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Fig. 4. Jiří Racek as Oedipus Rex, 2008, Jan Novotný's production, Strašnický Theater
See <http://www.strasnickedivadlo.cz/page.php?page=fotogalerie&program=305&pism=o>.

Oedipus in the Village. The First Outdoor Performance of a Greek Tragedy in Bohemia

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1.

The small South Bohemian village of Heřmaň, population 532, had it in 1936 (see picture 1). And it was in that very spot a small miracle took place. In 1920, the Heyduk¹ amateur theatre company was established there, which between 1920 and 1937 was able to stage more than 120 premieres of a Czech and world repertoire.² The dramaturgy exceeded the level of normal amateur theatres of that era because apart from the normal titles popular among the people, it ventured to try even the big repertoires – it staged Shakespearean plays (*Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Winter's Tale*), Molière's *Scapin's Schemings*, the one-act plays of Arkady Averchenko, an adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, *Fuente Ovejuna* by Lope de Vega, and so on. Of Czech domestic plays, apart from the typical Czech classics, what is surprising is the very swift introduction of new titles, among which the dramatists Karel Čapek³ and František Langer⁴ hold an important place as their plays were being performed on important world stages at that time. The breadth and quality of the repertoire is remarkable, but it was far from comprising all the activities of the amateur theatre company, which at the same time put on 60 lectures and literary evenings, staged exhibitions, soirées, and communal listening to what were then thinly spread radio broadcasts, organized trips to the cinema and to the theatre, and had its own library. It even published its own magazine called *Věstník*, *The Bulletin*, whose production and distribution testifies to the conditions at the time: *The Bulletin*, which was a source of information about the activities of the company, was written first by hand, and only later was it transcribed on a machine, bound together and placed at the local store. Everybody who read through it signed on the back page. Later on the company made efforts to have audience members also state opinions

¹ Adolf Heyduk (1835-1923), Czech poet and author of more than 60 collections of poems. He lived in Písek from 1877 and was admired and read by several generations, as is testified to by the fact that his name was chosen as the title of the Heřmaň amateurs' company.

² For the life of the Heyduk theater company see JIŘÍ ČERNÝ, *Intimní divadlo Václava Kršky*, M-ARS 1999; LUKÁŠ NOZAR, *Václav Krška a jeho divadelní období (1920-1940)*, Dissertation, Faculty of Humanity Studies of Charles University in Prague 2007; VĚRA MATOUŠOVÁ, *Václav Krška a ochotníci v Heřmaně*, in: *Heřmaň (dějiny obce a života zdejších obyvatel)*, Heřmaň 2008, pp. 98-118.

³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karel_Čapek (accessed 7. 8. 2009).

⁴ František Langer (1888-1965), was a Czech playwright, military physician, script writer, essayist, literary critic and publicist. He was born and died in Prague. Langer, as a physician, served in the Czechoslovak Legions in Russia during World War I. In 1935-38 he worked as dramatic adviser in *Městské divadlo* in Prague, Vinohrady, and as a commander of a Prague military hospital (rank of colonel). World War II he spent in England as a member of the Czechoslovak army abroad (brigadier general). His *Periphery* (1925) had great success on European stages.

about the productions they saw – pencils and paper were handed out after a performance, audience members wrote their responses about it anonymously, the actors read through them and some of them were then even published in the aforementioned magazine. The company also collaborated with other amateur companies from Southern Bohemia, often gave a guest performance in various towns in the region and was visited in Heřmaň by spectators from the wider surroundings. A special train was even dispatched for some performances.

2.

All of this would not have been possible without Václav Krška, who made his mark on Czech culture after the Second World War mainly through his screenplays and directing.⁵ At the time that the Heyduk theatre company was established he was only 20 years old (see picture 2) and was multi-talented – he wrote poems and novels,⁶ he often played an important role in his productions, and he sometimes designed his own scenography. He was very well-read, well-versed in cultural life, had lots of friends in the capital and thanks to them prominent people flowed into Heřmaň – well-known Prague theatre and film actors (some of whom enjoyed putting on a guest performance with amateurs), writers and musicians, etc. He worked together not only with his own company, but also with other amateur theatres. While all this is certainly remarkable, what is interesting for us, however, is that it was Václav Krška who, with his amateur players, organized the first Czech outdoor performance of a Greek tragedy, and that was Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

