

first publication

The article represents a slightly revised version of a paper delivered at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference in European Drama and Theatre History in Eger (Hungary), August 25-27, 2003.

1 Cf. the playbill, dat. 17.08.1828; Soproni Levéltár, Színházi plakátok, XV/6, 1700-1843. Cf. Vatter, Ilona: A soproni német színészet története 1841-ig. Budapest 1929 (Német philológiai dolgozatok 40), p. 76, note p. 95.

2 Cf. the disc recording from 1965: Ott, Elfriede: Phantasie in Ö-Dur. Monologe, Arien, Couplets, Gstanzen und Duette vom Augustin bis Steinbrecher. Elfriede Ott, vocal, Erik Werba, piano. Recorded at Wiener Konzerthaus, Mozart-Saal. Vienna: Preiser Records 1996 (CD Stereo 90289). The song is printed in Ott, E.: Phantasie in Ö-Dur. Wien, München 1976, pp. 71-74.

3 Schindler, Otto G.: »Mio compadre Imperatore«: Comici dell'arte an den Höfen der Habsburger. In: Maske und Kothurn 38 (1997), pp. 25-154; Schindler, O.G.: Das Reich der Toten, der Lederhändler von Bergamo und der Philosoph in der Narrengasse: Commedia dell'arte bei der Neuberin. In: Rudin, Bärbel / Schulz, Marion (Hg.): Vernunft und Sinnlichkeit: Beitr. zur Theaterpoche der Neuberin. Reichenbach i.V. 1999, pp. 37-95; Coticelli, Francesco / Schindler, O.G.: Per la storia della Commedia dell'arte: Il Basilisco del Bernagasso. In: I percorsi della scena: Cultura e comunicazione del teatro nell'Europa del Settecento, a cura di Franco Carmelo Greco. Napoli 2001 (Tra Musica e Teatro 3), pp. 13-342, esp. pp. 210-296.

4 Spada, Stefania: Domenico Bonicelli ou l'art d'improviser. Naples 1969, pp. 24-32, pp. 527-36; Coticelli / Schindler 2001, pp. 199-209.

5 Schindler 1997, pp. 103-111; Coticelli / Schindler 2001, pp. 210-221.

6 Bonicelli, Giovanni: La Prodigialità d'Arlechino mercante opulentissimo, perseguitato dal Basilisco dal Bernagasso d'Etiopia. Venetia: Domenico Lovisa 1693.

7 Benedikt, Heinrich: Franz Anton Graf von Sporck (1662-1738): Zur Kultur der Barockzeit in Böhmen, Wien 1923, p. 140; Schindler, Otto G.: »Ve škole zvráceného světa zcela neprotřelý Hanswurst« (Německá komedie dell'arte z čech). In: Divadelní revue 10/4 (1999), pp. 15-28, here pp. 16-19; Coticelli / Schindler 2001, pp. 95-99.

8 Ibid., p. 98.

In August 1828 the »local farce« *The Landlord in the Fool's Street, or the Disguised Beggar (Der Hausherr in der Narrengasse, oder Der verstellte Bettler)* was performed by the children of Sopron at the local town theatre.<sup>1</sup> But probably neither the actors, nor their director Tobias Kornhäusel or the audience had the faintest idea that this piece derived from an old and famous commedia dell'arte play, already inspiring European theatre audiences for more than one and a half centuries.

And when the well-known Viennese Nestroy-actress Elfriede Ott performs in one of her popular song recitals of Viennese comedy arias the comic song *Animal's Talk (Das Tiergespräch)*<sup>2</sup>, also nobody realises, that this song also derives from the same commedia dell'arte play, where the piece belonged to the part of *Dottore*, the character of the eccentric scholar. The song was performed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the popular Viennese comedian and partner of Johann Nestroy, Wenzel Scholz.

The play in question<sup>3</sup> concerns a credulous merchant trading with cordovan leather. He employs a beggar, who has adopted the respect commanding name of *Basilisco di Bernagasso*. *Basilisco* is susceptible – as soon will turn out – to become raving seriously mad – and the merchant takes advantage of that in order to get rid of a troublesome suitor, who runs after his housekeeper, he is interested in himself.

