TRIAL BY THEATRE

REPORTS ON CZECH DRAMA

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Barbara Day

Trial by Theatre

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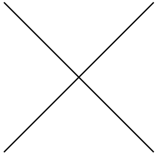

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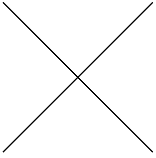

PREFACE

In the country now called the Czech Republic, the 1960s are known nostalgically as the *Zlatá šedesátá*, the "Golden Sixties." For a quarter of a century, Czechoslovakia had been shrouded in Nazi and Stalinist totalitarianism, but seemed in that decade to be emerging into a time of freedom. Czechs were looking forward to speaking and behaving as they wished, without fear of betrayal. The political hopes of the period, summed up in the phrase "Socialism with a human face," proved an illusion. But the Prague Spring itself was not; the decade of the sixties really was a time when literature and the arts flourished. Freedom of speech culminated in the summer of '68, when censorship was abolished.

I was fortunate enough to be there. Intrigued by meetings with young Slovaks and Czechs in Italy and France,* I found a way to cross the Iron Curtain by means of the bilateral cultural exchange programme administered by the British Council. In October 1965 I registered in the Drama Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU). I was overwhelmed—by the beauty of Prague, by the eagerness of new acquaintances to introduce me to their culture. Everyone went to the theatre, it seemed, and moreover had connections to someone working in it. My most important discovery was the Theatre on the Balustrade (*Divadlo Na zábradlí*); at first Ladislav Fialka's mime company, whose production *Fools* (1965) had a poetry and intensity I had never experienced in the British theatre. Then I met the drama company, led by the theatre director Jan Grossman with his close colleague, the playwright Václav

* This was in 1963 and 1964, when travel restrictions began to ease; students from the Bratislava Academy of Performing Arts (*Vysoká škola múzických umení*, VŠMU) brought Pavel Kohout's musical version of *Around the World in 80 Days* to Parma's 11th Festival Internazionale del Teatro Universitario. The student group included the future stars of Czechoslovak theatre, Emília Vášáryová and Marián Labuda.

Havel—Czechoslovakia's future president. Within weeks I had seen Havel's first plays in their original productions,* as well as Jan Grossman's iconic *Ubu Roi* (1964). In May 1966 I was watching the rehearsals for Grossman's dramatisation of Kafka's *The Trial*.

As a fresh graduate from Manchester University's department of drama, I was accustomed to the hierarchy of English theatre. But in my discovery of the Czech theatre, I found myself running neck and neck with luminaries of the British theatre: Peter Brook, Martin Esslin, Kenneth Tynan, Peter Daubeny… In the spring of 1967 and 1968, the Theatre on the Balustrade was a highlight of London's World Theatre Season; I was there, employed in an undefined role backstage. In June 1968 I returned to Prague hoping to negotiate a more defined role—until we were woken before dawn one August morning by the thunder of Soviet aircraft.†

Over the next few years I watched from a distance the gradual demolition of the society that had so engaged me. The country entered its third phase of totalitarianism. The lowest point came in 1979, with the imprisonment of the playwright who, in 1966, had lent me the first English translations of his plays: Václav Havel. I realised that not only had the whole world of the 1960s disappeared and its playwrights, directors, and dramaturges been dismissed, expelled, or otherwise silenced, but that the period could not be written about *at all*, that its names and activities were being erased from history. In an unserious moment I observed that the ban could not apply to me; I was beyond the jurisdiction of President Husák's "Normalisation." The observation was taken seriously by the scholar and expert in Russian theatre, Edward Braun; in 1980 I was accepted for postgraduate study at Bristol University, researching the history of the Theatre on the Balustrade and the small stages of the 1960s.

