



RADOST THEATER

The professional theater for children and young adults has been operating in Brno since 1949. Its founder and first director was the teacher and prominent amateur puppeteer director Vladimír Matoušek, who was one of the leading personalities of the interwar generation of Czech puppetry. The Radost Theater currently focuses on cooperation with prominent European and domestic artists. A specific part of the Radost Theatre is the theater of form, which uses puppets in a broad sense and combines the ensemble's musical arrangements with the expressive artistic interpretations of the stage productions. The repertoire is aimed at children from the age of six months, but also young adults, and adult audiences. The theater also organizes its own biannual international Radost Festival. Teacher and head of the Department of Aesthetics at the Pedagogical Research Institute, František Tenčík, first realized that Brno needed a new puppet theater back in September 1945. His choice of director was Vladimír Matoušek, a prominent amateur puppeteer director of the interwar years. The future Radost Theater was based in the building of the former Orania cinema in Bratislavská Street No. 32. Semi-professional operation of the theatre began in October 1947, and within two years Vladimír Matoušek had compiled his artistic team.

Professional activities of the theater date back to October 25, 1949. At first, the twelve-member ensemble included actresses Zora Bilková-Matoušková and Ružena Kolářová, director and actor Josef Kaláb, as well as visual artist Jarmila Majerová. Shortly after, Mirko Matoušek, Marcel Halouzka, Jitka Kalábová and the visual artist Karel Hlavaty also joined the ensemble, among other people. From the beginning, the Radost Theatre sought to create its own dramaturgical and production profile.

It mainly staged original plays from domestic authors. Some productions from the late 1950s became an integral part of the history of Czech puppet theater. By this time and under the guidance of director Františka Pavla Kainarová, the Radost Theatre had completed its first major foreign tours (Vietnam and Mongolia in 1956, and India, Ceylon, Indonesia, Cambodia, Egypt in 1958), where it received an extraordinary response from its audiences, as well as many accomplishments and awards. The theater building underwent its first extensive reconstruction and (at the time unique) modernization of the stage as well as backstage.

The artistic leadership as well as the production style changed during the first half of the 1960s. Director Jiří Jaroš brought new ideas and techniques, such as mask theatrical, pantomime, and black light theater. The productions at the Radost Theatre became more focused on comedy, and were more raucous and action packed.

In the 1970s, the newly appointed director and dramaturge Pavel Vašíček formulated a program of magical realism, which made great use of the existing artistic potential of the group: sophistication, lyricism, but also a sense of humor – all this combined with perfect puppet animation. During his time at the Radost Theatre, he also introduced productions for young adults and adult audiences to the repertoire. In the 1970s, exquisite poetic productions for children (e.g., Karafiát's Fireflies (1970)), as well as impressive grotesque parables for adult audiences were created.

In the 1980s, a graduate of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) in Brno, director Zoja Mikotová, who, among other things, very successfully staged Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* (1982), joined the ensemble. One of her productions has remained in the theater's repertoire to this day.

In the mid-1990s, Vlastimil Peška became the director and artistic director. He placed more emphasis on the musical component than traditional puppetry. Vlastimil Peška also initiated the large-scale reconstruction of all the theatre spaces.

In 2020, scenographer Pavel Hubička became the director of the Radost Theater. He brought the emphasis back onto the use of puppets and the distinctive artistic representation of the productions to the repertoire.

IT'S A JOY! A GUMPE INTO THE WORLDS OF PUPPETS

Johannes Doctor Faust / Johannes Doktor Faust

The story of the famous scholar Faust, who longed for wealth and knowledge so much that he sold his soul to the devil, was performed by nomadic folk puppeteers back in the 18th century. The production at the Radost Theatre was inspired not only by the original script of Matěj Kopecký (a famous Czech puppeteer of the first half of the 19th century), but the sculptor František Vitek also kept as much as possible to the traditional form of these marionettes, with which families of puppeteers toured throughout Bohemia and Moravia.