In 1932, he was himself a spectator to the most famous *Oedipus the King* to take place in the interwar period.⁷ Its director was Hugo Hilar,⁸ whose staging of ancient plays (*Medea*, *Oedipus*, *The Tracking Satyrs*) represented an original contribution both to the theatrical reception of Greek drama in Bohemia, and also to the development of Czech theatre overall. The set of Vlastislav Hofman became famous for enriching the production with vertical proportions and movement. In this way the stage event could be an active co-creator in which monumental tragic pathos was wedded to internal psychological power.⁹

⁵ Václav Krška (1900-1969) debuted as a film director during the war with a lyrical story called *Řeka čaruje* (*The River Works Magic*). After the war he particularly focused on biographical films dedicated to the great personalities of Czech culture (the violinist Josef Slavík, the inventor Josef Božek, the painter Mikuláš Aleš, the writer Alois Jirásek, the composer Bedřich Smetana). In the mid-1950s he brought two great stories of his favorite author, Fráňa Šrámek, to the big screen – the drama *Měsíc nad řekou* (*The Moon Over the River*) and the novel *Stříbrný vítr* (*Silver Wind*). His rich filmography contains both fairytales (*Labakan, The Legend of Love*), and socially critical works *Zde jsou lvi* (*Here are the lions*). For Krška's film career, see LUBOŠ PLÁČEK, *Lidmi i bohem zapomenutý*, in: Host 10, 1999, pp. 35-37, see also <http://www.volny.cz/czfilm/Osobnosti/Krška.htm> (accessed 7. 8. 2009).

⁶ MARTIN PUTNA, *Antika v díle Václava Kršky aneb O smutných faunech, papírových orgích a mužských spolcích*, in: IDEM, *Řecké nebe nad námi aneb Antický košík*, Praha 2006, pp. 149-161.

⁷ Productions of *Oedipus the King* have a long tradition in Bohemia (see www.olympus.cz), and it was staged in the National Theatre for the first time in 1889. It was only Hilar's production, however, that showed Sophocles' tragedy can pass muster on the modern stage.

⁸ Karel Hugo Hilar (1885-1935), theater director, poet, critic, novelist and dramatist. From 1 January 1921 until his death he worked at the National Theater in Prague as the head of company. He encouraged new creativity at the theater, promoted principles of dynamic expression of imaginatively rich direction, introduced many new talented artists onto the National Theater stage, took charge of the modernization of both the stage equipment of the National Theater and thoroughly established the foundation of a director's theater against the powerful opposition of conservative forces under whom all the artistic and organizational departments were subordinated to needs of the producers.

⁹ See EVA ŠORMOVÁ, *Karel Hugo Hilar. Points of Departure*, in: Eirene 37, 2001, pp. 62-70, who on the famous stage sets, writes (p. 68f): "The stage designer Vlastislav Hofman (who had worked on most of Hilar's productions since 1919) created an abstractly simplified, architecturally conceived stage. It consisted of a monumental suggestion of palace front and a double spiral staircase placed on a revolving stage. The appearance of the neutral object changed in the eyes of the audience

The production filled Krška with enthusiasm and it was a great experience for him: "I know only that I left the theatre quite drunk and dazed... And immediately the thought occurred to me to do Oedipus in my own style", he wrote in his directorial diary.¹⁰ And in actual fact, not a month after Hilar's legendary production at the National Theatre in Prague, Sophocles' *Oedipus* was presented on 28 April 1932 for the first time, only not with the Heřmaň amateurs, but with a competing theatre association of Jihočeskí akademici (South Bohemian academics) in Písek, the cultural centre of the region and rightly named South Bohemian Athens. There is an interview printed in the program of this production in which he confesses to his relationship to antiquity. He says that he had wanted to stage some time earlier Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (and he even had the pledge of guest performances by leading Prague actresses), but the plan came to nothing. He was led to Oedipus by a friend, a leading member of the National Theater who had created the role of Oedipus in Hilar's version and also appeared as a guest in Krška's production. Krška was not afraid of the tragedy's complexity. He had already had experience by that time with a Czech play written with mythological motifs – Otokar Theer's *Phaëton*,¹¹ a play which despite its considerable literary and theatric quality, is to this day considered to be very difficult to stage. Krška's direction of Oedipus was also influenced by a recent experience: a visit to Greece.

