

www.forumhistoriae.sk



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)



© 2025 The Author(s)
© 2025 Institute of History,
Slovak Academy of Sciences

The Summer Theatre in Bratislava: Dangerous Laughter and the Disciplining of Urban Popular Culture in the Late 18th Century

Ivona Kollárová 


Keywords

Bratislava, 18th century, summer theatre, popular culture, disciplining

DOI

[10.31577/forhist.2025.19.2.3](https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2025.19.2.3)

Author

Ivona Kollárová
Historický ústav Slovenskej akadémie
vied, v. v. i.
Klemensova 19
P. O. Box 198
814 99 Bratislava
Slovakia
Email: ivona.kollarova@savba.sk
 0000-0003-2231-5997

Cite

KOLLÁROVÁ, Ivona. The Summer Theatre in Bratislava: Dangerous Laughter and the Disciplining of Urban Popular Culture in the Late 18th Century. In *Forum Historiae*, 2025, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 26–48, doi: [10.31577/forhist.2025.19.2.3](https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2025.19.2.3)

Abstract

KOLLÁROVÁ, Ivona. The Summer Theatre in Bratislava: Dangerous Laughter and the Disciplining of Urban Popular Culture in the Late 18th Century.

The present study traces the history of Summer Theatre in Bratislava, a matter long overlooked in current research, through a source-based and comparative approach enabling the art form to be viewed as a space of both popular culture and social control. In a time when Enlightenment thinking saw theatre as a tool for educating the populace and building loyalty to the regime, theatre for non-elites gradually became a form of entertainment no longer tolerated. The sensitivity of authorities to any hints of prohibited expressions or ridicule is evident in the sources. Based on surviving programmes, this paper asks important questions regarding the practice and the content of Summer Theatre performances, and views this theatre not only as part of urban popular culture and the early history of the entertainment industry, but also as a space for free satire and open criticism of the elites, as well as an artistic reflection of public discontent and the general atmosphere of society.

The history of theatre is a well-established historical field, perceiving theatrical developments mainly as a space of elite or high culture which evolved from the first school, aristocratic and municipal theatres. In the latter half of the 18th century, the bourgeoisie gradually established itself in the cultural life of cities like Bratislava,¹ and the theatre became a space where the nobility and the bourgeoisie intermingled with each other. The development of “official” theatre culture is well represented by the construction of a new municipal theatre in Bratislava and the performances that were held there.

In reality, theatre transcended this elite, governable and controlled space, however. Performances by travelling troupes became arguably an even more important component of the cultural life of not only the bourgeoisie, but also of students, artisans and the wider social strata of the city, at a time when reading spread significantly in the latter half of the 18th and early 19th centuries.²

This work was supported by VEGA, Grant No. 2/0024/22 The Theatre as the Venue and Tool of Social Change and by APVV, Grant No. 21-0371 The glamour and fall of nobility. Strategies of noble representation in the History of Slovakia.

- 1 TANCER, Jozef. *Im Schatten Wiens: Zur deutschsprachigen Presse und Literatur im Pressburg des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Bremen : Edition lumière, 2008, pp. 35–36.
- 2 See: LINHARDT, Marion. Kontrolle – Prestige – Vergnügen: Profile einer Sozialgeschichte des Wiener Theaters 1700–2010. In *LiTheS*, 2012, vol. 5, Sonderband 3, pp. 7–41.

Theatre History as the History of Social Control

The first known permit to organise public balls and performances, issued for Carol Turbillio for a period of twelve years, was conditional on the “non-scandalous” conduct of this enterprise, without bringing any harm to religion or the state on one hand, and on supporting the poor with its proceeds on the other.³ The specific language of Turbillio’s licence reveals a close connection between the theatre and other forms of urban entertainment, as well as the entrepreneurial aspect, which would later translate into the designation of theatre directors as “Theater-Unternehmer.” When a certain Matthias Wintermayer asked permission to perform a play on the *Nativity of Our Lord*, a so-called *Krippel-Geschpill*, in Bratislava in 1774, he stated in the application that he had also performed it in Vienna and that the Viennese audience had been satisfied and “edified.” The city replied that the performance could only take place with the consent of the municipal parish priest and must not offend the faithful.⁴ We do not have further details, the where, when, how and what, of performances of this kind, but they were likely street attractions in places where ordinary people spent their leisure time.

Like books, Enlightenment theorists saw educational potential in the theatre too. It was “only” necessary to remove what was undesirable and replace it with what the reformers considered useful, just like in the case of reading. Writer, court adviser and reform theorist Joseph von Sonnenfels, a central figure in the transformation of theatres in the Habsburg Empire, warned that the theatre was too important to leave the scripts of the dramas to book censors. Theatrical performances reached out to wider—partially literate, partially illiterate—audiences and therefore he saw it necessary to implement special measures. Comedies, improvisations and farces were to be removed from the stages because they did not ennoble the nation in the sense of the ancient “prodesse et delectare.”⁵ With this in mind, a theatre censor office was established in 1770, independent of the censorial committee. It was to oversee in particular that fights, inappropriate poses and coarseness did not appear on the stage and that actors did not improvise, as improvisation was considered tasteless and characteristic of third-rate theatre for the uneducated.⁶

3 Archív mesta Bratislavy (AMB), Bratislava, Slovakia, Box (B.) 526, 27. 3. 1749, 10. 10. 1749.

4 AMB, B. 278, Numero (No.) 253.

5 SONNENFELS, Josef. *Grundsätze der Polizey, Handlung und Finanzwissenschaft. 1. Th.* Wien : Kurzböck, 1777, pp. 144–145. On theatre as an enlightenment tool for the ennoblement of the society, see: ENGELSCHALL, Joseph Heinrich. *Zufällige Gedanken über die Deutsche Schaubühne zu Wien.* Wien : Trattner, 1760. Karol Gottlieb Windisch also joined the fight against improvisation. See: CESNAKOVÁ-MICHALCOVÁ, Milena. *Geschichte des deutschsprachigen Theaters in der Slowakei.* Köln : Böhlau, 1997, p. 51. On Enlightenment discourse on theatre censorship, see: WÖGERBAUER, Michael. Od spásy k blahu: proměny literární komunikace a diskurzu o cenzuře. In WÖGERBAUER, Michael (ed.) *V obecném zájmu. Cenzura a regulace literatury v moderní české kultuře 1749–2014, Vol. 1.* Prague : Academia, 2015, pp. 74–75; KOLLÁROVÁ, Ivona. Divadlo – priestor ohrožovania mravnosti v disciplinizačnom diskurze na prelome 18. a 19. storočia. In BEŇOVÁ, Katarína – KOLBIARZ-CHMELINOVÁ, Katarína (eds.) *Umenie a umelci v meste okolo roku 1800.* Bratislava : Stimul; Katedra dejín výtvarného umenia FF UK, 2023, pp. 554–555.

6 EISENDLE, Reinhard. *Der einsame Zensor: Zur staatlichen Kontrolle des Theaters unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II.* Wien : Hollitzer, 2020, pp. 27–159; BACHLEITNER, Norbert. *Die literarische Zensur in Österreich von 1751 bis 1848.* Wien : Böhlau, 2017, pp. 240–241.

In 1776, Bratislava gained a new theatre, whose director was George Csáky. According to an order of the Governor's Council, the Municipal Council was to direct the printers in the city not to publish any work about the theatre, any theatre posters or any newspaper articles without the knowledge of director Csáky.⁷ In 1778, a further unspecified drama "about King Ladislaus and his brother Wenceslaus" was likely performed in the Municipal Theatre. Although the script was revised, it contained an inadmissible motif of incestuous adultery and therefore its staging and any printing of the script was forbidden. On this occasion, instructions were also issued to prevent similar situations in the future; only plays authorised by Viennese or Prague censors and approved by theatre director George Csáky could be performed in the theatre. It was even necessary to wait for the decision of the censors to print the script.⁸ During the traumatic period of the French Revolution, censors focused on eliminating anything that evoked revolution or social change. Privately owned theatres were of special concern because their existence was based on an entrepreneurial model of success, and they were more prone to overstepping the boundaries of what was permissible. A kind of opposition thus developed between court theatres, which recognised censorship as helpful or even necessary and private theatres, which saw censorship as a threat to their existence. In 1795, the emperor again banned improvisation, which had become widespread in suburban theatres.⁹

Summer Theatre in Bratislava: Folk Entertainment under Pressure

Besides the Municipal Theatre, a so-called summer theatre or Kreuzer theatre, also operated in Bratislava. The first vague reports about so-called Kreuzer comedies date back to the first half of the 18th century, performed by travelling comedians in front of the city gates and at fairs. An entrance fee was collected by a so-called Kasperl, who improvised jokes with allusions to topical social developments while walking among the audience during breaks.¹⁰ These were quite common in big cities.¹¹

The first traces of the existence of a summer theatre in Bratislava date back to the 1770s, as revenues from its performances appear in the bookkeeping sources of the theatre.¹² The *Historisch-kritische Theaterchronik von Wien* speaks of a "reguläre Bühne," i.e. a municipal theatre, and a "Kreuzerbude" (Kreuzer theatre), near the Fishermen's Gate and although the article appears to emphasise a gap between the two in the quality of their productions, the author

7 AMB, B. 288, No. 213.

8 AMB, B. 294, No. 26.

9 BACHLEITNER 2017, pp. 241–243. See also: HIML, Pavel. *Pozorovat, popsat, stvořit: Osvícenská policie a moderní stát 1770–1820*. Praha : Argo, 2019, pp. 212–219.

