

The term school theatre is used to denote student-performed theatrical events that occupied a firmly established position in the school year calendar and/or one of whose main objectives was to demonstrate the students' progress in public comportment and their mastery of Latin. School theatre represents the least spectacular but the most wide-spread form of the Jesuit theatre. At the same time, it is the least known facet of the Jesuit theatre since only very few plays survived.

This makes all the more valuable the corpus of 66 complete texts from Prague's colleges. It is thanks to this body of texts, that we can form at least a partial idea of the theatrical productions staged at Prague gymnasia in the first half of the 18th century.

Jesuit school theatre in its simplest form is represented by exercitationes and declamationes: semi-public productions whose audiences were typically limited to the students of one class.

There were two annual occasions for the presentation of school plays: the Carnival time and the end of the school year. Since the evidence of Carnival productions at the Jesuit gymnasia in Prague in the first half of the 18th century is scarce, it may be presumed that the majority of the extant texts belong to the category of plays offered at the close of the school year. Initially, a single play was staged on the occasion, featuring selected students from all classes. By 1670's, another practice prevailed in the Bohemian province: in the period from May to July, each class rehearsed a piece of their own, authored probably by the class teacher.

Concerning the structure of the school plays, they include nondramatic parts whose aim is to communicate the play's main message, draw attention to major twists of the plot, and, above all, to raise the audiences' awareness of the symbolic level of the play.