František Vitek

Sculptor, stage designer, puppet technologist, and puppet performer František Vitek (*1929) worked at the Radost Theater in Brno between 1955 and 1958. In 1958, he transferred, along with director Vladimír Matoušek, to the East Bohemian Puppet Theater in Hradec Králové, where he worked until 1981. His work reflects the craftsmanship of the sculptor along with the boundless imagination of the artist. In 2016, together with his wife Věra Řičařová, he received the prestigious Thálie Award for lifelong proficiency of puppetry.

Viera Popovová Sommernitzová

Artist, stage designer, and painter Viera Popovová Sommernitzová (*1945) studied between 1964 and 1968 at the Academy of Performing Arts (AMU) in Prague under the guidance of prof. R. Lander. Subsequently, between 1968 and 1969, she continued her studies at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague (VŠUP) with the famous Czech artist, puppeteer, and animator prof. Jiří Trnka. After some time, however, she abandoned her career as a theater stage designer and fully devoted herself to the visual arts.

Fireflies / Broučci

This is a fairytale about three generations of fireflies and their lives, which are closely entwined with nature and the annual cycle. The book was first published in 1876, and its author, the village priest Jan Karafiát, expressed through it his thoughts on relationships between people, their birth and death, ethical standards, and basic life truths. After the communists took over in 1948, it was practically impossible to publish the book due to its distinctive and strictly Christian foundations. This only changed with the easing of the political situation around 1968. Fireflies has premiered four times at the Radost theater, with the first one being directed by Pavel Vašíček in 1970.

Today you can see some of the puppets dressed in national costumes, but this is not how they dressed in the performance. They obtained their costumes in 1977, when the Radost Theater went on a foreign tour to Cuba, Mexico, and Venezuela. The production had finished by that time, but the director Vašíček had some of the puppets dressed in national costumes and rehearse a free range of folk songs with them, which the actors then performed with during the tour.

The Prince and the Pauper / Princ a chudáš

The puppets were designed for the production by the artist Hana Cigánová, and they were created and sculpted in such a way that the facial expressions came to life under certain lighting and ways of manipulation, or even by tilting the puppet's head. In contrast to the beginnings of modern puppet theater in the 1950s, the actors now no longer hid under the stage or behind the curtains, but quite led the puppets quite openly around the stage.

Hana Cigánová

Prominent Slovak stage and costume designer Hana Cigánová (*1944) devoted herself to puppets not only in practice while working on leading Czechoslovak puppet stages, but also as a teacher participating in the formation of the Department of Puppet Creation at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. In her work, she accentuated costume as a unique addition to the performance on stage. The wooden marionette heads that she designed have expressive emotions written on their faces, but she would also use body puppets and mask theater.

Love Letter on the Go / Psaničko na cestách

The fairy tale by Karel Čapek tells the story of how a postman Mr. Kolbaba tries to deliver a love letter on which the amorous chauffeur Frantík forgot to write the addressee's name. The operetta *Love Letter on the Go* was created at the Radost Theatre based on this fairy tale in 1993. The very original, although sometimes quite heavy, puppets that the actors has to struggle with were designed by artist and set designer Michal Hejmovský. In 2003, the Radost Theatre even took *Love Letter on the Go* to the theater festival in Madrid!

Sleeping Beauty, or The Magic Theatre / O Šípkové Růžence aneb Kouzelné divadlo

Artist and stage designer Michal Hejmovský also designed the puppets for the Radost Theatre's performance of *Sleeping Beauty or The Magic Theater*. The author of the dramatization remarked that he wanted to "show how a well-known fairy tale is created, how it is made, and how it can be performed on stage." Therefore, without hiding, the performance showed the magic of the theater with lights, sounds, and changes of decoration. Six actors played all the characters from the fairy tale, including the castle raven Arnošt, who described the events happening on stage.

Michal Hejmovský

Artist and stage designer Michal Hejmovský (*1964) is a graduate of the Toy and Puppet Department at the Secondary School of Applied Arts in Prague. He comes from a puppeteer family: his grandmother Zdena Hradská worked in an amateur puppet theater in Moravia, and his mother, artist and puppeteer Miluše Hradská, graduated from the puppetry department of DAMU in Prague. Michal Hejmovský first worked as an artistic sculptor at the Central Puppet Theater in Prague, later working independently as a sculptor and stage designer. He has collaborated with Czech, Slovak, and Polish puppet theaters, and his work has been included in exhibitions in France, Brazil, and the USA.

