



# Drama Education in the Czech Republic





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Praha 2023

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Tato odborná kniha (publikace) vznikla na základě institucionální podpory  
dlouhodobého koncepčního rozvoje výzkumné organizace poskytované  
Ministerstvem kultury.

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ISBN 978-80-7068-385-9





# Contents

## 1

- The Path to Modern Czech Drama Education: A Look at the History and Recent Past 11  
(Eva Machková)
- Drama Education in the Czech Republic in the 21st Century 21  
(Jakub Hulák-Jaroslav Provazník)
- Training of Drama Teachers, Directors of Children's Theatre Groups and Recitation Teachers 33  
(Hana Cisovská)

## 2

- Drama Education in the Curriculum of Czech Primary Schools 65  
(Radek Marušák)
- Drama within the Educational Area of Arts and Culture in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education 71
- Literary-dramatic Studies at Primary Arts Schools as a Continuous Artistic Education 77  
(Irena Konývková)

## 3

- Theatre with Children as Devised Theatre?! (Dramaturgical Perspective) 83  
(Irina Ulrychová)
- Speech Education and Recitation in the Czech Republic 129  
(Gabriela Zelená Sittová)

## 4

- Educational Programmes in Professional Czech Theatres 149  
(Anna Hrnečková)
- Creation-Creativity-Play: How Locations Can Inspire Complex Creative Play 159  
(Gabriela Zelená Sittová-Jaroslav Provazník)

- Czech Books on Drama Education: Selected bibliography 181
- Institutions and Organisations Involved in Drama Education in the Czech Republic 191
- Abbreviations and Acronyms 197
- Index 199



# The Path to Modern Czech Drama Education

A look at the history and recent past

## Keywords

History of the Czech drama in education; theatre with children; theatre for children; dramaturgy; festivals; workshops; methodology of drama education





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For several centuries, theatre was an integral part of education in the Czech lands. This was particularly true in monastic schools run by the Jesuits, where theatre was a crucial part of the curricula. This came to an end during the Enlightenment. Even before Empress Maria Theresa dissolved the Jesuit order, her educational reforms banned theatrical activities in religious schools. Theatre completely disappeared from school curricula during the last third of the late 18th century, and it is no exaggeration to say that the consequences of this utilitarian decision still affect us today.

During the first half of the 19th century some primary schools brought theatre back. It was not part of the mandatory curriculum but an optional after-school activity which usually culminated in a performance. These shows were also the first examples of Czech children's theatre. At that time, the Czech lands were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the official language was German. The leaders of theatre groups with children were often Czech patriots whose aim was to sustain and cultivate the Czech language (in addition to children's moral education). The leaders were often priests who initially translated plays for children's groups and later started to write their own. At the same time, theatre was greatly enhanced community life in villages and small towns: it helped spread the Czech language and brought together Czech patriots. Theatrical activities also promoted the local schools, facilitating contact between school and family. The proceeds from performances were often donated to charity.

The earliest children's plays were based on real life and included concise, direct moral lessons. The plot and characters were schematic and simplified so that the child actors and the audience could understand their messages. In the 1870s a new genre was introduced to children's theatre: the fairy tale. The first Czech children's play based on a fairy tale was probably *Cinderella* in 1872. At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, even the National Theatre in Prague staged several original children's plays based on fairy tales.

Children's theatre continued to be limited to the sphere of extracurricular activities, with the themes of productions changing depending on the political situation. After the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, children's theatre celebrated that event as well as the first president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. After 1945, the themes reflected the war years, the Nazi occupation and the heroism of the partisans. After the communist coup of 1948, many fairy tales presented kings and nobility as "class enemies" and were distorted by the ideological criticism of the time. There were even plays written to promote the Pioneer organisation, the only institution which the Communist regime authorised to organise children's activities.

This was the state of children's theatre in the early 1960s. At this time, the municipal music schools were turned into folk arts schools. These were part of the Ministry of Education's state school network, and they included several new departments: visual arts, music, dance and drama (called the literary-dramatic departments).

At the same time professional theatres expelled some actors for political reasons. Several of those actors became teachers in the new folk arts schools. The schools also employed Czech language teachers and theatre amateurs with diverse educational backgrounds. Simultaneously Czechoslovaks were learning about drama abroad for the first time via Peter Slade's *Child Drama* and his Birmingham centre. This was a huge revelation.

During this time, a team was formed which was made up of people developing the folk arts schools and children's theatre groups. In addition to the new understanding of drama innovations abroad, there were two other important influences on the development of Czech drama education. Firstly, the group included several actresses who had been trained in the Stanislavsky method in the 1950s. Secondly, there were progressive leaders of children's puppet troupes in the group who saw puppetry as a path to modern, creative theatre and to a child's development.

In the 1960s, the communist regime in Czechoslovakia began to loosen. This meant that we could occasionally participate in courses, conferences, congresses and shows in other countries and take our troupes abroad to perform. We also had the opportunity to acquire foreign literature, mainly in English and German. Some books were donated, but there was also a bookshop in Prague that was allowed to order books from abroad. However, they were quite expensive and importing them was cumbersome. For example, a book from nearby Munich took almost eight months to get to Prague!

We found that drama methods were a great way to transform children's theatre. With this knowledge we gradually transformed children's theatre from an activity dominated by superficial rehearsals and performances by stiff child actors to one where young performers acted naturally onstage, equipped with movement and speech skills. Children's ensembles shifted away from performing stereotypical plays and towards exploring new dramaturgical forms. In the 1970s additional financial support became available. After the 1968 invasion of "friendly" Warsaw Pact armies into Czechoslovakia, the communist regime understood that it needed to respond. It offered "bread and circuses" to the people. This enabled us to organise not only festivals, but also educational events for children's theatre leaders and teachers and even issue our first publications. The narrow-minded view of the regime did not realise that drama was not simply about children's play, but primarily about bringing up creative and autonomous, independent people – the type who were abhorrent to the regime. Numerous organisations and institutions – central, regional and local – contributed to the development of drama education. However, the Ministry of Education did not participate in any way. Sadly, despite all the transformations that have place since that time, the Ministry has held on to this position to this day.

East of the Iron Curtain, people had been unaware of drama education for decades. The Soviet model of theatrical activities for children (also implemented quite consistently in East Germany) was based on theatre groups established within the

Pioneer and youth centres. Only children who had good school results were allowed to take part, and they were expelled if their school performance worsened. In many places, performances were rehearsed in the same way as professional theatre, and the children in a production often did not get together until the dress rehearsals. Once we invited a group from East Berlin to perform a particular production that had caught our attention, but the Czech authorities ordered the director to bring another production that better suited the political ideology of the time. The director burst into tears during the subsequent discussion at the Czech festival.

In the period leading up to 1989, drama education was based on a system of games and exercises stemming from Stanislavsky's lessons, folk plays, social training, theories of play, and other sources. The main goal was to teach children to express themselves onstage, even in poetry and prose recitation. After a series of workshops and two pilot children's theatre festivals, the first national festival was held in 1974. It was called *Theatre Summer in Kaplice* (*Kaplické divadelní léto*), and it took place in Kaplice, a small South Bohemian town twelve kilometres from the Austrian border. One of the regular festival participants happened to be a teacher from Linz, who lived much closer to the venue than those of us from Prague. From 1974 to 1989, the festival was held annually in Kaplice; later it changed venues several times. Today it is called *The Children's Stage* (*Dětská scéna*) and is held in the town of Svitavy, located on the imaginary border between the Bohemia and Moravia regions of the Czech Republic. Since its inception the festival has retained its basic structure, which consists of a combination of performances and discussions complemented by methodological workshops and activities for children. For several years the festival also presented demonstrations of theatre/drama lessons with children.

Between the 1970s and 1989, drama education in the Czech Republic went through two phases. The first, which culminated during the late 1970s, can be seen as a period of searching. Its starting point was the realisation that children's drama activities, if they were to have real value for both the actors and the potential audiences, must not be a simplistic imitation of adult theatre productions. There was a focus on the methodology of working with a group, on developing that methodology, and promoting it to other drama teachers and children's theatre group leaders.

At the end of the 1970s, the first two-year training course in drama education was organised. About twenty teachers from all over Bohemia and Moravia attended, including students from universities studying to be drama teachers. It was later followed up by other courses, usually two-year part-time study programmes (called the people's conservatories at the time), which eventually were organised in all regions of the country. During this period, there was an emphasis on practical training of children's theatre group leaders and teachers.

The 1980s marked the completion and deepening of the methodology of drama education. The core group of interested and informed people expanded considerably.

At that time, secondary schools of pedagogy which train students to work in kindergartens introduced drama education into their curricula. Drama was also integrated into kindergarten activities. While both developments were marked by the practices of the school system of the time (uniform and one-off introductory classes without the provision for teacher training), at least they created the first opportunities to introduce drama in the school system.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Czech children's theatre was radically transformed. There were (and still are) a number of groups that aim to train children to create theatrical productions staging productions, using methods based on the reproduction of scripts. For a significant number of leaders at the folk arts schools, however, public productions ceased to be the primary goal and focus. Instead, they began to see the main purpose of their work as the process that leads to their creation, shapes the personality of children and equips them with the means to express themselves. They often devoted an entire school year, sometimes even longer, to the preparation of a performance.

Dramaturgy changed radically at this time as well. Instead of using scripts developed for other groups or professional theatres, most children's theatres devised original plays (a trend that was also happening in many professional theatres at the time). A second distinctive feature was the transformation of form, i. e. a preference for open, epic theatre. The third important point was that most of the plays were dramatic adaptations of quality children's literature. The range of genres also expanded – at the very beginning modern fairy tales prevailed, later folk tales were also introduced, and gradually plays based on real life, legends, adventure stories, and mythology appeared. Attempts at illusion-creating and psychologically plausible acting were replaced by more stylized expression in which the performers distanced themselves from the characters, as well as simple and action-oriented scenography and musical stylisation. This was influenced by writing and dramaturgy seminars that were part of the Theatre Summer in Kaplice. Some time later, the Circle of Children's Theatre Authors was established. Participants came up with ideas and discussed their scripts with the course lecturer and other participants. These seminars influenced the discipline of dramaturgy as a whole. They set new criteria and improved the quality of texts for children's theatre groups, thus having an impact even on people who did not participate.

The end of the communist political regime and the introduction of democracy in Czechoslovakia in 1989 led to a radical change in both our personal and professional lives. The group of people leading the field of drama education did not change, but the structure and organisation of cultural activities did. Most importantly, the field expanded significantly during this time and gained much prestige.

The third phase of the development of Czech drama education took place in 1990. In January and February of that year, two important events were organised. A teacher training seminar on drama education took place in Prague at the Charles University Faculty of Education and was very well attended. This event was followed by a series

of meetings and discussions held at pedagogical faculties outside of Prague. This resulted in the organisation of workshops from 1990–1993 for teachers of pedagogical and philosophical faculties. Drama was gradually integrated into the professional training of primary school teachers at the faculties of education. The University of Ostrava was the first and had the most extensive programme. The group of people involved in drama education expanded and changed, including theoreticians and university teachers, as well as numerous primary, secondary and kindergarten teachers and experts in the field of school pedagogy. The majority of these people had no previous experience with drama or theatrical activities.

At the very start of 1990, a document on drama education called *Schola ludus* was drawn up. Later that year, on 1 June 1990, the Creative Dramatics Association (Sdružení pro tvořivou dramatikou) was officially founded. A few months later, in October 1990, the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU) opened a part-time master's degree programme in educational drama, and in 1992 the Academy opened the Department of Drama in Education. In the same year, the Theatre Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) opened a full-time study programme in Brno. In 1994 DAMU opened a full-time study programme. In the first half of the 1990s, the first habilitation proceedings took place at DAMU, and the first doctoral dissertation in the field was successfully defended in June 1997 at JAMU in Brno.

During the first five years after 1989, secondary schools of pedagogy started offering drama education to all their students. Many grammar schools included the subject in their curricula, the number of kindergartens applying elements of drama increased, and, most importantly, drama as a subject was incorporated into the curricula of some primary schools. The number of teachers in the field increased considerably. There was also a much wider range of seminars and workshops on drama education led by foreign lecturers.

At the time, educational professionals became increasingly interested in using drama methods in other areas of education, especially the humanities. This process enriched the field by bringing in new ideas and content. Drama began to incorporate methods of social training and personal-social education as well as some elements of experiential learning. On one hand, the methodological and thematic range of activities expanded, but on the other hand, the intermingling with other disciplines sometimes led to the dilution of drama education. In extreme cases, drama was confused with anything creative and/or alternative.

During this period, a number of English-speaking specialists gave workshops in the Czech Republic. This, combined with greater access to literature about the field, enriched and transformed our view of drama education. The international specialists included Jonathan Neelands, Warwick Dobson, Judith Ackroyd, Cecily O'Neill, Juliana Saxton, Allan Owens, Andy Kempe, Rives Collins. Through seminal works of drama

experts, we became acquainted with new concepts of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. In addition to this, some American teachers began to work in Prague.

This process made it necessary to reconsider the existing practice of drama education. Until that point it had been almost exclusively taught as an extracurricular activity at the folk arts schools (which were renamed in the 1990s as primary arts schools) or in theatre groups. Drama in practice had concentrated on staging plays and developing a system of games and exercises. After 1990, drama education became – albeit in a relatively small number of schools – an independent subject, offering methods that could be applied to other school subjects. Still, the position of the Ministry of Education remains unchanged, and even qualified drama teachers who apply drama methods in their work are limited by the outdated educational system and its rules (classification, entrance and final exams, predominance of frontal teaching, etc.).

In the Czech context, drama education is currently one of the few disciplines based on the principles of modern 20th century pedagogy, and also yet one that lends itself to ongoing development. It features well tested methods which a pool of trained drama leaders are capable of implementing. Drama is in a unique position to innovate and help develop the educational system as a whole.

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# Drama Education in the Czech Republic in the 21st Century

## Keywords

Drama education; classroom drama; theatre with children and youth; festivals of children's theatre groups; recitation; workshops; courses



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In the former Czechoslovakia, almost all drama education developed through theatre performances by children. Until the late 1980s, most of these drama activities took place at folk arts schools [lidové školy umění – LŠU] (later known as primary arts schools [ZUŠ – základní umělecké školy] and other centres for after school activities. By the beginning of the 21st century, this had changed. Since then, drama education has become well established in two areas. The first focuses mainly on theatre, and the second has a more educational focus. The first area is geared towards a stage production, ideally presented as a theatre or recitation performance. The second area is focused on the classroom, and activities are not presented to an audience. Any theatre pieces created during these drama lessons are not meant to be performed, but to allow the participants to explore situations, characters, stories, topics, etc. Today we consider both approaches equally important. In fact, the first approach cannot be successful without the second. In order to create a good piece of theatre, we need to take children through a long-term process so they gain important skills and an invaluable learning experience.

In the Czech Republic, there is an extensive network of festivals, workshops and other events that provides an overview of both areas of drama education. The biggest and most important children's theatre event is the annual **Children's Stage** [DS – Dětská scéna], a national festival of children's theatre and recitation.

### **The Children's Stage National Festival and its selection procedure**

Since the early 1970s, the national festival of children's theatre ensembles has played an important role in Czech drama education. It is affiliated with a system of preliminary regional festivals in which ensembles are selected. In the Czech Republic, this selection procedure is not unique to children's theatre. It is rooted in a system of amateur arts showcases and festivals that started in the 1930s and was further developed in the 1950s. Later, the Central House of People's Art Creativity [ÚDLUT – Ústřední dům lidové umělecké tvořivosti], which was later replaced by the Institute for Cultural Educational Activities [ÚKVČ – Ústav pro kulturně výchovnou činnost], used this system as a model for all children's arts activities.

National festivals with preliminary rounds are paradoxically one of the few useful inheritances of the communist totalitarian era. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, many tried to abolish this system as a relic of the communist past. Consequently, regional cultural centres were abolished – the very centres that had nurtured amateur and children's theatre activities in all Czech regions. However, the selection process of the national festival remains in place thanks to a swift and effective transformation of the The Institute for Cultural Educational Activities (now working under the Ministry of Culture) and because of the efforts of hundreds of drama enthusiasts (many working with newly established interest groups). Today the National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture [NIPOS – Národní informační a poradenské středisko

pro kulturu] is responsible for all national amateur arts and children's festivals. ARTAMA is one of the departments of the centre and helps organise festivals in many arts fields: theatre, music, choirs, contemporary dance, folk dance, photography, and film. Most of the twenty national festivals hold preliminary rounds which have a very similar structure.

Since the year 2000, the Czech Republic has been divided into fourteen self-governing regions. Each region hosts its own regional festival. The venue is not always in the regional capital, but in the area where there is the most active drama community. The regional organisers oversee all production of the festival, including promotion and funding. They usually are supported by grants from local governmental agencies and the Ministry of Culture (ARTAMA acts as an advisory body for the organisers). The regional festivals usually take place in March and April. Occasionally regions also organise smaller district festivals, but this is only required in Prague because of its size.

There are fourteen regional festivals, and ARTAMA's aim is to ensure a noncompetitive, positive atmosphere at all of them. Festivals are an opportunity to bring people together, and various programmes are organised to achieve this: playful group discussions with children from different ensembles; facilitated discussions about the shows with teachers and children's theatre group leaders; diverse supplementary programme. The regional festivals also select shows for the national festival. The jury (which is called an "expert panel" at children's festivals) selects one performance at the end of each festival which is guaranteed a spot in the national festival. They can also recommend an unlimited number of performances, which are later assessed by a commission at ARTAMA which selects some of them for the national festival.

The selection process for children's recitation<sup>1</sup> festivals is similar. Two reciters from each of the three age categories are selected during the regional preliminary round. However, the reciter's path to the national festival is more competitive. Children start in school rounds, proceed to district rounds, and finally go to regional rounds. The youngest children (under 10 years of age) can take part in regional festivals, but do not enter the national festival.

The initial (and perhaps the golden) era of national children's theatre festivals lasted from 1974 to 1989 and took place in Kaplice, a small town in South Bohemia. It was called Theatre Summer in Kaplice [KDL – Kaplické divadelní léto]. From 1994 to 1998 the national festival was held in Ústí and Orlicí in East Bohemia. During this time, two children's festivals merged: the children's theatre festival and the festival

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1 Interest in recitation seems to be a very specific feature of Czech drama education – something not as common in any other country. Despite this, its potential has not been fully explored yet. Recitation as a creative interpretation of a literary text – not just memorizing in a form of mechanical reproduction of poems – can transform the way of children and youth understand literature and can significantly support readership. On the other hand, storytelling, a closely related form of verbal expression resembles to reciting, lags behind other countries where it is even taught in universities (e.g. in USA or Scandinavian countries).

of children's recitation ensembles<sup>2</sup>. The new national festival was named Children's Stage [DS – Dětská scéna], a name which has lasted to this day. From 2000 to 2010 the festival took place in Trutnov. In 2011 the national festival found its current home in Svitavy in East Bohemia on the border between Bohemia and Moravia. Every June, a week-long event takes place, filled with theatre, recitation, educational activities and additional cultural activities.

Amateur theatre festivals in the 70s and 80s, including the children's theatre festivals, were islands of freedom in the midst of a totalitarian state. The national children's theatre festival was a unique and sought-after opportunity to gain experience and a deeper understanding of drama education (thanks to Eva Machková, who oversaw the methodology of the festival). Because of the communist regime, children's theatre and drama education also attracted many outstanding people who could not work as professional artists or educators. The festival offered a chance to meet inspiring people, a feeling of common purpose and a sense of belonging, which added to its "conspiratorial" atmosphere. This aspect also caused many participants to keep coming back.

The Children's Stage Festival still retains the basic structure set in place in the early years (morning seminars for adults, performance blocks followed by public discussions, a festival newsletter, etc.). However, it plays a different role today because of the current political context. For many participants today, it is just one of many educational opportunities. For university students of drama education and students of secondary schools of pedagogy, whose schools often organise their participation, it is an opportunity to deepen their understanding of drama. For drama teachers, they can bolster their professional qualifications by participating in an accredited course. Still, the main objectives are the same as they were at the beginning. The Children's Stage Festival is a unique opportunity to gain a better understanding of theatre performed by children, to learn practical drama skills, and to meet other devoted drama professionals.

It is beyond the scope of this article to list all of the activities which constitute the Children's Stage Festival, but we would like to mention a few. First there are discussions following each block of performances. Since the beginning, there has been a search for the ideal way to facilitate these discussions. It is important to provide a professional, in depth assessment of the performances' positive and negative qualities, while also being sensitive to the feelings of the children and the drama leaders. We have found that it is effective to divide the discussions into two different formats. The first is a small, friendly discussion between the leaders of the children's

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2 Another specific feature of Czech drama education – recitation ensembles in their performances stick to the original literary text act it out more or less. So it is more an interpretation of the text than a dramatization. This most often results some scenic piece or else some kind of scenic montage or collage.

theatre groups and two drama experts (members of the jury). These usually last about 40 minutes and analyse the theatrical and educational aspects of an ensemble's work. The second format is carried out in two different ways: a discussion club and a public discussion. The discussion club allows members of children's ensembles to reflect on each other's shows. The public discussion is open to adult festival participants and members of the jury but does not involve the ensemble leaders.

All theatre performances at the Children's Stage Festival must be presented two times – in the morning for the general public (usually children from local schools) and in the afternoon for the festival participants. This gives the expert panel (i.e. the jury) a chance to see each performance twice. After the morning performance the experts share their impressions with each other, and in the afternoon they check to see if their assessment has changed. This is a very effective format because inexperienced children's performances can vary greatly from show to show.

As was mentioned earlier, morning seminars for adults are a fundamental aspect of the festival. In recent years, there have been 5–6 seminars per year. One of the seminars is held in tandem with the recitation showcase and lasts three days. All of the other seminars are six days. They address contemporary issues and topics that are of interest to children's theatre leaders, teachers, and students. Many outstanding drama educators have taught these seminars, and every year there is a drama educator from abroad to ensure that Czech drama education remains open to new impulses. The following international presenters have taught since 1994: Jonothan Neelands (Great Britain), Eva Russel (Canada), Judith Ackroyd (Great Britain), Rafael Ricart García (Spain), Kevin Dowsett (Great Britain), Francis Prendiville (Great Britain), Leah Gaffen (USA), Erich Hofbauer (Austria), Helmut Köpping (Austria), Frank Katoola (Uganda), Tatjana Brinkman (Holland), Sandra Tittoni (France), Joanna Parkes (Ireland), Wolfgang Mettenberger (Germany), Herwig Greschonig (Austria), Bernhardt Paumann (Austria), David Novak (USA), Vladimír Sadílek (Slovakia), Anna Caunerová (Slovakia), Christel Hoffmann (Germany), Rives Collins (USA), Michael Supple (Great Britain), Michael Woodwood (Great Britain), Howard Lotker (USA), Susanne Schrader (Belgium), Keith Homer (Great Britain) and Sanja Krsmanović Tasić (Serbia).