10 CESNAKOVÁ-MICHALCOVÁ, Milena. *Premeny divadla: Inonárodné divadlá na Slovensku do roku 1918*. Bratislava : VEDA, 1981, p. 22. See also: MÜLLER KAMPEL, Beatrix. Kasperl unter Kontrolle: Zivilisations- und politikgeschichtliche Aspekte der Lustigen Figur um 1800. In *LiT-heS*, 2010, vol. 3, Sonderband 1, pp. 105–146.

11 SCHIFFMANN, Konrad. *Drama und Theater in Österreich ob der Enns bis zum Jahre 1803*. Linz : Verlag des Vereines Museum Francisco-Carolinum, 1906, p. 86.

12 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár – Országos Levéltár (MNL – OL), Budapest, Hungary, C 42 Acta Miscellanea, Doboz (D.) 226, Fasciculus (Fasc.) 66, No. 356, No. 5612. The revenues and expenses of the theatre enterprise in the city in the year 1773, see: MNL – OL, C 42, D. 226, Fasc. 66, No. 356, No. 4726.

could not help noticing that, in reality, there was no sharp division between them. He points out that after the death of a lessee of the Municipal Theatre, a certain Passer whom “Hungary thanks for his good taste on the regular stage,” the theatre company was taken over by Wolfgang Rösslich. He is written about with disdain, since he apparently had no issues with improving the balance of his operations with “Kreuzer plays,” i.e. performances in the Summer Theatre.¹³ It is noted that it was humiliating for the actors of the troupe to perform there, stating “what man will not do for money.”¹⁴ In the next issue of the periodical, he adds that “the biggest and wisest part of the audience is looking forward to the reappearance of Wahr’s troupe,” that they find the Kasperls annoying, and that these plays are poorly attended and perhaps will not even be performed in the future.¹⁵ From among the principals, we know only of Franz Stöger, who was later active in Buda in the early nineteenth century.¹⁶ We also know of an actor named Reisinger, who was a Kasperl at that time. After performing to audiences in Pest and Buda for two years, he played in Bratislava in the summer of 1798.¹⁷ The Summer Theatre, also called the Shed, generated a profit of about 500 Florins a year. The date of its foundation is unknown, but we do know when it finished; a fire broke out in the theatre’s vicinity in 1800 that threatened the whole city and the authorities determined its demolition as a precautionary measure to prevent the fire spreading to other localities.¹⁸

The history of the summer stage can be traced back mainly from sources that illustrate the negative perception of its operations and the disciplinary measures that followed. At the same time, the sources point to its close interconnection with the Municipal Theatre, as a correspondent for the *Theater-Chronik* did, for example. In 1794, the senate sent a report on the lessee of the Municipal Theatre, Georg Jung, who allegedly entertained audiences only with moral and approved plays, but the previous summer—when the Municipal Theatre did not hold any performances—his troupe also performed at the Summer Theatre.¹⁹ The interest of the Governor’s Council in the Summer Theatre continued the following year, too. The Municipal Council was to send a statement as to whether this theatre was directly included in the lease agreement of the large, i.e. the municipal theatre, and what measures it wished to take to control it in the future. The Governor’s Council appears to have demanded its operations be restricted only to certain times of the year and certain hours of the day.²⁰ The standpoint of the Municipal Council is not available, but this exists as the first demonstrable instance revealing the antagonism between the interests of the city and the lessee on the one hand, and the regulatory pressure of the Hungarian

13 *Historisch-kritische Theater-Chronik*, 1774, no. 3, pp. 40–41.

14 *Historisch-kritische Theater-Chronik*, 1774, no. 4, pp. 59–62.

15 *Historisch-kritische Theater-Chronik*, 1774, no. 11, pp. 173–174.

16 See: BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ, Hedvig – SOMORJAI, Olga. *Das Kreuzer-Theater in Pest (1794–1804): Eine Dokumentation zur Bühnengeschichte der Kasperlfigur in Budapest*. Wien : Böhlau, 1988, pp. 22–23. A poster has survived, in which he was designated as the “director of the Bratislava company,” see: CESNAKOVÁ-MICHALCOVÁ 1997, p. 85.

17 CESNAKOVÁ-MICHALCOVÁ 1981, p. 23.

18 CESNAKOVÁ-MICHALCOVÁ 1997, pp. 85–86.

19 AMB, B. 793, Fasc. 5, No. 379.

20 AMB, B. 395, Fasc. 11, No. 378.

Chancellery, whose intentions were to be enforced by the Governor's Council, on the other. The Governor's Council probably did not show enough sympathy for the idea because another regulation followed soon after. The productions of so-called Kreuzer comedies allegedly have a negative effect on servants especially because they attend the theatre so frequently thanks to the cheap tickets that it ultimately distracts them from their duties. Furthermore, the performances create opportunities for the "cheap classes of people" (*concursum vilioris classis personarum*) to meet and have improper conversations (*prava conversatio*), which is why Kreuzer comedies are forbidden to be performed on any day or anywhere, except during annual fairs, and even then only on the understanding that nothing will appear that is against moral principles.²¹

However, management of the theatre was not satisfied with such restrictions and a fight began to preserve its status quo. The main activist was then lessee of the Municipal Theatre, Johann Ludovicus Csáky, who formulated his position on the issue—why he does not consider the regulation on allowing performances in the Summer Theatre only during fairs and only with special supervision fully acceptable, although, he claims he is fully aware that its aim is to promote the public good—and sent it to the Governor's Council. On the one hand, the regulation is based on the notion that low ticket prices, poor conditions and productions that are labelled low-quality and full of improvisation brand the Summer Theatre as a source of moral contagion to the lower classes and servants. On the other hand, the implementation of the regulation is ultimately detrimental to the interests laid down in the lease agreement of the Municipal Theatre with the city, which according to his interpretation, the agreement also provides for performances in the Summer Theatre. Csáky therefore views it necessary to regulate its activities in the future in a way that respects some circumstances essential to the very existence of theatre life in the city. Firstly, he pointed out that during the summer months, the same theatre company performed on this stage as in the brick-and-mortar theatre, and the contractual relationship could not be terminated for the summer period only. However, some special measures and restrictions could be implemented. This meant that they would only perform censored comedies, like those commonly played in the large theatre, and there would be no improvisation. The admission fee would be the same as in the brick-and-mortar theatre, ranging from seven to twenty cents depending on the seat in the auditorium, and theatre performances would end by ten o'clock and would not continue after this "curfew" under any pretext. Csáky also pointed out that the theatre was situated in a public space and was constantly under the control of the councillors, the bourgeoisie and the authorised theatre commissaries, and therefore he saw no reason why plays could not be performed in it in the summer. Performances in the brick-and-mortar theatre during the summer season were not an adequate replacement because the upper social classes making up the audience did not usually spend this time in the city. The cost of the performances would be higher than the revenue from admission fees, and this was the reason why

