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*Source / Izvornik:* **Slawisch-deutsche Kontakte in Literatur. Erster Teil. Festschrift für Professor Josip Babić und Professor Vlado Obad., 2018, Band 3, 207. - 222.**

**Conference paper / Rad u zborniku**

*Publication status / Verzija rada:* **Published version / Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)**

<https://doi.org/10.2370/9783844039542>

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:010671>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2023-04-01**



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# THE RECEPTION OF THEATRE PRODUCTIONS OF GERHART HAUPTMANN'S DRAMAS ON THE STAGE OF THE OSIJEK CROATIAN NATIONAL THEATRE IN OSIJEK'S PRESS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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## Summary

Although it has been more than seventy years since the death of the great German writer Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946) who preferred to stay in the Third Reich instead to emigrate, his opus and many WWII-related biographical facts revealed in the recent publications of his diaries seem to be still able to provoke ambivalence, controversy, and aversion. We might consider it a devastating fact that after the Second World War not a single Croatian theatre house dared to stage any of the Nobel prize winner's drama works – and even conclude that Croatian public (for a couple of generations!) has been denied the opportunity to enjoy the productions of one of the most prolific and influential German dramatists. However, any responsible theatre director cannot ignore the context of Hauptmann's now fully revealed anti-Semitism, anti-Slavism, and anti-Americanism expressed explicitly in his diaries, as proven in Željko Uvanović's book *Gerhart Hauptmanns Egoismus* (2013). Contrary to today's situation, Osijek's theatre audience has been shown six of Hauptmann's works in the period from 1910 to 1942. The task of this paper is to try to find out, by reading Osijek's press in the aforementioned period, what the expectations of Osijek's theatre audience were, how the press covered the activities of Osijek's Theatre, and what the reactions of the audience to the repertoire of Croatian National Theatre in Osijek were, especially with regard to Gerhart Hauptmann's selected dramas.

**Keywords:** Gerhart Hauptmann, drama, Croatian National Theatre in Osijek, Osijek's press, theatre critique, period 1910-1942, German-Croatian culture contacts, influence of the fact of proven anti-Semitism, anti-Slavism and anti-Americanism on the author's reception today, Željko Uvanović

Osijek's theatre scene and the German-speaking culture(s) have long been in the relationship of a strong and prolific correlation. Since the travelling

German theatre troupes<sup>1</sup> noted down Osijek as an unavoidable geographical point for their performances, in which numerous and well-organized Austrian, German (and German-speaking Jewish) communities lived at the time, those relations left a deep and a permanent mark not only in the theatre life, but also in the cultural image of the city which lies on the river Drava. That relationship, if we take into consideration the then contemporary artistic events in the centres of German culture, was strong – all up until the end of the Second World War. Having those facts in mind, it becomes clear that the repertoire of Osijek's theatre did not lag behind the most prominent European theatre houses.

Gerhart Hauptmann (1862 – 1946) is one of the pivotal personalities of German literature at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Disputed, attacked, forbidden, celebrated and awarded (thrice laurelled with Grillparzer-Prize, with the Nobel Prize in 1912, and with Goethe Prize in 1932, to mention the most important ones), this literary Nobel Prize winner was one of the most prolific authors,<sup>2</sup> not only in the context of German literature but also in the World literature. Although literary criticism was faltering for a long time when it comes to systematizing his work, it seems that the contemporary researchers of G. Hauptmann's work agreed with the estimation that Hauptmann's work is a mixture of “poetic compromise between tradition and modernism, an autonomous poetry which owes its contradictions to author's own personal contradictions.” (Uvanović 1998: 462) However, Uvanović (2013: 108) comes to the following disappointing conclusion after close reading of Hauptmann