To give a sense of who participates in the festival, we will take a look at the statistics from the 2022 Children's Stage Festival. There were a total of 16 children's ensembles. – Eight of these were selected by juries at regional festivals, eight were selected by the ARTAMA programme committee from a total of 28 recommended performances. There were 80 children from three different age groups (10–15 years old) in the recitation festival. About 100 adults participated in five practical drama seminars. In the regional rounds, 134 ensembles and almost 900 reciters participated, illustrating the high level of interest in the Children's Stage Festival. We do not know the exact number of participants in the district rounds, but we estimate that

is was somewhere between 6000–7000. The number of participants in school rounds can reach up to 10,000 around the entire country.

### **Other nationwide events within the field of drama education**

There is also a showcase of youth theatre every year called **Youth Stage** [MS – Mladá scéna]. Since 2009, it has taken place at the end of June in Ústí nad Orlicí. Youth Stage, like the Children's Stage Festival, includes an educational programme. This is aimed at the members of ensembles in the festival.

All types of ensembles (independent or school groups) can participate in the Children's Stage and the Youth Stage Festival. It is also possible to learn about the state of Czech drama at **showcases of the literary-dramatic departments of primary arts schools**. Unlike the Children's Stage Festival, these are competitions (awarding prizes to productions and individuals). However a new generation of drama teachers has brought fresh ideas and the showcases are gradually becoming less competitive and more focused on professional exchange. These showcases do not take place every year. The showcase of ensembles (ensemble performance) alternates with a showcase of soloists (recitation and solo drama performance) and of literary work (creative writing).

In addition to the above showcases, there are other drama events which do not have selection processes. **Brnkání**, a non-competitive showcase of children's theatre ensembles dating to 1994, takes place in Brno. **Soukání – Communication**, an international biennale, takes place in Ostrov, West Bohemia. It began in 1997. **Nahlížení – Insights**, another annual national workshop of youth theatre that combines a showcase event with various workshops, takes place in Bechyně, South Bohemia, and started in the late 1980s. **Nadělení**, another non-competitive showcase plus workshop event for student and youth theatre, took place annually in Brno between 1995 to 2011. There was a showcase of children's theatre organised by the Creative Dramatics Association (STD – Sdružení pro tvořivou dramatikou) that took place every autumn in Prague from 1998, which, in 2012, transformed into an annual showcase event called **Children-Drama-Theatre** [Děti-drama-divadlo]. Its now called **Children-Education-Theatre** [Děti-výchova divadlo] and is organised by the Department of Drama in Education at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. In 2000 and 2007, showcases of children's and youth theatre ensembles from the Czech Republic also took place at the Theatre Faculty in Prague as part of a drama education conferences organised by the Dept. of Drama in Education. Every September since 1995, a national workshop called **Drama Education in School** [Dramatická výchova ve škole] takes place in Jičín. It also provides an opportunity for children's and youth ensembles as well as child reciters to perform.

This brings us to that other domain of drama education that is not primarily concerned with stage production: classroom drama. This also has its own important



annual platform, **Drama Education in School**, a one-week national event that take place in Jičín. It started in the 90s and over a hundred teachers from all over the country attend every year. Led by experienced Czech and top-notch international drama teachers, the workshops give participants a chance to deepen their knowledge and skills in a particular area of drama education (e.g. story based classroom drama, how to work with children reciters, school theatre, drama education for pre-school children, voice education, movement education, theatre in education, pedagogical and psychological aspects of learning through drama...). Sometimes they also address other related areas (e.g. using drama methods in history lessons, civic education, literature, visual art, music, storytelling, creative writing...).

Another popular source of inspiration for both teachers and students of drama education is a national workshop of complex aesthetic education called **Creation-Creativity-Play** [Tvorba-tvořivost-hra]. It started in 1993, and each year it takes place in a different venue around the country. These workshops prove that drama education can bring together arts educators from different fields. It has the capacity to do the same in schools. There are usually between 80–100 teachers taking part in four to five different workshops led by a drama teacher working in tandem with another facilitator from a different aesthetic field (music, visual art, dance, literature or audiovisual education).

### **Drama education and its place in contemporary schools**

Drama education is not nearly as integrated in the Czech educational system as music or visual art. Those two subjects have a 200 year tradition in schools and are an integral part of Czech education. In contrast, drama education is a fairly new subject. It was not offered at primary schools until the early 1990s. The Creative Dramatics Association [STD – Sdružení pro tvořivou dramatikou] was founded in 1990 to bring together leaders of children's theatre groups, drama professionals and others interested in drama. Thanks to this association, the first drama curriculum for primary education was created. As a result, every school could participate in a programme called **General School** [Obecná škola]. If there was a drama teacher in the school, they could teach drama. The Ministry of Education's national curriculum called **Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education** [Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání], which was introduced at the beginning of the 21st century, was an important step towards introducing drama into the primary schools. It allowed drama to be an additional subject in the Arts and Culture educational area, on par with music and visual art<sup>3</sup>. In other

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3 Literature is an integral part of Czech national curriculum, but it is traditionally linked to the subject of Czech language. In the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education is thus part of the educational area entitled Language and Language Communication.

words, schools can include it in their educational programme if they have a teacher with sufficient drama training.

Drama education can be taught in Czech schools as an independent subject. The class can focus on creating a theatre production or be taught as classroom drama. Drama education can also be used as a method in other school subjects, such as history and geography, literature, Czech language, foreign language, civic or family education, etc.

Although drama education is considered an optional subject, it has all of the attributes to develop many different skills which are described as key competencies in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education. These include communication competencies, social and personal competencies, problem-solving and learning competencies, working competencies and civic competencies. Despite this, the status of drama education in the national curriculum is still very uncertain. Currently the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education is being revised, and drama continues to fight for its relevance in the Czech educational system.

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# Training of Drama Teachers, Directors of Children's Theatre Groups and Recitation Teachers

## Keywords

Drama in education; theatre with children and youth; training of drama teachers; formal education; non-formal education; informal education; workshops; seminars; literature and journals on drama education



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Our current system of educating drama teachers, including leaders of children's theatre and recitation groups, has its roots in the 1960s. Before that, few paid attention to drama activities. They consisted mainly of theatre clubs and existed only within the arena of extracurricular activities. In this essay, we will describe different types of teacher training programmes. For clarity, we have divided them into three categories: formal, non-formal, and informal (e.g. self-study of literature and journals).

## **FORMAL TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES: ARTS UNIVERSITIES, FACULTIES OF EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY, VOCATIONAL COLLEGES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF PEDAGOGY**

In the 1960s, state funded public arts schools, known as folk arts schools, established drama departments ("literary-dramatic departments"). (These schools still exist and are now called primary arts schools.) They are a unique Czech system of public schools dedicated to after school arts programmes, and they are accredited by the Ministry of Education. Subsequently people realised that there was a need to train drama teachers in the field. Simultaneously drama teachers' approach to their work started focusing more on children's needs and natural expression. It became clear that teacher training needed to provide a foundation in education and psychology as well as theatre skills. Fortunately, there were many excellent Czech drama educators who established high quality teacher training programmes for drama teachers. (These included Eva Machková, Jindra Delongová, Miloslav Disman, Josef Mlejnek, Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvílová, Olga Velková, Soňa Pavelková, Věra Pánková). In the early 1970s, the Theatre Faculty of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU) organised a one-year training course for future drama teachers. This was a significant step toward establishing undergraduate education in the field.

When the Velvet Revolution brought democracy to Czechoslovakia in 1989, opportunities to create a completely new system of formal education for teachers emerged. A group of drama experts did just that in 1990, outlining the requirements for a professional drama teacher. Their work is still the basis for students of drama education today. The following types of schools currently offer formal drama education programmes today: arts colleges and universities, pedagogical faculties, vocational colleges and secondary schools that train future kindergarten teachers.

### **Higher education at arts universities**

The Theatre Faculty of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU) launched a comprehensive higher education course in drama education. This was a milestone in the professional training of drama teachers. Immediately afterwards, two academies established drama education departments: the **Theatre Faculty of the Academy**



of **Performings Arts in Prague (DAMU)** and the **Theatre Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno (JAMU)**. Both departments still exist. They created university degree programmes to train professionals in drama education.

At both schools, the study programme is divided into a three-year bachelor's degree and a two-year master's degree. At both levels, students are required to pass a state examination and write a thesis. The Department of Drama in Education at DAMU offers a doctoral programme and JAMU students can pursue a doctoral degree through the theatre faculty.

The **DAMU Bachelor's degree programme in drama education** focuses on the development of pedagogical and performing skills. It equips students with the knowledge and skills to manage drama and educational activities with children and youth, especially in the extra-curricular context (primary arts schools, municipal community centres for children and youth, etc.).

The **DAMU Master's degree programme in drama education** includes more theory and research. Students can take electives based on their professional focus. They are trained to lead drama groups with diverse ages, educational needs, and social status. Graduates of the programme can create theatre performances, educate audiences, and incorporate elements of drama in education not oriented on producing a performance. They can employ their skills in educational, community, and social work.

The aim of the **Doctoral programme Theory and Practice of Drama Education** is to produce top professionals capable of working in a variety of educational settings and scholars who research and develop the field in a broad theoretical and practical context within aesthetic, pedagogical and psychological disciplines. At the end of their studies, candidates must defend their dissertation and pass a PhD examination.

The programmes are offered in two formats: full-time study and a combined format (students have some in person classes supplemented by self-study).

The Department of Drama in Education at DAMU also organises a two-year course called **The Fundamentals of Drama Education**. It provides lifelong learning opportunities to teachers from different types of schools and educational institutions. Participants receive a certificate at the end of the course, and they can continue to study in the Master's degree programme in the department if they have a Bachelor of education degree or have other pedagogical qualifications.

At the **Theatre and Education Studio at JAMU in Brno**, candidates can pursue a **bachelor's degree in drama education**. The classes focus on practical skills (voice, movement, acting, dramaturgy, social communication) and on the methodology of working with children and youth based on a theoretical knowledge of dramatic arts. Graduates are required to pass state examinations in pedagogy, psychology, didactics of drama education, the theory and history of Czech and world theatre.

Their **master's degree programme Theatre and Education** extends the theoretical knowledge of undergraduates in the field of dramatic art and focuses on directing

devised performances, dramaturgy and pedagogical work with non-professional groups (children, youth, amateur adult groups, groups with specific needs, etc.).

Graduates of the master's programme can continue their studies in the four-year **doctoral programme in Dramatic Arts** offered to students of all disciplines at the Theatre Faculty of JAMU. Graduates are encouraged to expand their theoretical knowledge in the field and to conduct their own research in the context of creative and pedagogical activities.

The Theatre Faculty at JAMU also offers a cross-disciplinary programme of dance, theatre and pedagogy within the **Studio of Dance and Movement Theatre and Education**.

The Theatre Faculty of JAMU also has a **bachelor's study programme focusing on drama education for the hearing impaired**. Their aim is to train professionals who can lead extracurricular activities in arts for educational institutions or theatres and implement their own creative activities.

Graduates of both JAMU and DAMU arts universities go on to work as teachers of drama education at after-school arts schools, secondary teacher training schools, faculties of education, and colleges and universities with teacher training programmes. Others work in the educational departments of professional theatres, museums, and as drama teachers in primary schools and kindergartens.

### **Education at the faculties of education and arts**

After 1989, faculties of education and arts started introducing drama education in very different ways. The current status of drama education at teacher training colleges thus varies greatly. Initially, drama education fulfilled (and still fulfils) two objectives. One was to strengthen the personal and social skills of future teachers, strengthening their creativity, communication skills and autonomous thinking. In the early 1990s, another aim was introduced to support pupils' personal and social development. Many teachers wanted to change the traditional concept of education and to adopt an activating and creative approach; drama education could do just that. It filled a gap in the need for personal and social development of children and young people in schools. Future teachers were trained in methodology to apply drama education in the teaching of various subjects.

In the 1990s, drama education was included in the curricula of the faculties of education and arts as a compulsory or elective subject. Often it was one of the specialisations of the primary school teacher education programme (along with physical training, visual art, arts and crafts, and music). It was also included in the training of special needs teachers. Departments of pedagogy, primary school pedagogy, music education, special needs pedagogy, and also – at the University of Ostrava – the Institute for Alternative Free Education were involved in teaching. Some faculties and departments also offered specialisation studies in drama education for university graduates.

Teacher training has undergone many changes since the 1990s, and not all of them have been positive for drama education. Other fields and disciplines have come to the fore and drama education, along with other arts subjects, have had to take a back seat. This is why the representation of drama education in higher education at Czech pedagogical faculties varies greatly, ranging from a rich variety of subjects to a complete absence.

Currently, most pedagogical disciplines at universities are divided into two levels: a three-year bachelor's degree and a two-year master's degree. Only the Teaching for Lower Primary School programme is an unstructured five-year degree.

Most commonly, drama education is part of the study programmes of kindergarten teachers and elementary school teachers. In the **kindergarten programme**, both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are offered. Foundation courses are compulsory at many faculties of education, and students can take elective classes that broaden and deepen their knowledge and skills. The foundation courses introduce students to the principles of drama education and the didactics of drama education in kindergarten. Elective courses often offer puppetry and theory of theatre for children.

The **teacher training programme for elementary school** prepares teachers to work with pupils aged 6 to 11. Drama education is included to a varying extent, ranging from one compulsory subject to a specialisation that students can choose as their focus, culminating in a state exam. The compulsory courses are mostly focused on mastering the fundamentals and principles of drama education and on the didactics of drama education. Electives deepen and broaden their knowledge and skills (e.g. Storytelling in school, Working with puppets).

The **study programmes of social pedagogy / social pedagogy and after-school activities** provide greater diversity in the teaching of drama education. These programmes prepare professionals to work with individuals and groups of all ages, in particular the socially vulnerable. In some faculties, the representation of drama education is very intensive. The compulsory courses include Foundations of Drama Education, Improvisation for Personal Development and Storytelling, which not only lay the foundations of knowledge of drama education, but also support the personal and social development of the future teachers. They offer elective courses on applied theatre, structuring drama work, puppetry as a communication tool, creating a theatre production with a non-professional group, etc. At other faculties, drama education is only offered as an elective about its application in further studies (e.g. drama education in work with risk groups).

Drama education is often part of **special needs departments**. Usually only one subject is offered, and this can be compulsory or optional. The only exception is a comprehensive study programme at the Institute of Special Education Studies in Olomouc. They offer a unique programme **Dramatherapy** and **Theatre Therapy**.

In **teaching for upper primary schools and secondary schools** (i.e. for future teachers of children aged 11–15 and 15–19) drama education is occasionally included as one of the pedagogical and psychological disciplines. In most cases it is an elective discipline, usually with very few hours or as a completely optional course offered to all students at the faculty or university.

Some **arts faculties** also offer courses that use theatre and drama education. For example, a theatre workshop is offered at the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University in Brno within the study programmes Pedagogy, Social Pedagogy and Counselling, Psychology, Aesthetic Education for Secondary Schools as well as in the programme of German Language and Literature.

### **Education at higher vocational schools**

High school graduates who want vocational training can attend 2-year vocational colleges. These students are usually not interested in the academic programmes offered by universities, or they are pursuing a field of study not offered by universities. Some of these pedagogical vocational colleges offer drama education in their **Social Pedagogy** and **Pre-school and After-school Pedagogy study programmes**.

### **Education at secondary schools of pedagogy**

Secondary schools of pedagogy train professionals for pedagogical work in the pre-school and after-school teaching programmes and in the pedagogical secondary schools. Both forms of study end with the Czech maturita (the state final examination, equivalent to A-levels in the UK). Each secondary school follows their own education programme which is based on the Ministry of Education's national curriculum framework.

**Pre-school and after-school pedagogy** prepares graduates to work as kindergarten teachers or educators in other pre-schools, and as tutors or after-school educators. It is up to each individual school to decide how much time it wants to give to drama education in its curriculum. The authors of the national curriculum framework presume that every pupil has encountered drama education in primary education, and teacher trainees can thus build on the previously acquired skills and knowledge while developing their pedagogical skills. However, this is not always the case, and so the teachers and pupils of this programme have the difficult task of filling the gap in the field. The studies are completed with the maturita (the state final examination), and the option of graduating in drama education is also available within the programme.

Graduates of the **pedagogical high school** are prepared primarily for further studies at a university or vocational college with a pedagogical specialisation. At the same time, they acquire the prerequisites for certain types of pedagogical activity, e.g. for working as teaching assistants. Depending on the specialisation they choose, they can also work in some areas of extracurricular activities for children and adults. One of the specialisations offered is drama education. It is part of the curriculum,

both in the general part of arts (aesthetic) education and in the vocational part, which prepares the graduates for specific pedagogical activities and motivates them to continue their studies of drama education.

Drama education has a special position in the education of future artists – actors at **conservatories**. Those provide artistic and artistic-pedagogical qualifications at the level of secondary and vocational college education. Students of music and theatre take a foundation class on drama education in the 5th and 6th year of their artistic-pedagogical training. However, many graduate after year 4 to pursue jobs in the arts, and only some complete the final two years. If they choose to complete their studies, they can find employment in school or other institutions for extracurricular arts activities as teachers in primary arts schools or conservatories.

## NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

### Seminars and courses

Non-formal training in drama education has been offered in the Czech Republic since the 1960s. This includes **short-term** (and **later long-term**) **seminars and workshops**. This was almost the only drama training available for many years. It provided high quality drama training during communist Czechoslovakia, when the educational policy did not allow for anything else. The first seminar took place in 1967. It was organised by the Central House of People's Art Creativity (ÚDLUT) thanks to the initiative of Eva Machková, who continued to supervise teacher training until well into the beginning of the 21st century. Others helped build a quality pedagogical foundation in drama education, including Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvilová, Jindra Delongová, Josef Mlejnek, Miloslav Disman, Olga Velková, Jana Vobrubová, etc. Those seminars owed their popularity to the good team of lecturers and to a carefully conceived educational structure, based on practical experience. Nevertheless, there was a need for in-depth, long-term training, and in 1977 a **two-year course for drama teachers** was launched in Solenice. At the end of the course, participants earned the qualification of a drama education teacher. The course was designed for leaders of children's theatre groups and clubs, drama teachers from folk arts schools, leaders of clubs at primary schools and teachers at secondary schools of education.

This course was a good foundation for the subsequent establishment of the **people's conservatories of drama education**. Additional courses were organised in different regions and an effort was made to unify them by creating a standard curriculum. Participants learned the foundations of drama education, acting, drama games and methodology, speech techniques, movement, children's literature, dramaturgy, directing children's ensembles, theatre history and also puppetry and children's solo and group recitation. It concluded with an exam. These were two-year courses

followed by seminars for graduates. Graduates include a number of prominent figures in drama education. The courses helped improve the quality of the field. These courses were an inspiration for the university programmes in drama education which were established in the 1990s.

The tradition of long-term courses (lasting several semesters and culminating in examinations) and short courses and seminars (lasting only several days) continues to this day. These events are usually organised by the **Creative Dramatics Association** (STD – Sdružení pro tvořivou dramatiku). It often cooperates with **ARTAMA** (part of NIPOS in Prague), the Department of Drama in Education at DAMU or other organisations involved in drama education (e.g. drama centres) and pedagogical faculties. Courses and seminars are usually focused on a particular area or target group (e.g. Drama education in primary school, Drama education with the disabled, etc.).

In the 1990s, Czech drama education also began to open up to the world. Drama teachers from other countries were regularly invited to the Czech Republic and Czech experts travelled abroad to gain experience.

Currently, several **long-term courses** are offered on a regular basis. They usually take place on weekends. One is called **Drama Education for Contemporary School**, a three-semester course organised by the Creative Dramatics Association in Prague. This course is open to all types of educators from all levels of schools and educational institutions as well as to university students. The course focuses on the participants' personal, social and creative development. The trainees later learn to apply drama to their own teaching. Another long-term training course is called **The Fundamentals of Children's Theatre** (organised by the Creative Dramatics Association in cooperation with ARTAMA), which is primarily aimed at leaders of school theatre ensembles and drama groups. The participants learn how to direct a theatre production and the methodology of working with children's theatre groups. They also master the basics of stage design, dramaturgy, acting, working with music and sounds, objects and puppets. As a part of the course, they take part in one of the children's theatre festivals. The Creative Dramatics Association also offers a two-semester **Course on Drama Education in Kindergarten**. It focuses on the personal and social development of kindergarten teachers and on drama education activities with pre-school, kindergarten and the first few grades of primary school.

Other workshops and seminars are offered by the Creative Dramatics Association and drama centres (e.g. How to do theatre with children), community centres, after-school centres (e.g. To be or not to be – drama for wellbeing at school), professional theatres (e.g. Summer Theatre School for Teachers), and lifelong learning courses at universities. **The Drama Education in Schools** is an annual week-long national workshop in Jičín. It has been organised by the Creative Dramatics Association since 1995. This is open to all teachers and promotes the introduction of drama education in schools. It also showcases children's theatre productions and recitation.

**Creation-Creativity-Play** is an important, popular workshop, which brings together people from different arts disciplines. Each group is led by two teachers, one drama teacher and the other is from a different field, e.g. visual arts, dance, literature, music or film. Every year this national workshop moves to a different location and provides new inspiration, ideas, themes and focus.

### **Education as part of theatre and recitation festivals**

Seminars at children's theatre festivals are another important way of training drama teachers. This tradition started in 1960s, when children's theatre festivals were split off from adult amateur theatre festivals. The first independent national children's theatre festival was held in 1971 in Žďár and Sázavou and then, from 1974 to 1989, it was held in Kaplice. Today the festival is known as **Children's Stage** (DS – Dětská scéna).

**Educational seminars and workshops** for teachers are an integral part of the children's theatre festivals, and they are led by inspiring Czech and international drama educators. In the early days of the festival, seminars focused on drama methodology, the principles of leading children's theatre groups and the dramaturgy of children's theatre. They explored how to create shows based on quality children's literature. Over time, the seminars became more specialised. Today they cover many topics, such as movement, acting, production, music, stage design, puppetry. Recitation seminars cover text analyses and interpretation, how to create a reciting group, speech techniques, methodology of working with child reciters, the dramaturgy of recitation, and how to evaluate children's recitation skills.

There are other events for drama teachers. They can attend **seminars and discussions** where drama experts analyse individual theatre productions and recitation performances. Theatre shows are a meeting place not only for children but also for teachers, who can share their experiences and receive feedback on their work.

The festival's newsletter *Children's Stage Journal* (*Deník Dětské scény*) covers stories about festival participants and reviews of performances. Before 1989, when study resources in drama were scarce, it was a place where inspiring materials and essays were published.

## **LITERATURE AND JOURNALS**

Publications are also an important way to educate drama teachers. The journal *Creative Drama* (*Tvořivá Dramatika*), founded in 1990, provides resources for the professional development of drama teachers. It was inspired by the journal *Theatre Education* (*Divadelní výchova*), published from 1964–1974 by Eva Machková. *Creative Drama* publishes theoretical studies and methodological materials, as well as examples of good practice in the Czech Republic and abroad. It provides reviews of professional publications, professional theatre productions for children and



reviews of recent children's literature. It publishes children's theatre scripts to promote dramaturgical and directing skills. The magazine is not only sought after by teachers in practice, but is also often used to educate drama teacher trainees.