Since *Basilisco* proves himself very efficient in this position, the grateful merchant wants to donate his property to the servant. When the contract is signed, *Basilisco* shows his true face, throws out his noble donator together with the housekeeper, and leaves them without any means. After useless efforts made by the merchant to get back his property with the help of a legal adviser or by cunning and deceit, *Basilisco* is finally overpowered by magic.

In Italian texts *Policinella* or *Arlecchino* play the role. In German texts it is first played by *Hanswurst*, and later on by *Kasperl*.

In the 1680s the play appeared first as *Le Dragon de Moscovie* at the Ancien Théâtre Italien in Paris, and the performer of its main character *Arlequin*, the famous Domenico Biancolelli named *Dominique*, certainly had adapted it from an older Italian scenario.<sup>4</sup>

The first printed version of the play appeared in Vienna, now entitled *Il Basilisco del Bernagasso*, and was performed by an Italian company in 1692.<sup>5</sup> Only one year later another print of the play was published at Venice, this time as fully written literary text entitled *La Prodigialità d'Arlechino*. Author of this comedy, which probably was also based on older commedia-scenarios, was Giovanni Bonicelli.<sup>6</sup>

From Naples to London and from Paris to St. Petersburg other texts or records of performances are preserved, but especially widespread the play must have been in German speaking countries, where it can – besides Vienna – also be traced in Bohemia and Hungary.

The first record of a German language production of the *Basilisco* comes from Bohemia.<sup>7</sup> Here Franz Anton count Sporck, one of the most dazzling figures of the Bohemian Baroque, made himself a name as patron of the theatre. In his spa Kuks [Kukus], situated on the river Elbe, he erected a theatre for the entertainment of his visitors and himself. Here the strolling theatre company of Franz Albert Defraime performed the *Comedy of the ungrateful Pasaalisk de Parnagasso* in 1728 and 1729. When Sporck got involved in a lawsuit for heresy, he complained in his letters about the injustice done to him, and compared himself with the »credulous Hanswurst« of the *Basilisco*-play, who experienced »how a cold, dissembling and dissimulated heart is full of viciousness«.<sup>8</sup>

The Bohemian aristocrat expressed himself very positively on the moral doctrine of *Basilisco*. He utilised it to demonstrate the use of comedy and of theatre in general. This is remarkable all the more, as later on the Viennese theatre reformer Josef von Sonnenfels cited in particular the *Basilisco* as characteristic example, how the German theatre was effected so badly by the Italian taste.<sup>9</sup>

Ten years after the performance at Kuks the play was performed in Vienna. It was entitled *Basilisco di Bernagasso* or *Thanklessness is the World's Gratitude (Undanck ist der Welt ihr Danck)*, and the manuscript is today preserved in the Austrian National Library.<sup>10</sup> Like the *Basilisco*-play by Giovanni Bonicelli from 1693 the Viennese manuscript is no scenario, but a lite-

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 92-95.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 69-75, pp. 236-285.

11 Schindler, Otto G.: *Hanswurst und Der gelehrte Stolperer: Zur Narrenszene des Wiener Basilisco von 1738*. In: Gruber, Klemens et al. (Hg.): *Festschrift für Ulf Birbaumer, Edda Fuhrich, Johann Hüttner zum 60. Geburtstag*. Wien et al.: Böhlau 1999 (Maske und Kothurn 43), p. 1ff., pp. 9-27.

12 Cf. also Dshiwelegow, A.K.: *Commedia dell'arte: Die italienische Volkskomödie*. Berlin 1958, p. 140f., who quotes the *Tirade of the Stumbler*, used also in the *Basilisco* (see following note), as best example for this genre.