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<sup>1</sup> S. Marijanović, V. Obad and G. Gojković made a minute report on German travelling theatre troupes. See in: Stanislav Marijanović, *Njemački teatar u Osijeku. Kazališni plakati i almanasi, Krležini dani u Osijeku 1987-1990-1991*, Osijek-Zagreb, 1992, pp. 134 – 191; Vlado Obad, *Njemačke putujuće družine na pozornici osječkoga kazališta, Krležini dani u Osijeku 100. godina HNK u Osijeku*, Osijek-Zagreb, 2007, pp. 30 – 44; Gordana Gojković, *Njemački muzički teatar u Osijeku 1825-1907*, HNK u Osijeku, Osijek, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Seven novels, a few short story collections, five novels in verse and more than 40 plays out of which the most influential are *The Rats* and *The Weavers*. *The Weavers* is often mentioned in drama theory because of the inauguration of the type of character who will gain importance in expressionistic drama.

diaries and consequently proving the disagreeable presence of egoism, *Heimatkunst* racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Slavism, and anti-Americanism:

On the one hand, it is a pity – on the other hand, it is absolutely justified that one has to be on Kerr's side after removing the mask of only simulated social involvement from Hauptmann's face, and after the diagnosis of his prevalent egoism. The nobility of Gerhart Hauptmann's position in the German and the European culture at the time of his life placed the poet actually under the obligation to do much more than he really demonstrated. Or was the high public reputation of the honorary doctor of four most respectable universities and the winner of many public prizes just an illusion?

This is an ominous shadow cast on the reception of Hauptmann after the Second World War Out both outside of Germany and within the German-speaking countries. But we look now on the period 1910-1942. Out of eleven Hauptmann's theatre pieces that the *Repertoar hrvatskih kazališta* (herein after: *RHK*) notes were performed in front of the Croatian audience, six of them were staged and presented to its audience by the Croatian National Theatre in Osijek. Those plays are as follows: *Rose Bernd*, *Colleague Crampton*, *The Sunken Bell*, *Elga*, *Drayman Henschel*, and *Before Sunset*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 6629D *Rose Bernd*. Five-act drama. Producer: Mihajlo D. Milovanović. Premiered on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1910. February 4<sup>th</sup> 1910. Two plays (*RHK 1*, pg. 470) 6803 D *The Sunken Bell* (*Die versunkene Glocke*). Five-act fairy-tale drama. Translator: Risto Odavić. Staging: Kurt Bachmann. Producer: Zora Vuksan Barlović. Premiered on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1914. December 19<sup>th</sup> 1915. Three plays (*RHK 1*, pg. 479) 6827D *Elda* (*Elga*). *Nocturnus*. Six scenes. Translator: Ivo Vojnović. Producer: Leon Dragutinović. Premiered on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1916. October 5<sup>th</sup> 1917. Seven plays (*RHK 1*, pg. 480) 6818D *Drayman Henschel* (*Fuhrmann Henschel*). Five-act drama. Translator: Antun Schneider. Producer: Robert Starck. Premiered on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1916. April 19<sup>th</sup> 1916. Two plays (*RHK 1*, pg. 480) 6733D *Colleague Crampton* (*Kollege Crampton*). Five-act comedy. Translator: Marijana Marković. Producer: Viktor Beck. Premiered on December 20<sup>th</sup> 1913. December 21<sup>st</sup> 1913. Two plays (*RHK 1*, pg. 475) 7224D *Before Sunset* (*Von Sonnenuntergang*). Four-act drama. Translator: Mihovil Kombol. Producer: Tomislav Tanhofer. Scenery: Đorđe Petrović. Premiered on October 30<sup>th</sup> 1932, April 27<sup>th</sup> 1933. Four plays (*RHK 1*, pg. 500) 7438D *Before Sunset* (*Von Sonnenuntergang*). Four-act drama. Translator: Mihovil Kombol. Producer: Aleksandar Gavrilović. Scenery: Đorđe Petrović. Premiered on November 28<sup>th</sup> 1942. January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1943. Three plays (*RHK 1*, p. 511). On April 13<sup>th</sup> 1918 Croatian National Theatre's ensemble from Osijek held the premiere of *The Beaver Coat* in Vukovar. *The Beaver Coat* (*Der Biberpelz*). Four-act rascal comedy. Translator: Tonka Savić. Producer: Emil Nadvornik (*RHK 1*, p. 483).