There are several organisations publishing research on drama. These include NIPOS (National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture), the Creative Dramatics Association, the publishing houses of both arts universities (AMU and JAMU), pedagogical faculties and companies focused on pedagogical literature. There are publications that introduce new teachers to drama and others on specialised topics. Teachers also find books on related fields valuable, such as drama therapy, theatre of the oppressed, or theatre sports.

In conclusion, professional drama education training in the Czech Republic is multi-layered, providing opportunities for participants of any age or background. Thanks to experience gained under communism, when all training was only informal, the ground was well prepared for the development of drama education after the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Formal, non-formal and informal education provide ample opportunities for all interested in the field.

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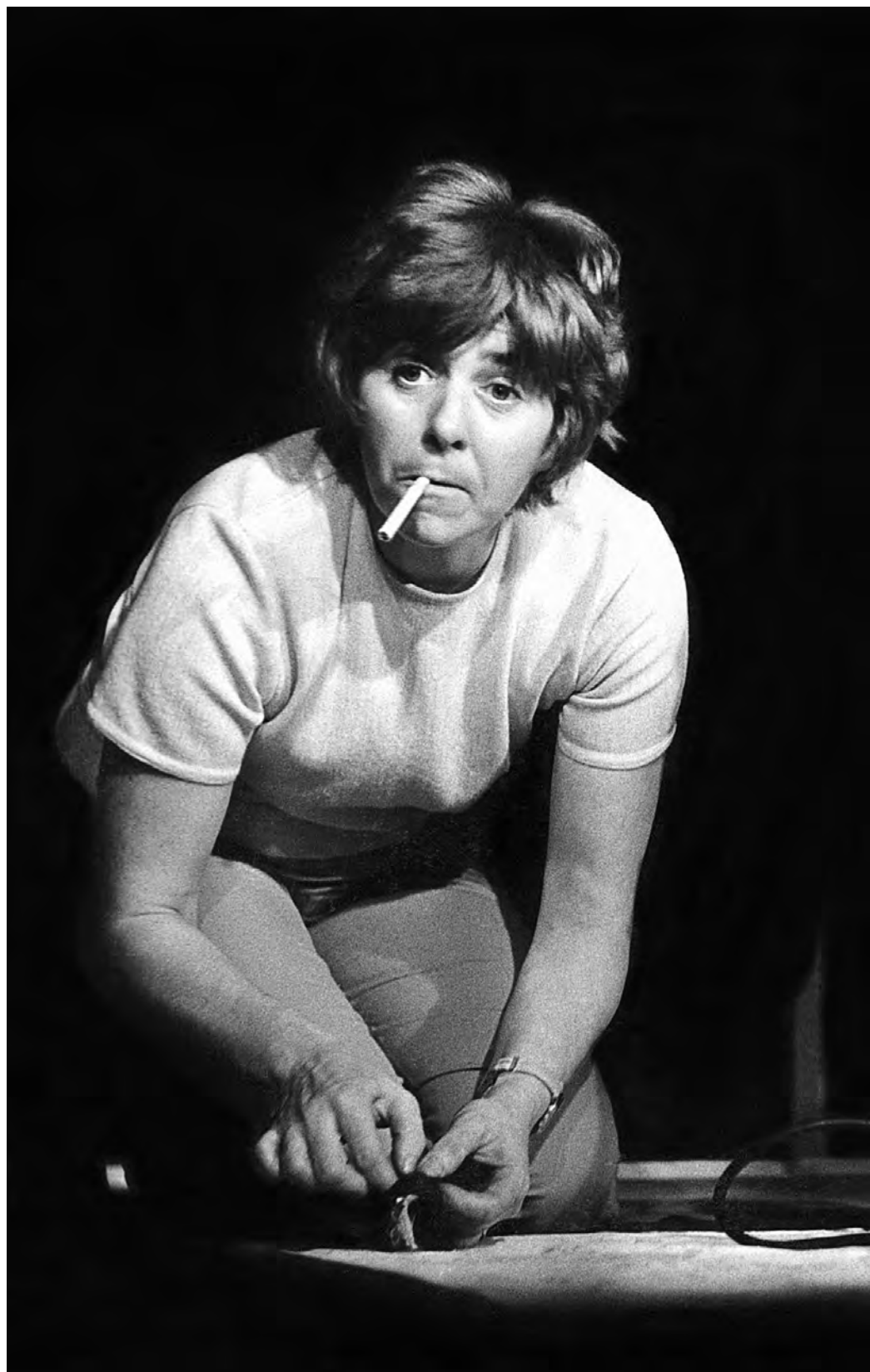




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↓ Eva Polzerová: A workshop on staging with children at the national festival *Children's Stage*, Svitavy 2015





↑ Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvilová (on left):  
 Movement and voice;  
 workshop at the national  
 festival *Theatre Summer in  
 Kaplice 1986*



→ Zdena Josková (back to the  
 camera): Author-dramaturgy  
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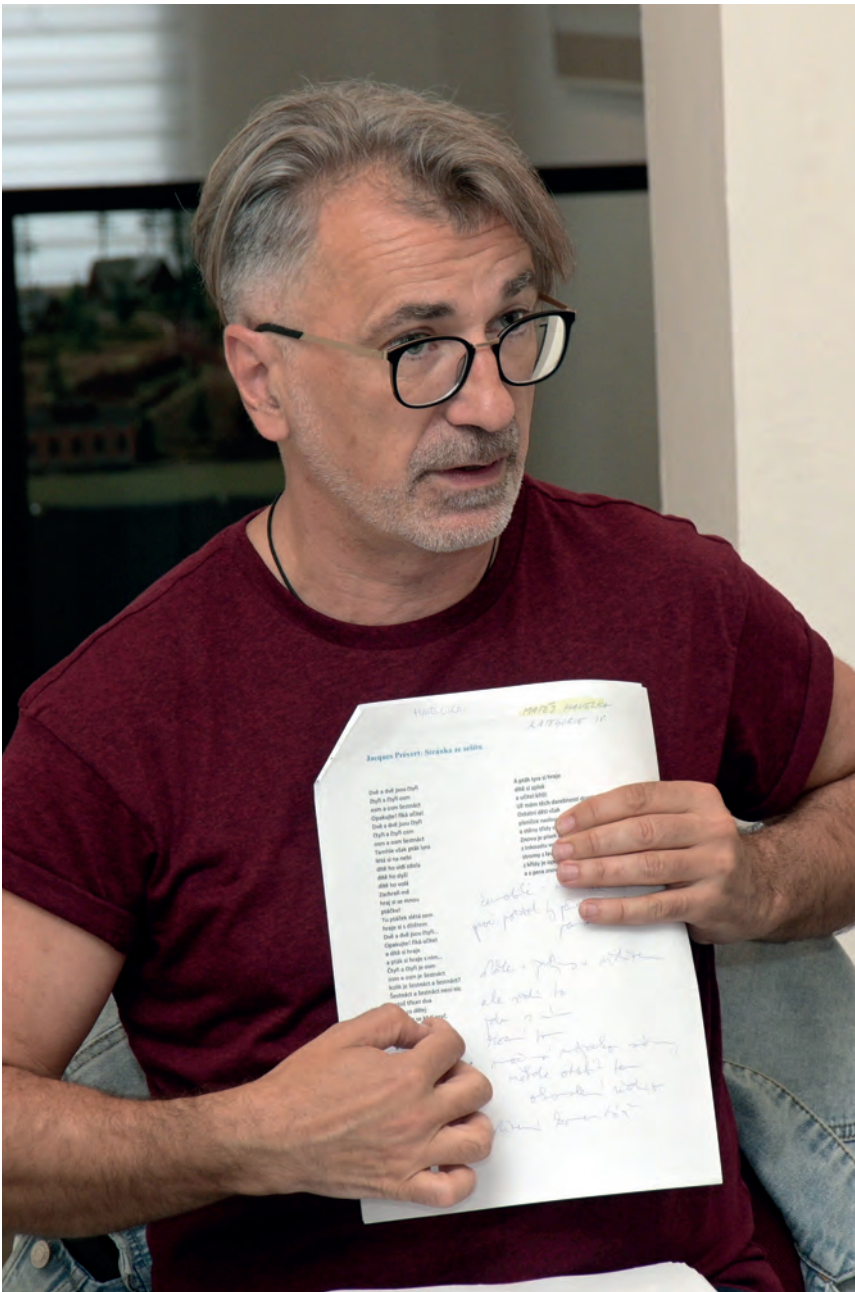
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workshop at the national festival *Children's Stage*,  
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• MÉDIA + KYBERVÝKANA → ZDRAVOSTI  
 • ABYENČE HRANIC - SPRAVDA X NEBEZPEČÍ  
 → CO JE ZESTĚ HRAČ  
 CO SI MŮŽE DVOLIT K AUTORITĚ  
 • VĚRY V RODINĚ  
 AGRSIVITA VŮČI AUTORITĚ (UČITELI)  
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 AGRSIVITA V DĚTSCÍ SOCIÁLNĚ  
 • JAK UČITELI ENKADATI? STRACH  
 (JAKÉHO CHARĚJI? DĚTI UČITELŮ?)  
 • NÁHLED DO ŽIVOTA UČITELĚ  
 • NEDOSTATEČNĚ SOCIÁLNÍ ROZVEDCOSTI  
 STRACH PŘISTAVIT JE NEŠTĚNĚ  
 135  
 135





↑ Frank Katoola: Working with children from the child's perspective; workshop at the national festival *Children's Stage*, Trutnov 2001

↓ Julian Boal: Theatre of the oppressed and its meaning; workshop at the national event *Drama Education at School*, Jičín 2007





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↓ David Booth: Learning through theatre; workshop at the national event *Drama Education at School*, Jičín 2010







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The way to theatre with children; workshop at the  
national festival *Children's Stage*, Svitavy 2011

↓ Rives Collins: Drama and theatre for children  
from an American perspective; workshop at the  
national festival *Children's Stage*, Svitavy 2012





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↓ Michael Supple: Theatre in the context of the contemporary world; workshop at the national festival *Children's Stage*, Svitavy 2014







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↓ Michael Woodwood: The power of the crowd: a seminar exploring group dynamics and individual relationships; workshop at the national festival *Children's Stage*, Svitavy 2016





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workshop at the national festival *Children's Stage*,  
Svitavy 2019

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Bednář: Poetry of movement; workshop at the  
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2

# Drama Education in the Curriculum of Czech Primary Schools

## Keywords

Curriculum; school system; child-centred school; competency; drama syllabus;  
personal and social development; theatre; artistic skills



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Immediately after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, as the political and social systems in Czechoslovakia transformed, so too came efforts to reform education. The main objective was to democratise and humanise schools, raising their quality to that of developed European countries. Discussions about the transformation of the system were mainly focused on decentralising education and reforming the curriculum, moving away from a single system.

From the viewpoint of drama education, the call for a child-centred school which develops children holistically was important. Arts subjects could play an essential role in fulfilling such a goal.

Indeed, drama education offers a plethora of methods that focus on working with groups and individuals, as well as addressing pupils' holistic development and teaching creatively. It met the needs of the reformers. Thanks to educational workshops, teachers gained an understanding and a respect for drama education and its wide range of inspiring methods. Drama education in the early 1990s contributed to the concept of education as play. Drama education helped to usher in the return of that concept to schools. It opened a way for schools to incorporate creative teaching and a holistic approach focused on children's individual needs and their personal and social development.

At that time, drama education in the Czech context emphasised personal and social development, while the goals of artistic development and drama's relationship to theatre were sidelined. This led to a somewhat warped perception of the subject – everything that was playful and creative was considered to be drama education. It was often perceived by the public (and by teachers) as simply a time when children could play and relax. However, a benefit of drama education's separation from its theatrical aspect was that its methods spread to other subjects, especially Czech, history, and social studies.

A notable change was brought about by new educational programmes, the most important of which was the *General School*. Drama education was included as a main subject in this programme for elementary school (i.e. education for children aged 6 to 12). The following explanation outlined how drama education could be integrated:

“A school can include drama education in its teaching plan if it has a teacher who is passionate and deeply convinced of its importance and benefits to students and the school atmosphere. The teacher should be professionally trained in drama education. Drama education can serve as a subject that helps distinguish a school and can contribute to creating a distinctive school spirit.

Ideally, drama education at the elementary school level can be taught by the class teacher. It is also possible to hire a teacher specialised in drama who works in close collaboration with the class teacher.

Drama education can be taught in accordance with the conditions of the school, the overall concept and the teacher's intentions in the following ways:



a) in a block with other subjects (e.g. other arts subjects or a subject introducing knowledge and understanding of the world and Czech language, as they can be mutually intertwined and complementary),

b) as an independent subject with a defined time in the timetable.” (Ministertvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy České republiky. 1993. *Návrh učebních osnov obecné školy* [Draft Curriculum for General School]. Praha: Portál. ISBN 80-85282-51-8.)

The above excerpt emphasises the personal and social aspects of drama education. However, it also offers ways to develop artistic skills. While the authors did not expect a stage production to be a necessary outcome of an elementary school drama course, it is included as an option.

As a result of the inclusion of drama education in the compulsory curriculum, teacher training programmes were offered to schools and a drama syllabus was developed.

Drama education was a part of other educational programmes for students of different levels, although not as a core or compulsory subject. Drama could be offered as an optional subject or as a method that could be used to teach other subjects.

In order to support the new subject of drama education, in 1992 two universities created departments in which students could pursue university degrees in the field: the Department of Drama in Education at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU) and the Theatre and Education Studio in Brno (JAMU). Later, the faculties of education of several Czech universities started offering drama education courses, particularly for students focusing on primary education (the most extensive offerings were at the University of Ostrava, Charles University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno and the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen).

In 1998, the government launched the most significant education transformation of the past 30 years. It was an effort to put the Czech education system in line with the EU, thus preparing the Czech Republic for future accession. In 2001, the government released the *National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic*, better known as the *White Paper*. It included plans to create a multi-level curriculum system, to incorporate lifelong learning, and to build curricula based on the concept of competencies. In addition to outlining the new education system and its objectives, the *White Paper* emphasised areas that should be targeted in education programmes for primary schools. These included improved foreign language teaching, education promoting citizenship and democracy, European integration, multicultural education, environmental education, education for a healthy lifestyle, and information technology. The programme also touched upon innovations in methods and forms of education. It supported an interdisciplinary approach, teaching in integrated units, project-based learning, and the encouragement of active, independent work by pupils. In many ways, the objectives, principles and methods of drama education were in sync with this programme.

At almost the same time, the Ministry of Education was creating the *Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education*, a new curriculum for primary education. After it was approved in 2004, individual schools created their own education frameworks.

The position of drama education in the *Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education* has been the subject of heated debate among experts in the field. Within the curriculum's Arts and Culture educational area, music and visual art are listed as compulsory subjects. Drama, however, is not – it is listed as an optional subject (along with a second foreign language; later, dance education and film and audio-visual education were added to this category).

Today, drama education is still an optional part of the Arts and Culture educational area. It is described in this way: “In elementary education, music and visual art make up the Arts and Culture section. Drama education can be included as an additional subject in the school curriculum as a separate subject, project, course, etc.” When the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education, national curriculum for primary education, was being developed, specialists discussed the content and objectives of drama education. They decided to introduce a new subject into the curriculum called personal and social education. As a result, drama education was no longer the only subject in which these topics would be covered. It made sense to put more of an emphasis on the artistic goals of drama education, linking it more closely to the Arts and Culture section. The core areas of the curriculum are currently: the basic prerequisites of dramatic playing, the drama and theatre process, reception and reflection of dramatic art. In partial revisions, the originally demandingly formulated outcomes were adapted to the conditions of primary schools. However, the individual outcomes are non-binding because it is not envisaged to implement the discipline in all grades of primary school.

Revisions to the *Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education* are currently being worked on. A team of experts from the sphere of academia as well as leading Czech drama specialists are in the process of writing an in depth analysis. Their study unites the two main areas of the subject for primary school – drama education for the classroom which does not lead to a theatre performance, and the theatre-making process.

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# Drama

## within the Educational Area Arts and Culture in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education

Drama as a school subject works with the expressive tools of theatre, namely the human voice and body. It cultivates them, striving to utilise them consciously both in the drama and theatre processes and in everyday communication. The subject is based on the basic principles of drama, seeing human behaviour as an external expression of people's inner perception, their motivations and attitudes in their interrelatedness. These principles are used both in a collective drama process, which is based on direct action in play situations with the aim of generating and examining themes, and in the theatre process, where the theme is communicated through human action.

In the same way as theatre, drama in education employs expressive tools borrowed from other kinds of arts (literature, visual art, music) in their interrelatedness, with respect to the specific possibilities of expression they can offer to serve the ultimate dramatic message.

The fundamental prerequisites of dramatic playing consist in acquiring and enhancing physical communication and play skills through a wide range of creative activities in a collective theatre and drama process.

The drama and theatre process consists of activities focusing on play action not intended to be watched by an audience, but bringing new experience gained from the situations of interpersonal communication. It also includes activities focused on the establishment of a scenic shape with all its components, and its presentation to an audience.

Reception and reflection lie in activities focusing on the active perception of drama in all its forms, and the systematic educating of a cultivated audience of dramatic work.

### **The area contributes to the forming and developing of key competencies by making pupils:**

- understand art as a specific way of learning about the world and use the language of art as a specific communication tool;
- see art and culture in their mutual interrelatedness as inseparable parts of human existence; learn through their own creation which leans on the subjectively specific ways of perceiving, feeling, experiencing and imagining; develop their creative potential, cultivate their needs and forms of expression, and establish their hierarchy of values;
- establish a welcoming and stimulating atmosphere, enabling them to create,

understand and learn about the values of art, adopt tolerant attitudes to various cultural values both of the past and present as well as the cultural expression of diverse groups, nations and nationalities;

- perceive themselves as free individuals; adopt a creative attitude to life, be able to overcome life stereotypes actively and keep enriching their emotional lives;
- take a personal part in the creative process, seeing it as a way to identify and express their own unique experiences as well as the phenomena and relationships existing in a diverse world.

## **STAGE 1 (6–11 years)**

### **Expected outcomes – Period 1**

Pupils will

- master the basics of proper breathing, voice, articulation and body posture; express basic emotions using voice and movement, and recognise them in the conduct of others;
- differentiate acted from real situations; acknowledge the rules of acting; put themselves into simple roles and act naturally in them;
- explore themes and conflicts on the basis of their personal acting;
- work together in a group to create a stage situation and present it to their classmates; watch others' presentations;
- with the teacher's help, reflect upon their experiences from watching a work of drama (theatre, film, television, radio).

### **Expected outcomes – Period 2**

Pupils will

- involve and combine somatic skills for the purpose of expressing their personal inner state and emotions as well as those of a specific character;
- work with rules of acting and variations thereon; put themselves into a role and act naturally and convincingly in an acting situation;
- identify themes and conflicts in situations and stories; look at them from the position of different characters; think about the impacts of characters' actions;
- work together in a group to create a short staged performance while using various tools of expression;
- present their staged performance in front of their classmates and continue to work on it on the basis of self-reflection and classmates' response; watch and evaluate classmates' presentations;
- reflect upon their experiences from watching a work of drama; on the basis of personal experience, differentiate the basic forms of theatre.

## **Subject matter**

### FUNDAMENTAL PREREQUISITES OF DRAMATIC PLAYING

- mind-body skills – working with breath, properly forming the voice, posture, verbal and nonverbal communication
- acting skills – putting oneself into a role
- social and communication skills – cooperation, communication in common life situations, in acting situations and in group stagework, presentation, reflection and evaluation

### DRAMA AND THEATRE PROCESS

- topics and themes in dramatic situations – finding and expressing them
- character types – working towards their deeper characteristics; tools of drama and puppet theatre
- dramatic situations, plot – organising the situation chronologically
- tools of and approaches to staging – staging improvised situations and mini-stories; presentation
- communicating with the audience – presentation, self-reflection

### RECEPTION OF AND REFLECTION ON DRAMATIC ARTS

- basic building blocks of a drama – situation, character, conflict
- contemporary dramatic arts and media – theatre, film, television, radio and multimedia
- types of theatre – drama, musical theatre, puppet theatre, movement and dance theatre

## **STAGE 2 (11–15 years)**

### **Expected Outcomes**

Pupils will

- make use of cultivated spoken and movement-based expression, observe basic vocal hygiene and proper posture;
- apply somatic skills when engaging in verbal and non-verbal expression; using examples, show the connection between experience and acting in oneself and others;
- develop, vary and repeat acting situations (independently, with a partner, in a group), acknowledge rules of acting and creatively develop them further;

- explore themes from various points of view and identify main themes and conflicts; be aware of analogies between fictional situations and reality;
- approach dramatic and stage work as a joint creative process in which they take on and perform their tasks, accept responsibility for the joint work and for the final presentation of its outcome;
- identify the basic dramatic elements in their own dramatic performance and in the work of drama; recognise the basic types of theatre and dramatic genres, including their main characteristics; critically assess works of drama as well as contemporary media art.

### **Subject matter**

#### FUNDAMENTAL PREREQUISITES OF DRAMATIC PLAYING

- mind-body skills – working with breath, properly forming the voice, posture, verbal and nonverbal communication
- theatrical skills – putting oneself into a role, stage persona; structuring acting and stage situations
- social and communication skills – communicating in common life situations, in acting situations and in group stagework, presentation, reflection and evaluation, teamwork, organising creative group work.

#### DRAMA AND THEATRE PROCESS

- topics and themes in dramatic situations – finding and expressing them
- working on the character – character, motivation, relationships
- conflict as the foundation of a dramatic situation – addressing conflict through the characters' behaviour
- dramatic situations, plot – organising the situation chronologically and causally, dramatisations of works of literature
- stagework – dramaturgy, directing, acting, stage design, music and sound
- communicating with the audience – presentation, self-reflection

#### RECEPTION AND REFLEXION OF DRAMATIC ART

- basic building blocks of a drama – situation, character, conflict, theme, climax, rising action
- basic dramatic genres – comedy, tragedy, drama
- basic types of theatre – drama, puppet theatre, opera, operetta, musical, ballet, pantomime

- contemporary dramatic arts and media – theatre, film, television, radio and multimedia
- selected history and types of world and Czech theatre
- significant personalities from Czech and world theatre

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# Literary-dramatic Studies at Primary Arts Schools as a Continuous Artistic Education

## Keywords

Primary arts school; drama education; theatre with children and youth;  
methodology; framework educational programme



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Primary arts schools (known as “folk art schools” until the early 1990s) are a unique aspect of the Czech educational system. From the age of 6 to 18, children can attend these educational institutions which offer extracurricular classes in music, visual arts, dance and literature-drama. All subjects follow a national curriculum and have specific teaching goals for each year. The classes usually meet 1–2 times per week, and children receive a report card at the end of the school year. The name “primary arts school” was deliberately chosen to be analogous to the name “primary school”.