Krška's reports about two trips to Greece are unfortunately relatively incomplete and apparently inexact.¹² The interview says:

"And love for antiquity dramas? Certainly it reached its pinnacle in Greece itself where I saw the year before last in Athens' Herodotus [*sic*] Theatre, which is connected to the Acropolis, some snatches of mythical and dance ceremonies, and in autumn last year I got to know the retinue of the dancer Aris Monastiriotis, and I could naturally fuse with the revived and modern antiquity that was demonstrated at the Acropolis at the Dionysus Theatre. The same company, with the cooperation of several artists, staged Sophocles' The Tracking Satyrs, and at the end I saw Medea in Athens and Prometheus Bound in Delphi's Apollo Theatre directed by dear friend Nikos Proestopoulos. They made an unforgettable impression, especially in Sunion and Delphi, which were decorated with the sharp peaks of the Parnassus and the Corinthian sea. I understood there for the first time why today's spectator is so removed from antiquity. It's simply the fragrance of the soil."¹³

Krška was in Greece in 1930 and 1931. His "Photographic Notes for a Speech"¹⁴ provide photographs of masks which could be identified without problem as the masks used in the famous production of Eva Palmer-Sikelianos (see picture 3). Krška, however, never referred to her, and the only identifiable name, Nikos Proestopoulos, is perhaps possible to identify as the cousin of Angelos

with rotating and lighting. The movement of the central stage object made the stage space dynamic and dramatic. At the same time it carried a meaningful message: the circular motion figuratively showed the impossibility of escaping one's fate. The staircase created the opportunity to situate the action on the vertical axis as well." See picture 4a.

¹⁰ The Bulletin no. 33.

¹¹ Otokar Theer (1880-1917), Czech poet and playwright.

¹² Krška talks for example about the Herodotus Theater (he has the Odeum of Herodes Atticus in mind), he places Eleusina in the region of the Delphi, and he talks about the fact that *Oedipus the King* was written more than 2000 years before the birth of Christ, i.e. that it's 4000 years old, etc.

¹³ The interview in the program of the production (see SOKA Písek, Fond: Všeškolenský spolek Jihočeských akademiků) was also printed in a magazine (*Jovna, Král Oidipus*, in: Písecké listy, 27 April 1932, p. 1). I would like to thank SOKA Písek Archive for providing the material cited in this article and for their very useful assistance.

¹⁴ The Bulletin no. 35, autumn 1936.

Sikelianos. He was a lawyer and man of letters who collaborated with Sikelianos at the time of the first Delphi festival in 1927.¹⁵ I presume that if Krška had been informed of the “Delphic idea”, which was promoted by the Sikelianos and his wife, then surely he would have referred to her because the idea of a cultural centre where theatre is played, lectures and discussions about serious issues were organized (together with an exhibition of local folk art) was close to Krška’s heart, even though it was not based on a return to antiquity. In any event, Václav Krška was apparently the only visitor from Bohemia who saw a performance at a Delphi theatre in those years, and it’s possible – thanks to the masks – to assume that he saw the famous repetition of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*. This performance, as Eva Palmer described it, accentuated the chorus of the play¹⁶ and the connection of the magnificent natural scenery with this inseparable part of Greek tragedy undoubtedly deeply influenced Krška. Both his first Oedipus in Písek, as mentioned above, and his second attempt, staged in Heřmaň on 6 July 1936, testify to this fact.

We have only very few concrete reports on the first production, despite the fact that it was a big event for Písek. The local newspaper even printed a retelling of the entire Theban cycle,¹⁷ a feuilleton based on a text included in the performance program, and a review¹⁸. It was acted out in the hall of the Sokol cinema, which Krška characterized as the only modern theatre in Písek. The review is naturally admiring of the performance of a guest (“Beautiful makeup, amazing movement, effective pauses in the speeches, a play of eyes and body, an immense vocal range, these are the bases of the artistic creation of Kohout”), although it nevertheless also praised other members of the company. What is valuable is the information that the 23-member chorus had an effect (“and the voices rang out freely, devotedly, wistfully, and uneasily”). What is disputable, however, is Krška’s claim that the stage designer Říha figured out the stage independently. The interpretation of the chorus really does differ fundamentally from Hilar’s production. Hilar reduced the number of chorus members to the leader and six spokesmen, and everything of a subjective accent in the chorus text was incorporated into Oedipus’s text. The chorus was located on the steps, whose gradient allowed it to be vertically divided into groupings. The changeable grouping and entrance down the steps linked the chorus to the overall rhythm of the production’s construction. The stage design of the young scenographer in Písek had to respect the shallow stage, while the sounding of the famous set used in Hilar’s production can, however, be seen in the grandiose columns and architrave even on the staircase, although it was not revolving (see picture 4a,b). We know from other developments that Krška loved grandiose crowd scenes,¹⁹ so that one can assume that he worked with a multi-headed chorus very successfully here, too.