While reading Osijek's press of the aforementioned period, this paper will focus on more sophisticated theatre critiques which do not only inform about the theatre event, but also include literary-theatre elements and reach an educational level of discourse.

1.

*Drayman Henschel*,<sup>4</sup> a five-act drama, was performed for the first time for Osijek's audience on April 4th 1916, and since then it has been performed only once.<sup>5</sup> In the introductory part of his text *Gerhart Hauptmann: Drayman Henschel*,<sup>6</sup> prof. D. M –s.<sup>7</sup> refers onto the main aim of Hauptmann's literary work and that is, in his opinion, a constant fight to reach the highest artistic goals. Osijek's theatre critic sees the secret of the literary success of the German writer in that very battle. As a decisive criteria D. M –s. points out the personal experience of the pains in life, but also a very emotional attitude towards the world which surrounds Hauptmann. Further in the text the author delves into the problems of symbolism which had been noted with the German writer, but he does not perceive the symbolism in a negative light, unlike a couple of other European literary critics: Hauptmann's symbolism, according to his opinion, "is never imprudent. The dreams and the symbolism encompass Hauptmann's relation to the world." As a specific value of Hauptmann's drama skill, the theatre referent of "Hrvatska obrana" points out the sure and absolutely true characterisation of his characters. To support that thesis, he points out Hauptmann's works and the main heroes who represent the very top of the European dramatic literature (*Florian Geyer, Rose Bernd*).

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding this premiere, "Die Drau" only had a short report (*Theaternachrichten*) that the following day (on Thursday) there will be a premiere staging of Gerhart Hauptmann's drama *Drayman Henschel*. Furthermore, "Die Drau" informs its readers that the main role was entrusted to Mr. Milivojević, and Robert Starck is the producer. "Die Drau", April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1916.

<sup>5</sup> *RHK I*, p. 480.

<sup>6</sup> "Hrvatska obrana", Osijek, year XV, April 5<sup>th</sup> 1916, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Under the initials prof. D. M –s. we find one Dragan Melkus, a professor of Secondary Modern School in Osijek.

The aforementioned is followed by attributes which, as we will see later, D. M –s. constantly correlates with the work of G. Hauptmann. Such are, for example, pity towards sufferers, mercy towards the fallen, and empathy towards human pain: “Suffering, pity, yearning and salvation, intertwined with love, make the last and deepest content of Hauptmann's poetry craftsmanship (...)”

After a lengthy introduction, as we have seen, the author of the text, among other things, dedicates a lot of paragraphs to his personal view and impressions of the work of the German Nobel prize winner, and the rest of the text has been dedicated to *Drayman Henschel*. Although we are talking about a review which was written after the theatre premiere, D. M –s. begins his review by outlining the summary of the play, and detecting the main points of the dramatic conflict (Mrs. Henschel's deadly illness, maid Hanna's and Henschel's affair, Hanna's child out of the wedlock whom she hates, adultery, Henschel's suicide). Although he emphasises that the main value of the play are strong and consistent characters, D. M –s. does not pause to consider the characteristics of the female character<sup>8</sup>, but rather directs his attention to the selection and portrayal of characters as a whole, concluding that all of the characters are well thought through, selected and, in a way, universal:

As a matter of fact, all of them are wonderful types. We know them, we have seen them, they are not only like this in Silesia – we can find them here as well, far to the south... Everything is considerable, imperious, true to its nature up to the tiniest detail. To him (Henschel, author's note) the unmentioned mysticism is intertwined with co-belief, which we often find in the lower classes of the public.