The folk arts schools were established by the Ministry of Education in the 1960s (under the Education Act No. 186 Coll., dated 15 December 1960). At that time the first curricula were created for the literary-dramatic department. The early curriculum was split into three areas: literature and theatre history, voice training and recitation, and acting/movement/puppetry.

In the early years of the programme, children couldn't join the literary-dramatic department until they were ten years old. The other departments in the school (music, dance and visual arts) started accepting children when they were seven. This was probably because of the prevailing notion that children should have a well-developed ability to read and write, as they were expected to focus on acting and creating theatre productions (either live acting or puppetry).

Most of the teachers in the newly created departments were actresses with university degrees from theatre academies. For various reasons, they had given up their artistic careers to work with children. Many of them had a great influence on the development of these schools, including Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvílová, Jana Vobrubová, Olga Velková, Věra Pánková and Soňa Pavelková. Over time, they started to recognise differences between the ways professional adult actors worked in theatre and the needs of children. Milada Mašatová and Jiří Oudes, who were puppeteers, were also instrumental in the development of a new approach to drama teaching.

In the second half of the 1970s, drama teachers searched for the best ways to teach drama to children. They realised that imitating adult theatre methods had no value to the child actors nor to their audiences. During this period of experimentation, teachers explored various methods of working with children. They shared their discoveries with fellow drama teachers and children's theatre directors. The annual national children's theatre festival, known as Theatre Summer in Kaplice (KDL – Kaplické divadelní léto), was an important platform for the teachers to exchange professional experience. Starting in 1974, drama specialists met there on a regular basis (these included Jindra Delongová, Jaromír Sypal, Květa Sypalová, Josef Mlejnek, Hana Budínská, Eva Machková and Zdena Josková, among others). The festival included workshops and discussions where participants got together and analysed performances and methodology. They formed opinions on modern children's theatre and came up with new ideas.

These drama pioneers applied their extensive theatrical and pedagogical experience to the development of new curricula. They recognised that teachers should focus more on the exciting process of theatrical exploration with their pupils rather than on producing plays, and they prioritised pupils' personal and social development. To quote the latest version of the curriculum for literary-dramatic department, "drama education is an important tool for developing pupils' social skills (the ability to empathise, to recognise the motivations behind their actions and explore various social situations using role-play), and for enhancing their emotional development, self-knowledge and self-control". The curriculum also includes theatre skills and the basics of theatre history and theory. In addition, the drama lessons can be divided into group and individual sessions, thus giving teachers the flexibility to work with pupils individually or in smaller groups, e.g. during recitation or puppetry classes. The new emphasis on the creative process and drama games allowed the schools to start accepting younger pupils.

Under the auspices of the Research Institute of Pedagogy in Prague [VÚP–Výzkumný ústav pedagogický], documents were produced that were recognised by all teachers in the field. Olga Velková, a former employee of the institute, had a great deal to do with this. In addition, drama teachers participated in training seminars led by prominent artists. These brought experienced and aspiring teachers together with outstanding artists, including prominent actors Radovan Lukavský, Ilja Racek, Ivan Vyskočil and Ctibor Turba, the dancer Eva Kröschlová, and the theatre director Jiří Pistorius.

When Olga Velková left the Research Institute of Pedagogy, there was no one to organise the meetings of the literary-dramatic department teachers. Consequently, the exchange of creative ideas was limited to festivals and workshops (e.g. the Children's Stage, the Student Festival in Náchod and the Wolker National Festival in Prostějov [Wolkrův Prostějov]). There has been a festival of folk arts school drama groups since 1986, but this only takes place every three years.

The lack of opportunity for in depth discussions about drama education methodology affected the curriculum modifications that took place in 2000 and 2004. Nevertheless, there were some positive changes, such as the incorporation of teaching blocks in the curriculum, allowing teachers more freedom in choosing subjects, as well as more flexibility in scheduling classes. Teachers are still restricted by an overly detailed curriculum. Fortunately, it has not been a major obstacle to their creativity as the schools gradually diversify (in contrast to the more conservative music programmes).

In 2006, the Ministry of Education launched the development of the *Framework Educational Programme for Basic Artistic Education*. This has become an opportunity to reflect on curricula, educational content and the overall concept of drama education. It has also led to discussions with teachers about the educational content that is currently required in the curricula. It has also allowed to consider the introduction of specialised programmes into the department.

Although problems have marked the various stages of curricular development in the field of literature-drama since the 1970s, the integration of theatre in primary arts schools is unparalleled in Europe. The existence of four art disciplines – music, art, dance and literature-drama – under the roof of one school provides exciting opportunities for stimulating collaboration and the creation of interdisciplinary projects. All of this helps shape a positive outlook on the importance of arts education as well as seeking a common ground in the development of children's artistic creativity in various disciplines.

In September 2021, a total of 248,853 pupils were enrolled in 507 primary arts schools around the country. Within this, a total of 10,449 pupils were enrolled in literary-dramatic departments of 276 schools.

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3

# Theatre with Children as Devised Theatre?! (Dramaturgical Perspective)

## Keywords

Theatre with children; devised theatre; dramaturgy; dramatisation; children's literature; montage





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In the Czech Republic, most theatre performed by children is devised (also referred to as “authorial theatre”). What exactly does that mean?

Devised theatre is a method in which the script is created by the collaboration and improvisation of the ensemble. This also refers to theatre which is inspired by or based on non-theatrical literature (stories, books, poetry, etc). The essential aspect to devised theatre is that it is formed by the creative input of all participants.

This approach is very common to theatre performances by Czech children’s ensembles. From 2000 to 2021, over 300 productions were presented at the national children’s theatre festivals Children’s Stage [DS – Dětská scéna]. Only 7 % of the productions used ready-made scripts or other material which had not been created specifically for the ensemble. The other productions were original dramatizations of literature (77 %) or completely original stories (16 %). Even when using ready-made scripts, the ensembles usually made significant changes.

Why is this? Why don’t Czech children’s theatre groups use scripts?

Is it because there are not very many scripts available, and leaders cannot find the type of story that they want to produce?

Or are they difficult to obtain because they are out of print and not easy to find in public libraries?

Or could it be that the language seems outdated or that the themes of scripts, once very popular, no longer seem relevant today?

Or because the ambition of drama group leaders drives them to come up with something new, or to reinterpret a familiar story in a unique, innovative way?

While some of these reasons might play a part, they are probably not the main reason.

Contemporary children’s theatre has been shaped by methods of drama education, and these focus on the development of the child’s personality.

Zdena Josková, an influential leader in the field of Czech drama education from 1960 to the early 21st century, wrote: “Theatre with children is not different from theatre, but it has distinct aspects to it. The simple fact that children are performing gives it a unique quality. This places it in a specific category, hovering between theatre as an artistic activity performed for an audience by adults (either professionals or amateurs) and drama education which uses theatrical devices aimed at developing the personality of the children, even when part of the process is the creation of a production performed for an audience. In the latter case, a deliberate part of the educational process is to make the final production expressive and engaging on an emotional and aesthetic level.”<sup>1</sup>

Children should not perform a play to serve the interests of the author and the dramatic text (and the audience). On the contrary: the performance should be used

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1 JOSKOVÁ, Zdena. 1999. „Dramaturgie a dramatika v divadle hraném dětmi“ [Dramaturgy and dramatics in theatre with children]. *Tvořivá dramatika*. 1999, vol. X, no. 1, p. 1.

as a tool to cultivate the children. This is a basic tenet of drama education, and it concerns the children's growth in the personal, social and artistic spheres.

Theatrical work with children should always be geared towards a particular group. What kinds of individuals are in the group? What are their relationships with each other? What are their interests, abilities, levels of experience... Consequently, a production that was created with one group may not (and in fact cannot) be suitable for another group. This is not simply due to the obvious external qualities of the group, such as the gender mix, the number of children in the group, available space and facilities. It is much more important to consider their internal qualities: their interests, how they interpret the meaning of a story and the characters' motivations, what they think a piece of literature can offer, how they would explore the places of indeterminacy offered by all literary texts, and – last but not least – what theatrical devices they choose for exploring the text and transforming it for the stage. Under no circumstances should this process be neglected, which can easily happen when ensembles use ready-made scripts.

(Nevertheless, it is useful to publish scripts of successful shows presented at festivals. These can provide a starting point for new ensembles and their leaders, showing them how to approach a text and the potential of children's theatre. They can also enrich and inspire more experienced leaders.)

### Genres and authors

Most frequently, children's theatre groups create shows based on **traditional fairy tales** (of both Czech and international origin) or **literary fairy tales**. Ensembles choose very different ways to adapt them, sometimes taking traditionally approaches, and other times using a very original approach. We often encounter generalised versions of well-known stories described as being "loosely based on" the original story which do not make any effort to draw from the source material. This can result in a bland production, a "trampoline" for shallow humor, in which the meaning of the original story is lost. We rarely see shows of this type at the national festivals, as they are eliminated during the regional festivals. There are, of course, innovative productions which are "loosely based on the motifs" of the original. These sometimes find new qualities in the topic (regardless of whether or not the author of the original story is mentioned). A good example of this was a script written for a puppet show called *Jak se hledají princezny* [*How to Look for Princesses*] by **Milada Mašatová**, which was inspired by a traditional Czech fairy tale by Karel Jaromír Erben *Dlouhý, Široký a Bystrozraký* [*Long, Broad and Sharp-eyed*]. **Jana Dvořáčková** wrote a humorous script called *Pobádka o Červené karkulce* [*Tale of the Red Riding Hood*] which presented three versions of the well-known tale: in Czech, Greenlandic and Chinese. This inspired an original production called *Karkulkoviny* which was created by **Ivana Sobková** and her Prague ensemble.

In addition to a good script, good productions often include a “key” or symbol that is created by the drama group. What does this mean? For a serious play, it might be the inclusion of a folklore ritual that incorporates powerful images. This could be presented using dance-like movement or choral narration. In a humorous play, a moment of playfulness could be highlighted (especially the “as if” play). Sometimes childlike spontaneous, as was for example the case in the production *Tu to máš!* [*There you go!*] (based on a book of English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh fairy tales by **Pavel Šrut** *Kočíčí král* [*The Cat King*]) or *Nu, vot!* (based on the Russian fairy tale *Žabka carevna* [*The Frog Princess*]), prepared by **Václava Makovcová** a **Jana Barnová** with children from Třebotov Primary School. It can also be effective (especially with older children) to incorporate a Brechtian approach, presenting comments about the show from a distance. Similar principals apply to the dramatisation and staging of legends, although this genre is rarely presented by children’s theatre groups.

It’s never effective to do illusionistic theatre with children, both in terms of acting as well as design (i.e. “realistic” sets and costumes). Children encounter demands that are impossible for them to fulfil successfully. This is an outdated idea of what theatre with children should be.

**Original adaptations of fairy tales** can bring a humorous take to the primary material. Often the stories are humorous, such as the popular Czech children’s book *Kocourkov* about wise fools and foolish wise men by **Josef Hiršal** and **Jiří Kolář**.

**Pavel Šrut** is the most popular author among Czech children’s theatre groups – since 2000, there have been fourteen productions based on his stories at the national children’s theatre festival Children’s Stage. Pavel Šrut has written adaptations of English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh and also American fairy tales: *Prcek Tom a Dlouhán Tom a jiné velice americké pohádky* [*Shorty Tom and Long Tom and other very American fairy tales*]. One of his stories, entitled *Osmý John a Krvavý Koleno* [*Eighth John and the Bloody Knee*] has been performed three times (it is an absurd, dark comedy about the drastic end of a naughty boy and the consequences of parental favouritism).

Another popular author is **Jan Werich** who wrote a collection of stories called *Fimfárum*. There have been ten adaptations of his work at the festival since 2001, including four based on the story *Lakomá Barka* [*Greedy Barka*], which shows that everyone can be susceptible to greed.

What makes the work of these two authors so appealing to children’s theatre ensembles? Both offer dynamic plots including dramatic situations. This goes hand in hand with their stories’ playful language which lends itself to dialogue and vivid descriptions of witty situations and characters. The characters in the stories are strongly defined types, making them ideal for child actors. Underneath the comedy, there is also a deeper meaning which is presented in a way that is not moralising. It integrates harmoniously into the story which has, thanks to its theme, has endured

the test of time and lends itself to original, contemporary, and even mischievous interpretations. These unique adaptations of original stories often help to bridge the period in children's development when they are no longer "little" but also not yet "big". Children often want to do more than present an interesting story onstage. They want to express themselves, explore aspects of the world we live in with a critical eye, laugh at the nonsensical and present the absurdities of life.

Humour and playfulness are also distinctive features of most plays based on **modern fairy tales**. The humour can be presented gently, showing life's occasional twists and turns, or in a nonsensical or even grotesque way. Over the past twenty years, there have been six productions at the national festival Children's Stage which were based on the stories of **František Nepil**. The favorite is *Pobádka o hadovce smrduté* [*A Story about a Stinkborn*] which uses a lighthearted tone to address themes of isolation. Equally popular are productions based on stories by **Josef Čapek**, **Hana Doskočilová**, **Josef Kolář** and **Daniela Fischerová**. The stories of **Miloš Macourek** are also frequently presented at the festival (his work was shown five times in the past twenty years, including two productions about bored teeth in the nonsensical story *Barborka a cucavé bonbóny* [*Little Barbara and Hard Candies*] and two productions about the thankless job of alarm clocks *Ostrov pro šest tisíc budíků* [*An Island for Six Thousand Alarm Clocks*]). Theatre makers are attracted to the crazy, wacky playfulness of this nonsensical genre, but it is not easy to dramatise and requires abundant creativity and imagination.

What material is the most suitable for theatre with children? A short, clear story with a strong conflict, a humorous tone, characters which don't demand deep psychological understanding, and stories in which children do not need to perform adult characters in a realistic way. The stories should not be realistic and should offer space for the children's playfulness.

The stories of **Oscar Wilde** and **Hans Christian Andersen** have a serious, sometimes tragic tone which have inspired children's theatre ensembles for years. Their work includes humorous and ironic commentary by the narrator. Unfortunately theatre makers often suppress this irony (intentionally or unintentionally), leaving us with an overly sentimental story. Neither of the authors deserve that.

Adaptations of shorter modern fairy tales are usually humorous. When children's groups adapt longer stories (fairy novels and fantasy stories), they can take a more serious tone.

Humorous plays are often comprised of short scenes which are connected by a main character who goes through different situations (often chronological). This episodic structure allows the theatre-makers to choose the number of situations and the length of the play. In order to create a meaningful structure, it is important that the protagonists develop and transform (or perhaps to show that they remain the same no matter what they go through). Some stories in this category

which have been used as source material include *Malý Alenáš* [*Small Butours*] by **Ivan Vyskočil**, *Winnie-the-Poob* by **A. A. Milne**, *Kocour Modroočko* [*The Blue Eyed Tomcat*] by **Josef Kolář** and **Ludvík Aškenazy's** *Putování za švestkovou vůní* [*A Journey for the Scent of Plums*].

In plays based on longer, more serious stories, the protagonist often has to deal with a fundamental problem about human existence. This can be directly linked to saving the world (or the world of a specific community) from evil or the painful search for one's identity. Heroes often face temptation, perhaps in the form of a magical power. Often they use the power of love or friendship and their willingness to sacrifice themselves for others to overcome this temptation. The genre of these stories can be blurred, incorporating fairy tale motifs, fantasy, or a more modern story for children or young adults. Some examples of shows that we have seen in this category are dramatisations of *Čarodějův učeň* [*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*] by **Otfried Preussler**, *Havrane z kamene* [*The Stone Raven*] by **Tomáš Pěkný**, *Momo* by **Michael Ende** and **C. S. Lewis's** *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. This type of story provides dramatic plots with strong conflicts and depth, as well as giving the ensemble the chance to explore the meaning of human existence. This type of play offers children on the edge of adolescence the opportunity to experience something which has great meaning to them. It can take them beyond the reality of their lives and shape not only the hero in the story but also their own future self. These texts demand a lot from the theatre-makers. It is challenging to select the most important situations to preserve the story's meaning, to maintain a plot which makes sense and have a final version that is manageable for the children to perform. It can also demand a lot in terms of acting. These stories are not made up of simple character types. The heroes are much more complicated. Children must be able to portray the character's development, what obstacles they have to overcome, and the moments of doubt. How can you help young actors master such a task, to find the tools that will allow them to succeed, and avoid the trap of illusionism, which does not work in these types of shows any more than it does in shorter stories? These subjects are usually pursued by older, more experienced children, but still the members of the ensemble are not always mature enough to take on this challenge, and the leaders do not always find an appropriate way to stage this type of show.

**Realistic stories** are another genre frequently staged by children's theatre groups. This makes sense – the protagonists are close to the children in age, experience, in the circumstances in which they live as well as the types of problems that they have to solve.

There is a wide array of stories in this category. It includes humorous prose (e.g. **Karel Poláček**: *Bylo nás pět* [*There Were Five of Us*], **René Goscinny**: *The Chronicles of Little Nicholas*), horror fictions (**Brian Jacques**: *Seven Strange & Ghostly Tales*, **Chris Priestley**: *Uncle Montague's Tales of Terror*), science fiction stories (**Ray Bradbury**:

*All Summer in a Day*), detective stories (**Erich Kästner**: *Emil and the Detectives*), adventure stories (**Michelle Paver**: *Wolf Brother*, **Rudyard Kipling**: *The Jungle Book*, **Mark Twain**: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*), stories with a female protagonist (**Iva Hercíková**: *Pět holek na krku* [*Five Girls to Care for*], **Charlotte Brontë**: *Jane Eyre*), psychological prose (**Ota Hofman**: *Útěk* [*Escape*], **Juraj Šebesta**: *Když se pes směje* [*When the Dog Laughs*], *Venussbe*) and war-inspired books (*The Diary of Anne Frank*, **Uri Orlev**: *Run, Boy, Run*), and stories about the difficult subject of death (**Jostein Gaarder**: *Through A Glass, Darkly*). In these stories, the young protagonists are depicted in everyday situations as well as in extraordinary circumstances, in familiar and exotic settings, in relationships that are both harmonious and cruel.

Short, humorous prose depicting the lives of younger children (which could include individual short stories that are part of a larger book or collection) usually have a concentrated, dynamic flow of action that leads to a final punchline. They depict characters that are of a certain type; sometimes these are on the verge of caricature (including adult characters) and comic exaggeration. This can be an advantage to theatre-makers. The problems that the characters encounter are minor and easy to solve, caused by an excess of children's energy, poorly thought-out ideas or a desire for adventure. The child hero is not alone, but a member of a group, and fights are not hostile but a way of expending energy or settling differences of opinion without fatal consequences for relationships (some examples of this can be found in the works of **Karel Poláček**, **René Goscinny** and **Astrid Lindgren's** *The Children of Bullerbyn Village*). Adults might complicate children's lives (and vice versa!) but usually play marginal roles, sometimes becoming victims of the children's spontaneity and unconventionality or creating boundaries that try to limit the children's impulses. Adults demand compliance to rules and order, but overcoming these restrictions is often perceived by children as an opportunity for adventure. Even when children encounter a lack of understanding from adults or a conflict with peers, the story ends with mutual understanding and an amicable solution.

As characters get older in stories, the length of the text usually gets longer. The humor also changes (becoming less kind and more ironic and sarcastic), the atmosphere is more intensive, and the lives of the characters are more complicated. The protagonists often view the settings of the stories (home, school) as boring or unfriendly. Adults don't have the time, interest, or ability to understand. They represent a way of life that the young characters resent, even if they sometimes give in to it. It is hard for the heroes to belong and get the approval of others while maintaining their own identity (**Sue Townsend**: *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole: Aged 13½*, **Brian Jacques**: *R.S.B. Limited, Jamie and the Vampires*).

There are also stories that portray an adolescent protagonist struggling to cope with a reality that is far from ideal. There is no humorous exaggeration in these stories. Relationships with peers, parents and other adults are complicated, and



misunderstandings can lead to serious consequences (e.g. **Ota Hofman**: *Útěk* [*Escape*], **Juraj Šebesta**: *Když se pes směje* [*When the Dog Laughs*], *Venussbe*, **Ray Bradbury**: *All Summer in a Day*). The protagonist might have to deal with a severe disability (**Alan Marshall**: *I Can Jump Puddles*). The search for identity is challenging and painful. Some of these books do not have much literary merit, as they are populist responses to an expressed or unspoken social demand. Still, they can be a good source of material for classroom drama activities which lead to a production based on the theme.

There are very few plays based on stories with female protagonists at our festivals, making it a genre of its own in this country. This is especially interesting given the fact that girls outnumber boys in most children's theatre groups (it is not uncommon to have all girl groups). Perhaps this is due to the fact that there is a lack of quality literature aimed at girls, as well as because these stories focus more on characters' emotions rather than on the plot. They are also often about romantic relationships, and it is very difficult for children of this age (especially boys) to represent such feelings onstage.

It is very challenging to bring serious realistic stories (which tend to portray reality as truthfully as possible) to the stage, both on the level of script development and staging. Because the stories are usually long and complicated, they need extensive work. The theatre-maker needs to choose the motifs, situations and characters, as well as create a dramatic structure, deciding what situations to cut. It is necessary to find a "key" to the production, i.e. a stylization that will prevent the show from being too realistic. How can the psychological processes of the characters be portrayed onstage while simultaneously respecting the abilities of the young actors so that the show does not become overly sentimental? One way of achieving this is for the role of the protagonist to be played by several actors, allowing them to share the burden of the show. This was successfully implemented in a production of *Run, Boy, Run* by **Uri Orlev** and performed by the Primary Arts School in Ostrov, led by **Irena Konývková**. The story can thus be edited, presenting a series of short sequences that are more manageable for the scope of a child actor. The hero's thoughts and feelings may be revealed externally, using a chorus or metaphorical devices (dreams, visual images, etc.). In a production of **Iva Hercíková's** novel *Pět holek na krku* [*Five Girls to Care For*], the Uherské Hradiště children's ensemble (directed by **Hana Nemravová**) portrayed the main character's inner thoughts very successfully by externalising them using characters aptly named Black and White who commented on and argued about them.

Another challenge to children's ensembles: how to portray adult characters. Sometimes it is possible to leave them out, but they are often central to the plot. Can a child play an adult? Adult characters are often seen through the eyes of a child in a simplistic way, mainly as holders of power (to forbid, command, or control something), or as people who do not understand children's problems. Even when the



adults are caricatures and can be played in a stylised way, the production still aims to be convincing. If a child actor is playing a child character, how does the child actor playing an adult appear beside him? Can it be believable? Will the adult in this interpretation be accepted by the audience? Will it not undermine the credibility of the piece as a whole and devalue its emotional impact? Will such a character have the power that adults naturally have within them? Won't the character blend in with the child characters? Could an adult character be played by an adult actor (such as a leader or older member of the ensemble)? But won't their acting be too different from that of the children and therefore appear out of place? Should a more stylized approach be chosen, such as using a voice on the phone or a shadow outside a door – knowing that such a portrayal of the adult highlights their detachment and alienation from the world of the children and their problems? Or should one depict an adult as a collective figure, multiplying their strength and power? Or substitute the adult with an oversized puppet or other artistic symbol (hat, spotlight)? Theatre-makers should try to answer these questions before choosing a story with an adult character that plays an integral role.