13 Cotticelli / Schindler 2001, p. 294.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 300-315.

15 *Kasperle, der Hausherr in der Narrengasse, oder der versteckte Bettler*. Hadamowsky, Franz: *Das Theater in der Wiener Leopoldstadt 1781-1860*. Wien: ÖNB 1934 (Kat. der Theatersamml. der Nationalbibl. in Wien 3), p. 181.

16 Schindler, Otto G.: *Theatergeschichte von Baden bei Wien im 18. Jahrhundert. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Badner Truppe und ihres Repertoires*. Mit einem Anhang: Unveröffentlichte Spieltexte, Szenare und Theaterzettel. 2 Bde. Wien: Diss. [masch.] 1971.

17 Schindler, Otto G.: *Oszták-magyar színházi kapcsolatok: főúri színház és vándorzinjásás*. In: *Oszták-magyar tudományos és oktatási kooperációs akció alapítvány: Projektjelentések 1993/94*, p. 30f; Schindler, O.G.: *Romeo und Julia* auf Schloß Krumau, der *Basilisco* von Kolin und das *Armenhospital in Kukul*: Über böhmische Theaterhandschriften in Wiener Bibliotheken und das Wasserzeichen in Wissenschaft und Praxis. In: *Biblos 44/1* (1995), pp. 81-103; Cotticelli / Schindler 2001, cit. pp. 286-293.

18 Schindler (1971), Bd. 2, pp. 273-279; Cesnaková-Michalcová, Milena: *Schulzova alebo Badenská divadelná spoločnosť*. In: *Slovenské divadlo 33* (1985), pp. 413-450; Schindler, Otto G.: *Hanswurst in Bratislava: Deutsche Lustigmacher auf den ältesten Theaterzetteln Ungarns und der Slowakei*. [Abstract, Bildmaterial und Literatur]. 2. Internationale Tagung der Thalia Germanica, Blankenburg / Harz, 25.-28.07.1997. Wien 1997; Schindler, O.G.: »Das Lustigste böst-möglichst angebracht...«: Theaterzettel der *Badnerischen Gesellschaft deutscher Schauspieler* aus Preßburg und Brünn. In: *Deutschesprachiges Theater im Ausland – Interkulturelle Beziehungen auf fünf Kontinenten in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Thalia Germanica, 3) [in print].

rary, completely out-written drama, however still offering many possibilities for improvisation. This version, which was performed 1738 at the Kärntnertheater, contains for the first time the *Scene of the Fools*, which became characteristic for all later versions.<sup>11</sup> This *Scene of the Fools* had developed from the *Tirade*, one of the declamatory highlights of the commedia dell'arte, which was assigned to *Dottore* und determined to parody the pseudo-scientific speech of the scholars by its bombastic mixture of eccentricity and meaninglessness.<sup>12</sup>

Already the Viennese version of 1692 included such a *Tirade*.<sup>13</sup> It consisted of chain rhymes about the so called »learned stumbler«, also known from Italian versions:

Ich bin gestolpert / und wäre bald gefallen /  
 Wäre ich gefallen / so hätt' ich mir weh gethan /  
 Hätt' ich mir weh gethan / so wäre ich krank geworden /  
 Wäre ich krank geworden / [etc.]

These chain rhymes were followed by nursery or better children's rhymes in the form of an *Animal's Talk*:

Wollen wir reisen? Sprach die Maisen /  
 Ja mein Schatz! sprach die Katz /  
 Wohinaus sprach die Maus /  
 Ins Gras sprach der Haaß / [etc.]

In the *Basilisco* of 1738 *Hanswurst* is looking for some legal advice and ends up in an unknown street, where he meets eight different fools. The turbulent flood of nonsense words of the *Dottori*, which in the Italian versions assails the pleading clients, is now assigned to the insane or feeble-minded inhabitants of this »fool's street«. The scholar, who was displayed as a fool, is now replaced by the fool, who is set up as a scholar. The nonsense they talk is in both cases the same, only the perspective has changed conspicuously.