The last third of the text D. M –s. dedicated to the premiere of the play. All of the praises went to the main actor, Mr. Milivojević, who in each segment (he especially noted the mask and the movement) perfectly embodies Henschel's

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, Hauptmann's contemporaries have expressed the specific relation of the author and the main female character as something specific to Hauptmann's writing, no matter if we are talking about a naturalistically or a neo-romantically shaped character. See: L. Ljubić, work mentioned, p. 416. On differences between naturalistic and neo-romanticist female characters in Hauptmann's opus cf. Glibić / Uvanović (2013).

character. A minor objection went to diction, because Mr. Milivojević occasionally got stuck in speech in the scenes which do not tolerate slow thoughts and actions. Mrs. Mitrović, who portrayed Henschel's wife, left an excellent impression on D. M –s., and especially with her convincing crying. Against Mrs. Dragotinović, although she played her part convincingly, he holds the fact that she was portraying a character of a girl who is quite younger than herself. The rest of the actors (Mr. Bonačić, Mr. Letica and Mr. Stojković, Miss Puhovska and Mrs. Gavrilović) did an excellent job with their parts, as well as the producer, Mr. Starck, who hit every note, planned the scenes in an excellent way, “bringing the soul in each scene. The audience was restless,” and in order to really see something art-worthy, D. M –s. tells them that they have to “find their way in the dark as well.” In the end, he concludes as follows:

Yesterday's evening fared well for both Mr. Manager and Mr. Dramaturge, especially for letting Mr. Starck<sup>9</sup> handle the part of the producer. We only cannot seem to understand why the clock in Henchel's room did not "come alive", and we cannot understand why there were no extras in the "tavern" in the fourth act. The first three acts were, and we say that again, done especially well and with great skill. We know that "Drayman Henchel" will not find all of the seats filled, but this is not the task of Osijek's Croatian National Theatre. The management's duty is to nourish drama in the first place, and then fine comedy, public plays etc., and another one that goes with is the opera – we cannot begin to love the operetta, its sole purpose to fill the coffers, nothing more...

2.

Gerhart Hauptmann's fifth drama work, with which Osijek's audience had the privilege to see on stage, is *Elga*, deduced as a noturno in the genre, and only eight months after the premiere in Zagreb. The text was written in 1896, and published and premiered in 1905 (at the Berlin Lessing-Theater) (Ljubić 2007 :415). It is important to note that this is the longest-running work of Hauptmann's at Osijek's National Theater stage: *Elga* was on the repertoire

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<sup>9</sup> Emphasized by D. M –s.



from November 1st 1916 up to October 5th 1917, and was performed a total of seven times.<sup>10</sup>

"Hrvatska obrana"<sup>11</sup> brings us the detailed text prior to *Elga's* premiere. An anonymous author begins by looking back on the date of the premiere (November 1st, All Saints Day), concluding that the date of the premiere "is no coincidence because it will, prior to All Saints' Day, increase the effort which pulses out of this piece," and it's on the verge of the Scriptures: *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas* (Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless. Or: Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.) And under "meaningless" the author implies passion, love and adultery, all the things that pushed the main heroin into earthly pleasures, and in a way represents some kind of a game between life and death and, continues the author, "makes everything seem meaningless and crazy, as if we were listening to a serious and dark choir of friars, followed by the music of the pipes, which sounds like a funerary song." The author points out that Hauptmann found a framework for his drama in a novella by Grillparzer,<sup>12</sup> and thus stating the main idea of Grillparzer's work: "It is but a dreamy state, dreamt by the knight who came to an abbey." After a detailed description of Elga's character (physical characterisation, social, moral and psychological: "Elga is a beautiful woman who married count Starschenski; she is the daughter of a fallen nobleman. She lives with her father in poverty, yet she always longs for riches, and for nice clothes and lush jewellery, and that was the only reason she married Starschenski.") The author discreetly suggests that Hauptmann stepped out of the frame of realism because the work basically has two endings: one is the tragic one, on stage, which does not culminate with the death of Elga's lover Oginski, but with her taking off her mask when talking to her husband ("Now all the evil, all the hatred towards her husband she never loved, culminates in her, and she snares words at him, full of poison and hatred."), and the other ending is the one which refers back to the original (Grillparzer's novella): "The curtain drops,

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<sup>10</sup> *RHK*, p. 480.

