

ŠTEFAN VEVAR

Milestones in the development of the Drama Society in Ljubljana (1867–1918)

In the contribution I attempted to record and evaluate those factors in the development of the Drama Society between 1867 and 1918 which were of crucial importance with regard to the foundation of the first Slovene theatre. Being fully aware that the milestones are difficult to tell from the natural course of history or evolution, I eventually selected from the fifty-year journey 14 very heterogeneous factors which I determine to be turning-points. To start with, the influences of previous and recent cultural history cannot be neglected because the society couldn't have been formed from nothing. Further on, two important turning points are the foundation of the society and the circumstances which led to its formation, as well as the establishment of its social (regardless of how irregular) funding, not to mention the beginning of drama teaching and the constant efforts invested in it. Moreover, the milestones include theatrical and dramatic works, the role played by Slovene politics, a gradual transition from dilettantism to professionalisation accompanied by a simultaneous transition from trivial to more serious drama. The list also includes competencies that the society acquired by overcoming various crises, the actor Ignacij Borštnik as a predecessor of a more realistic acting and the indispensable generation of actors and actresses who followed him and upgraded the "dilettante acting" characteristic of reading societies to a more in-depth characterisation. And then Ivan Cankar, whose dramas entered the Slovene theatre stage somewhat hesitantly because they were way ahead of audience expectation, but eventually (especially after the First World War) became foundational. The largest milestone is the birth of a theatre institution – i.e., the Slovene theatre – from a small but very ambitious society, and its nationalisation in 1920.

ABSTRACTS

ALDO MILOHNIĆ

From the Drama Society in Ljubljana to the drama societies across Slovenia

Compared to the massive nature of the reading movement in the mid-19th century, the drama societies despite their scarcity significantly contributed to the development of theatre culture in the Slovene ethnic territory. The author presents some key facts on the foundation and activity of drama societies which were established after the foundation of the Drama Society in Ljubljana in 1867. His overview encompasses all drama societies that the academic literature has thus far listed in this category: in Idrija (1889); Trieste (1902), Maribor (1909), Celje (1911) and Ptuj (1912, as a sub-society of Maribor Drama Society; since 1918 as an autonomous one). He also includes the Theatre Society in Jesenice (1910) which has been – most likely because of a different title – left out of previous discussions. The author analyses the contribution of these societies to the development of Slovene theatre at the turn of the 19th into the 20th century as well as their significance in a broader cultural and social context. He also draws attention to the initiative for the foundation of the Association of Drama Societies, which has only been mentioned sporadically and in fragments in academic literature to this day.

DARJA KOTER

Josip Nolli – the pioneer of the Drama Society in Ljubljana

The Drama Society in Ljubljana founded in 1867 was an important element in the development of Slovene theatre. One of the society's founding members was Josip Nolli (1841–1902), a lawyer by training, as well as a great patriot and thespian: an actor, singer, director and translator of theatre plays. His activity in the fields of Slovene music and theatre is divided into two periods, the first from 1864 to 1875, when he became a member of the opera in Zagreb and made an international career as a singer; and from 1890 until his death in 1902, when he was the principal

director of opera performances of the professional National Theatre in Ljubljana. As a pioneer of the Drama Society, Nolli participated in all its core activities, such as translations and publishing of dramatic texts, fostering the production of original works in Slovene, directing and education for theatre professions. In the organisation of theatre activities he followed the Czech examples. To meet the needs of education of theatre people he and his colleagues translated and adapted to Slovene conditions a Czech didactic manual they titled *Priročna knjiga za glediške diletante* [A Handy Book for Theatre Dilettantes, 1868]. Josip Nolli was the first great authority of the Slovene national theatre.

ALEŠ GABRIČ

The last decades of the Drama Society and its dissolution in 1948

When after the First World War the Slovene theatre in Ljubljana was nationalised and the responsibility for its activity was taken over by the state, the Drama Society lost some of the functions that had been written into its constitutional documents. When in the mid-1920s the society became active again, its tasks were limited in number. The society organised competitions to promote the writing of original Slovene drama and opera works but only granted the awards once. In the period between the two world wars, it mainly financially supported local students at the academies of music and people from theatre on their study trips and further training. With one exception, the society didn't take a stand on the relevant political or broader social issues nor join other important Slovene cultural societies in the preparation of memorandum on the needs of Slovene culture after the occupation and dismemberment of Slovenia in 1941. During and after the Second World War the society merely vegetated, hence its last board, presided over by Fran Saleški Finžgar, decided to dissolve it. In compliance with the society's statute, the participants of the general meeting held on 14th January 1948 unanimously adopted the decision. Upon the dissolution of the Drama Society the tasks listed in its constitutional documents had already been performed by professional cultural institutions funded by the Slovene state budget.