After his first attempt, Krška dreamed of a grand performance that would resemble the production in Delphi. Even though theatre in Bohemia played outdoors expanded long ago and

¹⁵ N. Proestopoulos (Προεστόπουλος, Νίκος, 1899–1968) was also a translator (Whitman, Shakespeare, Poe). For his connection with the theater see GEORGIOS BOURLOS, Μουσικά Χρονικά (Mousiká Hroniká), issues 9–10 (33–34), September–October 1931, pp. 219–223. I thank my Athenian colleague Petros Vrachiotis for drawing attention to this article and help in identifying the masks.

¹⁶ EVA PALMER-SIKELIANOS, *Upward Panic. The Autobiography*, (ed.) JOHN P. ANTON, Harwood Academic Publishers 1993, pp. 129–142. In the account of the first festival in Delphi in 1927, the author’s attention is focused mainly on the chorus and the costumes and a study of Greek vases.

¹⁷ ZD. STRABOCH, *Pohádka ze starého světa*, in: Písecké listy, 12 May 1932, p. 1.

¹⁸ JOFHA, *Král Oidipus, Feuilleton*, in: Písecké listy, 27 April 1932, p. 1.; JH [JOSEF HLouchA], *Starořecké drama Král Oidipus*, in: Písecké listy, 12 May 1932, p. 2.

¹⁹ Let’s look at the simple numbers. Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* 1923 – 80 people, Lope de Vega’s, *Fuente Ovejuna* 1936 – more than 130 people. In the Blatná production of *Oedipus the King* a 60-member chorus took part, so one can assume that the Heřmaň production had the same numbers.

has become a great favourite since the beginning of the 20th century,²⁰ such a performance of a Greek tragedy was considered by the director Stibor, who wanted to play *Oedipus the King* in front of the ancient architecture of the Hussite Church building in Olomouc in 1932. His intention was not realized, however, so Krška's performance of *Oedipus the King* with the Heyduk amateur company in Heřmaň is really the first attempt to indulge in Greek theatre once again with the sky overhead.

The company naturally also staged plays in a hall that was available in the village, but the crowning achievement of its efforts was considered to be a production made outdoors for which it always found the corresponding scenery (it even staged *Twelfth Night* on an island of the river Blanice). There was no permanent natural theatre with a solid stage construction and auditorium. The actors (and their friends) built a corresponding venue for each performance in the forest. We know how they designed the set for the production of *Oedipus the King* from the pertinent issue of the Heřmaň *Bulletin* and from the memory of the person invited once again to be the protagonist, Eduard Kohout. They had to chop down trees, cut the branches that cast shadows on the stage, build a podium and cover the stage with a cloth (which was made mostly for Eduard Kohout who as a city man was afraid of walking barefoot in the forest!), create a stage with "classical" columns, decorate the whole area with flowers, install benches for the audience and set up a refreshment bar for their comfort, and also maintain roads for vehicles delivering materials. The work was done by the whole theatre company, and village people from the wider surroundings who reacted gratefully to the fact that Eduard Kohout, the National Theatre star, had taken up a hoe and shovel.

The stage itself was simple. From the contemporary criticism in the regional press we read:

"Just under the game keeper's lodge is the auditorium, below is the fish pond from which the protruding stones are covered by wreaths and green blossoms, and between them water lily buds are blossoming, while behind a stone weir there is a prompter's 'booth' and in front of it there is a stage. There is a tall white rounded classical column on the left, a lower squared white column on the right, a dark classical curtain between them, and a classical staircase in front, while antiquity vessels with flowers are on the sides. Where, you ask yourself, did all this antiquity amongst these beautiful green pines and oaks come from?"²¹

In Hilar's production, the protagonist played in costume, while the actors were dressed in simple tunics and chitons which they made themselves or at least modified because costumes taken from Prague costume parlours did not suit – "it was some junk from Aida – the same colour, ornaments and cloaks", while the director needed austerity and simplicity (see picture 5). The music, produced by harmonium, kettledrum, cymbals, flute and fiddle, provided the background to the part of the chorus in accordance with the director so that the "content of the verses corresponded with the instruments or melody."