<sup>11</sup> "Hrvatska obrana", Osijek, year XV., October 31<sup>st</sup> 1916, pp. 4 – 5.

<sup>12</sup> The novella is *Das Kloster bei Sendomir*, from the year 1828.



we again see the sleeping knight whom we have seen in the first scene, as he awakes. It was all just a strange dream.”

By introducing us to the summary and the problematic of the work, the author of the text focuses on the problem of staging a drama, pointing out (as was typical in the years we are talking about, for instance, scenic productions of expressionist dramas) that the main problem is how to show the difference between the reality and a dream:

This difference between dream and reality, between what is going on and what the knight is dreaming about – it is all left in the hands of the producer to make that happen, and that is the producer’s most important work in this piece. Mr. Dragutinović is the producer in this play.

Furthermore, the nameless author determines which elements of the scenic production the producer will use in order to undoubtedly suggest the difference and the border between dreams and reality. He claims that stage of that period does not have the technical capabilities for such demanding scenes, but that the producer will reach for the choir in order to portray the contrast between dreams and reality:

This will especially be achieved with the help of the choir of church friars, accompanied by pipes: the song will be heard at the beginning and between each act, and that reminds us of the abbey, the knight, and we will, once the curtain goes down, exclaim: "Aha! It was all but a knight's dream!"

Theatre column's reviewer of "Hrvatska obrana" predicts that the first scene will be played out differently, suggesting at the same time that a tone of realism should engulf it, while other scenes, according to his opinion, should be intertwined with a tone of *story, fable, dreams*. The author concludes the text by informing his readers that the main role will be portrayed by Mrs. Vuksan-Barlović, Starchenski by Mr. Gavrilović, and other roles are portrayed by Mrs. Dragutinovička, Mrs. Makušinska and Mr. Stojković.

It is interesting to note that the unnamed author of the text in "Hrvatska obrana" ignored something that, for instance, occupied the theatrical critics

during the premiere in Zagreb. Namely, the most of the critics saw and judged this Hauptmann's piece from the perspective of a strong female character, such as Hauptmann had never put on stage before (Ljubić :416). The critic from Osijek, and one can see that through the quote from the Scriptures, sees Elga as a vain, unsympathetic person whose sole purpose is satisfying her own (frivolous) needs, subversively affects the regulated society and its norm with strictly classified male and female roles.

The day after the premiere, the author of the text (prof. D. M –s.) in "Hrvatska obrana"<sup>13</sup> reflects in a lengthy text not only on the premiere of the play, but also dedicates a large part of the text to the greatness of Hauptmann's writing skills, pointing out that "there was no such throng of humanity so artificially overcome as in the first act of Florian Geyer since Shakespeare." On the other hand, in *The Rats* D. M –s. notices that "the mix of various mixed up classes which hypocritically defend themselves, rise and fall" has been characterized with unreachable credibility. *Rose Brend* and *Drayman Henschel*, according to the author of the text, "reveal a deep pity of the poet not only with the main personas, but also with all the others that gather around them." Pointing out *pity* as the key word of Hauptmann's creativity, D. M –s. explains that it is exactly from the writer's pity that the "colossal judgement of the capitalist society order" arises. The judgement against the unjust capitalist society D. M –s. also sees in, as he characterized it, a *social* drama *Before Sunset*, pointing out that in that drama "we see the fall of grandeur, debauchery, poisoning the future generations in their mothers' bodies." He ends his thoughts of that drama with the following conclusion: Although there are quite a few repellent things in the play, as well as distasteful details, the poetic grandeur is still present. The conclusion is followed by a short deliberation about *The Weavers* and by an opinion with which the modern drama critique also agrees: D. M –s. sees Hauptmann as a dramatist who brought in among the first ones the mass as character on the theatre stage. After mentioning, as he said, the epos *Narres in Christo* and the novel *Atlantis*, D. M –s. concludes: "His meaning will

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<sup>13</sup> "Hrvatska obrana", Osijek, October 31<sup>st</sup> 1916, p. 6.

forever stay in literature as the one of the master and pioneer of the naturalist drama.”