NADJA ZGONIK

The Drama Society and the national iconography from the society's foundation to the First World War

Similar to other non-independent European nations, the national awakening of Slovenes who lived within the bounds of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy began with the Spring of Nations in 1848. In the 1860's, the process of building Slovene national identity began with the first non-institutional forms in culture, initially reading centres, followed by societies and similar non-governmental organisations. The Slovene language was a distinctive mark of Slovene culture, which transformed from a neutral means of communication into a national symbol. Dramatic theatre based on language became one of the most important platforms of the national transformation and the credit for this goes to the Slovene Drama Society founded in 1867. It organised competitions to foster the production of original Slovene drama and explored the national myths which, contrary to other nations, didn't draw from history but rather the life of the ordinary man and his social distress. At the time, the national iconography was illustrated by popular *tableaux vivants* in the form of historical allegories and national personifications which were included in the performances or celebrations held in honour of important events. The theatre was instrumentalised and performed different social and political functions; it was a place of amusement, a political stage, a place for public debates, an educational institution, linguistic centre and more, with these objectives: the cultural advancement of the Slovene nation, social development, political independence and an equal status in relation to other European nations.

GAŠPER TROHA

The Drama Society and its influence on the development of the Slovenian drama between 1867 and 1892

The foundation of the Drama Society in 1867 marks the beginning of continual professional theatre activity in the territory of Slovenia. There is no theatre without

drama texts, as there is no drama development without the possibility of its theatrical realisation. The contribution investigates the relations between the development of the original Slovene drama and theatre between 1867 and 1892, a period which can be divided into three parts. The first, which lasts until 1878, is characterised by the increase in number of original texts. In terms of genre, these texts included comedies and farces of lower genres inspired by popular Viennese drama as well as Linhart's adaptations (*Županova Micka* and *Matiček se ženi*). The second period coincides with the crisis of the Drama Society from 1878 to 1885, when not a single original text was produced. The third period is marked by the return of Ignacij Borštnik from his studies in Vienna, soon becoming the lead actor, a director and even a playwright. This period is characterised by Borštnik's interest in realism both in terms of acting and repertory. Borštnik and Josip Vošnjak who both wrote proto-realist dramas deserve special mention among playwrights of the time, although during the 1890s in particular Vošnjak with his dramas *Lepa Vida* and *Doktor Dragan* turned more towards realism. The latter influenced the dramatic writing of Ivan Cankar, who represents the first peak in the history of Slovene drama, the point at which it clearly was on a par with European drama in general.

IVO SVETINA

Tugomer, the Slovenian tribal hero

The contribution deals with the first Slovene tragedy, *Tugomer*, published in book form in 1876. The peculiarity of this play is that it has two authors, Josip Jurčič and Fran Levstik. Levstik not only adapted Jurčič's prose tragedy to verse, he also altered the concept of the tragic hero Tugomer, the leader of Slavs in the fight against Germanic peoples. Rather than exploring the differences between the two plays, the contribution tackles the question regarding what is the tragic fate of the main character and what makes the tragedy authentic to this day considering its staging in Ljubljana's Drama in 2014. The focal point of interest in this play, considered by Bratko Kreft "*the greatest artistic and national manifestation born out the programme and mission of the Drama Society*" is the subject of Tugomer as a "tribal hero," as it relates to Taras Kermauner's *Tugomer, slovenski plemenski junak* [*Tugomer, a Slovene tribal hero*] from 1991, the subject of loyalty to one's tribe (nation) and treason and collaboration with foreigners (Germanic peoples) that want to subdue the tribe (nation). In doing so, at least a rough comparison between Prešeren's *The Baptism on the Savica* and *Tugomer* – i.e., between

Črtomir and Tugomer, cannot be avoided. According to the contribution, Tugomer is still our hero, a tragic character, because from the national liberation war to this day the Slovenes haven't been able to objectively evaluate the tragic quality of treason and collaboration that caused fratricide and transformed winners into tragic heroes.

