

Josef Svoboda is one of the few stage setters well known in the Czech Republic and also abroad whose work is appreciated by general cultural public. He and also František Tröster and Vlastislav Hofman brought themselves to theatergoers' notice. Laterna Magika audience can still be fascinated by his creative invention and his visual and technical talent (light experiments and usage of two-way mirrors). Josef Svoboda is known mainly as a Laterna Magica stage setter.

Not many people know that he started his career in opera-house Velká opera 5. května. He worked here as a very young, beginning artist till the year 1948 when the theater was canceled. He was a stage setting director. He met here a group of young and creative actors and directors and together they created a unique type of a theater which changed established opera stereotypes. Josef Svoboda participated in this process by creating novel stage settings, always in accordance with the style of each inscenation. He always started from the essence of the story, for example in production Hoffmanovy povídky, Prodaná nevěsta, Tosca (still could be seen in the original form in Státní opera) and Výlety pana Broučka. He never followed stereotypes used by his predecessors and he created his own new stage space.

In my work firstly I have tried to summarize the situation in theater in post-war era and to describe the beginnings, division, development, character and impact of the theater Divadlo 5. května. Secondly I have written about Josef Svoboda, about his beginnings and his approach toward stage setting. The main part of my work is dedicated to Josef Svoboda's working in Velká opera 5. května and to descriptions of particular inscenations. The last part deals with reactions of period dramatic critics.