Altogether there are three supposed »wise men« or »scholars«, who *Hanswurst* is meeting in the »fool's street«. When he addresses the first, his question »ich möchte wissen« (»I would like to know [...]«) is answered with a nonsense story of a dog-bite, where everything rhymes with »-issen«. The trousers were in the front »zerrissen« and at the back »beschissen«, which ends with the invitation »du kannst mich hinten küssen«. With the second imaginary »learned« fool *Hanswurst's* question »I would like to know [...]« lets off a firework of foolish instructions. This time the joke consists in the point, that the questioner is asked to put his case briefly and in precise terms, whereas *Dottore* himself is bursting into an endless and grotesque apology of taciturnity, so that the overrun *Hanswurst* is again unable to speak a single word. This scene is created on the model of the *Scène de la Tirade* from Regnard's comedy *Arlequin, homme à bonne fortune*, performed 1690 at *Ancien Théâtre Italien* in Paris, which Regnard obviously also had written on Italian patterns.<sup>14</sup>

*Hanswurst* also misunderstands the last passer-by of the fool's street as »wise man«. He is now reciting the same tirade of the »stumbler« we got to know for the first time in the performance of 1692.

On the Viennese suburb stages, where *Basilisco* is performed as long as 1816, the play is also produced with the old tirade. The largest number of performances it reached at the Theater in der Leopoldstadt, where it was entitled *Kasperl, the Landlord in the Fool's Street*, or the *Disguised Beggar* and had 76 performances between 1781 and 1816.<sup>15</sup> Already the *Badener Truppe*, a theatre company named after its favourite seat Baden near Vienna, and the founder of the Leopoldstädter Theater as Vienna's first suburb theatre,<sup>16</sup> had the *Basilisco* in its repertory, that is initially after a scenario, which the actor Karl Richter recorded 1760 at Kolin in Bohemia.<sup>17</sup> With an expanded version the *Badener Truppe* appeared 1764 in the then Hungarian capital Pozsony / Pressburg [Bratislava]. From this theatre, which was at that time under the *impresa* of the well known Viennese comic actor Josef Felix von Kurz-Bernardon, who had just returned from Venice, the Austrian *Theatermuseum* at Vienna holds a series of theatre programmes, which are today the oldest known from Hungary or Slovakia.<sup>18</sup>

On one of these Pozsonian programmes the play is announced under the truly baroque title:

The rightfully punished thoughtless generosity of Hanswurst as the saying goes:

19 Blümmel, Emil Karl / Gugitz, Gustav: *Alt-Wiener Thespiskarren*. Wien 1925, p. 345, note 1.

20 Gugitz, Gustav: *Der weiland Kasperl (Johann La Roche)*. Wien 1920, p. 242.

21 Kádár, Jolán: *A Budai és Pesti német színészet története 1812-ig*. Budapest 1914 (*Német philológiai dolgozatok* 12), p. 10.

22 Pukánszky-Kádár, Jolántha: *Geschichte des deutschen Theaters in Ungarn*. Vol. 1. Munich 1933, p. 22.

23 Ibid.

24 It existed until 1804. Cf. Kádár 1933, pp. 67-72; Belitska-Scholtz, Hedvig / Somorjai, Olga: *Das Kreuzer-Theater in Pest (1794-1804): Eine Dokumentation zur Bühnengeschichte der Kasperlfigur in Budapest*. Wien et al.: Böhlau 1988 (*Maske und Kothurn*, Beih. 12).

25 Kádár 1933, p. 71f.; Binal, Wolfgang: *Deutschsprachiges Theater in Budapest von den Anfängen bis zum Brand des Theaters in der Wolgasse (1889)*. Wien 1972 (*Theatergesch. Österreichs X/1*), p. 69ff.; Cotticelli / Schindler 2001, p. 123, p. 171 note 694.

26 Belitska-Scholtz / Somorjai 1988, p. 160, p. 195, p. 250; Belitska-Scholtz, Hedvig / Somorjai, Olga (Hg.): *Deutsches Theater in Pest und Ofen, 1770-1850: Normativer Titeltatalog und Dokumentation*. 2 Bde. Budapest s.a. [1995], p. 3255, p. 3609, p. 4945.