MATEJA PEZDIRC BARTOL

The development of the Slovenian bourgeois drama at the end of the 19th century and *The Lady of the Camellias (Camille)*

In the second half of the 19th century, upon the advent of bourgeois drama the Slovene theatre experienced important developmental shifts. Its origins can be traced to Stritar's short drama scenes *Pismo* and *Kita* from 1870, a beginning that culminated at the end of the century with three plays written by Josip Vošnjak, *Lepa Vida*, *Doktor Dragan* and *Premogar*, before Ivan Cankar's *Romantične duše* and the works of Zofka Kveder and Alojz Kraigher. Slovene bourgeois drama was inspired in part by French drama – for instance, Duma's *La Dame aux Camélias* (commonly known in English as *Camille*). It was a global theatre success at the time and also performed on the stage of the Provincial Theatre in 1893 and 1895. Its staging enabled the first Slovene actresses to prove themselves in the resounding roles of major dramatic characters. The contribution explores the similarities between *La Dame aux Camélias*, Vošnjak's *Lepa Vida* and Cankar's *Romantične duše*, which are particularly evident in the formation of female characters, love scenes, the role of a father/mother as well as in dramatic structure. Bourgeois drama brought to Slovene theatre new types of characters, contemporary subjects and new settings – i.e. the bourgeois salon, which becomes a social space with symbolic representations. Novelties in terms of motifs and themes are mainly reflected in the entrapment in the bonds of a bourgeois marriage where only a man can commit a sin whereas a woman has to come to a tragic end so that the code and morals of the society are preserved.

BLAŽ LUKAN

The repertory of the Drama Society in the first decade of its activity

The contribution addresses the repertory of the first decade of activity of the Drama Society. The analysis of the repertory shows that it perfectly reflects the status of Slovene theatre at the time, as well as the culture, society, audience and language. In fact, it approaches with doubt the thesis which is prevalent in our older theatre history or contemporary critique with hardly any exception (we can mention Stritar's picturesque description of translated repertory as “*nothing but garbage*”), which is that the Drama Society had an inadequate repertoire that did not mirror the actual advance or ambitions in Slovene culture, society, theatre and art. It also demonstrates that less than a decade after *Slovene theatre* was formed as a term, this theatre already reflected and vaguely indicated every single principal circumstance for its real constitution, of course in compliance with its – also historical – capacities. The process of repertory maturing in the examined decade was not completed because a series of requirements which eventually contributed to the final formation of Slovene theatre as a national, political, cultural and aesthetic “apparatus” still required fulfilment; they can be considered three basic requirements combining the whole of them: professionalisation, institutionalisation and Europeanisation. The first decade lays goods foundations for that.

TONE SMOLEJ

The French repertory of the Drama Society (1867–1907)

In his contribution, the author addresses the first four decades (1867–1907) of the Drama Society activity when over 80 different French plays were performed or a total of more than 210 premieres and reprises; of the entire repertory, every sixth play was French. The author points to the fact that all major French playwrights of the 19th century were staged (including romanticists, representatives of bourgeois theatre, theatre of ideas, and naturalists) which can also be attributed to the number

of translators (Svetič, Hostnik) who studied French in Vienna. Interestingly, some leading Slovene writers (Stritar, Jurčič, Levstik) were very reserved with regard to French drama. Provincial censorship was very active at the turn of the century, deleting from the texts any mockery of the military, public servants, and religious beliefs. The only play actually forbidden during this period was Hennequin's comedy *Florette and Patapon*. In the second part of the contribution, the author explores the reception of some of the authors whose works were most often staged (Scribe, Sardou, Labiche). While in the translation of Scribe's *Adrienne Lecouvreur* Alojzij Benkovič left out some allusions to the French classicists, in his translation of Labiche's comedy *Le voyage de monsieur Perrichon* Franc Svetič congenially translated the plays on words.

IRENA AVSENIK NABERGOJ

Stagings of the opera and theatre pieces with the Jewish topic within the Drama Society, 1867–1918

In the European and consequently Slovene culture as well, relations with Jews were always charged with a number of prejudices, stereotypes and traces of anti-Semitism. These are in evidence in the selected dramas staged in the Slovene opera and theatre. They are often related to the figures of Biblical history or reflect the knowledge of the Jewish fate in the past or contemporary historical reality.

The contribution is focused on the period from 1867 to about 1918, which was characterised by intense activity of the Drama Society when several productions illuminating the issue of Jewish identity were staged in Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje and Trieste: Monsental's biblical play *Deborah* which became famous in English under the title *Leah, the Forsaken*, Shakespeare's comedy *The Merchant of Venice*, Halévy's opera *La Juive*, Goerner's one-act play *Potiphar's Wife*, Vetterlein's biblical play *Joseph and His Brothers*, Cavallotti's one-act play *Jepthah and His Daughter*, Wild's play *Salome*, Weiss' folk opera *Der polnische Jude* and Špicar's play *Miklova Zala*.