21 AMB, B. 395, Fasc. 12, No. 408.

the theatre was closed for six months. However, a small theatre does not require expensive props or many actors and musicians. He also reminded them of the terms of the agreement under which his father, George Csáky, had been granted the lease of the theatre and the ballroom in 1776 for twenty years, and requested an extension of this agreement for another four years, until 1800. He emphasised that the Summer Theatre was there to support the large theatre and if it did not operate, all the terms and provisions of the lease would change and could ultimately be considered detrimental to the lessee.²² In its submission to the Governor's Council, the Municipal Council sided with Csáky, considering his proposed regulation of the theatre to be sufficient to avoid such criticised circumstances in the future, and suggesting to the Governor's Council that increasing ticket prices and banning Kreuzer comedies would essentially solve the problem. The resolution underlined that the summer operations of the large theatre would be unprofitable and the theatre company, as well as the entire theatre enterprise, is not sustainable in the city without a summer theatre. The Governor's Council then informed the Hungarian Chancellery and sent a request for the summer theatre to be retained, supported by the above arguments.²³ The Hungarian Chancellery eventually allowed performances to be held even on ordinary days, from six to ten p.m., so that servants would not be distracted from their work. The theatre was expected to be a school of manners and two senators were to act as theatre commissioners, visiting both theatres and monitoring compliance with the rules. They were to print these rules and hand them over to the theatre director.²⁴ Caspar Púchovský and Florian Pencz were appointed as theatre commissioners.²⁵

Instructions to the theatre commissioners stipulated that the municipal captain was to ensure general safety in and around the theatre. A municipal patrol consisting of two constables was to confirm the implementation of proper fire prevention measures (street sprinklers, water buckets, water tanks) about an hour before a performance was to begin. The constables were also to monitor the theatre throughout the performances, inspect the entire theatre along with the ticket officer or the person designated as "Theatermeister" after the performances and report back the next day. It was the duty of the municipal captain to be present at every performance and he was to see that no disorder or other indecency took place either in the auditorium or on the stage among the actors. In doing so, he could use all means authorised by the municipal jurisdiction, including arrest, to secure the peace. The assistance of a military patrol was also available as a last resort. If other duties prevented him from monitoring a performance, he was to entrust this task to a municipal lieutenant or a trustworthy supervisor of the given zone.²⁶

The regulations resemble standard public order or fire safety regulations. No mention is made whatsoever of control over the content of the performances,

22 MNL – OL, C 51, Departamentum polittiae in genere et civitatum, Fasc. 227, 9307.

23 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 227, 982.

24 AMB, B. 399, Fasc. 9, No. 260.

25 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 227, 22950.

26 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 227, N. 2. ad N° 6850.

however, the measures appear to have been sufficient and the theatre operated for several seasons without any major issues.

Relatively little information has survived about the day-to-day operations of the theatre, but a comparative outlook may complement the incomplete picture. Information on the operation of summer theatres in Austrian territories, especially published research pieces on the Kreuzer theatre in Pest, enable us to see the summer theatre as a space of urban culture, due to such similar development, programmes and performance troupes, as well as identical or similar legislation, disciplinary pressures and reasons for their disappearance.

The summer theatre in Pest was established in 1794, meant as a solution to disputes between the lessees of the theatrical venues in the city. Just like in Bratislava, the theatre's wooden structure stood on a promenade near the Danube, though in this case, we have quite a lot of information about its equipment and operating costs, including a local ruling on its establishment included which an obligation to build a structure for six guards. Several posters have survived about its performances, as have regulations and contracts documenting that its operator, Eugen Busch, was obliged to finance not only the aforementioned guards from profits, but also to contribute to the poorhouse and the municipal *Spital*. Pressure to restrict its operations and hours was based on the same ordinances of the Governor's Council as those received by the Municipal Council of Bratislava. In 1796, the summer theatre in Pest closed down, with the reason considered to be the atmosphere after the Martinovics Trial, especially the fear of uncensored political humour. Its lessee, however, did not accept the situation and after many requests, was allowed to open a theatre in the spring of 1797 with the promise that it would only offer censored plays and that the performances would finish by ten o'clock.²⁷ Just like in Bratislava, complaints about the quality of the performances and extemporisation were part of its everyday life.²⁸

A Scandalous Poster

On 16 May 1799, the Feast of Saint John of Nepomuk, the Summer Theatre staged a play titled *Johan von Nepomuck, oder Kasperl, der Hofnarr des Königs Wenzl*, which the Hungarian Chancellery deemed to be a scandalous offence against the rules in force, claiming the performance disgraced the name of the saint. An investigation began almost immediately, on 22 May, with the Governor's Council seeking the following information: whether the comedy had really been staged under the given title, what had been its content, how many times and on which days it had been performed, whether the theatre commissioners had been present at the performances, what kind of public response it had received, who had had censorial supervision over such plays and whether there had been a fair in Bratislava at that time.

The Municipal Council responded through the municipal judge on the steps taken. Theatre director Christian Kuncz was summoned, and subsequently fined and reprimanded. However, they also pointed out that this play had been performed in Buda and Pest and did not lead to any problems or distur-

27 BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1988, pp. 9–12.

28 BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1988, pp. 33–34.

bances there. According to the director of the Pest and Buda theatres, the play had also been staged in Prague, although as the Governor's Council pointed out, the decree on Hungarian theatre censorship forbade priests to appear on stage.²⁹ The script was subsequently revised by the Governor's Councillor, Latinovics. The scandal would not have broken had Kuncz not allowed director Gottfried to attach such a problematic caption to the title because even the senator in charge of the theatre supervision stated that there was nothing derogatory in the play. Publication of the play's promotional poster was brought to the attention of the canon of the Bratislava Chapter, Franciscus Kramer. The play was performed only once and did not attract much attention because it was announced only on this single poster, which was removed before the performance began, at a time when few people were present in front of the theatre. However, it was seen by a retired official, several clergymen and a certain administrator at Saint Salvator's named Bugl, and that is how the complaints arose. Theatre commissioners Joannes Dévay and Captain Joannes Kárner had performed their duties to the best of their abilities, and such excesses had never been noticed before. In the future, however, the theatre commissioner would also keep an eye on all handwritten posters. The Municipal Council tried to sweep the whole issue under the rug, as it also came to light on this occasion that the regulations for the operations of the summer theatre were probably not observed; instead of running from six to ten o'clock, it played from three to ten o'clock.³⁰

In August 1799, at the instigation of the Governor's Council, the city accused Kuncz of blasphemy according to Section 59 of Articles eight and nine of the Criminal Code, the *Praxis Criminalis*. The offense was stating the words "Johann von Nepomuk oder Hofnarr Königs Wenzels" on a poster "with ill will, without respect for the veneration and holiness of John of Nepomuk in a supremely disrespectful manner" and by putting up this poster for public gaze, causing a scandal and ridiculing John of Nepomuk.³¹

The accused theatre director's successful defence was based on an accurate interpretation of the concept of blasphemy, i.e. speaking ill of the Virgin Mary, the saints, or God, in word or deed. The prosecution failed to prove that he had committed blasphemy as the plaintiffs could not detail his actions in connection with the production and posting of the problematic poster. The responsibility was shifted onto actors Michal Reisinger and Johann Nepomuk Landerer. The defence also successfully questioned the entire substance of the trial by scrutinizing the published title of the play. The word "or" figured in the titles of many plays and the term "Kasperl" was not a disparagement of John of Nepomuk because it did not refer to him but merely named another person, and was not an alternative to the saint's name. The defence further explained that the play had not been banned and that Kasperl and John of Nepomuk were not on stage together in any scene. The play not only did not ridicule him, but

29 Based on instructions to theatre censors, see: KOLLÁROVÁ 2023, p. 563.

30 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 253, 14864. Christoph Kuncz was a lessee (sublessee) of the theatre and the Redoute.