27 A playbill from the Theater in der Leopoldstadt, dat. 11.05.1804, is held by: Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, 64.525-C. For the Sopron playbill cf. note 1.

28 Playbill, Theater in der Leopoldstadt, dat. 14.12.1816, Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, 64.525-C. Cf. Cotticelli / Schindler 2001, p. 340f.

29 For the general history of this theatre cf. Bauer, Anton: *Das Theater in der Josefstadt zu Wien*. Wien 1957; Bauer, Anton / Kropatschek, Gustav: *200 Jahre Theater in der Josefstadt 1788-1988*. Wien 1988.

30 Playbill, Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, 64.524-C.

Who gives away his property,  
and then in neediness  
laments about his misery,  
has to accept his mess,  
or The travelling vengeance in the generous beggar, with Hanswurst the daydreamer,  
pulled around by his servants with a fool's rope.

The *Hanswurst* of the *Badener Truppe*, Johann Matthias Menninger, who was born in the Hungarian town Komárom<sup>19</sup>, was later relieved by the popular character of Kasperl. The role was played by Johann Laroche, who was also born in Pozsony<sup>20</sup> in 1745, and the play was henceforth produced under the title *Kasperl, der Hausherr in der Narrengasse*.

Menninger's *Badner Truppe* was also the first theatre company that played in Budapest, namely in the year 1770, and at this time still separated.<sup>21</sup> 1774 he played in the first theatre building of the twin-town, the Rondell-Theater at Pest.<sup>22</sup> Karl Marinelli, Menninger's co-manager and the later founder of the *Leopoldstädter Theater*, adapted not only the *Hausherr in der Narrengasse* for the company's leading actor Kasperl, but in his comedy *The Hungarian in Vienna (Der Ungar in Wien, 1773)* for the first time a Hungarian main character enters the stage.<sup>23</sup>

*Kasperl* and his repertory dominated also the so-called Kreuzer-Theater in Pest, erected in 1794, and entirely devoted to popular spectacles.<sup>24</sup> Since 1800 the *Kasperl* was played by Franz Stöger, who used to style himself on the programmes as »the cross-eyed Kasperl«. We can find Stöger until the 1820s in Ofen and Pest, where he must have died as »old man Kasperl« – one of the last and oldest performers of this character, who died in outmost poverty.<sup>25</sup>

Stöger appeared at the Kreuzer- or Summertheater in Pest mainly in *Kasperl* plays from Vienna's *Leopoldstädter Theater*. On the theatre programmes one could often read the remark: »A comedy borrowed from Herrn Laroche, the famous Kasperl from the k.k. Leopoldstädter-Theater« – as a quality stamp, so to speak.

Also the *Basilisco* can be found in the repertory of the Kreuzer-Theater, and three productions are documented in Pest for the year 1802: the first, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April, entitled *Kasperl der Hausherr in der Narrengasse, oder: Passalisko di pernegaso*; a second performance on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July under the same title; and a third production on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August that was called *Das lächerliche Donations Schreiben [The Ridiculous Deed of Donation] oder Passalisco de perno Casso*.<sup>26</sup>

Whereas the announcements of Pest are disclosing not more than the titles, the theatre programmes of Vienna and Sopron are telling at least the *dramatis personae* and their casting.<sup>27</sup> The traditional Italian commedia dell'arte characters are in these versions already »viennised« (»eingewienert«): The former part of *Arlecchino/Pulcinella* is now played by *Kaspar Schmalzkoch*; *Pantalone* is *Herr Knittelsfeld*. The *innamorato*, who goes in the Italian versions under the fine sounding name of *Silvio, Lucindo, Odoardo, Florido, Cintio* or *Don Consalvo*, is in the Theater in der Leopoldstadt simply *Thaddäus* (alluding to the popular character of the *Thaddädl*). Only the housekeeper still had the commedia name *Lisette*, *Basilisco* appeared under his original name, and the »reciter [»Wohlrödner«] and poet« was of course the »learned fool«, who presented the above mentioned tirades. In a later adaptation of the play entitled *Die Prellerey in der Narrengasse (The Cheat in the Fool's Street)* by Karl Joseph Schikaneder, the nephew of the *Magic Flute* librettist, which was first put on stage at the Leopoldstädter Theater in 1816, a descendant of the phrasemonger *Dottore* appeared again in the role of one of the fools, named *Wortkram* (literally *junk of words*).<sup>28</sup>

