

## SUMMARY

The aim of this diploma thesis is to employ a theatrological approach to the work of one of the most original and influential Czech pantomime troupes of all time, entitled Pantomima Alfreda Jarryho (the Alfred Jarry Pantomime, AJP). The company was established in 1966 in Prague by two young mime artists Boris Hybner and Ctibor Turba and existed as late as the political liquidation of the troupe in 1972 that came due to the process of the so-called normalization period in the former Czechoslovakia.

The thesis consists of four major parts that are divided into several subsections. The first part deals with the historical contexts of the art of mime, both international and domestic. The AJP troupe represents the second generation of Czech pantomime that refused the style of the so-called modern pantomime expressed in the international context by Marcel Marceau and in the Czech context by Ladislav Fialka at the Theatre Na zábradlí (Theatre on the Balustrade). Since there is no monograph strictly based on this theatre, although it played a major role among the newly established small theatres in the sixties (and had an important influence on the poetics of the AJP troupe), we briefly introduce the poetics of both the pantomime company led by Fialka and the drama company led by the director Jan Grossman, who brought the theatre of the absurd to the Czech stage.

The second part draws our attention toward the founder members of the AJP and provides the historical and theoretical background for the analysis of their work. It deals with their fundamental inspirational sources that are discussed in detail because of their crucial impact on the performances. Among them, we focus on the work of Alfred Jarry and his topsy-turvy world, Antonin Artaud and the theatre of cruelty, Samuel Beckett and the theatre of the absurd, Buster Keaton and the slapstick comedy, surrealism, beat generation and jazz. We consider the connections between the AJP troupe and the Czech Surrealist Group as well. The mimes of the AJP groupe refused the French tradition of mime and moved towards the American slapstick. Nevertheless, we can see that French culture and art played a major role among their inspirational sources.

The third part of the thesis is devoted to the history of the AJP company, from their amateur beginnings through to their later performances that earned international acclaim,

both at the International Festival of Pantomime in Prague and during the tours abroad. We witness the development and metamorphoses of their unique pantomimic style.

The final part aims to reconstruct the performances and films of the AJP and is based on the survey made in the previous parts. The analysis begins with their very first sketch entitled *Nezabiješ úplně bližního svého* (1966, *Thou Shalt Not Utterly Kill Thy Neighbour*) that developed into their most remarkable performance *Harakiri* (1968), followed by the shows *Idioti* (1970, *Idiots*), *Udělej mu to zprava aneb Turba tacet* (1970, *Give It Right to Him or Tacit Turba*) and *P.A.R. 3441* (1971, 1977). The young mime artists introduced a new pantomime character of a clown-wanderer, the themes of existentialism and the theatre of the absurd, the art of slapstick comedy and the mixed moods of black humour, cruelty and boundless playfulness and curiosity. Particularly, the analysis focuses on the definition of the characteristic qualities of their brand new pantomimic style that included interconnecting theatre and film, work with stage props, artistic utilisation of sound as an invisible partner and the poetics of laughter and frisson. We also discuss the contradicting opinions about the issue of the participation of stage designer Libor Fára.

The mime artists of the Alfred Jarry Pantomime proved to define and match the spirit of the time. They expressed the feelings and inner anxieties of the generation living under the absurd conditions of the communist totalitarian regime. Although their activities were banned early by political resolution, their work had a great influence on the development of pantomime and non-verbal theatre not only in Czechoslovakia.

Key words: mime, pantomime, second generation of Czech pantomime, non-verbal theatre, theatre of the absurd, slapstick, clown, Czech Surrealist Group, Alfred Jarry Pantomime, Harakiri, Alfred Jarry, Antonin Artaud, Boris Hybner, Ctibor Turba, Richard Rýda, Josef Platz, Boleslav Polívka, Jan V. Kratochvíl, Libor Fára, Jiří Sopko, Andrej Krob, Prokop Voskovec ml., Jiřina Třebická, Ladislav Fialka, Jan Grossman, Divadlo Na zábradlí, Theatre on the Balustrade, Reduta