31 AMB, B. 411, Fasc. 7, No. 201; MIŠIANIK, Ján. *Pohľady do staršej slovenskej literatúry*. Bratislava: VEDA, 1974, p. 276.

on the contrary, evoked emotions of pity for the tragic fate of the main character. The word “saint” is not mentioned on the poster because his canonisation occurred after his death, not during his lifetime, when the plot of the play takes place. Therefore, the poster could not be considered blasphemy or ridicule. If it sounded ridiculous, only its author, director of the Summer Theatre Albert Gottfried, was guilty, and he had already been punished with eight days of imprisonment for blasphemy and banned from theatrical activities in Buda and Pest. The fact that the poster had only a single handwritten version and was put up in one single place—directly on the building of the Summer Theatre—was another mitigating circumstance. It could be proved that Kuncz had no influence on the creation or placement of the poster, and the accusation of blasphemy was therefore unfounded. Albert Gottfried, director of the Summer Theatre and the author of the poster text, was found to be the only guilty person in the scandal. In November 1800, Kuncz was acquitted by the court but fined 10 Florins, as it was his duty to see that the poster was not published, or created at all, and “that no performances under a holy name would aim to ridicule holy things.” Gottfried’s statement, which sheds further light on the staging of this play whose content cannot be ascertained today, is noteworthy. He claimed that the play had been performed from the time the Summer Theatre had come into being, that it contained nothing immoral and the commissioners overseeing the performances could also attest to that. Also, the character of the Kasperl appears in many plays, in many titles and on many posters with the role in dramas to entertain pain-stricken audiences, which was his function in this play, too. Gottfried confirmed that theatre director Kuncz was completely blameless in the matter. Wherever there were summer theatres, the theatre director usually appointed a director to be responsible for everything around it because he himself was busy with the large theatre and its repertoire in the upcoming season. He stated that when Kuncz saw the problematic poster at the ticket office of the Summer Theatre, he immediately took it down and issued orders never to put the name *Kasperl* on a poster again. To the objection that this was done every year, he retorted that times and manners were changing. Kuncz’s innocence was also confirmed by Eugen Busch, director of the theatre in Pest and Buda, who stated that Albert Gottfried had been employed by him for two years as director of the local summer theatre and bore sole responsibility for all performances and posters, including when they contained anything offensive or scandalous. The actors of the Summer Theatre, Johann Nepomuk Landerer, Joseph Reisinger, Alois Sallety and Michael Reisinger, director Paullino Pallet and musical accompanist Johann Hunek also gave testimonies. They confirmed that Kuncz had already left the management of the theatre to Albrecht Gottfried when it opened, which meant not only the preparation of the performances, but also their promotion through posters, and so it was on 16 May 1799, when the problematic poster was put up. Another witness was municipal clerk Michael Keller, who confirmed that upon seeing the poster, Kuncz took immediate action—destroying and reprimanding the director.³² We may ponder what the actual apportionment of blame was, as the city appears to have protected Kuncz and his

32 AMB, Súdne spisy, B. 1902, 1797, L 41, No. 2188.

interests. In the dramatic year of 1799, the Governor's Council drew up another decree, which contained another rule in addition to the known regulations: the prohibition to perform anything with historical content without first showing it to the censor or the theatre commissioner.³³

A Missing Stage

Although the Summer Theatre was usually portrayed as an uncultured and vulgar maverick, an image also adopted by both contemporary and recent teatrology, in a sense it appears to have been an equal, although low-budget, counterpart of the Municipal Theatre. The Summer Theatre and the Redoute—a venue for balls and masquerade balls—were businesses under the Municipal Theatre lessee and it was through these operations that he improved the economic balance of his theatre enterprise. A comparison with the summer theatre in Pest reveals a similar situation; there too, the summer theatre helped to supplement the unprofitable operations of the large theatre and the entire theatre business in the city as well.³⁴ When the “Shed” at the Fishermen's Gate was demolished after the 1800 fire, it was not only servants, maids and “the rabble” that seem to have begun to miss it.

The idea to demolish the theatre first appears in sources in 1776 in connection with the construction of a theatre and renovation of the square. The Governor's Council decided to demolish the theatre which stood in the moat behind the new theatre towards Lawrence Gate.³⁵ In the end, it did not happen. When the Municipal Council asked for permission to rebuild the summer theatre in 1801, the Governor's Council refused the request and proposed instead to pay the lessee compensation based on a three-month calculation of his revenues.³⁶ However, in addition to the dissatisfied lessee of the theatre, other parties also became interested in running it. In the summer of 1801, a Bratislava café owner, Venceslaus Beránek, applied on behalf of a group of unnamed Bratislava café owners as future partners for the lease of a new summer theatre which was to be built. Therefore, it must have been widely believed that the theatre would be rebuilt. The Beránek group pointed out that it was not part of Kuncz's lease agreement, which explicitly mentioned only the large theatre and the Redoute, and that he himself had reportedly said that he no longer wanted to run it, precisely because of problems with its “morals.” If Kuncz was to bid for it still, the café owners offered more favourable lease terms. They even argued that as citizens and taxpayers, they should be given preference over an “unbürgerlicher Ausländer” like Kuncz.³⁷ Apparently, the Governor's Council did deal with Beránek's request because the Municipal Council was tasked with verifying whether the café owners' statements were true.³⁸ At the same time,

33 The text of the instructions has not survived in any source. AMB, B. 411, Fasc. 8, No. 251.

34 BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1988, pp. 8–12.

35 MNL – OL, C 42, D. 226, Fasc. 66, No. 356, No. 4726.

36 AMB, B. 424, Fasc. 5, No. 147; B. 426, Fasc. 8, No. 243.

37 AMB, B. 420, Fasc. 8, No. 264.

38 They verified whether Kuncz had indeed declared his lack of interest in the summer theatre when entering into the new lease agreement and whether the summer theatre was listed in his agreement. AMB, B. 420, Fasc. 8, No. 268.

they verified how the Pest summer theatre operations were treated contractually, learning that the lease agreement of the theatre director in that city explicitly mentioned the summer theatre.³⁹

The Hungarian Chancellery justified the ban on resuming the operations of the theatre in December 1801 by the war and in January 1802, used the morality argument (*corruptela morum*), describing the non-existence of the theatre as a preventive measure against moral decay. In the meantime, however, Kuncz also raised the question of compensation for the damage caused by his loss of income from the summer performances. This too was rejected by the Hungarian Chancellery. However, the Governor's Council warned that Kuncz would not be able to pay the agreed rent under these circumstances, given that the operations of the large theatre were unprofitable in the summer for the same reasons defined during the previous attempts to shut it down. Although the agreement does not mention the summer theatre, it stated that all the permitted "Spektakel und Komische Vorstellungen" could be performed, and that the rent calculation counted with the idea that revenues from the summer theatre were also included.⁴⁰ In response, the Governor's Council ordered the terms of the lease to be adjusted according to a new profit calculation that did not take into account revenues from the summer theatre.⁴¹ The Governor's Council and the Municipal Council of Bratislava appear to have continued trying to obtain permission to build a theatre. Among other arguments, they justified their efforts by the existence of a summer theatre in Pest and so in June 1802, the Hungarian Chancellery sent its further standpoint, stating emphatically that it would not allow a summer theatre to be built either on its original site or on any other site, and that the summer theatre in Pest would also be removed for good.⁴² There was no other choice left but to go back to Kuncz's lease agreement of 20 November 1800, where they did find a single mention of a summer theatre. Kuncz submitted a calculation of compensation based on the three-year revenues of the theatre to the Governor's Council, though the Municipal Council did not accept this either, considering the demands to be unjustified, partly because the theatre no longer existed at the time when the agreement entered into force. The Municipal Council also pointed out offers of higher rents (even by a 1 000 Florins) from other interested parties without including revenues from the summer theatre, only with a view of rebuilding it. Consequently, there was no question of compensation, only of a reduction of the rent, which was to be commented on by the Governor's Council. The latter turned to the Hungarian Court Chamber which confirmed that Kuncz was not entitled to this either.⁴³

The Governor's Council did not give up, however. In December 1802, it again appealed to the chamber with a modified argument, returning to the terms of the lease of the main lessee, Csáky, who had permission to perform "alle erlaubte Spektakel und Komische Vorstellungen" counting on the profits

39 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 253, 13215.

40 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 276, 3395.

41 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 276, 7804.

42 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 276, 14093.