Of particular interest is the development of the play at the Viennese Theater in der Josefstadt,<sup>29</sup> where *Kasper, der Hausherr in der Narrengasse* was performed again on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1810.<sup>30</sup> Tobias Kornhäusel played the landlord *Kaspar Schmalzkoch*, and a not further known actor of the name Robert played the part of *Basilisco di Bernagasso*. For the scene in the fool's street this time a special extra number was announced:

Herr Leopold Bürger, the popular harpist, will have the honor to produce himself today with a song, first and second part, called The popular quodlibet in dog latin; and the song of the talking animals, and some other pieces.

That the song of the talking animals is identical with the *Animal's Talk* of the old Viennese *Basilisco*-versions, seems evident, but if we look upon the »popular quodlibet in dog latin«, the

31 For the harpists in Vienna cf. Wolkan, Rudolf: *Wiener Volkslieder aus fünf Jahrhunderten*. Vol. I. Wien 1924-26, p. XLIV; Holzer, Rudolf (Hg.): *Wiener Volkshumor: Harfenisten und Volkssänger*. Wien 1943; Schmidt, Leopold: *Das Volkslied im alten Wien*. Wien 1947, p. 62ff., p. 75f.; Pemmer, Hans: *Wiener Harfenisten*. In: Pemmer, H.: *Schriften zur Heimatkunde Wiens*. Festgabe z. 80. Geb. Ed. by Hubert Kaut and Ludwig Sackmauer. Wien 1969 (*Wiener Schriften*, 29), pp. 133-149.

32 Johann Nestroy. *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. by Jürgen Hein et al. Vol. 8/II: *Weder Lorbeerbaum noch Bettelstab*. Ed. by Friedrich Walla. Vienna 1998, p. 71, pp. 137-142 (my thanks to Friedrich Walla for drawing my attention to this passage).

33 Pemmer 1969 (*Wiener Harfenisten*), p. 137; Czeike, Felix: *Historisches Lexikon Wien*. Vol. I. Wien 1992, p. 505.

34 Mayer, Josef: *Geschichte von Wiener Neustadt*. Vol. II/2. Wiener Neustadt 1928, p. 270; Pemmer, Hans: *Das Sommertheater in Hietzing*. In: Pemmer 1969, pp. 181-210, here pp. 182-190. Playbills and Manuscript sources in: *Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek: Porthem-Katalog; Wiener Theater 1708-1802, Abschriften nach Akten des Ministeriums des Innern*, la 59.478; *Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv: Gugitz, Gustav: Auszüge aus Theaterakten; Auszüge aus den Konversationsbögen*. Vol. I, p. 145.

