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Editorial

Half a century ago, while he was teaching a course at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Kurt Vonnegut wrote a sentence I find difficult to forget: "Be a good editor. The Universe needs more good editors, God knows." While humbled by invitation to become the guest editor of what is to be the first international volume of *Keria – studia Latina et Graeca*, published to celebrate the journal's twentieth anniversary, I am also ever so slightly nervous. Editing can use the authors' ingredients to make a Breakfast of Champions. However, there is always a possibility of a Slaughterhouse Five. To lessen the risk of such a calamity, I begged the assistance of my former and for ever – as it seems – partner in editorial adventure, David Movrin who being *in situ* has an innate understanding of what is right and wrong for *Keria*.

So this volume explores the topic of Classics and Communism in Theatre, offering a foretaste of a book to be published by the end of the year. It begins with a case study from regions beyond Soviet Europe, to give prominence to the research less frequently treated by scholars studying communism, namely with Edith Hall's *Communist Idealism in George Cram Cook's "The Athenian Women" (1918)*. Then the focus shifts to Russia shortly before the October Revolution, where three classicists, namely Tadeusz Zieliński, Innokentiy Annensky, and Vyacheslav Ivanov, prepared the ground for what they called the Slavonic Renaissance of Antiquity. After the October Revolution, Zieliński's son Adrian Piotrovsky and Sergey Radlov developed a concept of amateur theatre and proletarian performance where "sailors and the Red Army soldiers" staged Aristophanes' comedies at so-called *clubs*, "centres for education and propaganda for the masses." Nina V. Braginskaya explores this transition of the symbolist theory into socialist practice. From Russia, the focus moves west to neighbouring Poland, with a study of dramas by Greek and Roman playwrights performed under communism. Moving to Berlin and East Germany, Bernd Seidensticker highlights the fact that in the German Democratic Republic the ratio of theatre seats per capita was probably the highest in the world. His article on Ancient Drama and Reception of Antiquity in the German Democratic Republic provides an overview of the GDR's theatrical scene,

focusing on three pieces. These are Peter Hacks' adaptation of Aristophanes' *Peace* at the Deutsche Theater in Berlin in 1962, Heiner Müller's *Philoktet*, a play based on a Sophoclean tragedy, and the same author's *Der Horatier*, a short didactic play (*Lehrstück*) based on Roman history. The unique place of Sophocles' *Antigone* in the repertory of communist theatre and its influence on West- and South Slavonic drama in mid-twentieth century is discussed by Alenka Jensterle-Doležal, who also provides a review of theatrical innovation under communism in the region.

The scene changes from country to country and the picture is far from homogenous. The varying harshness of the communist regime affected the repertory, and both the strength of the local theatrical tradition as well as the presence of classical antiquity in education influenced the directors' choices. The public, on the other hand, could go along with or against the directors' inclinations – and could in times of tension see political allusions where none were intended, celebrating a victory of the Aesopian language.

Most of the articles of the present volume were discussed at the conference on *Classics and Communism in Theatre* in Warsaw in 2015, organised by the Universities of Warsaw and Ljubljana. The Slovenian students rocked the place with their Plautus. *Provenient medii sic mihi saepe dies*.

When he was leaving Iowa, Vonnegut wrote a letter of friendly advice to his successor. As all his letters, it is filled with timeless wisdom. ("Every so often you will go nuts. All of a sudden the cornfields get you.") But most importantly, there is solace for all guest editors of international journals: "Forget your lack of credentials. The University is perfectly used to barbarians."

Elżbieta Olechowska
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