

## **Abstract**

This dissertation introduces contemporary circus as a type of dramatic art. The work thus provides a basic framework for the analysis of contemporary circus and suggests a terminology for the designation of its specific traits. This terminology is derived first and foremost from the Czech theatre studies environment.

The theoretical delineation of contemporary circus stems from selected theses from Otakar Zich's *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art* and Erika Fischer-Lichte's *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. Contemporary circus, which is depicted as belonging to several discourses – historical, aesthetic, cultural policy and pedagogical, is described from a formal as well as content-focused point of view in order to best point out how the circus element changes and takes on meaning in relation to its theatrical counterpart.

The thesis is subdivided into five parts. The introduction outlines the key theme, goals and methodology as well as terminology and theories which provide the work with a suitable point of departure. The Contemporary and Traditional Circus chapter describes the history and development of traditional as well as contemporary circus in selected countries (France, Canada, USA, Scandinavia) which are considered significant within the context of circus arts development. The Foreign Contemporary Circus Performance Analysis chapter applies contemporary circus analysis methods to three international productions: *Wear it like a Crown* (Cirkus Cirkör), *Grimm* (Cahin-Caha) and *La Vie* (Sept doigts de la main). The subsequent chapter, dedicated to the Czech artistic environment, provides an overview of key theatre productions where circus appears as either a theme or as an artistic form. Three separate works by the Czech troupe Cirk La Putyka are analyzed here: *La Putyka*, *Up End Down* and *Risk*.

I found that Czech contemporary circus, rather than coming from a purely circus background, stems from a theatrical approach on the part of actors, directors, dramaturges and scenographers. During the course of the past two decades, several have managed to use the circus element in their performances as a means of expression, thus providing a new addition to the dramatic arts, i.e. contemporary circus.

## **Key Words**

acrobatics, circus artist, circus, circus arts, contemporary circus performance, contemporary circus, theatrics, dramatic art, theatre history, circus history.