On my return to Prague in 1982, I was registered in the Department of Theatre Studies of the Arts Faculty of Charles University. A remorseless purge had been operating in the faculty throughout the 1970s; a process that had involved not simply the abolition of departments and the dismissals of academic staff, but long drawn-out appeals, examinations, justifications, and assessments followed by constant checks, in an effort to ensure the faculty's loyalty to the regime.‡ In retrospect, I appreciate all the more the assistance I was given by my ironical consultant, the theatre historian Milan Lukeš, and

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* *The Garden Party* (1963) and *The Memorandum* (1965).

† AN-12s carrying tanks.

‡ In the early part of this century, this operation was the subject of research project *KSČ na FF UK 1969–1989* (The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at the Arts Faculty of Charles University 1969–1989) funded by Charles University, the Academy of Sciences, and the Czech Science Foundation. The resulting literature can be found in the Bibliography.

by those he suggested I should met. At the same time, I sought out my old contacts; knowing now what humiliations these practitioners and scholars had suffered and the risks they still ran, I look back with amazement at the willingness with which archives and memories were opened. I remember a visit to a windowless archive where the theatre historian Jindřich Černý introduced me to the daughter of the philosopher Jan Patočka; the lilac-scented, crumbling Sova Mills on Kampa Island, where I interviewed the theatre historian Vladimír Just; an enigmatic summons from the head of the Theatre Institute, Eva Soukupová; and long conversations with Jan Grossman in his apartment on the Vltava embankment. Later, I brought copies of articles I had written for the British press to Karel Král in the documentation department of the Theatre Institute; and met Anna Freimanová, who was secretly working on the samizdat journal *O divadle*, in the corridors of the National Museum's theatre department, where she was officially employed. Then, as I went around Prague one day in spring 1984, I was quietly informed by three different people that Havel had been taken from prison to hospital. I became increasingly aware of solidarity in theatre circles, and a network of connections functioning below the surface.

Not all my research was on the decade of the 1960s. I became fascinated by Czech theatre history, especially the nineteenth-century National Awakening and the interwar avant-garde. Above all, I discovered that theatre under "Normalisation" was not the barren land it seemed from a distance, but was full of fresh growth that subtly camouflaged itself to avoid attention from the authorities. Most dynamic of all, commended to me immediately on my arrival by Jan Grossman and by Milan Lukeš, was the Brno Theatre on a String (*Divadlo na provázku*). Its impact was similar to that of the Balustrade Theatre twenty years earlier, but this time my role was to bring the theatre to England. With the cooperation of Bristol University and many others, in a festival held during one of the low points of the Cold War (1985), audiences were cheering not only Theatre on a String but also the dance theatre Chorea Bohemica, the jazz musician Jiří Stivín, and other high points of Czech culture. Through the dramaturge Petr Oslzlý, the driving force behind Theatre on a String, I became involved with the "underground seminars"; that is another story, told in *The Velvet Philosophers* (1999), but I thank Roger Scruton, my colleague then, for his encouragement with the present book.

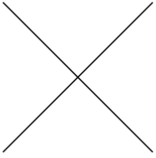
Over the years I have many people to thank: for the original dissertation, Edward Braun and Bristol University, and the British Academy, which helped to fund my research; also the bilateral exchange programme administered by the British Council, which made longer visits to Czechoslovakia possible; and my examiners, J. P. Stern of Cambridge and Robert Porter of Bristol. Robert Pynsent and David Short of London University and James Naughton of Ox-

ford University were generous with their time and knowledge. Simon Trussler published a long essay in *New Theatre Quarterly* (August 1986), following which Nick Hern commissioned *Czech Plays* (Nick Hern Books, 1991).