²⁰ Mainly in connection with so-called mass theater and theater scenes played on the occasion of celebrations of physical exercise (Sokol, The Workers' Physical Exercise Group), which promoted the idea of *kalokagathia*. For the production of the Czech adaptation of *Oresteia* staged for six thousand spectators see DANIELA ČADKOVÁ, *The New Oresteia of Arnošt Dvořák and the Problem of Oresteian Adaptation*, in: *Eirene* 39, 2003, pp.7-16.

²¹ ALOIS K. HEVERA, *Oidipus král v Cimburové kraji*, in: *Pisecké listy 1936?* See also EDUARD KOHOUT, *Divadlo aneb snář*, Praha 1975, pp. 124-5: "The auditorium was located like an amphitheater in an old quarry under a wooded hillside and between them and the stage with two classical columns, at the place where there was an orchestra in Greek theater lay a small fish pond. On the water's edge girls were making big wreaths of wild flowers that floated on the pond's surface during the performance."

Krška's actors were recruited from among the local villagers, and naturally there were amateurs with great theatre experience. Many of them had been a part of the company for many years, they had been systematically educated, and collaboration with professionals meant a lot to them.²² It is also not insignificant that a big actor found the time to take part in three rehearsals with the company.

The enthusiasm of the amateurs affected him, too:

"Anička from the mill washed the window, and next to the bucket of water she held the script with her foot and said: Child. Who bare thee, nymph or goddess. A young farmer walked beside a laden cart, whip in hand and recited: Sweet-voiced daughter of Zeus from thy gold-paved Pythian shrine Wafted to Thebes divine, What dost thou bring me?"²³

The performance, which was attended by spectators from the distant surroundings, was very successful. Prestigious actors from Prague even came to the dress rehearsal and the premiere was attended by a well-known journalist from Prague who wrote about the performance for a national newspaper. She was enthusiastic about the performance and the spectators:

"And mainly I wanted to say what heartfelt enthusiasm, efforts to penetrate the issue and a real desire to understand I saw on those hardened, laboured and agitated faces. The tears that the old lady in the cloakroom wearing a kerchief cried were real, and the old man in the huntsman outfit simply couldn't look. It lived within him. What ideal spectators. What humble and malleable actors."²⁴

Photographs from the performance even made their way into the popular picture weeklies *Pestrý týden* (Colourful Week) and *Letem světem* (The World in Brief).

Competing companies also started to consider performing these plays which until then had been beyond the means of amateurs. In nearby Blatná, they asked Krška to work together with them and also invited Eduard Kohout. During the Blatná fair in August that same year they organized a performance in the castle grounds with romantically rugged terrain. Several hundred spectators were seated on the clearing of the auditorium bordered on both sides with trees.²⁵ The Blatná performance had naturally the same concept as the Heřmaň production, from which they even borrowed the actress who played Iocaste.²⁶

Krška's interpretation of antiquity was more or less Winckelman-like. We find it in the harmonizing interpretation of the tragedy, poetically bucolic scenery aided by vases of flowers, wreaths floating on the surface of the fish pond and the chorus evoking a place of an occasionally

²² JOSEF ŠTADLER, the actor who played Creon, wrote, for example, in The Bulletin no. 35: "And so I recite the paragraph: I heard that our King Oedipus accuses me of terrible things, citizens, it's not possible to bear ...! And master Kohout suddenly interrupts me and says: 'Joe, you've remembered it well, but you say it like you would be telling Vašíček that you had taken two plums from his tree. But you have to yell till the roof comes down. So!'" MARIE PAVLÍČKOVÁ, who played in the chorus, also wrote: "I immediately forgot that I had three large flies biting my left shoulder and that a big ant had gone up my right sleeve. And when I lifted my eyes to recite my request to King Oedipus, it took my breath away. Who was it? It wasn't our genial master Kohout – it was someone completely different – half barbarian and half God. His acting wasn't theater; it was living, frightening reality – it was something that shakes one's entire being to the core – something that a person sees only once in their lifetime and takes it to the grave with them."

²³ EDUARD KOHOUT, *Divadlo aneb snář*, pp. 124–125.

²⁴ JARMILA SVATÁ, in: *Ranní A-Zet*, a supplement of *České slovo*, 14 July 1936, p. 2.

²⁵ SEKERA-DVOŘÁK, *Ochotnické divadlo v Blatné*, Blatná 1991, p. 38.

