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Editorial

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Editorial

This issue of *Theatralia* is primarily focused on one of the greatest personalities in the Czech tradition of theoretical Theatre Studies, Otakar Zich (1879–1934). Zich's works in this field have been adopted, interpreted, and contested by various strains of the Czech academic discourse within the discipline. Zich's studies can be found among other seminal texts of the Czech tradition of semiotics of theatre and drama, which has been strong since the 1920s and achieved worldwide recognition mainly through works by members of the Prague School such as Jan Mukařovský and Jiří Veltruský. A renewal of interest in the semiotics of theatre and particularly in the Czech context, has been reflected in the recent publication of new editions of theoretical studies by the Prague School mostly from the 1920s to 1940s (DROZD, KAČER and SPARLING 2016), as well as in several past issues of this journal (*Theatralia* 15 (2012): 2, 17 (2014): 2 and 19 (2016): 1). This renewed interest in Zich's work has brought his ideas into contemporary discussion and opened them up to a wider international readership.

Yet, the majority of Zich's fundamental works still remain largely inaccessible to English readership. His 'Puppet Theatre' (ZICH 2015), 'Principles of Theoretical Dramaturgy' (ZICH 2016) and 'The Theatrical Illusion' (an excerpt from Chapter 9 of *The Aesthetics*) (ZICH 2019) in English translations have acquainted readers with several of Zich's ideas. 'Puppet Theatre' serves as an introduction to the theory of puppet theatre with its sharpened sensitivity to the material nature of the stage and the 'actor' on it; 'Principles' presents a general outline of Zich's theory of theatre; and 'The Theatrical Illusion' presents crucial elements of Zich's thinking about the stage. However, the translation of his seminal work, *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art*, awaits publication. Originally published in Czech in 1931, the book created a climate in which 'the semiotics of theater and drama has constituted a primary area of inquiry for Prague School writers' (QUINN 1995: 1) and their followers. It is only now, when this issue of *Theatralia* is going to press, that an English translation is approaching a completion. This new re-translation of the book, which made use of Samuel Kostomlatský and Ivo Osolobě's earlier translation typescript, is being finalized by the general editor David

Drozd's team consisting of the translators Pavel Drábek and Tomáš Kačer, and editor Mark McEllan. The aim of this *Theatralia* issue dedicated to Zich and his *Aesthetics of Dramatic Art* is to spark reader interest as the official translation is under preparation of being published.

All the articles in the 'Yorick' section demonstrate a renewed interest in Zich. Introducing his ideas and possibilities for topical interpretations of them are the primary goals of this issue. It is our hope as editors that this issue (accompanied by the publication of the English translation of *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art* later this year) will provide a critical contribution to spreading Zich's ideas outside Czechia. For this purpose, we have given preference to articles that discuss Zich's ideas from a contemporary standpoint, reflect current trends in theory and production practice, and discuss aspects that have remained sidelined.

This issue was also framed by the three-year research project *Divadlo jako syntéza umění: Otakar Zich v kontextu moderní vědy a dnešní potenciál jeho konceptů* [Theatre as Synthesis of Arts: Otakar Zich in Context of Modern Science and Actual Potential of His Concepts] which was completed at the Department of Theatre Studies, Masaryk University, from 2016 to 2018. Not only is the translation of Zich's book being finished, but the research team, consisting of namely David Drozd, Pavel Drábek, Martina Musilová, Martin Bernátek, and Dita Lánská, conducted extensive archival research which provides new contexts for Zich's work, with a number of results presented in this issue. It is worth mentioning that Zich's archive surprisingly contained a manuscript of a German translation of *The Aesthetics* created sometime between 1934–1936; although it has not been possible to identify the translator or retrieve any other information about the text. The research project also provided a chance to perform Zich's most important musical composition again after nearly 90 years. Parts of his chamber opera *Vina* [Guilt] were presented as a staged concerto (for a report on the event, see *Theatralia* 21 (2018): 2).