43 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 276, 18541.

of the summer theatre. According to its interpretation, the rent could not be regarded as profit for the city, it was only a protection against losses in the form of the operating costs of the theatre providing theatrical life for the public. The Governor's Council did not consider the café owners' offer to provide the town with higher rent to be a persuasive argument, since they could apparently not be entrusted with running a theatre. Therefore, the Governor's Council insisted that Kuncz be compensated and that when drawing up a new lease agreement, the city take into account the fact that the summer theatre was no longer in operation.⁴⁴ In March 1803, the Hungarian Chancellery ended the debate by declaring that Kuncz was not entitled to compensation because the summer theatre was not included in his agreement. He profited from the theatre, the dance hall and the café and inn, and should therefore refrain from additional applications.⁴⁵

No further reports exist from the first or second decades of the 19th century. Nevertheless, we can admit that the city replaced the summer theatre and maintained it, probably in a kind of semi-official mode of operation. Similar theatres operated in larger cities, which is confirmed by the research of Karl Benyovszky, who pointed out that after actor Johann August Althaller, known by the surname Stöger, took over management of the Municipal Theatre in 1825, he began to entertain the idea of establishing a summer theatre and built a makeshift structure for this purpose on the site where the so-called arena in the area known as Au was later built. He also applied to the Municipal Council for permission to build a larger, more spacious theatre, which was granted in 1830.⁴⁶

Reflections on the Repertoire and Social Structure of the Audiences

In 1799, anonymously and without stating where it was printed, writer and educator Jakob Glatz (1776–1831) published the book *Freymüthige Bemerkungen eines Ungars über sein Vaterland*. Although he called it a travelogue across Hungarian provinces, it is actually an analysis and critique of the local cultural and social conditions. In it, Glatz also evaluated the social structure of Bratislava theatre audiences. He saw the Summer Theatre as a blight on the city, robbing people of their morals through its crude jokes, indiscriminate vocabulary and excessive improvisation. In his opinion, the theatre “entertained the lower and the higher rabble.” However, he also noted that the theatre was attended by children of good families, students and members of some privileged groups of the population. An educator by profession and a Lutheran pastor, Glatz was convinced that such a theatre had a negative impact on the morals of the common people and would soon be abolished. He noted that a performance about a tailor ridiculing the tailor's craft had even provoked street battles between tailors' apprentices and students. Though in light of the times, the question can be asked whether the street fights were the result of some jokes or the manifestations of latent social tensions and a pretext for strife. Glatz concluded definitively that

44 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 276, 27917.

45 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 285, 10868. In Pest, the summer theatre had operated until 1804 and due to different contractual conditions, compensation was paid. BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1988, p. 16.

46 BENYOVSKY, Karl. *Theatergeschichtliche Kleinigkeiten*. Bratislava : Steiner, 1929, pp. 3–6.

a theatre with a high-quality repertoire could, conversely, improve public taste and morals. He also mentioned the social reputation of actors and actresses in Hungarian cities; actor/actress was synonymous with vagabond or enemy of religion.⁴⁷ Glatz's reflections fall into the wider debate on the harmful influences of theatrical art, which cannot be overlooked in the writings of educators and self-proclaimed critics of morality at that time. Such commentary was closely related to the criticism of reading preferences and pointed out the incomparably stronger "malign" influence of the theatre.⁴⁸ In a related perspective, all popular non-elite theatres in this period had a "bad reputation" and were also venues for diverse forms of social life, including prostitution.⁴⁹

In the latter half of the 18th century, and not only in Bratislava, summer theatres were part of urban culture. Called *Volkstheater* in German, they were considered to be a carrier of specific theatrical forms (folk comedies, folk plays), and can also be considered a part of the beginnings of the entertainment industry. In big cities such as Vienna, theatres in the suburbs such as those in Leopoldstadt, Josefstadt and elsewhere, also gained a foothold beside the main theatres and the bourgeois houses, though, we can only form a rough idea about their repertoire.⁵⁰ The main genres were travesties, parodies, farces, magic plays (*Zauberspiel*) and Kreuzer comedies. The latter were probably not only a distinct genre, but also a way of collecting ticket fees; a Kreuzer or two before each act. Magic plays combined several genres of popular culture—medieval chivalric novels, late medieval mystery plays and the magic plays of the English Renaissance. They made use of scenery effects and brought in a consistent middle-class audience.⁵¹ One cannot fail to notice that their popularity went hand in hand with the success of the so-called witchcraft or magic novels (*Zauberromane*), which became the object of censorship among trivial and highly popular literature.⁵²

Quite a few literary scientific and teatrological definitions of burlesque, farce and related genres exist, but they are based largely on the tradition and development in English-speaking countries. Today, the term "burlesque" evokes mainly musical theatre featuring lascivious actresses and dancers, but there is much more to the art form. The genre has its beginnings in ancient theatre, with nearly five-hundred years of development from the sixteenth century.⁵³ Burlesque, farce, parody and comedy can all be differentiated from a literary scientific perspective. While the basic characteristics of burlesque are imitation

47 GLATZ, Jakob. *Freyemüthige Bemerkungen eines Ungars über sein Vaterland. Auf einer Reise durch einige ungarische Provinzen*. Teutschland : [n. p.], 1799, pp. 320–323.

48 KOLLÁROVÁ 2023, pp. 556–562.

49 GROSSAUER-ZÖBINGER, Jennyfer. Das Leopoldstädter Theater (1781–1806): Sozialgeschichtliche und soziologische Verortungen eines Erfolgsmodells. In *LiTheS*, 2010, vol. 10, Sonderband 1, p. 49.

50 SCHINDLER, Otto G. – FLOTZINGER, Rudolf. Volkstheater. In *Oesterreichisches Musiklexikon online*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1553/0x00144ce5> [last viewed on 10 February 2025].

51 MÜLLER, Ulrich. Zauberspiel. In *Oesterreichisches Musiklexikon online*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1553/0x0001e77c> [last viewed on 10 February 2025].

52 BACHLEITNER 2017, p. 104.

53 TRUSSLER, Simon (ed.) *Burlesque Plays of the Eighteenth Century*. London : Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. vii–xiv; STAUDER, Thomas. *Die literarische Travestie: Terminologische Systematik und paradigmatische Analyse (Deutschland, England, Frankreich, Italien)*. Frankfurt am Main : Peter Lang, 1993, pp. 37–39, 339–343.

and mockery and its role is criticism, farce is only meant to be entertaining. Both are close styles to parody, which is a comic imitation of an essentially serious subject. Travesty dishonours a particular work through its audaciously out of place treatment and rude language. It is cruder than parody and is always conceived on the basis of a single work, whereas burlesque usually has a number of inspirations and source material.⁵⁴ When analysing a particular play, the application of this scheme may naturally run into problems. However, it is important to remember that the artistic effect of burlesque, travesty and parody depended greatly on the spectators' knowledge of the subject(s), i.e. the object of the parody, and required them to be well-read. Could this be the case, at least partially, with the audiences of the Summer Theatre? Could such a cultural coding of the content be decipherable and comprehensible to the "servants and maids" who apparently constituted its audience base? A performative platform cannot be excluded, but is also clearly a simplistic perception that does not correspond to reality.

Research on the repertoire of the Kreuzer theatre in Pest offers a somewhat more realistic idea of what was happening in Bratislava. Performances started at three o'clock in the afternoon and ended at ten o'clock in the evening. Each performance lasted about an hour and was repeated five to six times a day, mostly consisting of three parts, starting with a play (burlesque, farce, travesty) that usually contained a so-called vaudeville, i.e. songs with humorous, satirical and socio-critical contents. Alternatively, there was a so-called *Singspiel* followed by a short "ballet" and finally, a so-called Kasperl would appear. Extant sources document that three-act plays were also performed. The few surviving programmes reveal that the performances were repeated rarely and a lot of different pieces were performed.⁵⁵

Possibilities to analyse the performance realities of the Summer Theatre in Bratislava are severely limited. While Municipal Theatre programmes were sent for censorship from 1794 onwards, the repertoire of the Summer Theatre is now documented by only two such lists, both written in 1799, apparently after the John of Nepomuk affair and just before the dissolution of the Summer Theatre.

The first surviving inventory dates to May 1799. A report by theatre commissioners Johann Kärner and Johann Dévay has also survived along with it and it points out that the regulation on sending programmes for censorship and staging only applied to plays that had been staged in Vienna or Buda and could not be fully complied with in the case of the Summer Theatre as for most of the plays, the actors knew them by heart and they did not have printed or handwritten scripts. Theatre director Kuncz allegedly sent in the list of farces only after being admonished several times, while director Albrecht Gottfried declared that his theatre was on the same level as the (summer) theatre in Pest, and that all the plays had already been performed in Pest and had been checked

54 Ulrich Broich points out the division between so-called high and low burlesque; high burlesque representing parody and low burlesque representing travesty. See: BROICH, Ulrich. *Studien zum komischen Epos: Ein Beitrag zur Deutung, Typologie und Geschichte des komischen Epos im englischen Klassizismus 1680–1800*. Tübingen : Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1968, p. 42.