²⁶ MARIE TRUBKOVÁ, who played Iocaste in both productions, writes in The Bulletin no. 35: "I didn't know any of my previous roles as well as I knew Queen Iocaste. I knew it better than the Lord's Prayer."

live image via graceful gestures with idyllic figures of girls making wreaths, and young men staring wistfully into the distance.

In contrast to this concept, Kohout's Oedipus had to be expressive and played according to Hilar's effusively passionate and "barbarian" interpretation, which must have caused something of a slightly disharmonious affect. The enthusiastic spectators, however, did not notice this problem. According to them, "Eduard Kohout achieved a crowning performance... but even the performance of the locals, the village amateur actors, was quite unbelievably good, especially the extras, who had the main role in this play."²⁷ The edition of *The Bulletin* published for this performance bore witness to the fact.²⁸

The main importance of Krška's production is understandably not merely the fact that a Greek tragedy was staged outdoors. Krška managed a never-to-be-repeated act: through his amateur theatre he revived the bygone concept of ancient theatre and united the whole village in a collective gesture of immense importance. The actors and local people felt it, too. This community is called the Divadelní obec (Theatre Village) in the program of Burian's avant-garde theatre D 41, and the reviewer who was present at the reading of some plays did not hesitate to write: "To play theatre – it's a red-letter day in whose honour everybody must show their talent."²⁹ This, of course, did not relate only to the production of Greek tragedy, but it is perhaps the most obvious requirement for it.³⁰

Summary

The first Czech outdoor performance of a Greek tragedy (*Oedipus the King*) was produced by Václav Krška, in the South Bohemian village in 1936. There was no permanent natural theatre with a solid stage construction and auditorium there. The actors (and their friends) built a corresponding venue for each performance in the forest. Krška's actors were recruited from among the local villagers, and naturally there were amateurs with great theatre experience. Some of them had been a part of the company for many years, they had been systematically educated, and collaboration with professionals meant a lot to them (the role of Oedipus was played by Eduard Kohout, star of the National theatre). Krška's interpretation of the play was more or less Winckelman-like. The performance, which was attended by spectators from the distant surroundings, was very successful. Prestigious actors from Prague even came to the rehearsal and the premiere was attended by a well-known journalist from Prague who wrote about the performance for a national newspaper.

²⁷ SINE AUCTORE, *Blatenské listy* 1936.

²⁸ The content of the edition is very rich and contains: Specimens of *Oedipus the King* in a translation by F. Stiebitz, an extract from Stiebitz's foreword to *Oedipus the King*, Krška's introductory address on the performance, photographic notes for the address containing photographs from the Greek trips, the director's diary and gleanings from rehearsals, a congratulatory dedication from Eduard Kohout, eight memories of the rehearsals and the performance from individual participants, an extract of a letter by a permanent visitor from Vienna, twenty color drawings of *Oedipus the King* by Ivan Vacek (see picture 7), a poster, press cuttings of reviews, and 34 photographs from the production and four from behind the scenes.

²⁹ KK, *Divadelní vesnice Heřman*, in: Program D 41, no. 5, pp. 167-168.

³⁰ VIT MRÁZEK, a student of theater studies at Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, in a so-far uncompleted dissertation, writes: "Krška managed by himself to make a fundamental impact on ancient theater, which did not consist in acting in an amphitheater or in erecting classical columns, or the movement variations of a mass gymnastic character, but rather in the religious spirit of Greek tragedy which represented the transcendent reflex of the ethical values of the entire community, the actors and the spectators as part of a communally experienced theater performance event."



Fig. 1 Heřmaň, the South Bohemian village in the time of performance



Fig. 2 Václav Krška



Figs. 3a-c. Photographs of masks taken by Václav Krška during his visit in Greece