An entire chapter could be devoted to literature that was not written for children, but which has the potential to appeal to older readers. This can greatly enhance the range of themes that children's theatre ensembles can explore, e.g. social hypocrisy, snobbery, rigid conventions, greed and the reckless pursuit of profit, betrayal of ideals, etc. You can find these themes in **Viktor Dyk's** short story *Krysař* based on *The Pied Piper*. The more humorous stories of **H. H. Monroe** (better known by his pseudonym **Saki**) offer grotesque exaggeration, as does **Oscar Wilde's** novel *The Canterville Ghost*. Some Czech 19th century classics can also be surprisingly adaptable, such as *Povídky malostranské* [*Tales of the Little Quarter*] by **Jan Neruda**, which was adapted by **František Oplatek's** children's theatre ensemble from Bechyně (*Nerudárium*). Along the same lines, **Hana Nemravová** and her ensemble from Uherské Hradiště created *Naša Divá Bára* [*Our Wild Bára*], based on the classic novel *Divá Bára* [*Wild Bára*] by **Božena Němcová**. The play explored themes based on society's rejection of a person who is different.

### Methods of creating the script

In the previous chapter we presented literature and authors most frequently used as a source for script development by Czech children's theatre groups. All of these epic works offer potential for drama. What exactly does this mean? According to Zdeněk Hořínek<sup>2</sup>, they provide scenic illustration and visualisation of meanings and facts verbally expressed. There is a dynamism and momentum in the story, with an

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2 HORÍNEK, Zdeněk. 1980. Úvod do praktické dramaturgie. Praha: ÚKVČ, pp. 21–22.

emphasis on plot. Psychological aspects manifest themselves in human actions and behaviour. The action takes place in the narrowly defined time and space of the play. The story offers verbality (a prerequisites for acting in words), clarity (so it can be understood “here and now”), and dramatic tension (which most often takes the form of conflict, i.e. it is a clash of two opposing forces).

(Sometimes the authors’ attention is focused on literature that is not dramatic, but which is fascinating because of its rich language, original style, metaphoric language or poetry. The theatricality of such pieces is dependent on a strong vision of the production which could use strong visual images, highly stylised stage action, music, etc.).

What methods could be chosen by theatre-makers when creating a script based on literature? Zdeněk Hořínek speaks of three approaches: 1. transcript for the stage, 2. dramatisation in the ordinary sense, 3. play based on an epic text.

**A transcript for the stage** draws from the original text as much as possible. It incorporates not only the dialogue, but also passages of a narrative or descriptive nature that could be turned into dialogue or maintain their narrative character. Theatre-makers might choose this approach because they value the author’s writing and want to preserve the original version (this is often the case with **Jan Werich’s** fairy tales or **Karel Poláček’s** stories). Another reason might be because they do not have the confidence to alter the original text. In any case, they then consider whether to keep the prototext faithfully or whether to omit some parts of it. But it is not a selection on a larger scale, such as entire situations or characters, but rather just single sentences or words. They must decide how to incorporate the selected text. If the direct speech from the original becomes dialogue, how will they use narration? Should sentences from the original be incorporated into the dialogue? How will the narrator be presented? Will there be a narrator, or more than one narrator, or an entire chorus? Will the narrator have a purely objective character outside the plot, or will he be given a role and thus become more a part of the plot? The characters in the story could also be narrators, switching between the roles. The narration could become a “dialogue” among several narrators who, as those who present the story, have a relationship to each other (provoking each other, opposing each other, etc.).

This approach is not effective if it is simply an illustration of the original. Theatre-makers should stage the piece in a creative way, using theatrical devices to enrich the literary qualities of the piece.

**Emilie Zámečníková** created a very successful show called *Napadlo bodně sněhu* [*There Was a Lot of Snow*] based on excerpts from *Bylo nás pět* [*There Were Five of Us*] by **Karel Poláček**. The Třebotov ensemble *Tři boty*, led by **Václava Makovcová** and **Jana Barnová**, also successfully adapted the English fairy tale *Titty Mouse and Tatty Mouse and others* in a production entitled *Tu to máš* [*There You Go*].

In a **standard dramatisation**, the theatre-maker tries to create a script that is theatrical but remains as close as possible to the original epic work. This “faithfulness” however, does not exclude major interventions in the structure of the prototext, which must still be clearly identifiable. The adaptation might cut all narration and tell the story using dialogue and action. It also could exclude certain plotlines or (especially with short stories) expand on the original material with new situations and characters. Even an epically constructed plot can only be presented through the dramatic action and dialogue of characters without the presence of a narrator and vice versa – the plot with classical dramatic structure could be presented using narrators, commentators, distancing effects, etc.

The third way of adapting literature for the stage is a **play based on an epic text** in which new, artistically distinctive work is created. A good example of this was the production of *Oscarky* (directed by **Jiří Rezek** and his ensemble from Slaný) which was based on the fairy tale *The Happy Prince* and other texts by **Oscar Wilde**. Another successful work was the **Hana Nemravová’s ... or Romeo and Juliet**, created by the Uherské Hradiště Primary Arts School. A reviewer described the show inspired by Shakespeare’s drama: “Six girls sit onstage, which is decorated by only three chairs and two side screens. They represent Rosaline, her two friends and their three maids. They gossip about Romeo and Juliet, discuss their dreams about men, find more and more stimuli for their disagreements, and claim to know the truth about what happened to Romeo and Juliet...”<sup>3</sup>

Another approach is to create a completely **original play**. This can be approached in two ways. Children might work with a script that was written for their specific group, either by the ensemble’s leader or one of the members. During the rehearsal process, the script will undergo a transformation, incorporating the ideas of the children. Their creativity will play a significant role in its final form.

Another approach is to start from scratch without a script, perhaps without even a subject or theme. What the final play will be and how it will be performed is completely created by the group during their production process.

In her article “The Specifics of Theatre with Children and Students” **Ivana Sobková** described the process she went through to create *Tančírna [Ballroom]*, an original play developed with her children’s ensemble named *Zpátečníci* from the Primary Arts School in Prague:

“At the beginning of the school year, I planned to spend time at rehearsals with exercises and the exploration of texts that I had selected. However, a number of students in the group had just started ballroom dance classes, and they spent a lot of

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3 BRHELOVÁ, Eva. 2007. „Co bylo k vidění na dvou březích Úpy“ [What to see on the two banks of the Úpa River]. *Tvořivá dramatika*. 2007, vol. XVIII. no. 2, p. 12.

the rehearsal time talking about this new experience. It was difficult to get them to focus on anything else, and they were constantly telling vivid stories about the dances, the balls... I finally decided to use this topic as a starting point for our show. We acted out these situations and talked about what was embarrassing, how they attempted to get to know other students, misunderstandings, etc. We explored the essence of what they were going through, why these situations had such a strong impact on them, and why they wanted to share their stories. A number of themes emerged, such as how people attempt to fit into society, how to establish relationships with the opposite sex, the hollowness of certain social conventions, the contradiction between someone's internal sense of themselves and how they present themselves externally, the demands made on young people... We chose the themes of first relationships, love and disappointment as the starting point of our play. It was a very personal topic, and we wanted the students to have a bit of distance from it. We created a few strong characters whom the students acted in improvisations. We explored their reactions, attitudes, motivations and gradually developed the characters. During this experimentation, we discovered connections between the characters which we wrote down and developed. We first did this in improvisations (trying to ensure that the character behaved in a believable way), and later we discussed ideas for how to further develop the characters based on our own experiences. We explored typical situations from the dance classes in our improvisations; we investigated the tactics used to begin, maintain, and end first relationships, we changed the situations to explore reactions in specific situations. We uncovered how small details in communication with others determine the characters' reactions, and consequently our own. How do we read different signals from our partners, what meanings do we attach to them, how they can sometimes confuse us? Through invented/created characters, at a safe distance, through experimentation, participants came to a very personal knowledge and understanding of themselves in relationships and methods of communication.

The framework of the production was basically obvious – a dance class. The presence of an adult (the dance master) was not necessary, the adult relationships were not essential for us and it would only complicate the situation unnecessarily. The dance lessons, the dances and other situations were divided by music. We chose two songs by Jan Budař Drzý kohoutek [Cheeky Rooster] a Nekonečná láska [Endless Love]. The song lyrics provided further inspiration about relationships. The theme of communication also was integrated into the dance routines. In order to play with details in movement, it was necessary to master basic dance steps and simple variations and routines of the chosen dances (blues, samba, tango). The coordination of the dances, attention to detail and staging were challenging in terms of movement and rhythm. The blues represented the opening of the show – the exploration and the first timid contacts between the participants. The seductive and playful samba symbolized relationships and their awkwardness, playfulness,

and the sophistication in tactics. The final conflicts, passions, intense feelings and break-ups were mirrored in the tango. Situations between the characters were embedded between the dances, a patchwork of scenes interwoven in the play. To clarify the inner motivations of specific characters, we also included monologues by the characters. These were created during the rehearsal process and were originally intended to find depth and refine the characters.”<sup>4</sup>

As is evident from the above excerpt, the role of the drama leader in this type of production is very demanding and the adult has to be able to create the right conditions to elicit personal, distinct testimony from the ensemble. The leader needs to get the ensemble to think deeply about the theme, to discover connections, to create and develop characters, to shape situations that will convey the theme, to cut unoriginal ideas, to find a way to stylize the show in order to create an effective production that allows the children’s voices to be heard.

Another interesting original play by Ivana Sobková was called *Noční můry* [*Nightmares*] and created with younger children. In this montage of short scenes, 6–8 year olds explored the theme of childhood fears which resulted in a highly stylised presentation that was something between horror and grotesque. A few years later, **Jiřina Krtíčková** created a similar piece using the same theme and montage approach. She worked with older children (the Rozcuchaní vrabčáci ensemble from Třebachovice pod Orebem) who, thanks to their age, presented a wider range of fears and traumas from the quite banal (e.g. fear of a hairdresser’s scissors) to the much more serious (loneliness, rejection from the group, divorce).

*You Generace* [*You Generation*] was an aptly named, humorous original production created by the ensemble from Nové Město na Moravě and directed by **Kateřina Šteidlová**. In this production, teenagers showed the simplistic and distorted view that adults (sometimes?) have of young people, which can reduce them to a generation of social network addicts.

*Journeys* by the Prague English-language company Story Theatre (directed by **Leah Gaffen**) is another example of an original production. The play’s title was the central theme, and to create the show, members of the ensemble researched stories of their own ancestors’ lives. The journeys were literal, but also a metaphor for change. Something in the past altered people’s destinies and still have an impact today. Each of the stories was told using a different theatrical device: puppetry, object theatre, shadow theatre, even a short “documentary” film. Although many of the stories were serious (and sometimes tragic), the entire show was handled with a lightness and exaggeration in a sensitive way. The emotional weight was carried

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4 SOBKOVA, Ivana. 2022. „Specifika dětského a studentského divadla“ [“Specifics of children’s and youth theatre”]. *Tvořivá dramatika*. 2022, vol. XXXIII, no. 1, p. 22.

by the original songs and thus it did not become an unreasonable burden on the young actors.

It is no coincidence that most of the scripts of the above original productions use a montage structure. Unrelated images, motifs, and scenes come together and create one entity. A theme, presented from different points of view, unites them, and it is only fully visible and complete when all of the scenes are connected.

What is the benefit of this approach? First of all, it is the possibility of a distinctly authorial input from children, who become co-authors of the play, speaking directly about topics that interest them, without the mediation of a “foreign” text. The montage structure allows creators to focus on short individual sequences. This makes it easier to construct than an elaborate, complete story, particularly for less experienced theatre-makers. Scenes can transition quickly from one to the next, and can be staged using various theatrical devices: dialogue, commentary, narration, documentary, etc. The final production often reflects many different opinions and attitudes – sometimes contradictory – capturing the complexity of its topic.

What are the pitfalls of a montage? It needs to form a whole, with a beginning and an end. The choice and order of the individual sequences must also be clear. They could be arranged to present contrasts or parallel situations, or perhaps there is a rational link, or one can build upon the previous piece... Because the show is not based on a text with known literary merit, there is a danger that the individual contributions could be of low quality (banal or cliché). The play also needs dramatic tension to keep the audience engaged. Plots with a conflict naturally have this tension; can the joy of discovering unexpected connections in a montage replace that? Further, montage is not always viewer-friendly. When watching a story, the audience dives into the flowing river of the narrative and it carries them along. A production based on a montage is more like crossing a raging mountain stream, searching for a path over randomly scattered rocks. There is another problem that the drama leader often confronts: if all of the children are working on contributions to the whole, how do you decide what will be in the final show? Often the leader has to choose between creating a strong, focused production and integrating the work of all of the children.

That said, the montage provides an interesting and beneficial way to expand a spectrum of tools which provide an opportunity for extensive involvement of the participants.

There are multiple ways to work with a children’s theatre ensemble: using literary stories, creating a new story in rehearsals, creating a montage based on a theme... No matter what material we choose, there is one fundamental requirement: to respect the child as a thinking, creative person while maintaining our artistic mission. The relationship between the child and theatre must be a partnership.



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↓ Milada Mašatová: *Stojí bruška* [*A Pear Tree Stands*], 1986





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↓ Hana Budínská: *Krabička* [*The Box*] (montage of nonsense verses from around the world), 1989







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↓ Irena Konývková: *Bylo nás pět* [*There Were Five of Us*] (adapted from the book by Karel Poláček), 2006







↑ Václava Makovcová a Jana Barnová: *Tu to máš* [*There You Go*] (adapted from three English fairy tales by Pavel Šrut), 2006

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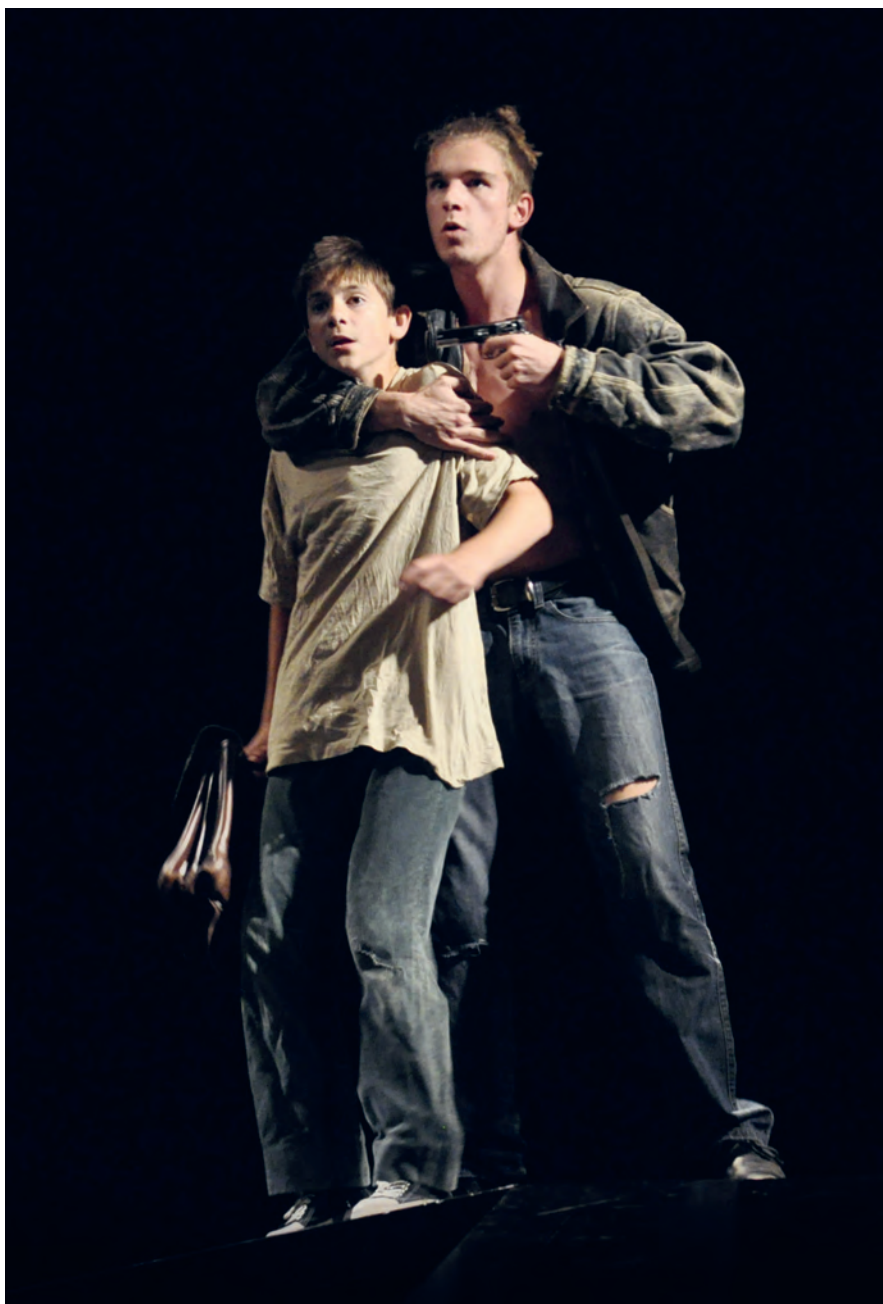




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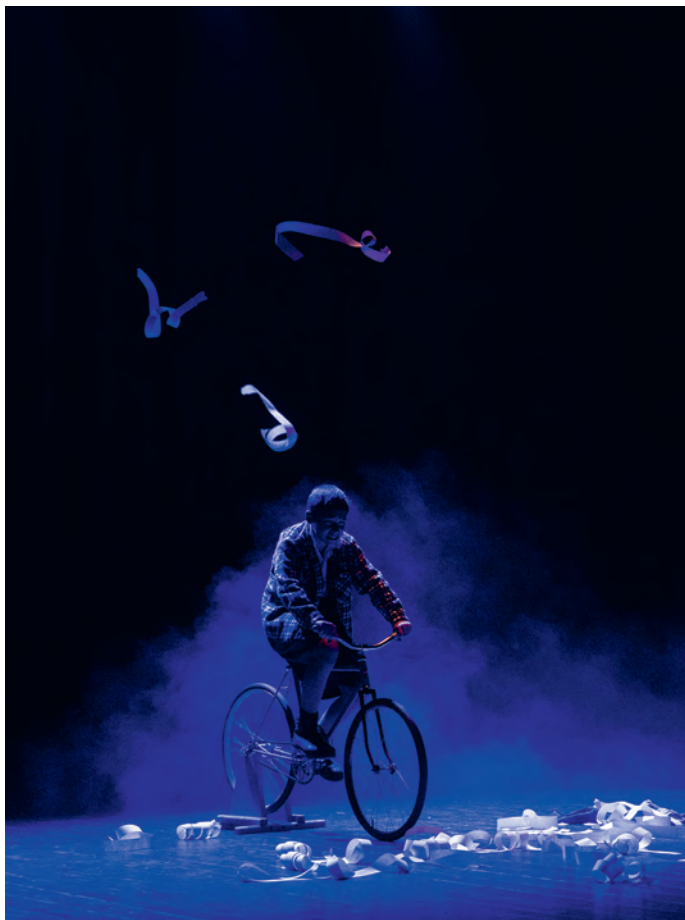




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# Speech Education and Recitation in the Czech Republic

## Keywords

Speech education; rhetoric; recitation; drama education; spoken Czech; Children's Stage National Festival; National Festival in Prostějov



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What exactly is speech education? In this article, I will describe how it differs from the traditional understanding of rhetoric, the overlap between speech education and drama education, and how recitation helps children develop their spoken language. I will focus primarily on recitation, which is very popular in the Czech Republic. Much of this article is based on findings from my own experience which were first presented in my dissertation<sup>1</sup>.

Several organisations do research on spoken Czech. The most active are the Czech National Corpus (ČNK)<sup>2</sup>, the Institute of Czech Language at the Czech Academy of Sciences (ÚJČ AV ČR – Ústav pro jazyk český Akademie věd České republiky), and teams of researchers from the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, in cooperation with teams from the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics and the Masaryk University in Brno. There are also inspiring research projects by the Phonetic Institute of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University (e.g. Melodic Structure of Spoken Czech, Prosody of Contemporary Czech).

Surprisingly, few Czech university education departments offer courses on spoken Czech. Those that are available lack any sort of teaching methodology, simply providing an overview of the current state of spoken Czech.

### **Who teaches spoken Czech (and who does not)**

While university faculties of education do not teach spoken Czech, there are numerous individuals who do, and their work has had a strong impact on the field. Many of them have backgrounds in theatre, radio and recitation. Some teach acting students at leading Czech arts university and theatre conservatories (these include Radovan Lukavský, Hana Makovičková, Jiřina Hůrková, Hana Kofránková, and Marta Hrachovinová). Others take a more commercial approach, offering courses to the public (these can be of a very mixed quality). At Czech Radio there are many experts who train novice radio announcers. Not surprisingly, numerous drama teachers include speech education in their classes. Every year theatre and recitation festivals demonstrate excellence in spoken Czech. Some professional associations, such as Slovo a hlas (Word and Voice)<sup>3</sup> and Přesah (Overlap)<sup>4</sup>, provide methodological support for teachers in the field.

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1 The dissertation *Scenology of Children's and Young People's Speech: Education for Cultivated Speech Through Methods of Drama Education, Especially Through Recitation* was defended at DAMU in September 2020.

2 Academic project at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, administered by the Institute of the Czech National Corpus.

3 Association was founded in 2003; [www.slovoahlas.cz](http://www.slovoahlas.cz).

4 The association was founded in 2001 to organise recitation festivals and workshops for the region of Prague.

## Speech education and rhetoric

There are three areas connected to teaching speech that are related, complementary, and intertwined: rhetoric, speech education and recitation.

Speech education is the most commonly used term to describe the didactics of teaching speaking to children. It encompasses all aspects of the education of spoken communication, including speech behaviour. It also encompasses speech in all contexts: daily public, private, artistic, and non-artistic as speaking cannot be divided into “domestic” and “public”. How a speaker develops his style is a lifelong process affected by many factors. Speech education should enrich and create the optimal conditions for this process.

In the Czech Republic, speech education draws from rhetoric in many ways. We still embrace ancient definitions of rhetoric (e.g. Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Quintilian’s *Institutes of Oratory*), adapting and modifying them to the needs of our time. “Rhetoric has dominated European education and culture. This is well illustrated by the fact that schools cultivated the same core subjects – grammar, rhetoric, and logic – from antiquity to the arrival of Romanticism (more than 80 generations of teachers, pupils, and students).” (Kraus, 1998, p. 11) Even today, spoken communication is the dominant mode of interpersonal communication. It is surprising that contemporary Czech schools devote so little time to teaching spoken Czech. Paradoxically, much more attention is given to spoken communication in foreign languages. It would be a good idea to take a look at the history of education and reevaluate how educational systems value the spoken word today.