Regarding the premiere, D. M –s. turns back to the key points of the staging (the friar’s song as the main "border" between reality and dreams, the *voice* of the pipes, the play of light and shadows...) As the main negligence of the premiere performance, D. M –s. points out the following:

Some of the scenes are connected with the voice of the pipes and the singing of the friars; it is understandable that the dream should not be interrupted; a scene must come after the other without shedding light onto the audience. But that should have been thought of during yesterday's performance, and above all, the voice should not reach the audience during the change of scenery.<sup>14</sup> True, next to the devices we have on our stage that is hardly achievable, but even that can be done if one wishes it, and we hope that we will not have to speak against the same felony during the revival.

The last part of the text is dedicated to actors. In general, D. M –s. is thrilled with the male role interpreters, so Mr. Gavrilović as Starschenski and Mr. Stojković as his servant basked in praises, while the main heroin (Mrs. Vuksan-Barlović), next to a handful of praises, received critique as well. It was a good-natured advice, saying that she shouldn't be as loud, so when she is defending her mad Dortka she should be a lot more discrete.

In the end, producer Dragutinović was also praised. He worked extremely hard on the staging, and D. M–s. also praises the management who decided to present one such piece to Osijek's audience who, as D. M –s. points out, should be presented with such serious pieces. He also invokes the viewers, since this is a piece which will constantly “remain on the repertoire” of Osijek's theatre, to *listen* to it a couple of times.

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<sup>14</sup> Emphasized by prof. D. M –s.

3.

Hauptmann's latest work which came alive on the scene of Osijek's national theatre house is *Before Sunset*<sup>15</sup> (*Von Sonnenuntergang*). That is a four act drama which had its premiere (for the second time on Osijek's stage) on November 28th 1942, and the reason was appropriate – celebrating the 80th birthday of the great German writer. Due to that occasion the entire edition of the theatre weekly paper, "Osječka pozornica"<sup>16</sup> was dedicated to the life and work of this German Nobel prize winner.

We read on the first page:

The German people have celebrated a ceremony of spirituality on November 15th, and that was the 80th birthday of their greatest living poet, who in today's time is the keeper of the poetry tradition of Goethe's genius. All German theatres arranged whole cycles of his dramas which have been shown during the month of Gerhart Hauptmann's birth, and on the actual day of his birth numerous poets put on celebratory shows etc. in their theatres. The grey-haired poet received numerous congratulations and the greatest of acknowledgements for his prolific and dedicated artwork. Our theatre will pay its respects to the great dramatist by putting on his symbolic drama *Before Sunset*.

Then the writer's biography with a review of some of his greatest works follows. The author<sup>17</sup> of the text pays special attention to the premiere (Lessing Theatre in Berlin, October 20th 1889, as a part of Otto Brahm's "Free Stage") of Hauptmann's drama. The author informs us that *Before Sunrise* is not only his first drama play, but also the writer's first encounter with a very demanding audience. The author of the text describes in great detail the atmosphere of the premiere which mostly consists of audience's negative

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<sup>15</sup> *RHK 1*, p. 511.

<sup>16</sup> "Osječka pozornica" is a weekly of Croatan National Theatre in Osijek which was published in Osijek from 1941 to 1944. The first editor of "Osječka pozornica" was Marko Fotez, and since the second year it was Anđelko Štimac. The weekly was published in the Public Print Shop Osijek. It featured weekly theatre show schedules and announced premieres. It brought previews of plays, columns on certain actors and other theatre news. "Osječka pozornica" has been digitalized and is available on the Internet pages of GISKO. <http://baza.gskos.hr/cgi-bin/croidig.cgi?A1210080270000611> (accessed on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2017)

