

ARCHITECT IVO KLIMEŠ

The World of Architecture and Theatre



01

Editors of the monograph: Lenka Popelová and Eva Špačková
Co-authors: Radovan Lipus, Albert Pražák, Radomíra Sedláková, Zbyněk Srba,
Martin Strakoš, Marie Šťastná, Petr Urlich, Ladislav Vrchovský

The publication investigates the creative work of Ostrava-based architect, Ivo Klimeš. It represents the first attempt to summarize the life's work of the outstanding architect, with emphasis on his specialization in theatre buildings.

Ivo Klimeš was born in Opava on April 3, 1932 to Leokádie Klimešová and lawyer Jaroslav Klimeš. The family had lived since 1936 in Opava in a residence designed by the architects Lubomír and Čestmír Šlapeta, from where they were evicted during the German occupation. Ivo Klimeš attended a grammar school in Opava during 1945-1951. After graduation he began his studies at the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the Czech Technical University in Brno, where he was greatly influenced by the renowned architect, Professor Bohuslav Fuchs. After university graduation in 1957 Klimeš started working for Stavoprojekt in Ostrava. In the early years he worked in the studio of the landscape architect Edvard Galuška, and later became a head designer at Atelier 2, specializing in public and cultural buildings. An important moment for his specialization in theatre buildings came when he won an architectural competition for the new Opera Theatre building in Ostrava (1959). Since 1960 Klimeš had been a member of the Union of Architects, however in 1970 was expelled and was no longer allowed to continue his membership during the “normalization” period. After 1989 he was one of the founding members of the Czech Chamber of Architects. Since 1991 Ivo Klimeš has been working as a freelance architect and has become an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Architecture in the Brno University of Technology.

A central part of the publication contains an extensive interview with the architect carried out by the book editors between 2012 and 2013. The interview chronologically explores the personal and professional life of the architect Klimeš. The interview serves to present his individual important projects, especially those designed for theatre buildings: the competition for the opera building of the State Theatre in Ostrava (1958-1959, 2nd prize in the second round of the competition, not implemented), the competition for

01 *Scéna a hlediště Slezského divadla v Opavě, fotografie Roman Polášek*

the opera and ballet stage in Pardubice (1961-1962, 2nd prize, not implemented), the reconstruction and extension project of the Municipal Theatre in Ostrava (design: 1967, implementation: 1969-1971), the competition for the design of a new theatre in Most (1967-1968, 1st prize, implementation: 1979-1985), the artistic architectural design of a platform area for the water treatment plant accompanied by a fountain and sculptures in Nová Ves, near Frýdlant (1969), a concert hall of the State Philharmonic in Ostrava (1969, 1st prize, not implemented), modification of the square with a fountain in Opava (1. Máje Square, today called Upper Square, 1970-1971), the reconstruction of the Jiří Myron Theatre in Ostrava (project: 1976-1980, implementation: 1980-1986), and the reconstruction of the Silesian Theatre in Opava (1989-1992). The interview deals with general issues of development of the theatre space and staging trends since the late 1950's, with architectural inspirations of Klimeš at that time, and with the influence of famous people he has met. Also included is the importance of competitions in the development of theatre buildings, and with the particularities of design practice both during socialism and today, conservation issues, current trends in architecture, visualization techniques, etc.

The publication is accompanied by a detailed summary of the projects implemented by Klimeš and by the texts that show his work, not only in the context of development of modern Czech architecture of the second half of the 20th century, but also with emphasis on other historical, cultural and social ties created by his buildings.

The Introduction summarizing the importance of the creative work of Klimeš was written by Martin Strakoš. He presents respective outstanding buildings using short profiles: the reconstruction and extension project of the Municipal Theatre in Ostrava, the architectural competition in the concert hall of the State Philharmonic in Ostrava, the reconstruction of the Jiří Myron Theatre in Ostrava as well as the reconstruction of the Silesian Theatre in Opava. The profile celebrating the anniversary of the construction of the new Most theatre was compiled by Radomíra Sedláková.

Other contributions focus on specific aspects of the work of Klimeš. Petr Ulrich discusses the influence of the work of Hans Scharoun, the outstanding German architect, on Klimeš's projects focusing in particular on the famous Berlin Philharmonic (at the same time the influence of this architect is already visible on Klimeš's family home in Opava, which was designed by students of Hans Scharoun). This text brings Klimeš's work into context with the works at the time in the West, both in terms of form and typology. Lenka Popelová's contribution deals with the influence of competition projects for theatres, organized during 1956–1968, on the development of the theatre typology in Czechoslovakia. What was important for the professional career of Mr. Klimeš was his distinctive successful participation in such competitions, which served as a tool for him to successively elaborate his vision of the variable theatre space. Her work is an overview of all theatre-building competitions of the time. The part written by Marie Šťastná focuses on the connection of Klimeš's work with the fine arts and his collaboration with artists (especially with sculptor Vladislav Gajda). Šťastná also deals with the actual architectural work of Klimeš. Eva Špačková emphasizes in her interview with Radim Ulmann the importance

of the architect's collaboration with this interior designer. Ulmann also describes his own works, which brings along the opportunity to perceive Klimeš's structures in a broader historical context.

Another section of the publication deals with the overlap of the work of Klimeš into the actual theatre experience. The contributions were written by leading directors, stage designers, and theatre critics in order to point out how the space designed by the architect is actually used and experienced during a theatre performance. An initial contribution of a stage designer and theatre theoretician Albert Pražák puts the project of the Theatre in New Most into the historical context of progressive construction of theatre spaces both in the local environment and abroad. In his theoretical introduction he also discusses the essence of a theatre space as a place for the acting performance that is in a way independent from the form of architecture. A poetically theatrical contribution written by Radovan Lipus depicts specific experience of the director with unique theatre space, both generally and in specific theatre productions in the above listed Ostrava theatres, in whose architectural form Ivo Klimeš participated, and which represent the cultural "life-giving place" to contemporary Ostrava. Also, theatre critic Ladislav Vrchovský discusses the relationship between architecture and theatre productions both in general and using the example of the mentioned Ostrava municipal theatres and Opava theatre. He describes the challenges these spaces bring to the directors, stage designers and performers in the given productions, and also their limitations. The director Zbyněk Serba, who started his professional career in the new theatre in Most, in his contribution outlines, based on his own long experience, the most significant productions directed by him that document the ways of selecting a very distinctive stage space in the Most theatre.

This book was not meant as a comprehensive monograph. Its contribution should be, in addition to providing familiarity with both the work of the architect Ivo Klimeš and the artistic and cultural life particularly within Ostrava, to promote professional debate on the values of contemporary Czechoslovakia / Czech architecture, particularly theatre architecture. Individual buildings of Klimeš are today an integral part of the publications dealing with the modern Czech architecture or theatre architecture. However, his work is yet to be published comprehensively and in great detail. The contributions are often accompanied by little-known, unpublished photographs, plans, and collection of photographs of Roman Polášek documenting the current state of these buildings.