

Jochmanová, Andrea

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Theatralia. 2023, vol. 26, iss. 1, pp. 138-151

ISSN 1803-845X (print); ISSN 2336-4548 (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/TY2023-1-11>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/digilib.78030>

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Access Date: 18. 02. 2024

Version: 20230517

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Archive of Costume Designer Inez Tuschnerová¹

Andrea Jochmanová²

[archive]

The strong connection of Inez Tuschnerová (1932–2015) – the phenomenon of Czech stage and costume design and inventor of nonwoven *Art Protis* tapestries – with the theatre art started during her studies at the School of the Applied Arts in Brno. From her childhood in Brno she was in touch with Parisian fashion through her aunt who would bring catalogues from Paris to her niece. Tuschnerová, born to a well off family and raised in the extraordinary fashion of Czechoslovakian *haute couture* of the 1930s and 1940s, lost her interest in social-realistic uniformity that came to be the state-promoted style after the communistic putsch in 1948 which radically limited all industries, fashion business included. It was the uniformity and loss of the quality in fashion related to the slump of textile which led her to focus closely on costume design. While the School of the Applied Arts insisted on her learning the trade of state-approved dressmakers, Tuschnerová's focus shifted at the textile school, where she possessed a sewing-machine and could learn the art of sewing and textile knowledge which had been helping her imagination throughout her whole life. Although the programme had been scheduled for three years, Tuschnerová finished the vocational school in two years. In 1949 she started to study fashion, but it did not ignite her interest, so she decided to change her major and moved to the studio of stage design led by the famous stage designer Josef A. Šálek (1911–1990).³ His far-sighted praxis brought him to engage his students in theatre activities by helping him with the realisation of his projects. He himself gave them theoretical and historical lessons not only at school but at the theatre and in his famous workroom which was opened for the creative use of his students in his house.

1 The publication by Andrea Jochmanová is financed by the Ministry of Culture within the framework of institutional financing of the long-term conceptual development of the Moravian Museum (DKRVO, MK000094862).

2 Andrea Jochmanová is researcher in Czech theatre history, interested in the reference between theatre and folklore, theatre and gender, cultural anthropology, storytelling and theory of games. She works as curator of manuscripts and scenography collection at the Department of Theatre History at the Moravian Museum Brno and also as assistant professor at the Department for Theatre Research at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno. Email: andy.jochman@gmail.com.

3 Šálek, born in Vienna, studied there at the Academy of Arts and took lessons at the theatre seminary of Joseph Gregor. His work for the National, later on State Theatre Brno started in 1939 and helped to form the creative profile of the Brno's stage for decades (GERICHOVÁ 2017).

Since her first collections place a great deal of emphasis on the detail, we can clearly see Tuschnerová's approach in the conception of costume design, as well as in the tapestries she started to work on during her studies at the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in 1953–1958, where she ended up through the Studio of Fine Arts with a special focus on the textile. The Studio was run by Alois Fišárek (1906–1980), and it was there that Tuschnerová became acquainted with the tapestry and, more universally, the knowledge of artificial usage of textile. At the same time she was also attending the Studio of Costume Design at the Academy of Arts in Prague led by academic painter Hedvika Vlková (1901–1986), former fashion designer and the heart of one of the famous interwar *haute couture* salons run by Hana Podolská in Prague. Vlková, whom Podolská had been presenting at Parisian fashion shows as a very skillful painter and copier, was giving lessons in fashion and figurative drawing with her sense of detail and vision as the central focus. She led her students to the vision that every single costume design is supposed to be a creative artefact. Here again Tuschnerová took practical lessons in sewing, which Vlková considered a necessary skill for every costume designer.⁴

Shortly before her graduate examination, Tuschnerová was given the opportunity to attend Oskar Kokoschka's summer class in Austrian Salzburg. Spending the summer of 1958 in the School of Sight, which Kokoschka called his training programme, gave her more spontaneity in the process of using the combination of non-conformity of chosen styles and fabric. With all these tools she had learned and with her ambition broadened by her systematic education (e.g., she attended the distance course in aesthetics at Charles University in Prague in 1960–1963), Tuschnerová began searching for the best way to enrol the psychology of stage character in expressive and dynamic drawing.

Along her path in costume design creation – such as her alumni project from 1952 dedicated to theatre, the collection of costume designs for Nikolai Gogol's *Ženitba* [Wedding] prepared only for the prescribed needs of final examination – she grew out of the descriptive detail and stylised expression which she had considered as necessity early in her career. Tuschnerová started to work for theatre in the season of 1953 when she drew up the costume design for Jiří Mahen's *Chroust* [Chafer] at the Regional Theatre (today Municipal Theatre Brno) under the supervision of stage designer Milan Zezula. Her very first independent work led her to her beloved Leoš Janáček and the production of his *Káťa Kabanová* [Katya Kabanova] at the State (today National) Theatre Brno in 1953. After more than 40 years of cooperation with the Brno stage (National/State Theatre) she ended her work for the National Theatre with *Katya Kabanova* in 1994. It is no coincidence that her alumni project in Prague was inspired by Janáček as well: her tapestry *Jenůfa* from 1958 was in the ownership of the Czech Music Fund in Prague.⁵ For this tapestry, she admitted drawing her inspiration from the cycle of arrases with the motives from Mozart which she had seen during her Vienna studies.