Vlasta kicked Vlasta, or The Maiden's War in Bohemia / Vlasta kopla Vlastu aneb Divčí válka v Čechách

The legend of the Maiden's War depicts the tragic conflict between the matriarchy and the patriarchy, but in this production the creators emphasized the comic side of the male and female struggle. The group of puppets is led by Princess Libuše, who acts as a kind of totem. During the performance, small puppets, members of the Bohemian tribe, were placed on her wide skirt.

Irena Marečková

Puppeteer, costume and stage designer, and teacher at the Department of Alternative Theater of DAMU in Prague, Irena Marečková (*1956) Irena Marečková (*1956) studied art and technology at the puppetry department of the Theater Academy of Performing Arts (KALD DAMU). For most of her career, she worked without a permanent engagement in collaboration with various theaters in the Czech Republic and abroad, including Slovakia, Poland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Estonia, and Japan. In addition to the puppet theater, she also designed stages and costumes for drama, opera, alternative or movement productions. In her distinctive style, she liked to combine different types of puppets, different materials, and styles. She combined her rich imagination with her craftsmanship and technical knowledge.

Baba Yaga, or Petrushka and Ivanek / Baba Jaga aneb Petruška a Ivánek

The set design for this classic Russian fairy tale about love and the intrigue that it had to overcome utilized the bright colors of traditional folk clothes and a strong element of patchwork. The picturesqueness was emphasized even more by the use of hand puppets.

The Bagpiper of Strakonice / Strakonický dudák

The dramatic tale *The Bagpiper of Strakonice* by playwright J. K. Tyl dates back to the mid-19th century. Its subject is a rumor about a poor Bohemian bagpiper who set out into the world to earn enough money to marry his beloved Doroška. The puppets in *The Bagpiper of Strakonice* belong to the so-called trick puppets. They are not used in the classical way in the foreground of the stage, but rather serve as a background for the live actors in scenes where it was necessary to "multiply" the number of characters of wild forest women and fairies. Therefore, only their faces and chest are prominent, the rest of the body is only indicated by the cloth of the dress. The puppets rest on poles that are controlled by the actors from below. They protruded from the decorations and thanks to the tube of the dress, which can be stretched like an accordion, they could be lengthened or shortened as required.

Sylva Zimula Hanáková

Sylva Zimula Hanáková (*1967) graduated from the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University in Brno and stage design at the Theater Faculty of JAMU. After completing her studies, she became a member of the Goose on a String Theater from 1991 to 1995. She is one of the most prominent Czech costume designers in theater, film, and television. She collaborated on respected theater sets throughout the country, also designing costumes for film and television. She worked with the Radost Theater mostly between 2008 and 2012 and, in addition to the puppets, she also created highly acclaimed masks for the street parade held during the international Theatre World Brno festival.

Buffalo Bill Once upon a time in Moravia A.D. 1906 / Buffalo Bill tenkrát na Moravě LP 1906

Indians and wild horse riders, sharpshooters and their tricks, a traveling spectacle called the Wild West Show parade before the eyes of the audience. The production also deals with the theme of Czech and Slovak migration to the USA, and therefore even the set design accompanied by the puppets takes on the sublime nomadic nature of the story. Everything unfolds around the suitcase of the main hero and the packed crates that the Buffalo Bill show travels with. The puppets in the production present the actors of the story from 1906 in a sequence of wild chases and stunts, but it is also about the theatrical puppets themselves, literally the working tools of the main character, actor Bořivoj Horák, the materialization of his memories of old adventures.

Pavel Hubička

Artist and stage designer Pavel Hubička (*1966) is a graduate of stage design from the Department of Alternative Theater DAMU in Prague. He works as a stage designer on Czech and foreign stages, mainly in Poland, but also in Sweden, Estonia, Russia, Hungary, and Slovakia. He has designed stages for about 180 theater productions. In addition to stage design, he also designs theater architecture, theater posters, and book illustrations. He became the director of the Radost Theater in 2020.



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