35 Archival sources: *Soproni Levéltár, playbills; Protocollum Senatorum Anni 1826, tom 1, 1004a/290, p. 219-220, no. 306 and 1827, tom. 1, 1005a/293, p. 117, no. 1342; Stadtarchiv Wiener Neustadt, Playbills; Wiener Neustädter Theatererinnerungen 1794-1828 [tit. fict.]; Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, Wiener Theater, Abschriften, 1822-1834, Jb 59.478. Cf. also Ziegler, Karl: *Theater-Almanach [...] der königl. Freystadt Oedenburg [...]. Oedenburg [1827] (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [henceforth OSZK])*; Ziegler, K.: *Theater-Journal [...] der königl. Freystadt Oedenburg [...]. Oedenburg s.a. [1828] (OSZK)*; Dietrich, Joseph: *Theater-Journal [...] Frühlings-Sträußchen [...]. Tyrnau s.a. [1836] (OSZK)*; Sachs, Hugo: *Theater-Journal [...] der königl. freyen Stadt Agram. s.l., s.a. [1838?] (OSZK)*; *Wiener allgemeine Theaterzeitung* 20 (1827), p. 326f.; *Wiener allgemeine Theaterzeitung* 38 (1945), p. 388, p. 400, p. 408; *Wiener allgemeine Theaterzeitung* 21 (1828), p. 235f., p. 263f., p. 358, p. 507f.; *Wiener allgemeine Theaterzeitung* 26 (1833), p. 194f.; Benyovský, Karl: *Das alte Theater: Kulturgeschichtliche Studie aus Preßburgs Vergangenheit*. Bratislava 1926, p. 95; Mayer 1928, p. 270f.; Vatter 1929, pp. 66-70, p. 74ff., pp. 85-112; p. 118, p. 126; Frigyes,*

*Tirade of the Stumbler*, a direct derivation appears more questionable, as the share of its Latin gibberish seems a bit too small. But it is certain, that it has a connection with a *Dottore's tirade* with its Latin jargon.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the harpists were the most popular representatives of the Viennese song,<sup>31</sup> who very soon also entered the theatre stage. In his parody *Weder Lorbeerbaum noch Bettelstab*, which was first performed in 1835, Johann Nestroy played a typical Viennese *Heurigen*-harpist, and referred explicitly to the »blind Poldl« – as Leopold Bürger commonly was called – as his shining example.<sup>32</sup> Leopold Bürger, one of the most popular Viennese harpists of the *Biedermeier*, was born in 1771 in the Hungarian town of Târsco (today Starcevo in Yugoslavia), who died in Vienna in 1833.<sup>33</sup> Since the popular folk-singer adapted the old commedia dell'arte tirade as an extra number for his own programmes, the connection with the original play was forgotten and the song attained an individual existence.

One of the last known performance of the *Hausherr in der Narrengasse* took place in 1828 at the town theatre of Sopron /Ödenburg. Still the »funny characters of the fool's street« can be found, but the »reciter and poet« – the virtual performer of the old tirade – is not mentioned any more.

About the Sopron performance we are unfortunately not very well informed. The playbill, preserved in the city archive, is the only source we have so far. About the actor Tobias Kornhäusel, who organised the production, we have again only some scattered and fragmentary information.<sup>34</sup> Probably he was a relative of the famous Viennese (theatre) architect Josef Kornhäusel. From Wiener Neustadt and the Theater an der Wien he came to the Theater in der Josefstadt in 1805, where he was sub-manager between 1810 and 1812. He then joined the theatre company of Leopold Hoch, a very well known theatre manager in Hungary: Leopold Hoch, born in Bohemia, made his debut 1807 in Kassa /Kosice [Kaschau] and travelled since 1811 through the provincial towns of the Austro-Hungarian empire.<sup>35</sup> In Hungary we find him in Varasdin [Varaždin], Nagykanizsa, Pápa, Köszeg, Szombathelij, Kismarton /Eisenstadt and after 1814 for some years also at Sopron, in Pozsony and Zagreb. The Sopron theatre usually showed plays parallel to the theatres of Wiener Neustadt and Baden bei Wien. In January 1826 we can find *Kaspar, der Hausherr in der Narrengasse* once more on the stage of Wiener Neustadt,<sup>36</sup> the next summer Hoch played in his main theatre at Baden, and during the winter season in Sopron. The following summer he appeared again in Baden.

Kornhäusel stayed at Sopron: On Sunday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1828, he announced on the playbill, that »with magisterial allowance and by general request«, he had the honour to give a performance at the royal free city of Ödenburg – under his direction and with the children of the town. They showed »*Der Hausherr in der Narrengasse, oder: der verstellte Bettler*«, local farce in three acts by the late Edlen von Marinelli«.