<sup>17</sup> The author is anonymous. We assume the author of the text is editor Anđelko Štimac.

opinion which was "disgusted' by the unknown writer's realism." The writer, although misunderstood and hissed down, announced even then that "a new sun is being born on the horizon of German drama." ("Osječka pozornica", pg. 2) Furthermore, the author follows Hauptmann's path of development, and states "constant intertextual places" of this dramatist (Ibsen's influence and the creative overcoming of influence, autobiographical elements in his drama opus and a strong feeling of reality which is transferred into the characters). The aforementioned is followed by a chronology of his work and a try to poetically name each of the mentioned pieces, for instance, *The Sunken Bell* (1986) was described as *an echo of defeats and personal, private crises which tortured the poet during his creation*; *Drayman Henschel* (1898) was characterized as *the poet's return to reality*, while *Rose Bernd* (1903) in the development of this dramatist's letter represents the proof that *the poet yet again found himself*. ("Osječka pozornica", p. 4) Now follows the casting list of Osijek's premiere performance: "On our premiere of *Before Sunset*, the main role of Mathias Clausen belongs to Aca Gavrilović, who is also directing this piece. In other main roles we have: Nevenka Veselinović, Elena Manjkovska, Draga Pregarc-Stiplošek, Ema Küfner, Đuka Trbuhović, Eugen Petrović and Milan Miljuš. In other roles we have a great number of the members of our theatre. The drafts for the scenery were made by Đuka Petrović" ("Osječka pozornica", pg. 7), and then the text is followed by the German writer's monumental thoughts about life and art.

The following page (p. 8) brings us a list<sup>18</sup> (up until 1942, author's note) of all the Hauptmann's pieces performed on Osijek's scene, concluding that "our theatre has in 35 years of its existence performed seven pieces of the great

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<sup>18</sup> The mentioned works are: *The Beaver Coat*, premiered on February 13<sup>th</sup> 1913; *Colleague Crampton*, premiered on December 20<sup>th</sup> 1913; *The Sunken Bell*, premiered on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1915; *Rose Bernd*, premiered on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1916; *Drayman Henschel*, premiered on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1916; *Elga*, premiered on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1916; *Before Sunset*, premiered on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1932. The data published in "Osječka pozornica" in some cases collide with the one we have available in *Croatian Theatre Repertoire*. The *Repertoire* notes that the first Hauptmann's drama staged in Osijek was *Rose Bernd*, premiered on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1910. The *Repertoire* does not note that *The Beaver Coat* was ever staged in Osijek (it was staged in Vukovar, on April 13<sup>th</sup> 1918).

German poet.” The author continues to explain that his list features only premieres, while “the number of performances of Hauptmann's dramas is large, because a lot of the pieces have been practiced anew, with new roles, which is for example the case with the latest drama *Before Sunset*.” (“Osječka pozornica”, p. 8) The last page features some kind of a poetic synthesis of the theatre, with the words of Hauptmann himself: “The theatre will not reach for a long time its full and deep meaning, as long as it does not get the blessing of the liturgy, as was in ancient Greece. It is strong on its own, but it is still only being tolerated, not cultivated; it is burdened by enemy judgement, and not under the protection of everything that is holy.” (“Osječka pozornica”, p. 12)

In his account of Hauptmann's life and work, the author of the text symbolically moves between two border lines of the German writer's literary work (but also life): between the drama *Before Sunrise* and his last work which represents some sort of a will of the writer himself, *Before Sunset* is very significant when we talk about *Hauptmann's life* on Osijek's theatre scene: it was this very work, presented to Osijek's audience more than 70 years ago, that was Hauptmann's last living word Osijek's audience had the privilege to hear.

4.