Although I am aware of the fundamental interdependence of rhetoric and speech education, I always refer to pedagogical work with children using the term *speech education*. Because of its ancient roots, people often have an inaccurate understanding of rhetoric, imagining a stereotypical orator wearing a Roman toga. Rhetoric evokes images of statesmanlike, political speeches and can seem antithetical to children’s education. This distorted perception can also have other, negative connotations: “There have been disputes over the ethics of a discipline was often more concerned with plausibility than truthfulness, and which focused on a speaker’s ability to persuade and influence an audience’s opinion.” (Kraus, 1998, p. 14) Therefore, I prefer to use different terminology when working with children.

## The important place of speech education in Czech drama education

Drama education developed in Czechoslovakia in the second half of the 20th century. Many of the leading drama educators were also actors, and consequently it was natural to incorporate voice and speech in their drama classes (some of these teachers included Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvílová, Soňa Pavelková, Jindra Delongová). There were two important influences on their approach to teaching voice. Many were inspired by methods from abroad which they learned about thanks to the initiative of

Eva Machková in the 1960s. The second was the Disman Radio Children's Ensemble, a group founded in 1935 by Miloslav Disman and based at Czechoslovak Radio. M. Disman created his first recitation ensemble with children in the 1920s and was well known for his work in speech education as well as children's theatre. The importance of cultivating speech has been fundamental to the development of Czech drama education since its beginnings.

### **Where to find published methodological support for speech education**

There are three widely used publications for teaching speech in the Czech Republic. They are all high-quality books with practical tips rooted in drama education and acting training.

*Mluvní výchova dětí [Speech Education of Children]* by Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvílová is a fundamental book of Czech speech education (the book includes her early writings from the 1970s). Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvílová was one of the early leaders of drama education. She was an educator and an actress. The book was written for drama teachers, but it is full of games and exercises applicable to speech education. To this day it is unsurpassed and the only systematic overview of speech methodology available. The new edition is ideal for primary school teachers of Czech. Chapters are divided based on a child's age, ranging from 7–15 years old (i.e. the ages of children in the primary arts schools). Her methodology is based on acting, role playing and improvisation. Š. Štembergová-Kratochvílová encourages her readers to adapt her exercises, which focus on speech components, to their own classes. Teachers should always be flexible, searching for the best ways to motivate their own students and help them gain skills through physical experiences. The book also explains important concepts such as: rhythmic feeling and posture, soft vocal onset, the rhythm and melody of speech, prolonged exhalation and the basis of breath support, resonance, speech rate, pauses, pronunciation and articulation, dynamism, accenting meaning, melodic modulation, vowel and consonant groups, etc. The book is still an inspiring and practical tool for today's readers, although some of the texts and approaches are outdated. Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvílová's publication awaits a successor. Many drama teachers working today were once her students, and they incorporate her principles in their teaching.

The two-part publication *Základy jevištní mluvy [Fundamentals of Stage Speech]* by Jiřina Hůrková-Novotná and Hana Makovičková provides guidelines on how to teach speech to young actors. The book was written by two authors: Jiřina Hůrková-Novotná, a linguist and a speech teacher at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, and Hana Makovičková, a teacher at the Prague Conservatory and a voice consultant. They published the first volume in the 1980s as a teaching guide for first year acting students at theatre conservatories. The second volume was written as a follow-up textbook for 2nd and 3rd year conservatory students. Although the textbooks were written for



high school students, they are appropriate also for university acting students. They are the most detailed textbooks on stage speech that are currently available.

Compared to the methodology of Šárka Štembergová-Kratochvílová, these textbooks provide comprehensive analyses of phonics and pronunciation. They introduce topics in a clear, thorough, sequential manner. The first volume focuses on the three basic components of human speech: breath, voice production, and articulation. The second volume is an in depth look at the rules of pronunciation and how they can be applied to the creative process. In the introduction to the first textbook the authors write: “The art of stage speech also requires [...] a perfect knowledge of the mother tongue, an understanding of the differentiated multifaceted way it functions.” (Hůrková-Novotná and Makovičková, 1984, p. 9) In the introduction to the second textbook, the authors write that the purpose of stage speech: “[...] is not only the mastery of the correct principles of the techniques of stage speech, but also the theoretical and practical understanding of the sound form of the richness and variety of the Czech language.” (Hůrková-Novotná and Makovičková, 1986, p. 11) Even though the authors focus on stage speech, their guidance can be applied to teaching speech for everyday situations.

Radovan Lukavský, an actor and teacher at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, was an extraordinary leader devoted to the art of the spoken word. He provided excellent interpretations of Czech poetry and was an award-winning actor for theatre and radio. He was also a talented teacher who interpreted and adapted Stanislavsky’s method of acting to the Czech context. In 2000, Lukavský’s book *Kultura mluveného slova* [*Culture of the Spoken Word*] was published by the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. It was a textbook for actors based on a series of lectures for film directing students at the Prague Film Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. He drew from his own extensive experience as an actor and speaker and included theoretical explanations, practical examples, and audio recordings (e.g. the articulation of vowels and vowel groups, sentence sound devices, euphony, correct Czech pronunciation of foreign words). The book draws from the theory of literature (e.g. interpretation of verse, the rhythm of speech, syllabotonic prosody, verse based on quantitative metre, free verse and its interpretation, etc.). His interpretations have a philosophical ethos, drawing examples from Czech culture. The book encourage readers to think deeply about language, and he argues that actors whose voices are echoed in mass media are partially responsible for the state of spoken Czech. He begins his textbook with a well-known proverb: “If it is said: as many languages a man speaks, so many times is he a man. Perhaps it could also be said: as one speaks his mother tongue, so is he a man.” (Lukavský, 2000, p. 7) R. Lukavský wrote his book for actors, but it is relevant to all interested in speech education. The examples and texts that he uses are not always accessible to children and need to be modified.

*Mluvený projev a přednes [Speech and Recitation]* by Vítězslava Šrámková and Jiřina Hůrková-Novotná was published in 1984, and unfortunately it is currently out of print. The book is a very useful resource for teachers working with children. Jiřina Hůrková helped bolster the level of professionalism in speech education through her strong academic background and her interest in the art of speech. She worked with acting students at DAMU, as well as with amateur theatre groups, and she taught children's recitation activities. In the 1960s, co-author Vítězslava Šrámková started working as an editor, academic and organiser of children's literature and recitation events for the ÚDLUT (The Central House of People's Art Creativity), today known as NIPOS (The National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture). Both authors were well placed to understand the most important issues concerning speech. *Speech and Recitation* was aimed at training teachers. It is predominantly a theoretical book, and each chapter ends with questions and activities that show teachers how to put the ideas into practise. The book does not contain many practical exercises and is not a toolkit of activities. It provides a comprehensive look at spoken word culture that is much more extensive than the publications mentioned above. This textbook also focuses on performance skills (reading aloud, improvised narration and recitation).

Many teachers have used the ideas of the above authors with their students. However, little research has been done about its application, and there is not a deep understanding of the issues related to the field.

### **Teaching speech education through recitation practice**

Recitation is more widespread in the Czech Republic than speech education. It has a long tradition dating back to the 19th century when it was used to promote the Czech language during the Czech national revival. We will look at recitation with children and youth today, which is shaped by national festivals and a network of regional festivals around the country.

The publications mentioned provide a good basis for teaching speech. Either they work primarily with analysing literature (chosen specifically for the target group) or performance. Even training for onstage speaking is often based on recitation principles, as it is similar to preparing solo recitation performances). Through teaching speech, teachers introduce students to quality literature and help them analyse it for a performance. At the same time, all speech educators believe that their work will have an impact on their students' spoken Czech in all forms of communication, not just onstage.

Working on a recitation performance is an ideal way for children to develop speaking skills. It also develops many other personal, cognitive, and academic skills and knowledge (especially in the area of drama and literature).

At the Department of Drama in Education at DAMU, students spend several semesters learning about recitation, which has always been considered an essential

component of Czech drama education. Many graduates work at primary arts schools which offer classes in solo recitation. Currently the DAMU course is taught by Nina Martínková and Gabriela Zelená Sittová, and additional courses are offered by adjunct professors Emile Zámečnicková and Jana Machalíková. Voice education is also included in the DAMU curriculum (taught by Ivana Vostárková and Vendula Holčáková). Jiří Lössl teaches a movement course, which encourages students to use methods of psychosomatic preparation and holistic readiness. He teaches them to be aware of the body as well as the voice in both recitation and acting.

There is a strong overlap between recitation and drama education. In both contexts, students ideally work in small groups and participate in holistic training. The body must be conscious, it must breathe, have an open voice and mind.

### **Recitation**

Emilie Zámečnicková provides a definition of recitation in her book *Paths to Recitation or A Guide for Teachers and Young Reciters*, which is the latest, most detailed and practical textbook on children's recitation. "Recitation is the creative vocal presentation of a literary text. The speaker or narrator should not be the text's author." (Zámečnicková, 2009, p. 10) She emphasises that the term recitation implies the delivery of literary texts (i.e. not plays) which were not written by the reciter. "Through the words of the author, the reciter communicates his or her personal views of the text and its subject matter, as well as to the world around." (ibid.) She underlines the importance of the personal involvement of the speaker. When a young child recites a piece, the audience should see how the child relates to it. Is he interested, pleased, saddened... With older children, the audience sees if the reciters agree or disagree with the piece, if they have reservations, etc. "They tell the audience all of this. And the audience understands the message; they are intrigued, excited, inspired..." (ibid.) It is necessary for reciters to engage the listener, to communicate, to share their narrative. To do this, reciters use their storytelling skills. This is primarily through words, but a reciter can use other acting techniques which support (but do not simply illustrate) the subtext. This approach is primarily applicable to solo recitation, not group recitation performances or poetry theatre.

### **What has shaped the current form of children's and artistic performance in the Czech Republic?**

When we guide children in any artistic area, the educational process is as important as the artistic process. This is true for reciters of all ages. There should always be a strong emphasis on the process that precedes the final performance. When we describe their work as "amateur", this is in no way pejorative. A child, by the very nature of being a child, will not give a professional performance (excellent though it may be) and cannot be held to the same standards as a professional adult artist. Thus, we

always say *children's recitation* to indicate, even in terminology, that it corresponds to a child's capabilities. This does not mean that it is undemanding. A good teacher knows an individual child's capabilities and limitations. The teacher can guide children to bring their own individual styles to their recitation performances.

Czech recitation is divided into two categories based on their grade level in school: children's recitation and amateur ("artistic") recitation. Reciters enter the amateur category when they finish primary school in 9th grade (at the age of 15 years old). In each category, there is a major national recitation festival every year.

The **Children's Stage** is the national children's recitation festival (it is part of the national children's theatre festival) intended for children aged 6–15. (Children under 10 years old can take part in regional festivals, but not the national festival.) The festival is non-competitive and showcases the most inspiring recitation performances, selected at regional festivals around the country. It is held every June in the East Bohemian town of Svitavy. The children are divided into 4 categories based on their age. Every year, almost 90 reciters perform at the 3-day recitation block of the Children's Stage Festival.

**Wolkrův Prostějov** (the Wolker Festival in Prostějov<sup>5</sup>), National Festival of Recitation and Poetry Theatre, is the amateur Czech recitation festival. The majority of participants are in high school or university, they must have finished primary school to be eligible. They are divided into 3 categories based on their age, and the final category has no age limit. Like the Children's Stage, this festival showcases inspiring performances by solo reciters selected from a network of regional festivals. The Wolker Festival in Prostějov is held annually in June in the Moravian city of Prostějov with about 90 reciters.

### **Where is the recitation of children and youth cultivated?**

There are not many opportunities to study recitation, which is not commonly part of the school curriculum and rarely taught in primary or secondary schools. There are also very few teachers with the background to teach it. Many teachers also hold extensive misconceptions about recitation. Often these stem from ignorance of how it has changed since the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th century. Rarely do teachers understand that the process includes deep analysis, with questions such as: Why should a child want to deliver this text? What topics are children actually interested in and why? What quality literature captures themes relevant to children today? Are such texts appropriate for recitation? Do children have a chance to talk about issues that are important? Do we give children the space to express their view on the world? Many think that public speaking is about memorising a text and regurgitating it for

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5 Jiri Wolker (1900–1924) was an important Czech poet, born in Prostějov.

an audience. Often people associate recitation only with poetry. Czech teachers often believe that children can only recite if they do not have a speech impediment, articulate well and speak loudly. This emphasis on technicalities reflects the widespread ignorance of recitation in education. Loudness, articulation, and adherence to speech conventions are important for reciters, but not the primary priorities. The technicalities are the easiest for teachers to evaluate, as they do not require any deep thought. Unfortunately, this approach is how most Czech schools evaluate written speech (i.e. spelling and grammar are more important than the meaning of the text).

It is hard to imagine how children's recitation could be taught on a wide scale basis. Within the current context it could not be integrated into Czech language and literature classes at schools. However, there are many educators around the country who have improved the quality of recitation, creating communities of like-minded educators in their "nest of recitation". Many teach at primary arts schools, some of them work at primary or secondary schools. There are also many leaders at children's and youth centres or other after-school organisations and children's theatre ensemble, such as the Disman Radio Children's Ensemble at Czech Radio. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that recitation is not included in the school curriculum, there is a robust and growing community of Czech educators dedicated to recitation. Through their high-quality work, they are nurturing many of enthusiastic children and young reciters.

### **From children's to artistic recitation**

We will look at three different developmental stages of a reciter. The art of recitation often attracts exceptionally talented people. This can be seen in the way some individuals develop throughout these stages, from reciting poetry as a child to staging complicated texts that require a certain level of interpretive skills and maturity.

I have divided the three age groups based on my extensive experience in training reciters. **The first stage** is made up of the youngest children. The upper limit of this stage is end of elementary school (approximately 11 years old). It is difficult to set the lower limit. Recitation is a form of storytelling and requires a conscious understanding of the topic, an original means of expression, and communication with the audience. This is something that children can do when they are in 3rd or 4th grade; very few younger children are capable of this type of performance. Younger children are able to parrot recitation performances, including intonation, gesticulation and facial expressions; their performances are often well received by inexperienced audiences. However, an experienced educator recognises the inauthenticity of the performance, and authenticity is the most important quality for a performer of any age. In this first stage, children usually like to recite poems with themes that relate to their own worlds. Short fairy tales, fantasy stories, and stories about child heroes who solve everyday problems are also popular.



**The second stage** corresponds roughly to middle school (grades 6–9). This stage marks the transition from the worlds of fairy tales to worlds that resemble the real world. Children think more about the characters and their inner motivations. They are interested in young heroes with whom they can identify. They are also interested in fantasy worlds, but ones in which there is humour, subtlety of nonsense, and a text that explores how and why events take place. Often girls turn to poetry that is thoughtful, intimate, and sometimes overly sentimental. This, too, is natural for this age.

**The third stage**, which high school students gradually enter, is a period of discussions, arguments, and strong stances on issues. Reciters feel the need to go deep, whether that translates into very fragile, nuanced performances or wild and radical recitation performances (and a whole range of possibilities in between). But underneath it all, they need to affirm that they are smart and that they have an understanding of the world. They have opinions which they stand by and can push to the limit. It's a period of connecting to the self through thought and reflection which can form a distinctive recitation performance style.

It is important to consider the stage of the reciter when preparing a recitation performance, as well as their perspective.

### **How we select texts for recitation**

The reciter interprets another author's text, not his own. This does not mean that performers should not be encouraged to write and share their own work. However, texts written by children do not achieve the literary quality needed for performance work. Usually these original texts also do not allow children to develop performance skills, and they cannot build a relationship with the text in the same way as they do with quality literature. The audience will also react differently to the performance. We recommend that reciters who enter festivals choose texts by high quality authors.

The choice of an appropriate text for presentation is a topic that many people raise at recitation seminars. A well-chosen text is the foundation of a successful performance at any age. Teachers or adults help the youngest children select pieces. Ideally older children select texts by themselves, but pedagogical support is always welcome, as selection requires knowledge of a wide range of good literature and dramaturgical experience. We are looking for a text of literary quality and suitable for performance. The age and maturity of the performer should also be taken into account. What subject matter or themes might interest the performer? Can the reciter interpret the text, and is it an appropriate length? How difficult is its construction? Is the language structure appropriate? Is the vocabulary contemporary? Does it need to be cut? The choice of type, genre, style and humour, and the mood of the text also play a role... Is it suitable for solo interpretation? (Can we find the subtext for interpretation?) Is the translation good? Do we have enough time to work on it? Does it

spark the performer's imagination? We could go on. However, when one finds a text that "fits the reciter", the result can be great.

### **The journey from finding the text to performing in front of an audience**

It's a long journey from the choice of a text to the first recitation performance. Many people memorise a text and simply reproduce it. Recitation should be about the art of interpretation even for young children. Good methodological work, which is well described in Emilie Zámečnicková's book, involves a thorough **analysis of the text**. Children must understand every detail. Young children should be able to imagine everything in the text and describe specific situations in detail, imagining what precedes and what follows, thinking about who is who and what is going on, etc. For older children, the text analysis should include a detailed examination of the overall structure of the text. An **imaginary film** should be playing in front of the reciter's eyes at the moment of recitation. Without a thorough analysis before memorisation, the essence of the recitation is lost. The reciter should find a message that encompasses what they want to communicate. The audience wants to know why the reciter is presenting that particular text. We may have heard a text before (this is commonly the case in children's recitation festivals), but we are interested in the new combination of text and reciter. What attracts the reciter to the text, what does it mean... When young children skip the stage of text analysis, they often recite the text in a meaningless way. Often they will recite a poem in a rhythmic way, simply copying its metre with no sense of meaning. If older reciters do not analyse the text, there is a lack of sophistication. The narration has no clear construction, no specific timing that brings out its meaning. There is often no interpretation, and external elements are often used to "spice up" the recitation (e.g. unnecessary gestures, props or costumes, technical sophisticated use of prosodic devices, etc.).

In my dissertation, I presented the steps that should be taken when preparing a recitation piece in more detail. Before selecting the text, I added a **motivation phase**, which I consider crucial for children and young reciters. Low (even misunderstood) motivation creates complications in the cooperation between teacher and speaker. When a child wants to recite a text by heart at school to improve his grade, he doesn't understand the point of recitation. Similarly, it becomes warped when the goal is to win a festival. Good motivation allows a child to develop a relationship to a piece of literature. Only this will result in a long-term, internal impact on the child.

I also include three other stages that take place between text analysis and the first performance: **the search for the main theme, or key**, to the interpretation, **the construction of the performance**, and **becoming confident in the setting (fixing) performance**. These are phases that are not insignificant, but they are not essential. Like E. Zámečnicková, I also include a phase of **reflection**. This gives reciters a chance to evaluate the performance, but it can also take place during the rehearsal process.

## **Recitation performance**

When the reciter enters the stage, he is immediately assessed by the audience. How fast and where did he come from, what does he look like, what is he wearing, how does he breathe, how does his body move, does he have stage fright, what direction does he look, where will he stand, how far away from the audience will he be, how will he make contact with the audience, how will his voice sound, what will he say...? The reciter gets to the moment he has been preparing for, but it is only at that moment that he sees the audience. What does it look like? How attentive is it? How big is the hall and how much does he have to project his voice? Who in the audience will be receptive to making contact? Who will the reciter keep an eye on? Will the reciter win the audience over from the start...? At such a moment, when the prepared reciter comes into contact with a live audience that cannot be influenced by preparation, the adrenaline for the final recitation performance kicks in. It is also important to be able to work with eye contact, gesticulation and facial expressions, timing and narrative time, voice and overall body tension. These skills can be trained at rehearsals, but they are mostly learned through experience in front of an audience. We will comment on some of these components.

**Eye contact:** The reciter should be able to make eye contact with the audience. This is not a general gaze into the audience, but connection with individuals. It should give the impression that through these individuals, the entire audience is included. This skill develops gradually in children. They usually start with a steady gaze fixed on their audience, e.g. a teacher, a family member, etc. Later on, they work on alternating their gaze between several spectators, or looking slightly above the heads of the audience. Gradually, the reciter connects with the entire audience naturally by making eye contact with more individual spectators in the audience, having a reasonable length of time for his gaze, shifting the gaze from one spectator to another in a reasonable amount of time, etc. All of this resonates with the message that is the essence of his recitation. It should complement the reciter's experience of the recitation and the reactions of the audience, which have a significant influence on the timing of the whole performance. An inexperienced performer often gazes beyond the audience (looking too far up or too far down), shifts the gaze from one audience member to another, or looks at only a small part of the audience in an empty gaze.

**Gestures and facial expressions:** Gestures and facial expressions should be natural. When children use gestures in their performances that were created by someone else, it almost always looks unnatural. Similarly, a gesture that came about naturally, but has lost its spontaneity during rehearsals can also seem staged. Working with a child performer is different from working with a professional actor, and stage directions or demonstrations of gestures do not work with children. The teacher must always evoke specific feelings in the children which will help them make their ideas

seem concrete. That will help children make gestures that maintain their authenticity even when repeated many times.

**Time and timing:** The first skills to be rehearsed with children include the time they should take when they walk onstage and stand in front of an audience, the time to make eye contact before the first words are spoken. Working with the author's name, for example, can serve as a "reciter's rehearsal", helping them tune in to the sound of their own voice in a particular space. It's the first thing the audience hears from the reciter, which helps the audience tune into the reciter's personality. The timing of the narration is carefully prepared in the construction of the recitation performance. Less experienced reciters often speed up their performances once they are in front of the audience. Working with a pause tailored to the audience is another skill that a reciter only acquires through practice. Young children must be carefully prepared for what to do after the recitation. Sometimes a reciter finishes at performance and has no idea what to do next. They should start with the traditional bow and develop the skill of working with body tension after the narration is finished. More experienced reciters can explore working with atmosphere in these transitional moments. It hinges on playing with time and creating tension and atmosphere through a conscious regulation of body and breath.

Experience in front of an audience is essential. We want the reciter to be able to deliver their performance to a **specific audience**. They should be in tune with the audience, be aware of their reactions, estimate how much time the audience needs to react to a joke, to estimate the temporal possibilities in the context of the present moment. In essence, a performer needs to improvise freely within a precise and well-constructed recitation performance. In theatre terminology, this is similar to the terms *staging* and *performance*. A recitation has a specific audience which will shape the performance to some extent. This is particularly relevant for recitation performances as they always break the fourth wall. The audience is part of the recitation. We often adjust the theatre lighting so that performers can see the audiences and make eye contact.

A recitation performance is very carefully prepared. The preparation should reach a level in which the narration feels as if it had been created on the spot in collaboration with the audience. During preparation, we must seek methods that lead the speaker to the greatest possible degree of authenticity, maintaining the illusion that it was not actually prepared in advance.