There are nine peer-reviewed articles in this volume in sections 'Yorick' and 'Spectrum', and an equal number of entries in the remaining sections. Veronika Ambros' article 'Otokar Zich and Prague's "Semiotic Stage": Reading Performance *Avant la Lettre*' opens the issue. It presents an overview of Zich's crucial concepts in a fresh contemporary perspective, focusing on the study of the theatre event / performance. The article also continues a critical discussion of Zich's theoretical conceptions, which was first developed mainly by Jiří Veltruský capitalizing on concepts introduced by Roman Jakobson, among others. It discusses, among other things, problems caused by Zich's understanding of realism, and what this entails for his theoretical framework of the study of performance.

Two texts that follow are on a similar topic but have a very different focus. Petr Osolobě's and Herta Schmid's articles study traces of Aristotelian thought in Zich's approach. The former article titled 'The Aristotelian Perspective in Otakar Zich's *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art*' by Osolobě presents Zich's oeuvre in a radical reading as inherently Aristotelian. It presents a whole array of overlaps between Aristotle's and Zich's conceptions of drama and performance. While showing how a systematic

approach to drama and theatre is a shared starting point, it further argues for an Aristotelian reading of Zich's understanding of representation, for which Osolsobě systematically uses the term 'mimesis'. While contemporary theory uses concepts such as cognitive 'blending' to explain the central issue of the representation of a character on stage (which Zich resolves by introducing his concept of 'actor figure' based on late 19th century experimental psychology), Osolsobě follows a hylomorphic metaphysical position championed by Aristotle and identifies relevant features involved in Zich's discussion of the actor figure.

Schmid's 'Aristotelism in Czech Structuralism: Jan Mukařovský and Otakar Zich' goes beyond Zich and compares several Aristotelian moments in his works with those present in the prominent Prague School theorist Jan Mukařovský. By contrasting ideas of these two thinkers, the article further develops problems involved in hylomorphism which involves subtleties of the relationship between the material (such as, the actor) and its form (such as, the character they represent).

Bohumil Fořt's 'On Poetic Types or More?' discusses 'On Poetic Types', a text written by Zich in 1918. It is the first introduction of this early study by Zich to the English readership in a text which illustrates Zich's development before he started his work in theory of drama and theatre. Fořt identifies various general theoretical standpoints of Zich's development as an aesthetician which predate and, thus, precede the concepts developed in *The Aesthetics*. Yet, as Fořt shows in his discussion with prominent Czech theorist and critic Oleg Sus, Zich's concepts remain crucial for Czech semiotic theory of theatre, while his general aesthetic ideas had only little effect – if any – on the Prague School structuralist aesthetic theories of art, and literature in particular.

Another study in our collection offers a musicological approach to Zich's 1922 opera *Vina*. Professor of Musicology Brian S. Locke of Western Illinois University focuses in his article on the multivocality and 'psychological realism' as parts of Zich's approach to the libretto. Locke's acute analysis of orchestral score and especially vocal lines, concepts of silence and sound, as well as the musical Leitmotifs of an opera kept in oblivion for almost a century contributes to the understanding of Zich not only as a pre-Prague School scholar, but also a composer of operas. The article comes as a follow up to Locke's work on editing Zich's original score for two pianos and publishing it in 2014.

Martina Musilová's article 'Otokar Zich on Dramatic Acting' explores the concept of dramatic acting from *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art*. The author looks at Zich's ideas from a historical perspective, focusing on Zich's fascination with experimental aesthetics, Czech modernist influences and opera experience. Musilová draws parallels with Zich's understanding of the stage figure with Stanislavski's and Carnicke's views. At the same time, she is critical of Zich's approach due to his adherence to late 19th century understanding of 'realism' in theatre and striking evasion of consideration of avant-garde theatre developments.