55 BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1988, pp. 12–16.

by the Governor's councillor. The first list contains a programme of plays for the period from 19 May to 31 July 1799 (Appendix 1). The second surviving list (Appendix 2) is dated August 1799, containing plays that were to be performed in August and September. The Governor's Council allowed scripts to be performed after being revised and "cleansed." Only one play was removed from the repertoire: *Der Baierische Hiesel*. The effectiveness of this regulation does sound rather problematic, given that the performances had already been going on.⁵⁶

The programme of the theatre usually consisted of anonymous plays, likely written by literarily unknown authors. There are exceptions, however. For example, the comedy *Sarmäts Feuerbär* by Viennese theatre director Emanuel Schikaneder appeared in the programme twice. The full title of the play was *Herzog Ludwig von Steyermark oder Sarmäts Feuerbär*. Its text was censored in 1797 as the play was planned to be staged in one of the official Hungarian theatres. The censor concluded that although it had already been edited and inappropriate language had been removed, he considered its performance inappropriate for the time being, especially for its images of rebellion.⁵⁷ Another renowned author represented in the repertoire of the theatre was Karl Friedrich Hensler. His Singspiel *Das Sonnenfest der Braminen* was officially presented as a two-act play,⁵⁸ whereas in the repertoire of the Summer Theatre, it was presented as a ballet in three acts. This raises questions about what adaptations the play had undergone and whether it could still be regarded as Hensler's work.

Some of the plays appeared as published texts in the 1830s, which casts doubt on whether they were actually the same plays listed. For example, *Was einer gut macht, verdirbt der andere* appeared in the yearbook of the Leopoldstadt theatre in 1829 and is attributed to well-known Viennese playwright Johann Hermann Herzenskron, born in 1789. It is therefore unlikely that he was the actual author, as he probably only treated an earlier subject. This may be an accurate formula for approaching the genesis and adaptation of other scripts, too. In 1779, the anonymous comedy *Der Zanksichtige oder die rechtmäßige Erbin* was published and probably also performed on other stages.⁵⁹ The Singspiel *Der Schlosser*, a German translation of a French one-act play by François Antoine Quétant, was performed repeatedly.⁶⁰ The repertoire also included *Weiss und Rosenfarb*, a Singspiel by Joseph Franz Ratschky, one of the most important representatives of Austrian Enlightenment literature.⁶¹ The manuscript of the anonymous play *Der Lebendige Haubenstock* has survived in the estate of the Austrian playwright Franz Ignaz Castelli.⁶² Anonymous titles with their text unknown, which are clearly dramatizations of literary models, include the three-act ballet *Werthers Leiden, und Tod*, for example.

56 AMB, B. 411, Fasc. 9, No. 272; MNL – OL, C 51, 19560.

57 MNL – OL, C 51, Fasc. 240, 5254.

58 HENSLER, Karl Friedrich (ed.) *Das Sonnenfest der Braminen: Ein heroisch-komisches Singspiel*. Wien : Goldhann, 1792.

59 *Der Zanksichtige oder die rechtmäßige Erbin: ein Lustspiel*. Prag; Leipzig : Gröbl, 1779.

60 The theatre programme lists it as a three-act play. See: QUÉTANT, Antoine François (ed.) *Der Schlosser: ein Singspiel*. Frankfurt am Main : Andreä, 1772.

61 RATSKY, Joseph Franz. *Weiss und Rosenfarb: Singspiel*. Troppau : Traßler, 1781.

62 *Der lebendige Haubenstock: Lustspiel in zwei Aufzügen*. Manuscript held at the Austrian National Library, <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC13949955> [last viewed on 10 February 2025].

The same can be said with a high degree of certainty about a number of plays. Although their titles are identical to those of some well-known plays, the subtitles indicate that they are different versions, perhaps some further unspecified local adaptations. *Roland der Rasende*, known as a five-act play by Julius von Soden, exemplifies this well as it appears in the list as a chivalric play in three acts. Examples like this are numerous; one play is probably in Yiddish, and some of the titles contain slang.

What is available to us is the repertoire of a single season, with about a hundred performances but only a few scripts. Thus, to understand what was going on in the Summer Theatre and in the minds of its audiences, i.e. the recipients, we can work with circumstantial evidence, but let us return to the listed plays. Apart from short titles, the record also contains simple descriptions like ballet, pantomime, comedy, Singspiel, comedy with songs, magic play, chivalric play, *Geistergeschichte* (ghost story), *Räuberstück* (bandit play), etc. Moreover, it is impossible not to notice that there is a difference in quality and genre between the two lists representing the repertoire of one season. While the first list includes some well-known works, the second represents mostly anonymous, “more trivial” folk culture. Did one troupe perform throughout the season or did other, small, travelling companies perform too? Many other questions also arise. Given the small number of sources, we are in a situation where definitive statements are difficult to formulate and even more difficult to substantiate.

What is available today is only a kind of signal, the tip of the iceberg. What attracted the urban population and on the contrary, what provoked the resistance of moralists and ultimately led to the dissolution of not only the Municipal Theatre in Bratislava? Was it really primarily the repertoire or did other, non-performance related circumstances also play a role? The answers to these questions are important in developing a concept of the social and cultural functions of the theatre. As such, it is necessary to step behind the scenes of the literary scientific schemes and examine non-elite popular culture, along with its important functions, as an equal factor. In this way, we can get closer to what irritated the powerful of the empire so much. This was a zone of liberating, uncontrolled fun, what Mikhail Bakhtin called subversive and liberating laughter, institutionalised in the Middle Ages in carnivals, first tolerated, later persecuted.⁶³ Do not discount Norbert Elias’s concept of a growing self-consciousness and an increasing threshold of repugnance throughout history.⁶⁴ In early modern Europe, jesting and joking were acceptable even in public places such as churches and courts, but later the behaviour was officially banned from these areas. We can view the history of the Summer Theatre as the history of laughter in its sociological and anthropological, or even psychological, contexts. Sigmund Freud considered laughter to be an expression of unconscious desires and anxieties, which is now seen as an alternative to Bakhtin’s concept of the

63 BACHTIN, Michal Michajlovič. *François Rabelais a lidová kultura středověku a renesance*. Praha : Argo, 2015, pp. 96–123.

64 ELIAS, Norbert. *O procesu civilizace: sociogenetické a psychogenetické studie, II*. Praha : Argo, 2007, pp. 237–313.

liberating function of laughter.⁶⁵ Laughter, by which people cheerfully “mock” pompous or abstract discourses and ridicule the values of the dominant official culture. Coarse language, bawdy songs, humorous and vulgar greetings as common practices in parody and travesty illustrate the importance of the role of parody in building informal language and popular culture. Pierre Bourdieu identifies the use of comic disrespect and offensive language with the anti-cultural symbolic inversion of dominant values and authoritarian discourses by unprivileged social strata.⁶⁶

Disparaging statements about the theatre and its audience can be viewed in this light. What can be seen behind them are the late-Enlightenment, mentoring tendencies of the state to decide what is useful entertainment and to educate the audiences and shape their tastes, as was the case in controlling reading habits too. Moreover, an attempt to authoritatively control discourse and suppress expressions and desires for social change can also be recognised in the background. Under the banner of morality and public peace, the aim was to bring the theatre and its audiences under control and, ultimately, to eliminate them.

Conclusion and Outlook

“I can only recall that there was a lot of laughter from the beginning to the end.”⁶⁷ Available research on theatre culture has given almost no attention to the phenomenon of summer theatres. The object was rather primarily the gradual institutionalisation of municipal theatres in the form of their construction and operations, as this was seen as an important stage in the development of elite, and later even national, culture. Historiography has assigned summer theatres an inferior status, like travelling troupes. One of the reasons was probably the relatively limited source base. Summer theatres were also perceived in the same manner by Enlightenment reformers and critics of morality in their time. Such contempt has also been adopted and internalised in recent theatrological reflections; however, more in-depth research reveals that there is no reason to point to a non-existent gap between the brick-and-mortar, “elite,” theatre and the wooden, “non-elite” and “immoral” one, and that they were interconnected both at the level of rents and operations and at the level of performance practices. The summer theatre was an alternative stage and a space for the entertainment of wider social strata. It is this sociological focus that enables us to progress from perceiving the theatre as a monolith of elite culture to viewing it as a diversified system, a zone where elite and non-elite cultures intermingled. Forming part of the culture of the unprivileged strata, folk theatre was not a blight on the noble appearance of the city’s urban culture but a stable part of its culture.

