

Zdenek Blazek / Jan Jirasek

R.U.R. – Rossum’s Universal Robots

Opera in 3 acts and prologue for orchestra, computer and live-electronic

Libretto by Zdenek Blazek according to Karel Capek’s play (1921)

Conductor: Milan Kanak
Director: Tomas Svoboda
Stage design: Jana Prekova
Costumes: Martina Lukesova
Electronic stage: The Vasulkas
Dramaturgy: Dusan David Parizek

Co organizers: National Theatre Brno (CZ) / Fraunhofer Institute for Media Communications
(D) / Visegrad Festival Association Wroclaw (PL)

Artistic supervisor: Petr Vrana
Project Management: Petr Vrana, Reinhard Wanzke

With the support of Czech Ministry of Culture and the Culture 2000 programme of European
Union.

World First Night: 30th September 2004 at National Theatre Brno, “Mahenovo”
<http://www.ruopera.com>

SINGERS

Harry Domin / Robot Primus (tenor)	Milan Rudolecký
Ing Fabry / Damon (baryton)	Jakub Tolaš
Dr. Gall (tenor)	Milan Vlček
Dr. Hallemaier (baryton)	Svatopluk Sem
Konzul Busman (bas)	Ladislav Mlejnek
Stavitel Alquist (basbaryton)	Michal Mačuha
Helena / Robotka Helena (soprán)	Daniela Reichová
Nána (alt)	Jana Štefáčková
Radius (bas)	Lukáš Hynek – Kramer

ACTORS

Harry Domin	Tomáš Matonoha
Helena	Richard Stanke
Stavitel Alquist	Josef Polášek
Dr. Gall	Miloš Mejzlík
Ing. Fabry	Dalibor Přecechtěl
Dr. Hallemaier	Kryštof Rýmský
Konzul Busman	Jakub Žáček
Sulla	Daniela Reichová

- **EUROPEAN COPRODUCTION**

The work on **R.U.R. opera** brings together private as well as state institutions for co-operation across country borders: During its progress participants in the **R.U.R. opera** production have to started a productive process on the background of the cultural heritage and the working structures of their partners in order to accomplish the opera.

R.U.R. opera is arising from co-production under the direction of **Media Archiv Prague** with the **National Theatre Brno (CR)**, the **Visegrad Festival Association Wroclaw (PL)** and the **Fraunhofer Institute for Media Communications (D)**. Czech Ministry of Culture and the European Union program - Culture 2000 support R.U.R. opera.

All appointed institutions have introduced themselves in a series of lectures and presentations as a cooperation project between Media Archiv and Goethe Institute in Prague. So has arisen concomitant program of R.U.R. opera project (eventually NIGHTS OF ROBOTS) called ARE YOU ARE, in which were by prominent specialists introduced to wide public both motif of robot (artificial human) in a context of modern technical society and question of possibilities to use new media in a traditional theatrical spaces.

- The **R.U.R. opera** in three acts and prologue by Zdenek Blazek (1977), published 1988) redrawn by Jan Jirasek (2004) will be performed for the first time in September 30th 2004 on the stage of National Theatre in Brno (Mahen's Theatre), Czech Republic.

- **R.U.R. opera** arises from a world wide famous science fiction play **R.U.R. Rossum's Universal Robots** by **Karel Capek** (1920, 1921). The play gained world fame as a science fiction or anti-utopia in which the word **ROBOT** was introduced to the world for a very first time.

- **ROBOT**: We can meet with ROBOT characters in Capek's play on dehumanization of man. ROBOTS are products of serial production of production lines and they serve as a technical surrogate of "human/living" worker in a fabric system. In the year 1923 (Theatre Guild, 1923) was ROBOT character presented on a stage not as a character but as a humanoid machine, with abilities that imitate and even outdo human abilities, for the first time. ROBOT character as a technological hypothesis is related with a popularization of ROBOT in Anglo-Saxon surroundings, in which it is connected to the tradition of Frankenstein monster and it becomes an embodiment of menace that still more and more sophisticated technology and machines will one day turn against their creators and they finally destroy humankind.

More friendly face of ROBOT as a good-servant/friend of man gave to this character great propagator of ROBOT character in its "machine-like/technological" appearance Isaac Asimov (coiner of the word ROBOTIC and three Laws of Robotics). Picture of ROBOT as a humanoid machine endure in an awareness of wide public till nowadays. We can meet with ROBOTS in sci-fi movies and literature and their appearances include spectrum from super-soldier (Terminator) to emotional machine (Artificial Intelligence).

- Creative team of R.U.R. opera thinks up the original functions and motifs of ROBOT character in Capek's play. ROBOT was in fact a metaphor-symbol of a man-machine relationship in a technical civilization in the beginning of the 20th century (the period between two world wars called the *Machine Age*). The creative team gave to ROBOT character up-to-date shape. They are inspired by Wells (with whom is Capek often