### **Performance can be "studied" at festivals and workshops**

Thousands of children and young people participate in recitation activities every year thanks to the national and regional festivals. It is a significant artistic activity in the Czech Republic and has an important place in education. The level of recitation varies, as does the level of pedagogical guidance. There are dozens of outstanding

performances every year at the national festivals, which provide a place in which teachers can discuss and reflect on the methodology of children's recitation.

Jana Machalíková, a reciter and recitation teacher, says that recitation can only be studied at festivals. She is right. The best reciters go to the two national festivals, Children's Stage and Wolker National Festival in Prostějov. At workshops organised at Children's Stage, experienced instructors discuss the performances with the child reciters, and also with the teachers who accompany them. Workshop participants and drama education students from universities and secondary schools attend discussions. National festivals are the best place to learn about how to direct a young reciter.

Every day the Children's Stage newsletter (*Deník Dětské scény* [*Children's Stage Journal*]) summarises festival events. These provide an overview of recitation show-cases as well as the follow-up discussions where instructors give feedback to reciters. They also describe recitation workshops, the public discussions for adults, and provide behind-the-scenes observations about the children's recitation:

“Read and watch.” (Jiřina Lhotská, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2022, no. 1, p. 34)

“Learn to work with time. It is an effective strategy for a reciter. If the reciter can manage time, the audience becomes partly responsible for the presentation. They use their imagination and will help with the delivery of the recitation.” (Gabriela Zelená Sittová, *Children's Stage Journal*. 2022, no. 1, p. 34)

“The reciter should evoke emotions, not perform or act them out.” (Emilie Zámečnicková, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2023, no. 1, p. 37)

“Always inhale and exhale before you begin. This will let the audience know with whom they are dealing. They will become interested in what you are saying. Audience contact does not begin or end with the verbal part of the recitation. It is important to build the atmosphere.” (Jana Machalíková, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2023, no. 3, p. 58)

“It is necessary to be careful not to run out of prepositions. Because then the rhythm changes, and the verse becomes iambic.” (Magdalena Gracerová Chrzová, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2023, no. 3, p. 58)

“I was more interested in you than in the text itself. [...] It might be worth finding a text in the future that doesn't give everything away right at the beginning.” (Vít Malota, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2023, no. 3, p. 58).

The first issue of the newsletter includes comments from the juries of the 14 regional festivals. A jury member from each festival highlights its most significant aspects. They talk about new trends and why they selected the winning reciters for the national festival. Their assessments provide a great reservoir of important information related to children's recitation and its methodology. The regional rounds showcase a wide range of quality. They include beginner's who have not been taught the basics and experienced reciters who bring great depth to their performances. Here are a few examples of feedback from the regional festivals:



“Erik’s openness was impressive in his unusual and at times flippant treatment of the text [...]. It was evident that the reciter enjoys the text and has the desire to communicate it. Erik also showed his genuine interest in his recitation of the poem [...]. Although he deconstructed the form created by the author, had flawed pronunciation and delivered the refrain with mechanical intonation, his presentation was genuine and honest.” (Zuzana Jirsová and Jaroslav Provazník, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2021, no. 0, p. 7)

“Although the poem is frequently presented at children’s recitation festivals, Matěj delivered it differently from most, bringing us a convincing performance enhanced by his concrete ideas. He dropped and later found a paper handkerchief, using an imaginative device in his delivery.” (Jakub Hulák, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2023, no. 0, p. 7)

“There were serious dramatical mistakes in this age category (childish texts, texts with no relation to the reciter, badly cut texts, excerpts taken out of context and lacking a theme...” (František Kaska, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2023, no. 0, p. 12)

“The reciter is sophisticated, communicative and has a good sense of the situation and the overall construction of the piece. She delivers with joy, with inner energy and joy, performing in the moment and providing depth.” (Eliška Vobrbová, *Deník Dětské scény*. 2023, no. 0, p. 14)

Discussions with reciters and jury members at the Wolker National Festival in Prostějov (for performers over 15 years old) are similar to those at the Children’s Stage. Juries are made up of experienced teachers, professional actors, radio and theatre directors, and dramaturgs. Discussions are open to a wider audience, and the depth of analysis corresponds to the reciters’ age, understanding, and discussion skills. Again, I will provide excerpts from the festival newsletter (*Zpravodaj Wolkrova Prostějova [The Bulletin of the Wolker National Festival in Prostějov]*) to give sense of the discussions:

“The story is very difficult to understand and convey to the audience. It is full of images and metaphors. You didn’t explore all of its dimensions. [...] The delivery was not very personal.” (Martina Longinová, *Zpravodaj Wolkrova Prostějova*. 2021, no. 6, p. 6)

“I would avoid using the Beatniks’ way of expressing themselves. [...] Your great concentration, the way you connect with the audience, goes against you. Your delivery arrested them, manipulated them, and they wanted to fight back. [...] Be careful not to let this become a habit.” (Aleš Vrzák, *Zpravodaj Wolkrova Prostějova*. 2021, no. 6, p. 7)

“You were a very good sound engineer of the text, but you did not interpret it or put anything of yourself into it.” (Libor Vacek, *Zpravodaj Wolkrova Prostějova*. 2021, no. 4, p. 8)

“You are a very skillful performer. From the start, the audience was with you. You developed each situation with tremendous economy, naturalness and dignity as well

as with a flair for the narrative. We were engaged in the story. At every moment.” (Vladimíra Bezdičková, *Zpravodaj Wolkrova Prostějova*. 2021, no. 6, p. 6)

“It seemed to me that the entertaining stylisation corresponded to the texts. Perhaps sometimes there was a bit too much parody.” (Josef Kačmarčík, *Zpravodaj Wolkrova Prostějova*. 2023, no. 5, p. 9)

“When I lowered my head and didn’t look at you, the sound was very flat.” (Vít Roleček, *Zpravodaj Wolkrova Prostějova*. 2023, no. 6, p. 7).

There is much inspiration that can be gleaned from festival newsletters. Perhaps the above selection captures the breadth and depth of attention given to the reciters at festivals.

Although the Czech educational system does little to foster the teaching of spoken Czech, there is a strong tradition of recitation in the Czech Republic. National festivals have a strong impact throughout the country. They also foster the culture of spoken expression by children and young people. Many experts interested in oratory from a pedagogical point of view are publishing books, articles and other publications. They have the potential to improve the methodology of spoken Czech in the Czech educational system. However, we still await a contemporary, comprehensive methodology of speech education aimed at children and young people.

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4



# Educational Programmes in Professional Czech Theatres

## Keywords

Theatre educator; link between theatre artists and audiences; educational programmes in theatres; workshops about performances; theatre summer camps; methodological materials



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A theatre educator works closely with professional theatres, creating a link between theatre artists and audiences. It is their role to develop the audience's – and ultimately society's – understanding of and respect for theatre.

This is an area that is still quite new in the Czech Republic, despite the fact that we have been aware of it for twenty years. In this country, there is still great scope for research, experimentation and development.

### **First steps**

For many years, Czech theatres did not feel compelled to provide educational programmes. The state-funded folk arts schools (today primary arts schools) provided high quality drama programmes for children, complemented by a rich tradition of amateur theatre in the Czech Republic.

When theatres did offer educational programmes, they almost always took the form of lectures by the resident dramaturg. These usually took place before performances and would explain the context of the production to interested audience members.

In the early 2000s, the understanding of the role of cultural institutions (at least those subsidised by the state) began to change. There was a realisation that cultural institutions should not only offer theatrical productions but should also contribute to the atmosphere of a society. They should provide a forum for discussion on current topics and develop people's relationship to the theatre itself as well as to the arts in general. Theatre institutions should help foster a relationship to the arts in the community, providing education and training, nurturing future generations of spectators and communicating closely with the audience.

Audiences are increasingly viewed as a partner of the artistic institution, not merely consumers who passively watch a production. The audience members are people who should (and often want to) help create and develop the institution, who help it fulfil its societal and artistic goals. Such people do not need to be "sought out" and "enticed", pandered to or unilaterally educated. They should be engaged in dialogue, listened to and offered opportunities to participate both on artistic and civic platforms. Further, theatres should actively work to make audience members aware of this role.

These ideas are related to the Europe-wide search for democratic cultural politics in the 21st century, a compromise between the contradictory concepts of democratisation of culture and cultural democracy. Theatres and other arts institutions are experiencing a decline in public support and the failure of current marketing strategies.

In this shifting context, Czech theatres are beginning to introduce programmes to strengthen the audience's relationship to the theatre, such as backstage tours, workshops and discussions.

The first attempts to introduce comprehensive educational programmes in theatres took place in 2005 by the Prague Švanda Theatre (Švandovo divadlo) and in

2004 by Ponec Dance Theatre (2004). Later other theatres developed programmes, including the Drak Theatre (Hradec Kralové) in 2010, the Moravian-Silesian Theatre (Ostrava) in 2012 and the Ostrava Puppet Theatre (2011).

In 2014, a conference entitled *The Pathways to Cooperation between Theatres and Schools in the Czech and German Contexts* took place in Ostrava. This provided an important impulse for the development of the field, as it was attended by many theatre managers. The inspirational contributions from both Czech and Germans helped spread awareness of the form and purpose of educational programmes. There was also an important conference series entitled *Centre of Interest: The Audience*, and *RE: Audience*. This was organised by Creative Europe, the EU's cultural support programme, which considers working with audiences an important long-term priority.

Subsequently many other theatres started implementing programmes led by theatre educators which focused on working with audiences. These included Prague's National Theatre (2014), the South Bohemian Theatre in České Budějovice (2014), the Minor Theatre in Prague (2015), the Polárka Theatre in Brno, the Lampion Theatre in Kladno, and the Na Cucky Theatre.

### **(Not only) initial problems and obstacles**

Initially these programmes often encountered problems and resistance. Theatre educators were compelled to justify their activities, showing the reasons behind and the value of these programmes. Some theatre artists viewed theatre education and working with audiences as a threat to their own jobs. They were afraid of the educator's "scholastic" approach and they were worried that it would offer a "dead" view of the art of theatre. They feared that the educator would explain the piece beforehand, manipulate the audience and flatten their experience. Many could not imagine that a "teacher" could be a trusted partner in communicating to the audience. Others felt that theatres should not waste their energy and resources on anything other than a professional artistic production. Some believed this was an unnecessary fashionable trend that would soon be forgotten.

Another problem was that for many years, it was virtually impossible to employ theatre educators. They were recruited as part of the marketing or sales department; lecturing was done by dramaturgs or actors. Because most educators worked as external freelancers, initially education programmes took the form of one-off pilot projects rather than complex long-term educational projects. This made it difficult for educators to become a part of the structure of the theatre.

A vital question was (and often still is) how to finance educational programmes. Theatre managers have to use a great deal of creativity to design the programmes so they remain affordable and do not lose money. It is necessary to find grants and other subsidies and subsidy calls and to fit into their conditions a field for which they were not initially set up at all, to reduce costs as much as possible, etc.

It should not be a surprise that there were also operational problems: lack of space, lack of understanding of the needs of the educator (e.g. quiet working environment), respect for the scheduled times of programmes, access to equipment and resources, and time allocation. Often the theatre educator had to be a technician, producer, as well as oversee marketing and selling the programmes, accounting, creating promotional materials... Sometimes theatre educators were not recognised as specialists in their field who deserved respect.

### **Current situation**

Although the problems described above have not disappeared, there is a (still rather) fragile recognition of the profession of theatre educator within the network of Czech theatres. A few theatres have educational departments that employ multiple people and have their own premises, offering a wide range of activities and which are closely linked to the theatre on several levels. Theatres are no longer presenting the work of the educators as extraneous, and they present outreach programmes as an integral part of their institution. The general awareness of the profession among artists or the public is still quite limited, but it exists. Teachers often cooperate well with theatre educators and target the programmes to their students. However, it is still not the norm for every subsidised theatre to have their own educator.

It is possible to study the profession at the two Czech theatre faculties – the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU) and the Theatre Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno (JAMU). Students can take both compulsory and elective courses offered by the drama education departments (the Department of Drama in Education at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, the Theatre and Education Studio at the Academy of Performing Arts in Brno).

The Association of Theatre Educators was founded in 2021. It oversees the development and increasing awareness of the field. It creates pilot programmes for theatres that do not have their own theatre educators and offers education in the field to adults and university students from related professions. It also offers lectures and workshops for theatre educators from all over the Czech Republic and initiates regular meetings.

### **Starting points for the theatre educator**

The work of Czech theatre educators is based on the assumption that we are not born with an innate understanding of (theatrical) art, and that without sufficient stimulation (usually coming from the family or school) it may remain inaccessible. An appreciation of the performing arts, active spectatorship and also an awareness of the essential role as a spectator (who has rights, responsibilities and possibilities), are a means to view the world and oneself.

In its beginning, theatre education focused on training and building of the spectator's arts literacy. Today, it emphasises on the above-mentioned concept of the spectator as a partner, responsible for personal and societal development.

The principles of the theatre educators' work are mainly based on drama education. The foundation is based on interaction, experiential learning, communication, dialogue, and being open to different solutions. These are fundamental features of an educator's work. Consequently, Czech theatre educators are mainly recruited from the field of drama education, and theatre education is now viewed as one of the possible forms of drama education.

### **What does a theatre educator do?**

Theatre educators create programmes for a wide range of audiences. They help audiences build a relationship to the art of theatre as well as to a specific institution, break down prejudices, introduce forms of theatrical expression, awaken participants' creativity, nurture the community, initiate discussion on current issues, place artistic production in local / political / social / historical contexts, provide space for self-expression, activate and sometimes initiate the creation of experimental productions.

In addition to working with schools, theatre educators focus on activities for families and communities. They work with adult audiences, minorities, people with special needs, and with those who are not regular theatre goers.

Initially theatre educators usually prepared programmes independently, without much input from theatre artists. Now many are looking for opportunities for closer collaboration with artists. Educators are often part of production teams, collaborating on theatre events. They develop workshops with artists, and they work as directors or co-directors of professional or amateur productions.

### **Types of educational work**

**Workshops about performances** are the most widespread programme offered by Czech theatre educators. These take place before or after performances. The pre-show workshop familiarises the viewer with the context of the production, introduces specific theatrical genres or staging principles, and gets the viewers excited about the show. It is important not to reveal everything to the participants, and under no circumstances should the workshop diminish the audience's experience by imposing a specific point of view or explanation. The post-performance workshop is a good opportunity to discuss the theatre piece with the audience, showing that theatre is about communication with the piece as well as about the piece. The workshops are also a good way to get audience feedback.

Another popular programme consists of **practical workshops**. These give participants the chance to learn about all of the theatre professions and specific components



of a production. There are workshops that relate to a **specific topic** about approaches to theatre and theatre history, the themes of the productions, etc. There are also **workshops tailored** to a specific group and its needs (e.g. a school class). Almost every theatre offers **backstage tours, public discussions, interviews** with artists or experts in many fields. It is also common for theatres to offer **theatre summer camps** for children.

An increasingly popular programme of Czech theatres is the **partner school**, in which theatres establish long-term cooperation with specific schools. Throughout a school year, a group attends several theatre performances and takes part in a series of workshops and informal meetings. At the end of the programme the group often creates its own performance. These activities provide an intense experience as well as skills and knowledge that come from an in depth experience of theatre-making.

An important part of the theatre educator's job is **educating teachers**. After the family, teachers have the most impact on students' perception and acceptance of the performing arts. Czech teachers are often unsure of their ability to prepare students for a theatre production or to reflect upon it afterwards. They need to become more familiar with the production, to learn how to use drama education methods in the classroom, etc. Most theatres offer seminars (often accredited by the Ministry of Education) to teachers.

Theatre educators also create **methodological materials and worksheets** for teachers (which can also be used by families, etc). Methodological materials offer teachers inspiration and activities related to a specific production. Children, families, and students of all ages can use the worksheets to guide them as they reflect on the production and other theatre-related topics.

It is common for theatres to organise **community events, interactive activities, and events for families and the general public**, sometimes associated with festivals, holidays, anniversaries, or projects organised on a national or global platform. These enhance relationships with the community, offer meaningful and creative activities, and connect with potential audience members who have not yet found their way to the theatre.

Many completely new programmes were introduced during the Covid pandemic from 2020–2022 when theatres and schools were closed for months and all activities moved online. Theatre educators, often in collaboration with theatre artists, developed activities such as interactive online productions, video workshops that could be used by teachers in lessons, exploration games guiding participants through the city or forests, online workshops which took the participants through all the steps of making a production (giving participants the possibility to influence the process), etc.

At the same time, the pandemic clearly demonstrated that the work of the theatre educator has an important function and is indispensable in establishing and maintaining close contact with the audience.

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# Creation- Creativity-Play

How locations can inspire complex creative play

## Keywords

Creativity; play; drama education; action art; site specific; creative writing; literature; recitation; choral singing; dance; visual arts; film



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During the early 1990s, a new structure was created to support and enrich children's arts programmes in the newly democratic Czech Republic. These include annual workshops, festivals and recitation showcases, such as: Dětská scéna [Children's Stage], the national children's theatre festival, Dramatická výchova ve škole [Drama in Schools], a one-week workshop in Jičín, Mladá scéna [Youth Stage], a festival for youth in Ústí nad Orlicí, and Nahlížení [Insights], a workshop of high school theatre and drama education in Bechyně.

There are similar structures supporting children's programmes in other arts disciplines (dance, choral singing and visual arts). All are coordinated by ARTAMA, a department of the the National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture (NIPOS) which was established by the Ministry of Culture.

In 1993 ARTAMA and the Creative Dramatics Association [Sdružení pro tvořivou dramaturgii] initiated a completely new type of workshop: an interdisciplinary national workshop called Creation-Creativity-Play [Tvorba-tvořivost-hra]. The organisers describe it as "a workshop of complex aesthetic education". What distinguishes it from other workshops? It is aimed at teachers of all arts disciplines: drama, poetry, reading/recitation, literature, dance, visual arts, music and film. Other teachers who want to expand their horizons and get inspiration from arts educators are also welcome. Participants teach at all levels of education, from kindergarten to university.

The Creation-Creativity-Play workshop was established in the early 90s, a time of great enthusiasm when much effort was put into bringing radical change to Czech schools. This included a new burst of interest in drama education, which had previously only been taught as an extracurricular activity (usually in the form of theatre productions). Schools slowly began to introduce drama. Many embraced this new method as a welcome alternative to the passive, rote teaching that was prevalent at the time.

The impetus for organising the Creation-Creativity-Play workshop was a serendipitous meeting. In 1991 ARTAMA created a new department called the Centre of Children's Activities and hired four specialists in arts education fields: drama, dance, visual arts and music. These arts educators soon realised how much they had in common. In particular, they all shared a primary goal: to use creative processes to enrich children. The "products" (performances, texts, concerts, visual objects or exhibitions) should be a means to cultivate children, not the goal. They realised that the lines separating the arts disciplines were not always distinct. This culminated in the decision to create a workshop where teachers from different disciplines could come together, work together, and ultimately enrich and inspire each other.

### **Topics generated by the genius loci**

The first national Creation-Creativity-Play workshop took place in 1993 in a lake-side kindergarten in Jindřichův Hradec, a small historic town. It was there that the

foundations of future workshops were laid. The workshop still continues in a format very similar to one piloted so many years ago.

There are groups of 15–25 participants, usually teachers, leaders of arts groups, students and teacher trainees. A pair of workshop leaders guide the group. This pair always includes one drama teacher and one teacher from a different arts discipline (visual arts, dance, music, literature and, in recent years, film). This “multidisciplinary” team plans and leads the workshop together; hence the disciplines complement, support and, ideally, empower each other.

The teaching teams and the well-tested workshop structure usually don't change from one year to the next. However, there is one significant variable: the location. The Creation-Creativity-Play moves every year, and the location is the thematic focus of every workshop. This “traveling” character is one of its most unique features. The themes are inspired by the appearance, layout and atmosphere of the location. A workshop with the theme WALLS AND GATES took place in Polička, a town surrounded by medieval fortifications. When the location was at the Sloup castle, which is carved into a rock, the theme was LIGHT. Telč, known for its expansive renaissance square, hosted a workshop about SPACE. Sometimes inspiration comes from the landscape: STONE was the theme in Polná, a small town with fortress ruins, a Jewish cemetery and a quarry. Some places have unique features that are part of their genius loci. A workshop held in Český Krumlov was called WHEELWORK, reflecting on the symbiosis of this picturesque old town and its winding river. In Olomouc, the topic was ZOOM: participants explored the relationship between significant historic monuments and the small details which created them. Every place reflects traces of historical events and stories, and local legends are often part of workshops. If we are sensitive to the spirit of the place, we can bring the imprints of real and fictitious characters to life.

The theme is the starting point for three days of activities. To excite participants from the outset, the workshop opens with a dramatic, inspirational “happening” in which the theme is revealed. It is often some sort of journey through the landscape of the location. For example: AIR was the theme of the first workshop, which opened with a “night walk” over a frozen lake, through a snowy forest, down city streets in a housing estate. Participants became aware of the air they breathe in various locations and the differences in smell and atmosphere. As mentioned earlier, the theme in Český Krumlov was WHEELWORK. Participants climbed up the Renaissance castle tower at night and looked out at the “wheelwork” of the whole town. They all received a little cogwheel. They then took a narrow wooden staircase to the top of the tower, where they turned the crank of the tower's ancient clock, whose mechanism has been measuring time for centuries... In Polička, participants had to find keys to the WALLS AND GATES to “open” them. Led by the light of wooden torches, they ended at a gate guarded by a black-hooded figure and had to open the hanging padlock.

Sometimes the events were scripted theatrical events: In Litomyšl, with a CASTLE theme, the participants were led to the courtyard of a candlelit Renaissance chateau. They heard a conversation between two characters emanating from one of the castle windows, followed by fragments of other dialogues coming out of other windows – echoes of past stories which might have happened at the castle. The event came to a climax with the sound of Renaissance vocal music filling the arcades of the castle. In the northern Moravian town of Štramberk, a shadow-play performance launched the event, relaying a local legend about Tatar soldiers who besieged the town in 1241 and allegedly cut off the ears of local Christians.

After the dramatic introduction, participants spend the next few days in groups working on activities based on the theme. As explained above, a pair of teachers guides the groups, and each combines drama activities with one other art discipline (music, visual arts, movement, film, literature).

The workshop culminates with all of the groups coming together and making presentations about their exploration of the topic. These can take many forms: exhibitions, musical production, a discussion, or most frequently, short performances.

### **Methods and concepts**

Each of the teachers/pairings of teachers brings a different style of work to the process. The methods, types of lessons and concepts are connected to the development within the art disciplines. This is especially true of drama, which plays the decisive role in the way the workshop is shaped.

Initially the workshops took place from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. With this format, most workshop leaders focused on theatre games that develop sensory perception, imagination and creativity. The workshop started with some sort of stimulus, such as a movement from the Moldau (Vltava) symphonic poem of Bedřich Smetana, a fairy tale, a visual object or an installation. Another approach was to allow dramatic play to inspire a fine-arts activity (e.g. a gallery of visual objects inspired by “life stories” of stones).