Among my Czech teachers and friends, I remember with especial gratitude Karel Brušák of Cambridge University and Jan Grossman. Jitka Martin, Petr Oslzlý, and Richard Weber were also immensely important. Close behind came Oldřich Černý, Lída Engelová, Jiří Hanák, Antonín Jelínek, Karel Král, Zuzana Kočová, and Zdenka Kratochvílová. Those who gave much help when I was researching the original dissertation included Jan Burian, František Černý, Jindřich Černý, Drahomíra Fialková, Jarmila Gabrielová, Vladimír Just, Jakub Korčák, Otomar Krejča, Milan Lukeš, Lída Myšáková-Paulová, Bořivoj Srba, Jiří Suchý, Milena Tomíšková, and Ivan Vyskočil. I also interviewed or corresponded with Jiří Daněk, Jan Dušek, Ladislav Fialka, Václav Havel, Miroslav Horníček, Václav Hudeček, Jan Hyvnar, Karel Jernek, Jaromír Kazda, Jan Kopecký, Karel Kraus, Ivan Kyncl, Oldřich Lipský, Harry Macourek, Miloš Macourek, Luboš Malinovský, Zdeněk Míka, Jiří Nesvadba, Petr Pavlovský, Karel Pech, Boleslav Polívka, Zdeněk Potužil, Jan Přeučil, Petr Scherhaufer, Evald Schorm, Otakar Roubínek, Zdeněk Šikola, Josef Škvorecký, Ladislav Smoček, Zdeněk Svěrák, Ctibor Turba, Milan Uhde, Nina Vangeli, Radim Vašinka, Vladimír Vodička, and Stanislav Vyskočil. The help of the Theatre Institute has been invaluable throughout. More recently, my thanks go to Veronika Ambros, Marie Boková, Jan Dvořák, Anna Freimanová, Vlasta Gallerová, Jaroslav Krejčí (photographer), Julek Neumann, Jana Patočková, Ladislava Petišková, Jitka Sloupová, and Eva Šormová. Finally, I want to thank Martin Pšenička for his encouragement and perseverance in seeing this project through from 2014.

I am grateful to the students on the Arts and Social Change program of SIT Study Abroad, Czech Republic, and Academic Director Sarah Brock, and to the students on the international programme at DAMU, Dean Doubravka Svobodová and Vice Dean Marek Bečka, for giving me the chance to relive this story of Czech theatre. At the final stage, I turn again to the Department of Theatre Studies of the Arts Faculty of Charles University Prague and the Karolinum Press, and thank them for enabling this publication.

Barbara Day June 2018



INTRODUCTION

The past is never far away in Central Europe, and this book is for those interested in the ethical and cultural resistance to the destructive ideologies of the twentieth century. ***Trial by Theatre: Reports on Czech Drama*** is not concerned with theatre alone; nor is it intended as a comprehensive history of the Czech theatre. It is rather an exploration of why the theatre is central to the social and political history of the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia). Czech theatre, described by the historian Jarka Burian as the "Reflector and Conscience of a Nation," is neither peripheral nor elitist, but an essential part of daily culture. Historically, it is identified with the spirit of the nation, and with the revival of its language. It is about the power of the creative spirit and its engagement with the deadly forces of totalitarianism.

Trial by Theatre is a revision and completion of my dissertation *The Theatre on the Balustrade of Prague and the Small Stage Tradition in Czechoslovakia* (1986). I worked on this during the years of "Normalisation," to keep alive the memory of the small stages that had played a critical role in the society and politics of the 1960s. I followed threads leading back to the Czech "National Awakening" in the Habsburg Empire. In the Bohemian lands, the theatre's status and reputation enabled its practitioners to develop visual, linguistic, and dramatic features that they used to promote national objectives. The pressures of history led to their constant reinvention and redeployment at times of social and political crisis. Between the wars, the Prague Structuralists created a laboratory for the analysis of theatre. During the Nazi occupation, theatre became a refuge. The intense theatrical creativity of the 1960s was partly due to the ideological barriers that forced intellectuals out of literature and academia. Similarly, the theatre of the 1980s owed much

of its vitality to the influence of personalities banned from public life after the Soviet invasion of 1968. It was, as it turned out in 1989, the theatre that shaped the Velvet Revolution. The historical examples I have chosen often come from the "poor theatre" (in Jerzy Grotowski's sense) rather than from the classic stage. The deeper I went, the more I realised how much more there is to discover. I do not consider this book to be a definitive text, but a handbook for further exploration.

