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**ACTORS AND ACTING IN THE *SCHOLA LUDUS* CYCLE
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1. Introduction

This article¹ deals with acting in the *Schola ludus* cycle.² Firstly, the cycle itself will be briefly introduced (II). Secondly (III), the article will focus on the foreword addressed to curators of the Sárospatak school (dated April 24, 1654) which reveals a lot about actors in the local performances (since full eighteen points of this foreword were dedicated to the issue of theatrical rendition of the work).³ Thirdly, the texts of the actual plays will be analyzed, because they also serve as an important source of information regarding the theatrical rendition of *Schola ludus* as well as the acting the author had wished for (IV.). There is information in prologues and epilogues as well as extensive author's commentaries containing *inter alia* many details about how actors were to approach their parts. Mostly notes appear in the text of the scenes; instructions at the beginning of the individual scenes are less frequent. However, the author's commentaries are not divided evenly in the *Schola ludus* plays; for instance in *Pars II.*, the commentaries are rather scarce and only few of them can be found in the second act of *Pars VIII.* This is also reflected in the distribution of quotations from the plays used in this article. Finally (V), the article looks at whether the acting required from young actors by Comenius was in line with requirements contained in an important treatise by Jesuit Franciscus Lang entitled *Dissertatio de arte scenica* (1727).

2. About *Schola ludus*

Historians of pedagogy highly value the cycle of school plays *Schola ludus*⁴ (written and performed in the reformed school in the Hungarian town of Sárospatak during the first half of the 1654),⁵ especially its pedagogical impact, and particularly the way

¹ The study is a result of the research funded by Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy (RVO No. 67985995).

² On acting and gesticulation in the plays by Comenius see KLOSOVÁ 2014 and KLOSOVÁ 2017.

³ See KOMENSKÝ 1656, 3–17. In order to make the mentioned parts easily findable (also in various other editions of the *Schola ludus* cycle), the information contained in this introduction is quoted under the numbers of the individual points.

⁴ KOMENSKÝ 1656.

⁵ On Sárospatak school and *Schola ludus* in general see KLOSOVÁ 2016, 103–186.

things were visualized⁶ – actual objects, their models or pictures were demonstrated during performances – and its educative role. However, experts in theater often believe that *Schola ludus* is a completely non-theater work. They think so because the eight parts of the cycle (plays are called simply *partes*) are a dramatization of Comenius's textbook *Janua lingvarum* (namely of its edition from 1652) – a handbook of Latin and at the same time a small systematic encyclopedia of things that appear in the world. Nowadays, it can come as a surprise, but public performances that focused on matters taught in schools were nothing unusual in the 17th century.⁷

Pars I. of the cycle focuses on the description of the entire world; it discusses how the world came to exist, the parts it is composed of, as well as its mineral resources, flora and fauna. *Pars II.* was devoted to human anatomy and physiology. *Pars III.* demonstrated the sphere of human skills ranging from agriculture and crafts to activities concerning transport and travelling. *Pars IV.* was dedicated to issue of book writing and manufacturing and it also captured the teaching process in the elementary and Latin schools. *Pars V.* depicted university life and briefly introduced the main fields of study. *Pars VI.* was dedicated to the issues of morals and it showed the teaching process at a completely fictional institution, the school of morals. *Pars VII.* showed one's social relations both within the family (act I) and the community (act II describing the founding of an ideal town). *Pars VIII.* discussed obligations of the ruler, politics and affairs in the kingdom (act I), but it was also partly dedicated to basic religious and theological issues (act II).

In *Pars I.*, the entire cycle was introduced by a long scene in which King Ptolomaeus (Ptolomaeus Rex) had scholars and representatives of various domains and activities summoned to his court, so they could relay knowledge about the world to him and his several advisers. It concerns the first five parts of the cycle that thus had the same logical framework; the King and his advisers appeared again in the final play of the cycle.

3. Foreword to curators in the Schola ludus cycle: General information about actors and acting

3. 1. General organization.

According to point 10 of the foreword, noble and respectable viewers were to be seated along two sides of the college yard where the play was staged. These viewers included school curators, noble guests, and possibly also parents of the students (Pt. 1). That

⁶ Cf. for instance various articles in the VOISINE–JECHOVÁ 1994.