Yana Meerzon's article is a cross-discipline study in which she offers readers a discussion of fictional space and worlds within the Prague School approach and shares her own experience of practically applying the theory in her teaching practices with

students on dramaturgy in the University of Ottawa. A case study elaborating Lubomír Doležel's theory of counterfactual fictional worlds into developing fictional worlds based on historical facts and figures in her class gave students the possibility to test their creativity and to come to terms with theory turned to practice. Zich's ideas of 'spatial dramaturgy' and 'force field' are applied to the play and performance analysis necessary for creating spatial dramaturgy, especially in immersive theater. The teaching methodology offered by Meerzon is also of special interest to teachers looking for new ways of training future specialists.

The 'Yorick' section concludes with Martin Maryška's essay on application of Zich's 'image' to the analysis not only of dynamic theatre productions but also static theatre publicity in the forms of posters. The scholar poses a question: does a figure on a poster represent an actor, a stage figure, or a dramatic character the actor represents? The author draws his view of posters from Zichian triad *actor – actor-figure – dramatic persona* and argues that a poster is a 'translation' of a stage figure into a 'poster figure'.

The section 'Spectrum' presents a study of two famous Shakespearean *Tempest* productions by Leon Schiller in Poland in 1938 and 1947. The author of the article 'The Vacant Utopia: Reflecting on the First Polish Post-war Staging of *The Tempest*' Przemysław Pożar discusses the changes in the producer's view over time and the influence on scenography and directing. The paper analyzes the Schiller's 1947 production mainly through the reception of contemporaries, which according to the scholar's conclusions influenced the later critical evaluation of the director's approach. The author also raises an important question for the current issue, concerning translation and its influence on the reception of the creative work within a community as well as internationally.

Our issue includes two interviews in the 'Guests' section. The first one with Emil Volek and Andrés Pérez-Simón addresses the difficulties of translating Zich from Czech into English and the role of such translations for the international awareness of the origins of Czech Structuralism. The two scholars recently published their joint translation of Zich's chapter 'The Theatrical Illusion' from *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art in PMLA* 134 (2019): 2, thus introducing an international audience to Zich's theatrical approach. The second interview is with a Ukrainian professor and Kyoto Prize laureate Nelly Kornienko, the founder of a new synergetic, non-linear approach to theater study. Among other topics she discusses the repressed modernist theater director Les Kurbas and the Prague School.

The section 'Reviews' includes the assessments of three books. The first review comments on Irena Makaryk's historical overview of productions of Shakespeare made by Ukrainian modernist theater director Les Kurbas, thus bridging Kornienko's interview. The second provides a detailed comment on the book, which is in our view important for Czech theater students, *Slovník literárněvědného strukturalismu* [A Dictionary of Structuralist Literary Theory and Criticism] edited by Ondřej Sládek and a group of other scholars. The third review introduces the most recent Cognitive Theatre Studies monograph by John Lutterbie, *An Introduction to Theatre, Performance and the Cognitive Sciences* (2020).

Three reports in the 'Events' section focus on the recent events dedicated to theater-related conferences and an exhibition in the Czech Republic. In this issue we include the reports from two conferences hosted by Masaryk University and a detailed overview of the exhibition of works by a Czech artist and designer Inez Tuschnerová.

In the 'Archive' supplement to the volume we present a facsimile of an excerpt from the first translation of *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art* (a terminologically crucial part of Chapter 3, 'Analytic Theory') in form of a typescript by the translator Samuel Kostomlatský with editorial pen-marks by Ivo Osolsobě (m.s., 1984 or earlier). The section offers a transcription of the typescript and shows a re-translation of the same excerpt by Drábek and Kačer (edited by Drozd and McEllan). It briefly discusses certain terminological issues involved and points out various difficulties entailed in the project of translating Zich's *Aesthetics*.

We would like to thank to the team of the Department of Theatre Studies and the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University who supported our efforts in editing this volume, to the editors, translators and proofreaders who worked on the English issue, the authors who contributed to the journal, to the peer-reviewers of the papers, and certainly to the scholars and friends who supported each and every one of us.

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