The prologue reports on a debate organised by the journal *Divadlo* (Theatre) in November 1968, three months after the Soviet invasion. The theatre directors, playwrights, dramaturges, and critics involved were aware of how the theatre could influence the emotions and behaviour of the public, and of their own responsibility in this context. Conscious that they were standing at a historic moment, they reflected on the emotional power of history, and on how it had been used and misused. Since they invoked the National Awakening, I have made this the starting point of my narrative. In the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth century, two theatre cultures ran side by side: the mainstream German-language theatre and its makeshift country cousin, the Czech-language theatre, always translating, improvising, complaining, shouldering its way onto the stage. The roots of theatre in the Bohemian Crown Lands, however, reach deeper. Maybe they took hold in the first century AD when the Celtic Boii settled at the crossroads of Europe, or perhaps five centuries later with the arrival of the Slavs. Surrounded on three sides by Germanic tribes, the Czechs took possession of a bowl of the most fertile and picturesque territory in Europe. Among the legends later dramatised are those of Princess Libuše, prophet of the greatness of Prague. The martyrdom of Jan Hus in 1415 established him as a national hero, while the military defeat of 1620 (the Battle of the White Mountain) was followed by the executions of the Czech aristocracy and the emigration of the Protestant intelligentsia. The next three hundred years, controversially denoted an "age of darkness," were marked by re-catholicisation and the dominance of German as the language of education and administration. This formed a historical context in which an emotional yet practical and articulate resistance developed on several levels.

In this environment, theatre became a tool for survival in the hands of a nation that felt existentially threatened. This was when the "myth of the National Theatre" emerged—the "Golden Chapel" built out of the contributions of ordinary people. Even if one allows that most of the funding came from state sources, the myth has its own validity, and its impact on the popular attitude to theatre is recognisable today. In the nineteenth century the theatre was an essential element of Czech identity; in the twentieth it asked increasingly difficult questions, instinctively analysing and subverting any ideological programme. In its role as the conscience of the land, the theatre has been

educational without being didactic, ethical without being self-righteous. Although often intensely political, it did not condemn or endorse, but invited theatregoers to decide for themselves. That is not to say it did not know right from wrong; rather, it asked theatregoers to look at right and wrong from different angles, and maybe to revise their conclusions. The audience took the questions home, or debated them there and then in the theatre foyer.

In this "theatre on the move" (*divadlo na pohybu*)* every performance was different and thus "always at a beginning." It drew inspiration (but not convention) from the past. It relied on the paradox that an event in history can happen only once, yet in the theatre that one time is "here and now". With censorship on its heels, it learnt to express itself through simile and metaphor, through juxtaposition, allegory and allusion, requiring the full engagement of the theatregoer. This kind of theatre was at home on the "small stages" (*malé scény*) that originated in the 1960s, in the "*auteur théâtre*" (*autorské divadlo*)† of the 1970s and in the "studio-type theatres" (*divadla studiového typu*) of the 1980s, when its practitioners, taking responsibility for an otherwise "normalised" nation, pressed for change.

In *Trial by Theatre: Reports on Czech Drama*, I try to tell the story of a national theatre whose history parallels that of society, using particular themes and personalities to follow it from one generation to another. I have summarised or omitted (maybe unfairly) some aspects of theatre history which deserved a fuller treatment, but which did not illuminate the story of "theatre that is always at a beginning." Conversely, I have sometimes highlighted minor figures or incidents to emphasise a particular relevance. The continuity of the Czech theatre community makes it possible for this to work organically. More tangibly, the Czechs have been (and still are) exceptionally diligent in recording and analysing their own theatre history.

The Cabinet for the Study of Czech Theatre (*Kabinet pro studium českého divadla*) was founded in 1956 as part of the Institute of Czech Literature of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Its researchers were engaged in long-term projects such as the four-volume *Dějiny českého divadla* (*The History of the Czech Theatre*; 1968, 1969, 1977, 1983). Notoriously, the history never advanced onto the delicate ground beyond 1945. It would be a major work of scholarship were it not for its ideological bias—for which I do not blame the researchers, most of whom would have wished things otherwise. Under Communism, the Cabinet was not only the workplace of ideologists, but also

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* Theatre on the Move is the name of a festival held by Theatre (Goose) on a String (see p. 236–241) in Brno in 1973 and subsequently at unpredictable intervals, but always at a critical moment in the life of the theatre.