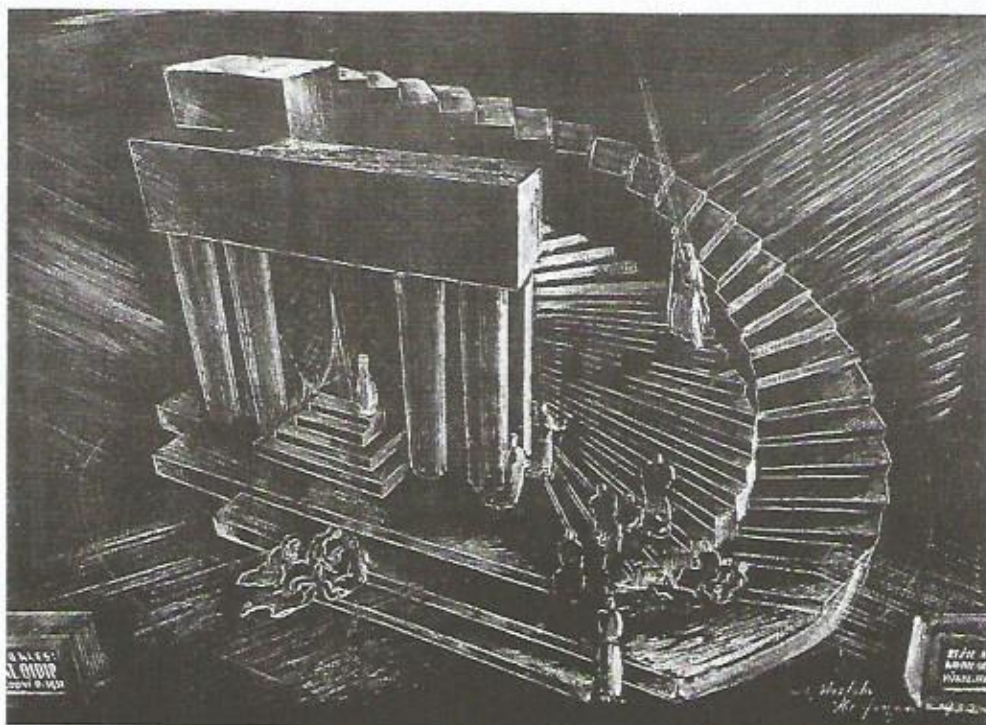


Fig. 4a The stage design for Hilar's production of *Oedipus the King* (V. Hoffman, 1932)

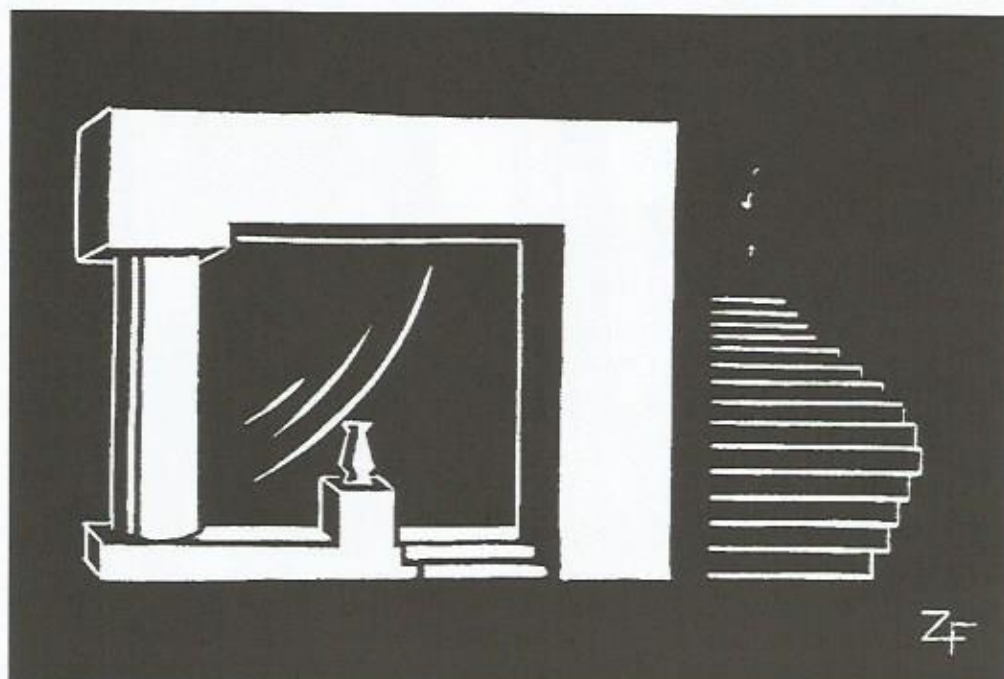


Fig. 4b The stage design for Krška's first production of *Oedipus the King* (M. Říha, 1932)



Fig. 5a Open air performance of *Oedipus the King* (1936)



Fig. 5b Open air performance of *Oedipus the King* (1936)



Fig. 6 The audience



Fig. 7 The color drawing by Ivan Vacek