As *dramatis personae* we find *Basilisco di Bernagassa, Kaspar Schmalzkoch, Lisette*, his maid-servant, *Herr Pernk von Knittelfeld, Thaddäus*, his son, *Simon*, his servant, and a notarius. In the fool's street appeared a »lady in mourning« (»*ein Frauenzimmer in Trauer*«), a country boy, a country girl and a post servant. As child actors were mentioned the brothers and sisters Winkler Friedrich, Joseph and Johanna; Diem Samuel, Michael and Katharina, Dorn Ludwig and Ludowika as well as the boys Schneider Samuel, Kundt Wilhelm und Prindl Andras.

For some time only the *Animal's Talk* remained of the »viennised« commedia dell'arte play and led under Leopold Bürger an individual existence. In 1829, one year after the performance in Sopron, Wenzel Scholz presented it as his recitation number with new music by the popular Nestroy-composer Adolf Müller sen.<sup>37</sup>

In our time in addition to and independently of Elfriede Ott the *Animal's Talk* experienced a revival by the well known children's book author Mira Lobe<sup>38</sup>, and in her adaptation it found its way even back to the stage: In the Christmas productions of Vienna's Burgtheater it is performed by Heinz Zuber, a popular children's clown of contemporary Austrian television.<sup>39</sup>

Today the text can be found in children's theatre. This corresponds with the typical development for many other forms of popular theatre in the course of its trivialisation: *Pulcinella*, *Hanswurst*, and *Kasperl*, in former times the most popular protagonists of the comic theatre for adult spectators, are today mainly existing as characters for an audience of children.



Lám: A györi német színészet története (1742-1885). Győr 1938, pp. 60-64; Eigner, August: Das Meidlinger Theater (1807-1874). Wien 1940, pp. 47-52, p. 58, p. 62, p. 66-69; Probst, Franz: Beiträge zur Geschichte des deutschsprachigen Theaterwesens in Eisenstadt. Eisenstadt 1952 (Burgenländische Forsch. 18), pp. 55-60, p. 81; Kosch, Wilhelm: Deutsches Theater-Lexikon. Vol. I. Klagenfurt 1953, p. 804; Hankiss, Elemer / Berczeli, A. Károlyné: A magyarországon megjelent színházi zsebkönyvek bibliográfiája XVIII-XIX. század. Budapest 1961, p. 468 (index); Pemmer 1969 (*Sommertheater in Hietzing*), pp. 191-199; Schaffrath, Reinhold: Die Geschichte des Badener Stadttheaters im 19. Jahrhundert. Vol. I-III. Wien: Diss. [masch.] 1987, pp. 23-28; Kislér, Karl Michael: Der Theater-Mayr: Aus den Tagebüchern des Theatermalers Michael Mayr. Wien 1988, p. 43, p. 94, p. 98, p. 102, p. 113, p. 131; Haider, Alois: Die Geschichte des Stadttheaters St. Pölten von 1820-1975. Wien: Diss. [masch.] 1989, p. 54; Anhang, pp. 20-23; Zumpf, Peter: Chronik eines Theaters: Wiener Neustadt, 1794-1994. Wr. Neustadt 1994, p. 21, p. 129f.

36 Verzeichniß der aufgeführten Stücke, von 1. Jänner bis 19. März 1826. In: Wiener Neustädter Theaterinnerungen 1822-1834, Stadtarchiv Wiener Neustadt. Cf. also Zumpf 1994, p. 129.

37 Das Thiergespräch (gesungen von Herrn Scholz). In: Neueste Sammlung komischer Theater-Gesänge, Nr. 220. Wien: Ant. Diabelli & Comp. s.a. [ca. 1830], pp. 3-11. A copy of this score holds the Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, which preserves also a text manuscript and other prints.

38 Lobe, Mira: Ein Vogel wollte Hochzeit machen: Lauter schöne Tiergeschichten. Innsbruck 1989, p. 109ff.

39 Zuber, Heinz: Enrico und seine Tiere, ein Mitspielbilderbuch nach einer Kindervorstellung im Wiener Burgtheater. Mödling, Wien 1990.

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