† In the sense that the author is one or more members of the company, cf. Josef Kovalčuk, *Autorské divadlo 70. let* (1982).

a refuge for banned teachers and dramaturges, much of whose research remained unpublished until after 1989. When, in the early 1990s, the budget of the Academy of Sciences was radically cut, the Cabinet was rescued by the Theatre Institute (*Divadelní ústav*). A team of researchers still produces scholarly encyclopedias and histories such as *Česká divadla: Encyklopedie divadelních souborů* (*Czech Theatres: Encyclopedia of Theatre Companies*).

The Theatre Institute itself—now the Arts and Theatre Institute (*Institut umění – Divadelní ústav*)—was founded in 1959 by the Ministry of Culture bureaucrat who had been responsible for the hugely successful Czechoslovak exhibit at Expo 58 in Brussels. It became an essential part of the Czechoslovak theatre scene and in the 1990s adapted to the electronic age, not only through a comprehensive website, but also through networking all theatres and associated institutions.* It organises conferences and exhibitions (including the Prague Quadrennial), is an initial point of contact for foreigners, collates information from theatres and teaching institutes countrywide, operates an accessible library and documentation department, and publishes a range of books on theatre.

One feature of Czech theatre that intrigues foreigners is the lack of unemployment; under Communism this was manipulated by the Plan—the number of students selected by the teaching institutions corresponded to the number of personnel required for the countrywide theatre network. They were prepared at the academies, the universities, and the Prague Conservatoire (musicians and dancers). The Academy of Performing Arts (*Akademie múzických umění*) in Prague† and the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts (*Janáčkova akademie múzických umění*) in Brno‡ are prestigious, university-level institutions on the international network. They prepare students for practical roles in the theatre, including acting, directing, puppetry, arts management, and stage design. Dramaturgy, which straddles the practical and academic fields, can be studied either in the performing arts academies or in one of the university departments for theatre studies at Charles University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno, or Palacký University in Olomouc. The university departments became independent more gradually than the Academies, which were established in the energetic postwar years. In Brno and Olomouc they emerged as fully fledged departments only after 1989; while the department in Prague barely survived the purges of the Normalisation period, in the process being merged with the department of music. These organisations and their publications are important for any researcher of Czech

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* The Theatre Institute director responsible (from 1996–2007) was Ondřej Černý, son of the theatre historian Jindřich Černý. He then became director of the National Theatre (2007–2012).

† Opened in 1946, it has three faculties: Music/Dance, Drama, and Film/TV.

‡ Opened in 1947, it has two faculties: Music and Drama.

theatre, as is the Clementinum Library, the Baroque complex of buildings in the Old Town of Prague.* The British Library in London also has impressive holdings of material on Czech theatre. However, there was very little available in English in the 1980s, and the situation has not improved as much as one would hope. Two well-researched but contrasting books *Czech Drama Since World War II* by Paul Trensky (1978) and *The Silenced Theatre* by Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz (1979) emerged at the end of the 1970s.† A number of articles have appeared in specialised theatre journals; the best of them are by Jarka Burian, who subsequently shaped some of them into *Leading Creators of Twentieth-Century Czech Theatre* (2002), as well as publishing *Modern Czech Theatre: Reflector and Conscience of a Nation* (2000). I recommend the latter as the best available introduction to Czech theatre. Since 1989, two histories of the Czech theatre have been translated and published by the Drama Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU): Jaromír Kazda's *Czech Theatre* (1994) and Jan Císař's *The History of the Czech Theatre* (2010). The first is clear and factual, but very brief; the second is thorough and erudite, but complex for a newcomer to the subject.‡