compared) and may be the most by Huxley and they transform Capek's theme dealing with human-modern civilization relationship to the current form. In this way there is arising multi-genre stage formation using different media of theatrical expression as well as an ultimate technologies. There is on the stage reviving new myth of a post-modern technological civilization and cyber-punk culture. Capek's utopian factory accumulating the world with over-production of ROBOTS has its contemporary parallel in supermarkets - "cathedrals of consumption". The R.U.R. opera artist team (in words of supermarket managers) promises "mega-experience": materialization of illusions simulated by hyper-realities of advertisement. R.U.R. opera going to be production of the "age of entertainment", the age of late-capitalistic civilization of pickers and hunters of extreme adrenalin and erotic experiences, solitary individuals, orientated on self/satisfaction, an instant pleasure. Neil Postman formulated this civilization credo in a title of his book: *"Amusing ourselves to death"*. We will see BAGNIO, BARBIES and MILITANT BUREAUCRATS' WORLD. The late-capitalistic society is not anymore threading with unification of a man (see Capek's robot character) but it is based on a principle of very individual needs satisfaction. Capek's metaphor of ROBOT get transformed/mutated into unidentifiable hermaphroditical image of CYBORG in which is reflected our loss of distance toward technological devices/prostheses and mediated world that penetrates us and we are plunging into chaos of simulated physical senses. CYBORG metaphor, that is current mutation of ROBOT metaphor of the beginning of the last century is at the same time an expression of so called "genderquake" – erosion of traditional roles of genders, as is Sadie Plant dealing with it. Plant understand humankind as a modernistic formation that have/had gender face - face of a man. In the age when "**WE ARE MACHINES**"(Donna Haraway) has this face appearance of a perfect being – of hermaphrodite – CYBORG. In our R.U.R. opera production embodied this perfections character of HELENA GLORY.

- **OPERA AUTHOR: Zdenek Blazek**

Zdenek Blazek, was born 1905 in Zarosice and died 1988 in Brno, Czechoslovakia. He was Vilem Petrzelka student in composition at the Brno Conservatory. He completed his theoretic studies in music at Prague conservatory in the class of Josef Suk. The composer Blazek is famous for his songs and his choral works. He expressed his competence in the field of music drama in the two operas "Verchovina" ("Highlands" Premiere in Brno 1956) and "RUR" (composition finished in 1977).

- **OPERA REDRAWN BY: Jan Jirasek**

Jan Jirasek was born in 1955, Rychnov nad Kneznou, Czech Republic. Studied at the Janacek Academy of Music Art in Brno composition with Prof. Zdenek Zouhar as well as an electro-acoustic, computer and electronic music and music theory. His musical works were internationally performed at the following festivals: „Sznthese 90“ Festival in Borges` „Electronmusic Festival“ Stockholm` „le Colloque International des jeunes Compositeurs de Music Electro/acoustic 1991“, UNESCO in Paris; Ars Electronica; Prague Spring Festival; Schleswig-Holstein Festival; „Czechoslovak Night“ Munich 1990; Munich Bienale. His works was performed in concert halls in the following cities: Munster, Vienna, Regensburg, Berlin, Warsaw, New York, Boston, Washington D.C., Nurnberg, San Francisco. He is also composor of scores e.g. very succesfull Czech movie „Kytice“(A bunch of Flowers).

- **DIRECTOR: Tomas Svoboda**

Tomas Svoboda, born in 1972, studied drama at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University, then theatre direction at Janacek Academy of Music and Drama in Brno. During his studies, he already enjoyed remarkable success in Czech, Slovak and Polish theatres. His staging of Jon Fosse's play "Someone's Going to Come" at the minor stage of the Brno National Theatre was nominated for the Alfred Radok Award in most of the categories. After graduation, he's been working as freelance in leading avantgarde fringe theatres. The very titles of his productions suggest the character of these projects, for they include Bertold Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Theatre on the Shoestring, Brno), Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* (National Theatre Prague / The Bouda Project) and Irwin Welsh's *Trainspotting* (Petr Bezruc Theatre). The director has repeatedly been nominated in the Talent of the Year. Tomas Svoboda was appointed as an artist director of Rokoko theatre in Prague in the year 2004.

- **ELECTRONIC STAGE: The Vasulkas** (Woody Vasulka/supervision; Steina Vasulka; Rob Shaw)

Brno native Bohusla Woody Vasulka, the world legend of video art and robotic art, is currently investigating what he calls "the new epistemic space", examining modes of interactivity between participants and technology as communication of gestures, voice, sound, speech and music. From his experience in building media installations and large media constructions, Woody Vasulka address a new set of narrative opportunities emerging from media space under surveillance of sensors or other devices generating media protocols.

- **REMOTO – the electronic baton: Vladimir Fila**

For the first time the conductor of R.U.R., Milan Kanak, will make use of the electronic baton, called REMOTO. The REMOTO enables him not only to control the orchestra but also the music that comes from the computer in time and loudness. To do so the conductor has trained the computer with his emotional interpretation of the music, similar to the training with a voice recognition program. Thus R.U.R. opera will present the computer as electronic member of the live-orchestra to the audience.

- **STAGE AND COSTUME DESIGN: Jana Prekova, Martina Lukesova**

Jana Prekova lives in Brno, Czech Republic, works as costume and stage designer mostly for Czech National Theatre in Prague. In Brno she is teaching costume and stage design on Academy JAMU and body design on Academy FAVU. She was awarded the Golden Medal on Prague Quadriennale 1999 for stage design.

Martina Lukesova is finishing her studies on stage design at the Janacek Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, subject. She has done line of succesfull projects. Her artist interested is in both purely drama projects and experiments involving socioart and humanspecific.

- The world first night R.U.R. opera is a part of broader project named by its authors **NIGHTS OF ROBOTS**. After the R.U.R. opera performance will follow two-day seminar *Capek's Theme in Hollywood* and press conference NIGHTS OF ROBOTS as parts of INVEX fair in Brno. Series NIGHTS OF ROBOTS will culminate by synchronised dance parties; the biggest one will happen in G2 exhibition hall Brno fair. Dancers introduce themselves as robots, cyborgs and androids.