When it comes to theatrical issues, the here presented review of Osijek's press in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, gives us full right to conclude that Osijek's audience was continuously well-informed when it comes to premieres and received detailed reports. The texts were written with great competence. Drama was observed as a literary text, without ignoring the theatrical aspect. This means it was still perceived as a theatrical play, with a detail description of characters and players who participated in the creating of the theatre production. It is important to add that cultural columns had an important function of preparing the viewers for the literary text, or rather it's staging. We are talking about lengthy texts whose sole purpose was to place the



authors and their work in space and time, and situate the work into the opus of the dramaturge the text was talking about. Often the authors would also mention the previous premieres, as well as prominent artistic names known for their cooperation on one of the previous plays.

As we have seen in examples above, the authors of the theatre reviews also had a role of the "guardian of the societal taste", and they would often criticize Osijek's public who obviously inclined more towards 'easier' pieces (especially towards operettas, as D. M –s. reports) whose reception did not demand a lot of intellectual endeavour. Osijek's theatre, under constant pressure to attract and keep the audience, balanced between entertainment and art, trying to satisfy the public's taste but also to keep up the pace with Europe's cultural capitals. The fact is that serious drama pieces would not linger long on the repertoire (with honourable exceptions) and that Osijek's audience didn't react appropriately during the plays. That was the cause for theatre critics and reporters to persistently and permanently fight for a higher artistic level, but also to open the horizons for Osijek's theatre audience. The role of Osijek's press was not only to report and to educate, but also, as it seems, to take the role of Prometheus, too. The final remark would be that a new reception of Hauptmann's dramas in Croatian theatre houses is not in sight – due to contextual and political problems Hauptmann created himself.

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**Marica Liović**

## **Die Rezeption der Theaterproduktionen der Dramen Gerhart Hauptmanns auf der Bühne des Osijeker Kroatischen Nationaltheaters in Osijeks Presse in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Obwohl es mehr als siebenzig Jahre her ist, seit der große deutsche Schriftsteller Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946) starb, der es vorzog, im Dritten Reich zu bleiben, statt zu emigrieren, hat es sich herausgestellt, dass sein Opus wie auch viele biographische Fakten aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg (in den jüngsten Publikationen seiner Tagebücher öffentlich verfügbar) imstande sind, immer noch Ambivalenz, Kontroversen und Abneigung hervorrufen zu können. Wir können es als eine verheerende Tatsache betrachten, dass nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg kein einziges kroatisches Theaterhaus es gewagt hat, irgendwelches Drama des Nobelpreisträgers zu inszenieren – und sogar zu dem Schluss kommen, dass das kroatische Publikum (für ein paar Generationen!) keine Möglichkeit hatte, die Inszenierungen der Werke eines der produktivsten und einflussreichsten deutschen Dramatiker zu genießen. Ein verantwortlicher Theaterregisseur kann jedoch den Kontext von Hauptmanns nunmehr vollständig offengelegtem Antisemitismus, Antislawismus und Antiamerikanismus nicht ignorieren, die ausdrücklich in seinen Tagebüchern zum Ausdruck kommen, wie in Željko Uvanovićs Buch *Gerhart Hauptmanns Egoismus* (2013) bewiesen wurde. Entgegen der heutigen Situation hat Osijeks Theaterpublikum in den Jahren 1910 bis 1942 sechs von Hauptmanns Werken gesehen. Die Aufgabe dieser Arbeit ist es, durch das Lesen von Osijeks Presse in der erwähnten Zeit herauszufinden, was die Erwartungen von Osijeks Theaterpublikum war, wie die Presse über die Aktivitäten von Osijeks Theater berichtete und welche Reaktionen das Publikum auf das Repertoire des kroatischen Nationaltheaters in Osijek hatte, insbesondere in Bezug auf Gerhart Hauptmanns ausgewählte Dramen.

**Stichwörter:** Gerhart Hauptmann, Drama, das Kroatische Nationaltheater Osijek, Osijeker Presse, Theaterkritik, Zeitabschnitt 1910-1942, deutsch-kroatische Kulturkontakte, Einfluss des festgestellten Antisemitismus, Antislawismus und Antiamerikanismus auf die Rezeption heutzutage, Željko Uvanović