Czechoslovakia briefly caught the attention of the West by its success at Expo 58 in Brussels, which also launched the international career of the stage designer Josef Svoboda. However, Svoboda's ascent, although fuelled by half a century of Czech scenographic experiment, was largely solo, and its specifically Czech features were uncredited abroad. His work is described in Helena Albertová's *Josef Svoboda: Scenographer*, and that of his predecessors Vlastislav Hofman and František Tröster in the monographs *Vlastislav Hofman* and *František Tröster: Artist of Light and Space* (theatre designers are more fortunate than theatre directors in having their work made accessible to the international public; puppetry is likewise relatively well presented). The creative surge in 1960s Czechoslovakia—especially the new wave of film§ but also theatre and literature—led to the appearance of Czech theatre companies in London's World Theatre Season. This stimulated the writing

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* It was here that in 1983, after I had been vainly ordering copies of *Divadelní noviny* (*Theatre News*) for 1967, a courageous assistant in the reading room alerted me in a whisper to the existence of the (unsignposted) *zvláštní fondy*—special deposits of politically sensitive material—in the attic. An official letter from the Department of Theatre Studies at Charles University allowed me to access the attic and read *Divadelní noviny*. My temper tantrum when the *zvláštní fondy* refused to release the papers for photocopying led to an appointment with a higher authority, which rather strangely took place in a public corridor. The authority prevaricated by requiring another letter from my department, which felt, however, that it had pushed the barriers far enough, and arranged for me to borrow copies from a personal archive.

† Details of all the publications mentioned in the Introduction are in the Bibliography.

‡ I would also like to thank Martin Pšenička for drawing my attention to the fact that Jan Císař's book is part of an ongoing dialogue between different schools of Czech theatre historians, particularly with reference to the (untranslated) *Dějiny českého divadla* (*Divadelní revue*, 1/2011, pp. 161–164).

§ See Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave* (1985).

of reviews and newspaper articles by British journalists and theatre critics, in particular the American professor, Henry Popkin, in *The Times*. These are now buried in archives, although Martin Esslin's brief chapter on the Czech Theatre of the Absurd appeared in the second edition of his seminal book on the subject. The Havel phenomenon was beginning to emerge at this time, and his first plays were published in English in the late 1960s; however, their potential was hampered by the well-meaning attempts of his translator to retain control. In the West, Václav Havel has tended to overshadow other Czech playwrights of this period, although one is grateful for his theatrical biography by Carol Rocamora (*Acts of Courage*) and literary biography by Kieran Williams (*Václav Havel*). A major project to translate Havel's theatre writing and publish it in English was recently refused funding.

Otherwise, information on theatre produced in the Czech lands is largely inaccessible to students and researchers who do not know Czech. Enormous frustration is caused by the fact that the nation that has probably done the most to document and analyse its theatre experience has done so little to make it systematically available in a world language. With some exceptions, publications available in English are lightweight and/or occasional, without an overall strategy. The publishing house *Pražská scéna* occasionally publishes in English, as does the Theatre Institute, mainly on aspects of contemporary theatre; this is also the case with the Theatre Institute's periodical *Czech Theatre*. One edition of the Cabinet's scholarly periodical, *Czech Theatre Review*, has been published in English; a second is due. English editions of the internationally oriented periodical *Svět a divadlo*, published as *World and Theatre*, also appear sporadically.

Returning to books published abroad: If one covers the field chronologically, the political story of how the National Theatre came to be built is told in Stanley Kimball's *Czech Nationalism: A Study of the National Theatre Movement 1845–83* (1964), while *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe: 1746 to 1900* (edited by Laurence Senelick, 1999) uses contemporary documents to bring alive the stage of that period. John Tyrrell's *Czech Opera* (1988) and Brian S. Locke's *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theater, 1900–1938* (2006) shed some sidelights on theatre practice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Given how little has been published in English on the Czech avant-garde between the wars, it is not surprising there is virtually nothing on the equally dynamic and innovative avant-garde theatre. An exhibition in 1990 in Oxford and London produced a catalogue on the Devětsil arts association; MIT published a monograph on its leader Karel Teige in 1999; and Derek Sayer's *Prague, Capital of the Twentieth Century: A Surrealist History* came out in 2013, but none of them has much to say about the Liberated Theatre or E. F. Burian. The only extended stud-