The Enlightenment needed to control and police put censorial pressure on theatrical life. It sought to exclude not only scripts, but words and subjects deemed inappropriate for the censorship triad of the Church, the state and mo-

65 BURKE, Peter. *Variety kulturních dějin*. Praha : Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2006, pp. 131–132.

66 BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. London : Routledge, 1984, pp. 490–493.

67 Memoirs of a prompter of the summer theatre in Pest. See: BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1998, p. 23.

rality. From the time of Maria Theresa on, a strong tendency to remove all improvisation from the theatre can be perceived, as its ambition was to bring not only more entertainment but also non-conformity, satire, social criticism and a desire for social change.

However, despite the efforts of the theatre commissioners, improvisations could not be removed from the stage. It was partly thanks to this fact, and despite supervision and strict discipline, that the theatre did not only become a space for the enlightened education of spectators and for building loyalty to the regime, but remained a place for artistic reflection on social problems and social criticism.

The seemingly banal scandal of the theatre poster points to the leadership's extreme sensitivity to any public hint of non-conformity and inappropriate jokes. It reveals a fear of uncontrolled entertainment, of mocking the authorities and of "subversive" laughter. Not only as a stage, but also as a social space for "servants, maids and the rabble," the Summer Theatre was considered to be a mockery of the values of the dominant official culture. The aim of the authorities was to bring it under control and ultimately eliminate the outlet under the pretext of morality and public peace as a symbol of the fear of the meeting and communication of unprivileged social strata.

In the latter half of the 18th century, summer theatres formed a part of urban culture not only in Bratislava, but other European cities and can be considered an important phase in the history of the entertainment industry. This specific urban space raises many unanswered questions and prospective topics not only of the history of theatre, but also of social history. It is also necessary to re-ask questions about the coding of the message of the performances and performance techniques, and seek answers beyond platitudes about immoral farce and the superficial jokes of clowns.

Appendix 1

Verzeichniss deren in Sommertheater von 19. May bis inclusive ult. Julij 1799 aufgeführt werdenden Stück' und Balletts als:⁶⁸

Im Monath May

9.	Sarmäts Feuerbär	Lustspiel mit Ballett in 3 Akten	Schikaneder, Emanuel
20.	Die Tapferkeit der Kossaken	Mit Ballett in 3 Akten	
21.	Arlequins Grabmal	Pantomime mit Ballet in 3 Akten	[Bienfait] ⁶⁹
22.	Das Wettrennen	Lustspiel in 3 Akten	
23.	<i>Norma – nichts</i> ⁷⁰		
24.	<i>Freytag Nichts</i>		
25.	Kasperl Tyroler Medridatlenzel ⁷¹	Lustspiel in 3 Akten	
26.	Der Bräutigam im Felleisen	Mit Ballett in 3 Akten	[Treuerz, I.] ⁷² In the Yiddish language?
27.	Die Räuber in Küstrin	in 3 Akten	
28.	Was einer gut macht, verdirbt der andere	in 3 Akten	[Herzenskron] ⁷³
29.	Der gelbsüchtige Bräutigam	in 3 Akten	
30.	Die Spinnerin ⁷⁴	Ballett in 3 Akten	[Schikaneder, Emanuel]
31.	<i>Freytag Nichts</i>		

Im Monath Juny

1.	Das Sonnenfest der Braminen	Ballett in 3 Akten	Hensler, Karl Friedrich
2.	<i>Repet.</i>		
3.	Der Zanksüchtige	Lustspiel in 3 Akten ⁷⁵	
4.	Sarmäts Feuerbär	Lustspiel in 3 Akten	Schikaneder, Emanuel

68 The appendices are transcripts of programmes submitted to the censors. Further information on these plays was obtained from available online catalogues and bibliographies that capture theatrical life in Europe and Hungary in the given period. Besides the list of plays of the summer theatre in Pest, published in BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1988. See also: BENDER, Wolfgang F. – BUSHUVEN, Siegfried – HUESMANN, Michael. *Theaterperiodika des 18. Jahrhunderts: Bibliographie und inhaltliche Erschließung deutschsprachiger Theaterzeitschriften, Theaterkalender und Theatertaschenbücher. 3 Th.* München : Saur, 1994 – 2005 (hereafter referred to as *Theaterperiodika*); BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ, Hedvig (ed.) *Deutsche Theater in Pest und Ofen 1770–1850: Normativer Titeltatalog und Dokumentation. 2 Bd.* Budapest : Argumentum, 1995 (hereafter referred to as *Deutscher Theater*).

69 BIENFAIT. *Harlekin im Grab oder nach Regen kommt Sonnenschein: Eine große Pantomime*. Wien : [n. p.], 1777.

70 The so-called norm was a decree stipulating the number of performances a theatre was allowed to play in a year. It first appeared in 1752, and the number kept changing. See: GROSSAUER-ZÖBINGER 2010, p. 52.

71 BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1988, p. 46, no. 85.

72 A more recent edition of this play TREUHERZ (jun.). *Die Verlobung oder Der Bräutigam im Felleisen: Fastnachts-Posse in jüd. Mundart*. Berlin : Bloch, 1833.

73 *Taschenbuch des k. k. privilegierten Theaters in der Leopoldstadt für das Jahr 1829*, 6. Jahrg. Wien : Gerold, 1829, pp. 79–170.

74 Probably SCHIKANEDER, Emanuel. Die Spinnerin im Gatterhölzel oder der Stock am Eisenplatz. In *Theaterperiodika* 3, p. 821.

75 *Der Zanksichtige oder die rechtmäßige Erbin: ein Lustspiel*. Prag; Leipzig : Gröbl, 1779.

5.	Appoll[o]s Leyer ⁷⁶	Zauberspiel in 3 Akten	
6.	Der Sirenen Gesang	Romänchen mit Ballett in 3 Akten	
8.	Weiss und Rosenfarb	Singspiel in 3 Akten	Ratschky, Joseph Franz
9.	<i>Repetur</i>		
10.	<i>Repetur</i>		
11.	Der Luftballe ⁷⁷	Pantomime mit Ballett in 3 Akten	[Jacobi]
12.	<i>Repetur</i>		
13.	Der dumme Gärtner	Singspiel in 3 Akten	Schikaneder, Emanuel
15.	<i>Repetur</i>		
16.	Der schwarze Bürgrogk	Mit Ballett in 3 Akten	
17.	Der 2. Theil dasselben oder das Rachegepennst	Mit Ballett in 3 Akten	
18.	Werthers Leiden und Tod	Ballett in 3 Akten	
19.	<i>Repetur</i>		
20.	Die Sonnenblumme	Märchen in 3 Akten	
22.	Der schwere Reuter	Ein Stück mit Ballett in 3 Akten	
23.	Amarilla, oder: So machens die Mädchen	In 3 Akten	
24.	Der Räuber Käsebier	In 3 Akten	
25.	Der Schlosser	Singspiel in 3 Akten	
26.	<i>Repetur</i>		
27.	Der gelbsüchtige Bräutigam	Stück in 3 Akten	
29.	Die Weinlese ⁷⁸	Ballett in 3 Akten	[Hartmann]
30.	<i>Repetur</i>		

Im Monath July

1.	Die bezauberten Kurierstift	Stück in 3 Akten	
2.	Arlequins Grab	Pantomine in 3 Akten	[Bienfait]
3.	Philind und Laura	Singspiel in 3 Akten	
4.	Die übriggebliebenen Jungfern im Fasching ⁷⁹	In 3 Akten	
6.	<i>Repetur</i> diess Stück		
7.	Der Strapazel im Weinkeller	Stück in 3 Akten	
8.	Weiss und Rosenfarb	Singspiel in 3 Akten	Ratschky, Joseph Franz
9.	Die Eroberung von Gibraltar	Ballett in 3 Akten	
10.	<i>Repetur</i>		
11.	Der Schlosser	Singspiel in 3 Akten	
13.	Die Bekanntschaft in Karlsbaad ⁸⁰	Stück in 3 Akten	
14.	Der dumme Gärtner	Singspiel in 3 Akten	Schikaneder, Emanuel

76 *Deutsche Theater* 1, p. 152, no. 317; BELITSKA-SCHOLTZ – SOMORJAI 1988, p. 42, no. 7.

77 *Theaterperiodika* 2, p. 1128.

78 *Theaterperiodika* 1, p. 595 etc.

79 *Deutsche Theater* 2, p. 835, no. 6213.

