarket chain, and reminiscing about the winter stadium in Litoměřice, about her first ever treble toe loop and about her coach Jarda. What effect, in such a menagerie, will have the arrival of a mysterious theatre and movie director, carrying all the weight of the world's pains? And what will happen when one of these autistic people puts into practice the theory of the parallel universes? A play about egoism, perversion, borderlines between various worlds and about the abnormality of the normal.

*"It's not so difficult to be autistic. You say many numbers, talk to the others in the third person. In fact, I copied all of this from the Rainman. I watched it three times in the row, on a DVD..."*

The world premiere directed by N. Deáková opened at the Studio Beseda of the Klicpera Theatre in Hradec Králové in March 2010.

## **ECHOES FROM THE CZECH DRAMA COMPETITIONS**

**Eva Prchalová**

### **VERTIGO**

(ZÁVRAŤ)

3 M, 2 F, an ape

*“Two paths lead to love. One is ordinary, direct and proper. The other one is bad, it goes through death; this is the way of a genius.”* (Thomas Mann)

*Vertigo* tells a surreal story of an ordinary marriage. Ludvík and Ingrid are nervous – they expect visitors. Ludvík is trying to cool down next to an open window while Ingrid is suffering from vertigo and tells her husband about the encounter she had that very morning: at a supermarket, she met her favourite TV soap hero Tony the Heartbreaker, kept a pistachio shell she peeled off him and put her favourite cuddly monkey from a key ring into his pocket. The visitors arrive. They are an unmarried couple, René and Sylvie, and they are younger – especially when compared to the photographs they sent ahead via email. It transpires that something like a pre-arranged “swingers’ party” is expected to take place in Ludvík and Ingrid’s flat. At the beginning, René and Sylvie take more initiative and show more experience: first, they keep offending the older couple by their cynical wisdom; then, Ludvík and Ingrid let themselves to be manipulated by both young people. As Sylvie lures Ludvík away from the sitting-room, René massages Ingrid’s feet. Alcohol strengthens Ingrid’s proclivity to vertigo and René takes advantage of the fact to encourage her to liberate her suppressed love. After the act, Sylvie returns to the room on her own: she claims Ludvík took refuge on the balcony after an unsuccessful attempt at lovemaking. Sylvie maintains their flat has no balcony. In her dizziness, though, she ends up believing (or is it all a dream?) that Ludvík is getting ready to jump down from the balcony; desperately trying to save him, Ingrid bangs on the wall behind which the balcony – according to Sylvie – is supposed to be hidden. Following this climax, Ludvík returns – he is all wet, as he had to take a bath in a fountain down on the square to cool down after having heard Ingrid’s and René’s amorous passion. Ingrid towels up Ludvík in motherly fashion; then they begin to dance together and go out into streets (or perhaps onto the balcony?). Enter Tony the Heartbreaker with an ape who dances for him.

The play won the **First Prize** at the prestigious **Alfréd Radok 2010 Playwriting Award Competition**. The play was given a staged reading at Nova Scena of the National Theatre in Prague on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

**Ondřej Novotný**

**THAT SUMMER**

(TO LÉTO)

Flexible casting

*“I think nobody was going out with anybody. The only thing was, we all slept with each other,”* says one of the voices commenting on the character of a young man called “Mengele”, dispatching monologues and posing as a “cursed rock poet”. Using suggestive images and Hrabal-like text style, Mengele tells the story of the summer during which he experienced a “romance” with a girl called “n”. He describes the course of their affair – the moment he accepted her first invitation to sex, followed by the usual mutual attraction and summer time erotic and alcoholic rush, all the way to the boredom and inability to deal with it that set in later and the total disintegration of both the relationship and mutual communication.

The text is a succession of variously composed monologues, lines, verse, quotes, everyday reflections etc. The individual sequences/images are introduced by letters in alphabetic order and a range of swearwords starting with that letter. Love, sex, inebriation, life on the fringe of society are the main themes of the play; vulgarisms throw more light on the individual shades of the soliloquies. All of these combine together to create an image of a world as seen by the characters “M as Mengele”, “n” and so on. The result is an original vision of the darker, hidden sides of the world around us on the periphery of our perception.

This **winning entry** in the new Brno-based **Konstantin Treplev Awards** playwriting competition was given a staged reading at the Goose on a String Theatre in Brno on April 23, 2011.

## **NEW TRANSLATIONS OF OLDER PLAYS**

### ***Into English –***

**Arnošt Goldflam**

#### **THE DIRECTOR'S BOX**

(ŘEDITELSKÁ LÓŽE)

2 M, 1 F

Arnošt Goldflam has several times turned to a theatre setting for his plays (The Ticket Girl, Debate with the Maestro, etc.). The Director's Box, takes place in an old folks' home, where two forgotten actors spend long hours together. With both irony and nostalgia they remember the past and try as best they can to recall the odd moments when they were truly happy.