ies in English on the Liberated Theatre and Burian's D34 have again been Jarka Burian's articles, republished in *Leading Creators*. More is available on the work of the interwar Prague Linguistic Circle, which was ahead of the world in its development of the Structuralist analysis of theatre: *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions* (1976), edited by Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik, has papers on the semiotic analysis of theatre; Keir Elam analyses these in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (1980). The first book specifically on the Prague School and theatre semiotics, *The Semiotic Stage* by Michael L. Quinn, was published in 1996 after the author's death, and *An Approach to the Semiotics of Theatre* (2012) by one of the original Structuralists, Jiří Veltruský, in 2012, eighteen years after his death. Hot off the press is the *Theatre Theory Reader: Prague School Writings* (2017). Its anthology format is a model for publications in English that would disseminate Czech theatre analysis and criticism.

The case is similar with the Czech repertoire, only a part of which is available in English. It was 1999 before any of the classics of the late-nineteenth-century village drama became available in English; the first was Gabriela Preissová's *Her Stepdaughter*, otherwise known as *Jenufa*, followed in 2002 by *Maryša* by Alois and Vilém Mrštík (with an essay by Jan Grossman). The other plays of this genre, including the wry comedy *Our Proud Peasants*, are still not available. The interwar period is represented by Karel (and Josef) Čapek's plays, either in dated 1930s translations (*R.U.R.* and *The Insect Play*) or in more acceptable recent versions (*Čapek: Four Plays*, 1999). The plays by the more interesting František Langer do not seem to have been translated into English, except for a dificult-to-obtain version of *On the Periphery*; the only other I know from this period is Arnošt Dvořák and Ladislav Klíma's *Matthew Honest*. The 1960s fared better; all of Václav Havel's plays are available, sometimes in editions that include plays by his colleagues: He shares *Drama Contemporary: Czechoslovakia* with Klíma, Kohout, Kundera, and Uhde; *The Vaněk Plays* with Dienstbier, Kohout, and Landovský; and *Czech Plays* with Fischerová, Klíma, and Topol. Josef Topol's *The End of Shrovetide* is available in the Visegrad Drama series, but existing translations of plays by Milan Uhde and Arnošt Goldflam are not on general sale. It is unfortunate that one of the most notable playwrights of the 1960s, Alena Vostrá, is not among them; she helped to continue the Czech tradition (strongest in the nineteenth century, especially with Gabriela Preissová) of women writers with insight into the shifting zeitgeist.

An online search for material begins with the English pages of the Theatre Institute site. The papers of some candidates at Czech universities who have written their dissertation or diploma work in English are available on the internet, as are some papers on Czech theatre studies by English-speaking

scholars. On the other hand, the number of books on theatre in Czech continues to grow, in spite of what one would expect to be a limited readership; not just commercial publications (those too), but also serious criticism and analysis. In 2016, the Janáček Academy listed around twelve Czech periodicals that dealt exclusively with aspects of theatre (I am counting dance, puppetry, and amateur theatre, but not opera, as this overlaps with music generally). Of current periodicals, the most useful for historians is the *Divadelní revue* (*Theatre Review*), published by the Cabinet for the Study of Czech Theatre. I have included in the Bibliography only those books and periodicals directly relevant to my work.

When I first had the idea for the dissertation that became this book, the Iron Curtain still divided Europe, and the Cold War seemingly stretched for decades ahead of us. I wanted to put on record achievements that could not then even be mentioned in the Czech lands. I wanted to celebrate the free spirits of the past and present who saw resistance to totalitarianism as a self-evident activity. I wanted to honour those who believed in theatre as the ethical heart of society. This still applies.