80 It may be an adaptation of the play *Bekanntschaft in Baden*. *Deutsche Theater* 1, p. 185, no. 595.

15.	Die dreifache Heurath in Narrenthurm	Stück in 3 Akten	Destouches, Néricault ⁸¹
16.	Die Simandl-Insel	Ballett in 3 Akten	
17.	Der lebendige Haubenstock	In 3 Akten	Becker, Michael
18.	Die schöne Sck[l]awin	Stück in 3 Akten	
20.	Arlequins Grab	Pantomime in 3 Akten	[Bienfait]
21.	Das Tyroler Weibchen	Ballett in 2 Akten	
22.	Belgrads Eroberung	Pantomime in 3 Akten	
23.	<i>Repetur</i>		
24.	<i>Repetur</i>		
25.	Der Hanakische Jahrmarckt	Stück in 3 Akten	
27.	Die 3 buklichten aus Damas-co ⁸²	Pantomime in 3 Akten	
28.	<i>Repetur</i>		
29.	Der 30. jährige Practicant	Lustspiel mit Gesang in 3 Akten	
30.	Das Falschenkunde	Ballett in 2 Akten	
31.	Der Minotaurus	Pantomime in 3 Akten	

Pressburg am 18. May 1799.⁸³

Appendix 2

Verzeichniss denen von 1. augustus bis 30. 7ber herausgegebenen Stücke wie folgt.⁸⁴

[August]

1.	Kasperl im Vogelhaus	1 Act. Dann folgt ein Ballet in 2 Act. Dann folgt Ballet in 2 Act.	
2.	Freytags nichts		
3.	Der Blumen Ritter	ein Zauberspiel mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
4.	Der die Knöckln gessen hat, der kann die Suppen auch essen	ein Lustspiel in 2 Act. Ballet 1 Act.	
5.	Kasperl auf den Zobelfang	mit Tänz in 3 Act.	
6.	Der Bairische Hiesel	in 3 Act.	[Rossbach, Christian] ⁸⁵ <i>Underlined by the censor</i>
7.	Der lächerliche Kesselflicker	ein Lustspiel in 3 Act.	
8.	Der Pascha v[on] Scutari	ein türkisches Stück mit Tänz in 3 Act.	
9.	Freytag nichts		
10.	Die Kinderfresser in Holland	mit Tänz in 3 Act.	
11.	Der spukende Schneider ⁸⁶	in 2 Act. Ballet in 1 Act.	

81 *Deutsche Theater 1*, p. 266, no. 1305.

82 *Deutsche Theater 1*, p. 262, no. 1268; *Kreuzer Theater*, p. 45, no. 64.

83 MNL - OL, C 51, Fasc. 253, 13955.

84 AMB, B. 411, Fasc. 9, No. 272.

85 BACHLEITNER 2017, p. 459; *Kreuzer Theater*, p. 43, no. 21, 22.

86 *Deutsche Theater 2*, p. 787, no. 5785; *Kreuzer Theater*, p. 58, no. 305.

12.	Der Räuber Lapats, oder der Schröcken Mann in Böhmen	ein Zauberspiel mit mi Tänz in 3 Act.	
13.	Rolland der Rasende	ein Ritterspiel in 3 Act.	[Soden, Julius von] ⁸⁷
14.	Kassperl und Bernarton, die 2 Räuber von Ungefähr	Ein Lustspiel in 3 Act.	
15.	Der San Fa Son	Lustspiel in 1 Act. Ballet in 2 Act.	
16.	Freytag nichts		
17.	Der Maytanz ⁸⁸	eine Rittergeschichte mit Tänz in 3 Act.	
18.	Der Zeitung Schreiber	in 2 Act. Ballet in 1 Act.	
19.	Kasper also Schuster Glück und Unglück in einen Tragsessel. Die Feuersbrunst ⁸⁹	in 1 Act. dann folgt ein Ballet in 2 Act.	
20.	Der Kopf ohne Mann	ein Geistergeschichte mit Tänz in 3 Act.	[Schikaneder, Emanuel; Woelfl, Joseph] ⁹⁰
21.	Das 4 jährigen Babben Kind	ein Lustspiel in 3 Act.	
22.	Rippel das dume Ross	Lustspiel in Act. Ballet in 1 Act.	
23.	Freytag nichts		
24.	Das Feuerabendsfest der Türken	mit Ballet in 3 Act.	
25.	Kasperl als Hausknecht im Spittal zu Wien	in 2 Act. Ballet in 1 Act.	
26.	Die Zauberlanden	mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
27.	Der Räuber Bohatschef	Räuberstück mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
28.	Aumeliens Zauberey	ein Zauberspiel in 3 Act.	
29.	Der golden Zaubers Apfl	Zauberspiel mit Tänz in 3 Act.	
30.	Freytag nichts		
31.	Die Belagerung Orsova ⁹¹	mit Tänz in 3 Act.	

[September]

1.	Der Spaziergang	ein Lustspiel in 2 Act. Ballet 1 Act.	
2.	Ritter Abalt u[nd] Kasper in der Bärenjagd	in 3 Act.	
3.	Kasperl in tausend Ängsten	Lustspiel in 2 Act. Ballet in 1 Act.	
4.	Der lächerliche Schulm[ei]st[e]r	ein Lustspiel mit Arien und Chören in 3 Act.	

87 Probably an adaptation of the following play. See: SODEN, Julius von. *Der rasende Roland*. Berlin : Maurer, 1791.

88 It may be an erroneous copying of the title *Der Maikranz*. See: *Kreuzer Theater*, p. 53, no. 225.

89 It is probably not the three-act play of the same name by Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Grossman but a shorter theatrical form, e.g. a pantomime. See: *Theaterperiodika* 1, p. 380.

90 Probably an adaptation of Schikaneder's original opera.

91 *Deutsche Theater* 1, p. 186, no. 611; *Kreuzer Theater*, p. 43, no. 27.

5.	Der Räuber Lapatsch oder der Schröckende Man[n] in Böhmen	ein Zauberspiel mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
6.	Freytag nichts		
7.	Die Belagerung Gibraltars	mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
8.	Die 2 lebendigen Mehlwürme	Lustspiel in 2 Act. Ballet 1 Act.	
9.	Der Basha (!) v[on] Scutari	mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
10.	Kasperls Herzklopfen unter den Backtrog	in 3 Act.	
11.	Wenn alles stirbt, so stirb ich auch	in 3 Act.	
12.	Alexander u[nd] Balmire ⁹²	ein türkisches Stuck mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
13.	Freytags nichts		
14.	Der Kopf ohne Mann	ein Geistergeschichte mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
15.	Das vertäuschte Praesent	in 2 Act. Ballet in 1 Act.	
16.	Die Belagerung Wien	in 3 Act.	[Pelzel] ⁹³
17.	Das Geisterschloss zu Helfenberg	in 3 Act.	
18.	Kasperl der Operitt	ein Lustspiel in 3 Act.	
19.	Kasperl als Schuster Glück, und Unglück in Tragsessel Die Feuersbrunst	in 1 Act. Ballet in 2 Act.	Grossmann, Gustav Friedrich ⁹⁴
20.	Freytag		
21.	Der Blumenritter	ein Zauberspiel mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
22.	Das Guartälfen	ein Zauberspiel mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
23.	Der Binter Tatel	ein Lustspiel in 3 Act.	
24.	Kasperl der lebendige Haubenstock ⁹⁵	ein Lustspiel in 2 Act. Ballet in 1 Act.	
25.	Jeder trage sein Kreutz mit Gedult	[ein] Zauberspiel in 2 Act.	
26.	Die Zauberlampen	mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
27.	Freytag nichts		
28.	Der Zauberbecher	Ein Zauberspiel mit Tanz in 3 Act.	
29.	Der Raritäten-Kram[m]er ⁹⁶	ein Lustspiel in 2 Act. Ballet 1 Act.	
30.	Kasperls Reis in die Höll ⁹⁷	Lustspiel in 1 Act. Ballet in 2 Act.	

92 *Deutsche Theater* 1, p. 134, no. 155; *Kreuzer Theater*, p. 42, no. 3.

93 *Deutsche Theater* 1, p. 188, no. 617–618.

94 *Deutsche Theater* 1, p. 331, no. 1864.

95 *Deutsche Theater* 1, p. 493, no. 3264.

96 *Theaterperiodika* 2, p. 726.

97 *Deutsche Theater* 1, p. 495, no. 3284.