In some performances there is a trace of stereotype regarding the Jews rooted in the majority culture (*Deborah, La Juive*), such as slyness, demonic power and greed, and the motifs of hiding their identity, suffering and their wandering. On the other hand, the reviews of productions in the newspapers *Slovenski narod*, *Slovenec*, *Ljubljanski zvon* and *Dom in svet* don't demonstrate such fear of Jewish 'colonisation' as is evident in other articles. The critics only rarely write about the inappropriateness of the Jewish

topic on stage and they often compliment the Slovenes for their more liberal attitude to the Jews than that in the Germanic territories. It seems that in reviewing the productions of the Drama Society which laid the foundations of the Slovene theatre, the critics were a lot more interested in the development of Slovene acting, the quality of actors and the 'purity' of the Slovene language on stage than addressing either the content or the ideological character of the plays.

GREGOR POMPE

The Drama Society and the beginnings of opera performances in Slovenia: the repertory's analysis

The comparison of the repertory of the Ljubljana Opera House in individual historical periods (from the foundation of the Drama Society until the relocation to the new building of the Provincial Theatre; from the relocation until the First World War; from the end of the First World War until the end of the Second World War; from the end of the Second World War until Slovenia's independence; from independence until today) aims to illustrate the repertory characteristics of the Ljubljana Opera House during the activity of the Drama Society (in particular from 1918 until the end of the Second World War) as opposed to other European theatres of similar provincial status. It shows that since the relocation to the Provincial Theatre, the repertoire was both in terms of national origin of works as well as genres balanced and that new works were relatively quickly staged. "Aging and shrinking of repertory only became evident after the Second World War when it displayed a number of anomalies: distinctive lack of German opera (R. Wagner, R. Strauss), contemporary music-theatre works and baroque opera. One of the principal characteristics of the repertory during the activity of the Drama Society is its orientation to the Slavonic, which can be attributed to the absence of Slovene opera; for instance, Slovene audiences identified with Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, a Czech national opera.

IGOR GRDINA

Gorenjski slavček 1872

The libretto *Gorenjski slavček* by Lujiza Pesjak from 1872 was written as a text for “lyrical operetta”. The author, who had a relatively good insight into the musical and theatre practice of her time, pointed out with this rather unusual genre label the predominance of the lyrical over the comical element. The actions of individual stage characters are motivated accordingly. It is impossible to find a negative character; complications and issues are consequence of the conduct of figures that are only reported and not actually present on the scene. Comedy is only related to some non-central characters, while the story-line draws attention to the broader problems of the Slovene territory. Other than having a patriotic tendency, the work is critical of the situation in the Habsburg Monarchy which ignored the pauperisation of the lower strata of the population and the usury by the wealthier. *Gorenjski slavček*, with the music composed by Anton Foerster, can also be understood as a gift from Lujiza Pesjak to her daughter Helena who became an acknowledged opera singer in the time of the libretto’s first publication; she appeared in the Dresden opera and also established herself as a music teacher (she was very much appreciated by Anna von Mildenburg).

The characters in the adaptation of *Gorenjski slavček* into an opera – the new libretto was the work of the Czech Emanuel František Züngel – were substantially changed. Chansonette who was transformed into a complete foreigner (in the operetta he was a well naturalised immigrant from France) was transposed from the lyrical into the comic sphere. Consequent to the new concept of this character who in the operetta is not only well-intentioned but also understands the Slovene situation, his aria revealing Pesjak’s knowledge of soprano repertory (enumeration of roles in which Chansonette sees Minka) was omitted. In general, Züngel accentuated contrasts among characters and thereby applied in *Gorenjski slavček* the usual forms of comic opera. However, these elements could not be fully realised because of the patriotic tendency of the work. In its final version, *Gorenjski slavček* became a cheerful opera with a happy ending but the actions of individual characters are less substantiated than in the operetta.

PETER BEDJANIČ

Opera singer Emil Scaria (1840–1886)

It has been documented that the members of at least two generations of the world renowned bass Emil Scaria lived and worked in Kranj as respectable members of the bourgeoisie. According to some sources, the family name used to be Škarja which would signify its Slovene origin, but this fact is refuted by other sources, including Slovene ones. Emil Scaria was born in Graz in 1840 as the son of the esteemed doctor Johann, who was born in Kranj. After a short study of singing he made a failed debut in Pest in 1860, and following a few more failures and further study in London he started to work in Dresden. His extremely voluminous and at the same time beautiful voice, together with his acting talent, made quite an appearance on stage and it didn’t take long before he conquered opera stages (mainly in the German-speaking lands). In 1871 he was engaged by the Vienna State Opera, which provided him excellent conditions for work. The number and range of his tours expanded and he even sang in the United States of America. According to reviews he was considered the leading world bass of his time. The culmination of his career was his role in the world premiere of Richard Wagner’s *Parsifal* at Bayreuth in 1882. Ten years before he appeared in two pieces on the stage of the German Opera Theatre in Ljubljana and introduced the local opera audience and critics to the highest standards of the art of opera. As a descendant of a family that used to live in this territory, he donated a substantial part of his fee to the locals.

