

# Theatre and Drama on the Territory of Today's Slovakia before 1830

The beginnings of religious forms of medieval theatre date back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century and are associated with the process of formation of Western Christian liturgy, where the decisive role was played by the development of tropes. First Easter trope called *Quem quaeritis?* (Whom Do You Seek?), created in the monastery of Saint Gallen in today's Switzerland, was dramatized during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and this resurrection Easter performance at the end of the decade gave birth to the first, specifically theatrical phase of medieval religious drama – a liturgical play.

The arrival of renaissance and humanism in the area of development of religious theatre on the territory of today's Slovakia manifested itself by the adoption of a new dramatic genre – the school play.

The development of the secular form of the Slovak (and Czech) renaissance and humanistic theatre was most markedly affected by two Slovak playwrights writing in Czech who lived and worked in Moravia and Bohemia – Pavel Kyrmezer and Juraj Tesák Mošovský.



Pavel Kyrmezer: Czech Comedy about the Rich Man and Lazarus (Prague, 1566). Source National Library of the Czech Republic



The interconnection of the European genesis of religious dramatic theatre production with our domestic development can be witnessed in the Saint Gallen trope that has been preserved in Slovakia in the so-called Pray Codex (1192 – 1195). Source Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Budapest, Kézirattár, Quart. Hung. FU/1433



A proof of continuous development of school plays in Slovakia is an early baroque school performance called *Ein zwiefacher poetischer Act und geistliches Spiel* (A Double Poetic Act and Spiritual Play), created by Peter Eisenberg, which fully reflected the high quality of our school theatres at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Source Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Budapest, Régi Nyomatványok Tára, RMK II. 765

In the baroque period, the most common form of religious dramatic theatre production was still the (protestant and catholic) school play.



The presence of school drama lasting several centuries significantly influenced the Bernolák era, which can be seen in the example of a translation of the German tragedy *Chrysanthus and Daria* written by the Austrian priest Gottfried Uhlich, translated by Michal Klimko under the name *Krizant and Daria* in 1793. Source Slovak National Library, SD 8401



The second edition of Juraj Palkovič's play *Two Bangs and Three Shushes* from 1810, which is considered our first original dramatic play in the area of secular drama from the Bernolák era. Source Slovak National Library, SB 2133

With the emergence of the Age of Enlightenment in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, school plays were considered more and more obsolete, and in 1794 they were officially banned.