When we added an extra day to the workshop, workshop leaders created more complex projects that lent themselves to a multi-disciplinary approach (e.g. in Telč, a drama/movement group explored spaces based on the Atlantis myths; a drama/music group explored musical toys using the fairy tale *The Swineherd* by Hans Christian Andersen in Český Krumlov).

Over the years, Czech drama teachers acquired techniques for creating drama structures. At the Litomyšl workshop, the drama-literature group developed a process drama based on *Beauty and the Beast* (by Mme Leprince de Beaumont) which took place outside in the magical gardens of the Renaissance castle.

In drama/visual arts workshops, the specific location can inspire elements of action art. Some of these bore marks of land art, others were closer to body art. In

these projects, we saw how the two very different art disciplines merged, creating something hovering between drama and visual art.

### **Impulses and discoveries**

How has the Creation-Creativity-Play workshop affected participants? Workshop leaders agree that all of the arts disciplines demand a deep level of commitment. At first, most workshop participants are charmed by the atmosphere and enjoy the novel approach. Over time, many come to understand the value of a deep understanding of each of the disciplines. They begin to observe the work of the leaders very closely, comparing different approaches. This leads them to examine the use of certain games, plays and techniques, the efficacy of motivational techniques, how to utilise the specifics of the location, the best methods to develop a topic and lessons, leadership strategies. Most importantly, they assess how the two-member teaching team has succeeded in building bridges between their respective art disciplines.

The final discussion is one of the enduring “rituals” at the Creation-Creativity-Play workshop. Participants reflect on their experiences, sharing ideas and giving feedback about what worked and what could have been done differently. We have come to some important conclusions:

- It has proven as beneficial if the working groups are heterogeneous as far as age, education, experience and interests are concerned. Those who have participated repeatedly often mention how enriching it was for them to work within a discipline they had never tried out before or would not even have dared to try under normal circumstances.
- The main goal of the workshop is to find ways to connect the different disciplines. How can they complement each other? What principles do they share? Often this comes out of improvisations (with colour, shape, space, sound, melody, movement, voice, language, light...). At the same time, the participants get to know the specifics of each discipline: what is typical, what makes it unique, what distinguishes them from each other.
- We have found that drama enhances the potential of other art disciplines. Drama is based on acting *here and now*. Each participant commits their whole being to drama, and by “playing” together, the group creates a fictional world. The visual object can be elevated, developed, played out by the dramatic action. A song or a sound composition can achieve an additional dimension and meaning if it becomes part of a story acted out as drama...

Although the focus of the Creation-Creativity-Play workshops is the creative process itself, the final “testimonies” are important. They show how the group explored the theme. They open our eyes to new ways of looking at the topic and the location that has “generated” it. Finally, they prove that CREATION means not only enjoyment of

PLAY (which is a necessary prerequisite), but also hard work and patience so that CREATIVITY, or the creative process, is a source of genuine satisfaction.

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← Dialogue of colours and movement – workshop in Jindřichův Hradec in 2004



↑ Drama as a visual art – presentation of one of the workshops in Jindřichův Hradec in 2004

↓ The road that leads nowhere, based on a story by Gianni Rodari – the story was used as the inspiration for the literature-drama workshop in Jindřichův Hradec in 2004







↑ From the workshop Visual art-Drama in Jevišovice in 2005

↓ Fragments of stories in the monastery – opening event of the workshop in Police nad Metují in 2008





↑ Presentation of the workshop Visual art-Drama  
in Police nad Metují in 2008

↓ Regional tale prepared by the workshop Drama-  
Literature in Jablonec nad Nisou in 2010







↑ Movement and Drama – improvisation with glasses in the city of glass and jewellery in Jablonec nad Nisou in 2010

↓ From the workshop presentations that took place in the monastery, the monastery garden and other places in Bechyně in 2012





↑ From the workshop Drama and Visual art in Kolín in 2013

↓ From the workshop Music and Drama in Olomouc in 2015







↑ From the workshop Visual art and Drama in Jevičko in 2016

↓ From the opening event in the night streets of Jevičko in 2016





↑ Town as an eye – from the opening event in Jevíčko in 2016

↓ From the workshop Music art and Drama in Jevíčko in 2016







↑ From the life of the houses – performance with masks created in the workshop Drama and Visual art in Liberec in 2017

↓ From the workshop Movement and Drama in Liberec in 2017





↑ Movement-dramatic action at the exhibition of paintings – workshop in Prachatice in 2018

↓ Recording and developing a dramatic situation in the streets of a medieval city – workshop in Prachatice in 2018







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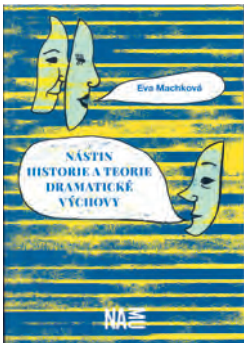
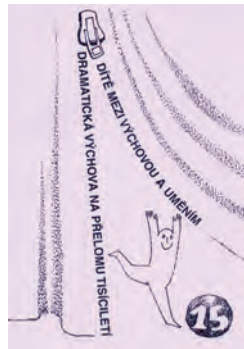
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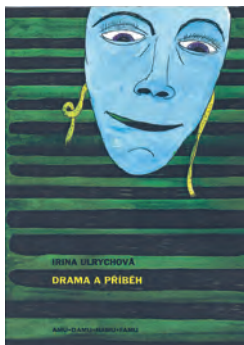
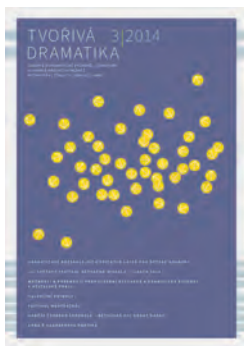
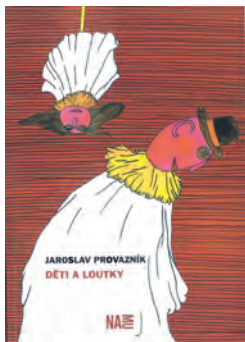
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# Institutions and Organisations Involved in Drama Education in the Czech Republic

### **ARTAMA, NIPOS, Praha**

P. O. BOX 12 / Fügnerovo nám. 5

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ARTAMA is the name of the department of amateur artistic activities. It provides professional services for amateur arts and children's activities. It organises and oversees workshops and seminars, festivals; collects documentation; provides comprehensive information about amateur arts activities, expert opinions for local government and self government authorities; cooperates with corporations, civic associations, cultural institutions, schools and school facilities. In addition, ARTAMA offers professional consultations, develops plans for events, dramaturgical consultancy and contacts to experts in specific fields. ARTAMA works closely with the Creative Dramatics Association (STD). The specialist on drama education in ARTAMA: Jakub Hulák. ARTAMA is a member of the Czech AITA Centre.

### **Sdružení pro tvořivou dramatiku / Creative Dramatics Association**

Jaroslav Provazník (President), Jakub Hulák (Secretary)

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e-mail: std@drama.cz

www.drama.cz

The Creative Dramatics Association plays an integral role in Czech drama education. It was established as a nonprofit organisation in February 1990, just after the end of communism in 1989. Eva Machková was the first president. The Creative Dramatics Association has a network of regional groups, giving it a presence throughout the Czech Republic. It organises workshops, invites drama teachers and specialists from abroad, helps organise national children's theatre festivals, publishes books, prepares curricula of drama education, guarantees and recommends good drama teachers. The Creative Dramatics Association is a member of the Czech AITA/IATA Centre and the member of the IDEA.

### **Katedra výchovné dramatiky, Divadelní fakulta, Akademie múzických umění v Praze / Dept. of Drama in Education, Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts, Prague**

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMU – Akademie múzických umění v Praze [Academy of Performing Arts, Prague]

ARTAMA – department for amateur artistic activities within NIPOS

ČNK – Český národní korpus [Czech National Corpus]

DAMU – Divadelní fakulta, Akademie múzických umění v Praze [Theatre Faculty, Academy of Performing Arts, Prague]

DDL – Dětské divadelní léto [Children's Theatre Summer, national festival of children's theatre, 1990–1993]

DS – Dětská scéna [Children's Stage, national festival of children's theatre and recitation, 1994–]

IPOS – Informační a poradenské středisko pro místní kulturu [Information and Consulting Centre for Local Culture]

JAMU – Janáčkova akademie múzických umění v Brně [Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, Brno]

KDL – Kaplické divadelní léto [Theatre Summer in Kaplice, national festival of children's theatre, 1974–1989]

LDO – literárně-dramatický obor [literary-dramatic department]

LŠU – lidová škola umění [folk arts school]

MS – Mladá scéna [Youth Stage, national festival of youth theatre]

NAMU – Nakladatelství Akademie múzických umění [The Publishing House of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague]

NIPOS – Národní informační a poradenské středisko pro kulturu [National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture]

SPgŠ – střední pedagogická škola [secondary school of pedagogy]

STD – Sdružení pro tvořivou dramatiku [Creative Dramatics Association]

ÚDLUT – Ústřední dům lidové umělecké tvořivosti [Central House of People's Art Creativity]

ÚJČ AV ČR – Ústav pro jazyk český Akademie věd České republiky [Institute of Czech Language at the Czech Academy of Sciences]

ÚKVČ – Ústav pro kulturně výchovnou činnost [Institute for Cultural Educational Activities]

VÚP – Výzkumný ústav pedagogický [Research Institute of Pedagogy]

ZUŠ – základní umělecká škola [primary arts school]





# Index

*(The names of Czech drama teachers or specialists on drama include their personal data)*

- Ackroyd, Judith – 17, 26  
Andersen, Hans Christian – 88, 163  
Aristotle – 132  
Aškenazy, Ludvík – 89  
Barnová, Jana (1969) – 87, 93, 107, 114  
Bednář, Pavel (1967) – 62  
Bethlenfalvy, Adam – 63  
Bezdičková, Vladimíra – 145  
Bláhová, Krista (1944) – 182  
Blažejová, Lada (1977) – 124  
Boal, Julian – 56  
Bobková-Valentová, Kateřina – 18, 182  
Bolton, Gavin – 18  
Booth, David – 57  
Boyne, John – 125  
Bradbury, Ray – 89, 91, 104, 108, 120  
Brecht, Bertolt – 87  
Brhelová (married Davidová), Eva (1978) – 98  
Brinkman, Tatjana – 26  
Brontë, Charlotte – 90  
Budař, Jan – 95  
Budínská, Hana (1933–2016) – 45, 79, 99, 101, 102, 165, 182  
Bura, Anna (1988) – 156  
Caunerová (married Línová), Anna (1975) – 26  
Cisovská, Hana (1961) – 9, 34, 182, 193  
Coggin, Philip A. – 18  
Collins, Rives – 18, 26, 58  
Comenius – see Komenský, Jan Amos  
Čapek, Josef – 88  
Černík, Roman (1964) – 193, 195  
Delongová, Jindra (1925–2019) – 35, 40, 46, 79, 132  
Disman, Miloslav (1904–1981) – 35, 40, 133, 182  
Dobson, Warwick – 17,  
Doskočilová, Hana – 88  
Dowsett, Kevin – 26  
Dvořáčková, Jana (1970) – 86, 111  
Dyk, Viktor – 92  
Ebelová, Lenka (1980) – 123  
Ende, Michael – 89  
Erben, Karel Jaromír – 86, 102  
Ferklová, Alžběta (1979) – 193  
Fidlerová, Klára (1981) – 195  
Fischerová, Daniela – 88, 101, 124  
Fišer, Zbyněk – 165  
Frank, Anne – 90  
Gaarder, Jostein – 90  
Gaffen, Leah Nancy (1968) – 26, 96, 121  
Gavrylyuk, Zina – 156  
Gažáková, Eva (1977) – 193  
Gosciny, René – 89, 90, 111  
Gracerová Chrzová, Magdalena (1975) – 143  
Gréeová, Barbora (1997) – 120, 123, 126, 127  
Gregorová, Vlasta (1952) – 186  
Greschonig, Herwig – 26  
Hanyš Holemá, Irena (1970) – 193

- Havlík, Vladimír – 165, 166
- Heathcote, Dorothy – 18
- Hendrich, Josef – 19
- Hercíková, Iva – 90, 91, 105, 110
- Hiršal, Josef – 87
- Hofbauer, Erich – 26
- Hoffmann, Christel – 26, 58
- Hofman, Ota – 90, 91, 117
- Holčáková, Vendula (1986) – 136
- Homer, Keith – 26, 62
- Homolová, Michaela (1972) – 113
- Horáček, Radek – 165, 166
- Horáková, Eva (1938–2014) – 18, 29
- Horová, Eva – 18, 29
- Hořínek, Zdeněk – 98
- Hrachovinová, Marta – 131
- Hrnečková, Anna (1982) – 9, 150
- Hulák, Jakub (1971) – 9, 22, 29, 144, 192
- Hůrková Novotná, Jiřina – 131, 133, 134, 135, 145
- Jacques, Brian – 89, 90, 106, 112, 115, 121
- Jeřábek, Jaroslav – 69
- Jirsová, Zuzana (1951) – 104, 144
- Josková, Zdena (1928–2010) – 49, 79, 85, 98
- Kačmarčík, Josef – 145
- Karaffa, Jan (1965) – 194
- Karnaukhova, Irina – 114
- Karppinen, Tintti – 60
- Kaska, František (1969) – 144
- Kästner, Erich – 90
- Katoola, Frank – 26, 56
- Kempe, Andy – 18, 59
- Kipling, Rudyard – 90
- Kofránková, Hana – 131
- Kolář, Jiří – 87
- Kolář, Josef – 88, 89
- Komenský (Comenius), Jan Amos (1592–1670) – 19
- Konývková, Irena (1959) – 9, 50, 78, 91, 106, 110, 117, 118, 127
- Kopecká, Tereza – 156
- Köpping, Helmut – 26
- Kotásek, Jiří – 70
- Kotátková, Soňa (1950) – 182, 193
- Kovalčuk, Josef – 98
- Králová, Olga (1961) – 184
- Kraus, Jiří – 132, 145
- Krörschlová, Eva – 80
- Krsmanović Tasić, Sanja – 26, 62
- Krtičková, Jiřina (1978) – 96, 116
- Kyjovská, Michaela (1969) – 109
- Leprince de Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie – 163
- Lewis, Clive Staples – 89
- Lhotská, Jiřina (1947) – 145
- Lindgren, Astrid – 90
- Línová, Anna – see Caunerová, Anna
- Longinová, Martina (1972) – 144
- Lössl, Jiří – 136ž
- Lotker, Howard – 26
- Lukavský, Radovan – 19, 80, 131, 134, 145
- Macková, Silva (1951) – 182, 183, 193
- Macourek, Miloš – 88, 109, 122
- Maděryč, Vojtěch (1977) – 112
- Magerová, Eva – see Polzerová, Eva
- Machalíková, Jana (1972) – 136, 143, 183
- Machková, Eva (1931–2023) – 9, 12, 19, 25, 29, 35, 40, 42, 43, 50, 79, 81, 133, 183, 184, 192
- Makovcová, Václava (1956) – 87, 93, 107, 114
- Makovičková, Hana – 131, 133, 134, 145
- Malá, Klára (1986) – 43
- Malota, Vít (1995) – 143
- Mandlová, Jana (1963) – 119, 124
- Maria Theresa – 13
- Marshall, Alan – 91, 110
- Martínková, Nina (1953) – 51, 136, 184
- Marušák, Radek (1965) – 9, 53, 104, 184, 192
- Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue – 13
- Mašatová, Milada (1934–2000) – 46, 79, 86, 101, 102, 103, 184
- Mettenberger, Wolfgang – 26
- Milne, Alan Alexander – 89

- Mlejnek, Josef (1921–2008) – 19, 35, 40, 45, 79, 100, 184, 185
- Mokrá, Jana (1984) – 126
- Müllerová, Magdalena – 156
- Munroe, Hector Hugh – see Saki
- Musil, Roman (1964) – 183
- Neelands, Jonothan – 17, 26
- Němcová, Božena – 92, 103, 105
- Němeček, Pavel (1961) – 195
- Nemravová, Hana (1965) – 91, 92, 94, 105, 107
- Nepil, František – 88
- Neruda, Jan – 92, 114
- Novak, David – 26, 57
- Nováková, Libuše (1936) – 48
- O'Neill, Cecily – 17,
- Ondráčková (former Oplatková Rezková), Kateřina (1985) – 108
- Oplatek, František (1967) – 92, 109, 111, 114, 121
- Oplatková Rezková, Kateřina – see Ondráčková, Kateřina
- Orlev, Uri – 90, 91, 118
- Oudes, Jiří (1936–2018) – 79
- Owens, Allan – 18,
- Page, Christiane – 19
- Palarčíková, Alena (1965) – 110, 112, 185
- Palaščáková, Michaela (1997) – 125
- Pánková, Věra (1929–2000) – 35, 79
- Parkes, Joanna – 26
- Paumann, Bernhardt – 26
- Pavelková, Soňa (1932–2008) – 35, 46, 47, 79, 132, 184
- Paver, Michelle – 90
- Pěkný, Tomáš – 89
- Pilková, Soňa – 165
- Pistorius, Jiří – 80
- Poláček, Karel – 89, 90, 93, 106, 119
- Polánková, Lenka (1978) – 194
- Polzerová (former Magerová), Eva (1946) – 48, 185
- Prendiville, Francis – 26, 54
- Preussler, Otfried – 89
- Priestley, Chris – 89
- Provazník, Jaroslav (1949) – 9, 18, 19, 22, 29, 30, 43, 144, 160, 165, 182, 185, 192
- Quintilianus, Marcus Fabius – 132
- Racek, Ilja – 80
- Read, Herbert – 165
- Rezek, Jiří (1961) – 94, 104
- Ricart-García, Rafael – 26, 55
- Rodari, Gianni – 168
- Rodová (former Rodriguezová), Veronika (1966) – 165, 184, 194
- Rodriguezová, Veronika – see Rodová, Veronika
- Roleček, Vít – 145
- Russell, Eva – 26
- Řezníčková, Kateřina (1972) – 19, 185
- Sadílek, Vladimír – 26
- Saki (Munroe, Hector Hugh) – 92
- Saroyan, William – 127
- Saxton, Juliana – 18,
- Shakespeare, William – 94, 107
- Schrader, Susanne – 26
- Silverstein, Shel – 123
- Skála, Pavel (1986) – 122
- Slade, Peter – 14
- Slavík, Jan – 166
- Slavík, Miroslav (1958) – 186
- Smetana, Bedřich – 163
- Sobková, Ivana (1974) – 86, 94, 96, 98, 106, 108, 113, 115, 193
- Sobková, Milada – 165
- Somers, John – 55
- Stanislavsky, Konstantin Sergejevich – 14, 15, 134
- Ston, Michal (1975) – 116
- Strnadová, Olga (1963) – 120
- Supple, Michael – 26, 59
- Svobodová, Eva (1952) – 186
- Svobodová, Radmila (1957) – 182, 186

- Svozilová, Dana (1951–2001) – 186
- Sypal, Jaromír (1930–2015) – 79
- Sypalová, Květoslava (1933–2018) – 79
- Šebesta, Juraj – 90, 91, 116
- Šrámková, Vítězslava – 135, 145
- Šrut, Pavel – 87, 107, 109
- Šteidllová (married Žarníkov), Kateřina  
(1983) – 96, 118
- Štembergová-Kratochvílová, Šárka  
(1924–2002) – 35, 40, 49, 79, 132, 133, 134,  
145, 186
- Švejdová, Hana (1960) – 186
- Tesárková, Radovana (1967) – 125
- Tittoni, Sandra – 26
- Tomková, Anna – 182
- Townsend, Sue – 90, 113
- Tretiagová, Lenka (1965) – 119, 122
- Tupý, Jan – 69
- Turba, Ctibor – 80
- Twain, Mark – 90
- Ulrychová, Irina (1953) – 9, 52, 84, 182, 186
- Vacek, Libor – 144
- Vacek, Pavel (1947) – 182
- Valenta, Josef (1954) – 186, 187
- Valenta, Milan (1958) – 194
- Váňová, Michaela (1990) – 156, 187
- Veličková, Lucie (1970) – 115
- Velková, Olga (1927–1996) – 35, 40, 79, 80
- Verne, Jules – 100
- Vobrubová, Eliška (1953) – 144
- Vobrubová, Jana (1925–2014) – 40, 48, 79
- Volkmerová, Hana (1975) – 194, 195
- Vostárková, Ivana (1951) – 54, 136
- Vrzák, Aleš – 144
- Vyskočil, Ivan – 80, 89
- Ward, Winifred – 19
- Way, Brian – 19
- Werich, Jan – 87, 93
- Wilde, Oscar – 88, 92, 94, 103, 104, 119, 120
- Willems, Tom – 61
- Wolker, Jiří – 137
- Woodwood, Michael – 26, 60
- Zámečníková, Emilie (1955) – 30, 93, 103, 136,  
140, 143, 146, 187
- Zelená Sittová, Gabriela (1980) – 9, 130, 136,  
143, 146, 160
- Zhoř, Igor – 166
- Žáková, Eva – 156
- Žarníkov, Kateřina – see Šteidllová, Kateřina





# Drama Education in the Czech Republic

Jaroslav Provazník (ed.)

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Translated by Lenka Kapsová, Veronika Krátká, Pavel Bednář and Michaela Lažanová

Translations revised by Leah Gaffen

Graphic design by Radek Pokorný

Printed by Finidr, Český Těšín

Národní informační a poradenské středisko pro kulturu

Praha 2023

ISBN 978-80-7068-385-9

Tato odborná kniha (publikace) vznikla na základě institucionální podpory dlouhodobého koncepčního rozvoje výzkumné organizace poskytované Ministerstvem kultury.



Sanja Krsmanović Tasić

“The book presents a thorough study of the field of drama education in the Czech Republic through the historical, theoretical, factual perspectives of eminent drama/theatre education experts. One of the greatest strengths of this publication is that it was written by the protagonists themselves: drama educators, pedagogues, teachers and professors who have invested years of their lives to the development of the field. Another valuable aspect of the book is that it takes a multigenerational approach, including articles by current leaders in the field who bring fresh new voices to Czech drama education. All in all, this book is an important and significant contribution to the world of drama education, and it brings an exciting and much-needed understanding of our field in the Czech Republic.”



Kateřina Žarníková

“The book introduces not only the current situation of Czech drama education, but also its historical development, allowing the reader to understand the roots of drama education in the Czech Republic and the influences that have shaped it. The diverse range of forms of drama education is presented to the reader in logically structured sections. Each study is accompanied by an index of literature that can guide the reader to further exploration of the topic. A major contribution of the book is the pictorial material, which enriches the information, providing a concrete view of the ideas presented in the book. Also important are the lists of selected Czech literature about drama education and institutions and organisations dealing with drama education, including their contacts.”



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