HENRIK NEUBAUER

The beginning of ballet in Slovenia

The Slovene audience (in Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje and Ptuj) first became acquainted with ballet performances in the second half of the 18th century through the tours of German and Italian theatre companies. The first Slovene ballet company was founded immediately after the First World War in 1918 in Ljubljana and after the Second World War in Maribor. The beginnings were very promising because in the 1920s the ballet

company in Ljubljana gained in quality and in number of members. After 1923, and despite the efforts of the ballet masters responsible for the company, it diminished in number from over 20 to as few as 7 ballerinas. In such a reduced form it was taken over in 1928 by the Russian ballet master Peter Gresserov-Golovin. The small company participated in a lot of operas and operettas and also presented a ballet evening once a year. In the mid-1930s it was gradually joined by male dancers and experienced somewhat of a boom before and after the Second World War with the arrival of Lidija Wisiak, Boris Pilato, Maks Kirbos and other new members. Other than Golovin, the choreographies were also the work of Maks Froman, Pia and Pino Mlakar as well as Pilato and Kirbos. At the end of the Second World War, when Golovin's era was over, the ensemble was both in terms of quantity and quality enhanced. After the war, Golovin and Kirbov laid good foundations for the existence and progress of the second Slovene ballet company in Maribor. This period of the Slovene ballet was also the time when new works were produced by Slovene composers.

KATARINA PODBEVŠEK

The Drama Society – the initiator of acting (speech) education

With the organisation of the acting school (1869), where other than singing, studying recitation and acting were the principal subjects, the Drama Society contributed to the gradual improvement of the non-cultivated speech of “dilettantes”. Considering the absence of a Slovene stage speech tradition, the first teachers mainly drew from their acting-singing practice and imitation of foreign acting models. *Priročna knjiga za glediške diletante* [*A Handy Book for Theatre Dilettantes*] (1868, Josip Noll and Josip Stare), translated from the Czech and adapted to local conditions, was the first attempt to systematise the individual modes of expression of an actor (speech, facial expression, gesture, body language) and thereby provided grounds for the later forms of organised speech learning. Despite of its sporadic activity, the school performed an important function, raising awareness of “dilettantes” as to the importance of education, promoting further training and contributing to the gradual formation of a more complex (speech) aesthetics that resulted in a more natural acting (speech) and abandonment of affected speech patterns. Credit can also be given to the first actors trained abroad (in Vienna, Prague), for instance Zofija and Ignacij Borštnik, Avgusta and Anton Danilo, Anton Verovšek, Hinko Nučič, who occasionally returned to the Slovene stage (and also did the teaching). The development of actors' speech can also

in part be attributed to a contemporary, at the time rather advanced, linguistics (the first orthography, grammar books, dictionaries), in particular the efforts of Stanislav Škrabec toward a publicly spoken Slovene that could compete with German.

BARBARA OREL

The Drama Society and the beginnings of theatre education in Slovenia

In 1869, the Drama Society in Ljubljana founded a drama school, which was the beginning of organised theatre education in the Slovene ethnic territory. The contribution explores its development (until 1914 when activities terminated); and based on the analysis of curriculum, teachers' and students' testimonies illustrates the gradual increase in the school's quality. During the period of its irregular activity, 1869–1885, the classes (mentored by Dragoila Ody, Kornelija Šolmajer, Anton Trstenjak and others) were intended for theatre dilettantes in order that they acquire the skills of recitation, singing and movement on stage. During the period of regular activity, 1886–1914, the teachers were former students who studied abroad, in particular in Vienna and Prague (Ignacij Borštnik, Anton Danilo, Anton Verovšek, Hinko Nučič, Milan Skrbinšek, etc.), and the curriculum with the emphasis on dramatic acting gained a theoretical dimension. After 1918 the Drama Society no longer executed the role of the principal decision-maker with regard to theatre education. It collaborated (under the title of theatre consortium and together with Glasbena matica Ljubljana) in the foundation of a three-year drama school of the Yugoslav conservatorium for music and the art of acting (1919–1921), which was the first attempt to include theatre education into advanced education in Slovenia. In addition, the Drama Society provided financial support to the drama school of the Theatre Actors Association of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1922/23) and education of Slovene theatre artists abroad (from the fund of the Rajko Arce Institute – from 1924 and in particular in the 1930s).