"I wanted to write about actors and their failings and faults, without emotion, rather about their human destinies," says Arnošt Goldflam, "and I also wanted it to be with hindsight, not those times full of action, but what remained of them. There have been three readings, in Brno, in Prague and in Hradec Králové and all of them were a great success, and people laughed a lot. I wanted it to be an audience piece, where people enjoyed themselves and where there would be a fair amount of transcendence."

Premiere 30 November 2004 in the HaDivadlo in Brno. The play has just been nominated for Alfréd Radok Award - the Czech version of Olivier Awards - in the category of Play of the Year.

#### **Translated into English by Eugénia Kamožinová.**

*"The event of the Brno autumn was the Czech premiere of Arnošt Goldflam's Director's Box in the HaTheatre. His second latest piece takes place in an old folk's home where two old and forgotten actors spend long hours together. They recall the past, especially moments when they were truly happy. In Ondřej Elbel's production Ján Sedal is excellent as the more worldly-wise of the two. He is ironic, sarcastic, spontaneous. Maybe he invests much of his own life into the role (when he recalled how he "harried the theatre director", a tremor ran through the HaTheatre leadership in the front row); he pretends to be a thug, but in reality he badly needs his "gaffer", a role cut to fit Miloslav Maršálek. The trio is completed by a new reinforcement to the company, Jana Plodková as the nurse taking care of the two old men and at the same time the embodiment of their memories."*

Pavel Gejdoš, ČTK

*"...The heaviest weight of the evening is carried by Ján Sedal in the role of the self-centred, egotistic and cantankerous Eda. Eda evokes memories of his successes onstage and with women, but from the context it appears he is greatly exaggerating, maybe even making them up. However, diction in the style "every word a pearl"*

*convinces his opposite number of his truthfulness, whilst he covers up with banalities, half-truths, stormy attacks and aggressive humiliating speeches. Sedal's delivery is precise and true to life, and he evokes a lively response from the audience. Even over Ruda's dead body Eda is unable to feel pity for anyone else. He is only sorry at having lost his audience, his spectator and, when needed, his foil. Even the rebellious gesture which he apparently once used to express his arrogant relationship with the director sitting in the box, and which he now repeats as though he were addressing the director of all human destinies, with all its isolated despair sounds hollow and theatrical. The declaration in the motto - "I like you, Ruda. I like you, Eda" - ironically convicts its bearer of the inability of feeling.*

*I consider The Director's Box at HaTheatre to be the most powerful stage experience the Czech theatre is offering this season."*

Milan Uhde, Divadelní noviny, 8. 2. 2005

**Marek HOROŠČÁK**

**BOILED HEADS**

(VAŘENÝ HLAVY)

4 M, 2 F

A middle-aged married couple, Miriam and Karel, live in isolation in the middle of a forest. However, in the course of one night several intruders force their way into their house. The first is a girl at the age of puberty, Linda, who insists she is looking for her runaway cat in the forest. Karel, who is suspicious, nevertheless allows her to sleep in one of their rooms, which for security he locks. Immediately afterwards a car crashes not far from the house and two injured young men try to gain access to the house. The multiple coincidences have fateful results for the characters. Linda pretends that she is Karel's stepdaughter; she swears at him and complains to Miriam. It is not clear whether she is only being provocative or whether she is ventilating a real trauma. Karel goes along with her game. Both the new arrivals find it strange that a father should lock his daughter in her room, and try somehow to intervene in the row. Linda brings the whole argument to an end when accompanied by one of the youths she runs away into the forest. The other youth has to stay in the cottage because of a broken leg. Early the next day Karel takes him to hospital, in advance cutting off part of his ear as a warning. The young threesome decide not to leave the situation just like that. They succeed in persuading the pub lady-killer J.T. to set out for the cottage with a pistol and scare the couple a little bit. However, Linda and J.T.'s retaliatory measures end quite unexpectedly - Karel and Miriam eventually overcome the attackers and literally boil their heads. The text balances on the edge between a cool thriller and an ironic black grotesque.

**Translated into English by Eva Daničková**

*The audience does not recognise action as an illusory reality but accepts the offered play which moreover has the comically very rewarding and situationally enlivening principle of drama: paranoia*

Tomáš Syrovátka: Hledání divadla chcete-li dobře uvažené hlavy, Svět a divadlo, 2001/3

## ***Into German –***

**Arnošt 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. 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.

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.

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. 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.

The world premiere took place at HaDivadlo/HaTheatre, on November 10, 2007.

**Translated into German by Rolf Simmen.**

Vitriolic sarcasm. I was afraid it was for informed audiences only, but I forgot dunces don't usually go to theatre. A resounding success! Also thanks to bravura performances by Petr Jeništa as an authentic Hitler, Jana Plodková as Eva Braun and Simona Peková as Mrs Goebbels.

J.P.Kříž, Právo 5.12.2007