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## **Dramatic works by John Amos Comenius**

(abstract of the thesis)

Submitted thesis analyzes 10 dramatic works written by Comenius from the point of view of both historical events and practice of Central European theatre (especially of school type) of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. First the work discusses the dramatic pieces performed in so called “gymnasium” in Leszno, the introduction of which occurred in 1635. First documented performances (since 1639) took place just during the Comenius’ rectorship. Dramatic pieces, being performed in Leszno in 17<sup>th</sup> century, followed and were in full compliance with contemporary trends. Protestant pieces (being written especially in German and Latin) became a source of inspiration for their authors. However, they did not stand aloof from subjects, typical for Jesuit playwrights.

Comenius’ pieces *Diogenes Cynicus redivivus* (performed in 1640, issued in 1658) and *Abrahamus patriarch* (performed in 1641, issued in 1661/1662) took place in Leszno, as well. As for *Diogenes*, a part of researchers emphasize humorous adaptation as well as choosing a peculiar antic topic. The others speculate over fact, why author choose just this philosopher: cynicism is featured with absolute disallowing social conventions including the propensity for publicly done promiscuity. But Comenius considered cynicism in certain degree to be rather rigorous following the requirements of stoic morale and philosophy, considering Diogenes to be great thinker, featured with an intrinsic freedom. Author proves, that even tradition took a share in Comenius’ choice of topic: popularity of Diogenes as a person, in an early modern age universally perceived as an edificatory entity, entitled to criticize social and political ills ensuing from his spiritual independence and purity.

*Abrahamus patriarch* did not won such favor from researchers. Critics of said play treated Abraham to be a dramatic person without evolution, who consents to offer his own son without a cunctuation. However, Comenius, who hardly could allocate other character to the hero, than given in the Holy Bible, has emphasized that Abraham, commanded by Lord, gets on his physical and spiritual wandering a long-term enlightenment concerning the Divine Intention, promises and their performance, as well as on Divine Retributions. Thus, in the light of this experience and cognition the patriarch’s decision seams as the result of a cognitive act and as a logical complement of his spiritual way. Comenius treats the scene of

Isaac sacrifice as a proof of Abraham's faith (as it was usual in protestant plays), the natural consequence of which was a loyalty of God's commands. If compared with evangelical play by Théodore de Bèze *Abraham sacrificant* (1550) the Abrahamus by Comenius has common concentration to a group of protestant exiles, to raise their spirits.

In Hungarian Sárospatak Comenius wrote, based on the textbook *Janua lingvarum*, a series of eight theatre performances *Schola ludus* (written in 1654, issued in 1656). Plays discuss the world of natural matters successively (I), human body and spirit (II), world of human art (III), trivial Latin school (IV), academy (V), world of public morals (VI), life within human society (VII), kingdom, monarch's duties, religion matters, and theology (VIII). Except for analysis of the plays the dissertation herein was dedicated also to the work of Czech exile Šebestián Macer of Letošice. During 1650 and 1651 Macer, as the rector of Leszno school, wrote three dramatizations of topics of 60 chapters of *Janua* by Comenius (in version dated 1649) performed at Leszno school. First of these dramas was performed also in Sárospatak at the end of 1653 or beginning of 1654.

Even though in the first play of Comenius' cycle *Schola ludus* we may find both certain marks of *Janua* text dated 1649, and petty parts of text by Macer, subject matter concerns quite autonomous treatment. For *Schola ludus* as whole text of *Janua* in version of 1652 was essential. In first plays the author followed the content exactly enough, however, Comenius first and foremost re-formulated the wording of *Janua* for his dramatic pieces. As a basic method the author divided text of textbook into as much acts, scenes, and as much as possible lines of dialogs of dramatic characters. From the fourth play of said cycle Comenius incorporated new topics in plays, independent from the *Janua*. Dramatically the best parts of cycle arose such a way: i.e. *Pars IV.* and *V.* (schools), first act and into scene 4 and second act *Pars VI.* (public morals), second act *Pars VII.* (building the utopian city), and first act *Pars VIII.* (kingdom, warfare). Great attention is paid in this dissertation to performance of the overall cycle, the details of which is showed in author's introduction and author's remarks within the text hereof. At the end, the dissertation draws attention also to receipt of *Diogenes* and *Schola ludus* within contemporary European culture.