4 For more about Vlková see (GORČÍKOVÁ 2012).

5 Tapestries from the Janáček's cycle made according to Tuschnerová's design, such as the ones for *Jenůfa* and *Liška Bystrouška* [The Cunning Little Vixen] are now in the ownership of the Moravian Museum. So far no clue about the location of the tapestry of the announced *Katya Kabanova* has been found; it probably was not realised (see BŘEZINOVÁ 2018: 25).



Fig. 1: King of the Forest Spirits from the Oskar Nedbal's ballet *Pohádka o Honzovi* [Tale of Simple Johnny]. South Bohemian Theatre České Budějovice, 1960. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 2: Carmen (Mária Urbanová or Ľuba Baricová) for the production of Bizet's *Carmen*. Jozef Gregor Tajovský Theatre Banská Bystrica, 1962. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 3: Turandot (Miriam Hynková) in Gozzi's *Princess Turandot*. State Theatre Brno, 1964. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 4: Vladimír (Stanislav Bechynský or Jiří Přichystal) from the Borodin's *Kníže Igor* [Prince Igor]. State Theatre Brno, 1973. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 5: King Richard II (Miloš Kročil) from Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Mrštík Brothers Theatre / Municipal Theatre Brno, 1985. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 6: King Richard II (Miloš Kročil) from Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Mrštík Brothers Theatre / Municipal Theatre Brno, 1985. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 7: Queen Anna (Zdena Herfortová) from Brecht's *The Life of Edward II*. Mrštík Brothers Theatre / Municipal Theatre Brno, 1988. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 8: Anselm (Jiří Dušek) from Molière's *The Miser*. Mrštík Brothers Theatre / Municipal Theatre Brno, 1987. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 9: Angel from Kocmánek's *Actus pobožný o narození Syna božího, Pána našeho, Ježíše Krista* [Actus Preyerful of the Birth of the Son of God, Our Lord, Jesus Christ]. U Jakuba Theatre Brno, 1990. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.



Fig. 10: Prince Orlofský (Hana Horká or Blanka Černá) from Johann Strauss' *The Flittermouse*. National Theatre Brno, 1991. Collections of the Department of Theatre History, Moravian Museum Brno, Czech Republic.

Her monumental composition of expressive figures, contrast of colours and dynamics of textile arrangement emphasise the dramatic bearings of Tuschnerová's perception of Janáček's work.⁶ No wonder she was also one of the inventors of the Czechoslovakian *Art Protis*, a non-woven textile tapestry that in the second half of the 1960s led to international success (e.g., a golden medal from the International Craft Fair in Munich in 1966 and presentation in the Czechoslovakian pavilion at Expo Montreal 1967, and so on). Tuschnerová tried to use this unique technique for the stage as well – in 1967 when she prepared 68 compositions for the costume designs supposed to be realised in the *protis*, *art protis*, and *uni protis* style for the stage realisation of Wagner's *Rienzi* in the National theatre Bratislava. Even though the realisation was not accepted that time, Tuschnerová used *art protis* for a collection of costume designs in 1988 for the production of Brecht's *Život Eduarda Druhého Anglického* [The Life of Edward II] in the State Theatre Brno (see Fig. 7).

At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, her costume designs started to change noticeably. As for the details in figurative drawing, she began to use more shortcuts and the dynamic lead of pencil, pastel, or brush in her draughtsmanship. Tuschnerová started to mark some significant gestures or poses of characters while restraining the expression in faces. The characters were no longer limited by the black contour or any readable lines. The conception of costume seems like a wealthy billowing substance as if the author was attempting to underline the psychology of the character and its temper in the set. In her work on the substance and the expansivity of character, Tuschnerová sometimes emphasised her interpretation with the foam-like alluvium of colour; sometimes she even used spatulas, glue, and textile to reach her goal. As a costume designer, she envisaged the position of the character in the space of play and its position among other characters, she emphasised their hidden masks and their behaviour, as well as the historical context of the drama. She also personally supervised the process of creation for every single costume from the moment of material selection, over the cutting, sewing and dress rehearsals, to the finalisation.

During her career she had made almost one hundred collections of costume designs for various Czechoslovakian theatres, though still mainly for Brno's stages. She cooperated with lots of influential personalities, such as directors Evžen Sokolovský, Miloš Hynšt, Oskar Linhart and Alois Hajda, director and choreographer Luboš Ogoun, or stage designers Miroslav Tomek, Vojtěch Štolfa, Karel Zmrzlý, Milan Zezula, or Ladislav Vychodil. As the inventor of *Art Protis*, she prepared the collection of 68 costume designs for Richard Wagner's *Rienzi* in 1967 (JOCHMANOVÁ and ZAHŘÁDKA 2018: 113–144). Even though this work of Tuschnerová was not used for the set, we see here more evidence of her elemental effort to bring more experiments to the art of costume designs. Later, she had the opportunity to use this original technique in the production of Brecht's *Life of Edward II* (Municipal Theatre Brno, 1988). For the first Czechoslovakian production of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* (State Theatre Brno, 1965) she invented not only the costume design collection but also the oversized head-masks which were

6 See (JOCHMANOVÁ and ZAHŘÁDKA 2018).

reminiscent of puppetry carving (KOVÁŘOVÁ 2004). Her collections of phantastic creatures for Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (State Theatre Brno, 1966) gave the impression of surrealistic dreaming.

Not only was she a very inspiring person with original opinions of art and life or both, she was also a teacher who worked at the School of Applied Arts and later at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts. She helped her students find their artistic expression during the consultations in her senescence.

At the end of her life, she handed almost all of her costume design collection down to the Department of Theatre History at the Moravian Museum Brno. A few months after her ninetieth birthday, we want to commemorate her with this short presentation of her stunning work.

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