⁷ For performances focused on matters taught in schools in the Silesian town of Wrocław see for instance BUDZYŃSKI 1996, 103. For the edition of *Janua* from 1652, see the footnote 14 below.

was the actual audience for the plays. Viewers from among the students were divided into two parts. Our knowledge about the presence of public students during the plays is only based on the words in the foreword (Pts. 6, 10) and on a mention contained in Comenius's so-called autobiography in the treatise *Continuatio admonitionis fraternae* (1669); they were to be seated along the third side of the school yard.⁸ According to the foreword, the fourth side of the yard was reserved for students of the Latin school, for whom the participation at the performance was mandatory, as the plays were part of the teaching, a form of repetition. At the same time, the students of the three classes of the Latin school were also actors in the performed plays and they were to move between the scene and the auditorium (Pt. 10).

Students who coped well with their roles were to be publicly appreciated. When the play ended, the school curators praised the performers for their diligence to motivate them, and actors from poorer background were to receive a small gift as well. The performing students, professors, and parents were invited for refreshments (Pts. 16, 17). The prologue and epilogue of *Pars V.* subsequently state that not only praise, but also a deserved criticism can have educational impact, and it can motivate students to strive for better results.⁹

3. 2. Actors and audience

According to the foreword to the curators (Pt. 10), the actors were to enter the platform for the performance from their seats in the audience and return to their seats again after playing their part. However, it is not known whether this practice was really followed, or rather whether it was really followed for all plays of the entire cycle because in some plays some of the actors were leaving the place where the play was performed through a canvas („*velum*“)¹⁰, behind which there could possibly be other space. On the other hand, in common professional theaters of the 17th century, the stage and auditorium were separated not only physically but by social and psychological barriers as well. However, these barriers were often removed during various non-professional court performances in which members of the nobility performed and thus found themselves in a place typical for actors, considered as people without a home and rights. These barriers were also removed during school plays, when the roles of actors were assumed by the students; it is frequently supposed that these school plays were performed in classes, possibly without actually using a

⁸ There was around one hundred of these students at the Sárospatak school; they underwent additional training there that was to help them in their further studies or practice, and at the same time they functioned as private tutors for students of noble origin. See also KOMENSKÝ 1975, 259.

⁹ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 241, 320.

¹⁰ KĽOSOVÁ 2016, 160–164.

stage. However, in the plays of the *Schola ludus* cycle, it is obvious that the boundary between the auditorium and the place where the play was performed, that is between the actors and the audience, was rather blurred. Nowadays, such practice is quite common but in the 17th century it was unusual. For instance, Comenius's university Bedel (Pedellus) in *Pars V.* (act III, sc. 1) as a matter of course hands out theses of a graduating medic not to the actors, but to personages of the Sárospatak public life directly in the audience. The audience was thus also involved in the story and became part of the play.¹¹

Moreover, the second act of *Pars VII.* includes one peculiarity – the number of performers is gradually growing and no character leaves before the end of the scene. In the eighth scene dissatisfied folk appear worried about having their rights secured. In this mass scene the author requested that the folk should be embodied by “*totus reliquus scholae coetus*”.¹² The Latin school had three classes which means that even if only thirty boys studied in each of these classes, the number of actors in this scene would grow to ninety. However, the classes were usually more numerous in the 17th century; it is known that the *Vestibulum* class had 113 students when it was opened in 1651.¹³ Thus it can be deduced that such number of actors could not come to the place where the play was performed sufficiently quickly and all the same time, unless they were directly among the audience. The folk were to be dressed in peasant clothes or other cheap clothing and equipped with various farming tools. It is thus possible that these viewers who were actors at the same time were sitting in the audience already dressed.

3. 3. Preparing performance: roles, audition, rehearsals

According to the foreword addressed to the curators of the Sárospatak school (Pt. 3), the plays were to be performed by students of *Janua* and *Atrium* classes¹⁴ If there were not enough students in these two classes, students of the *Vestibulum* class could

¹¹ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 300.

¹² *Ibid.*, 414.

¹³ BLEKASTAD 1969, 487.

¹⁴ The classes were called according to the textbooks by Comenius that were used for teaching. The lowest class used the textbook *Vestibulum*; the following one used a bit more difficult *Janua* and the last class used *Atrium*, a practical textbook of Latin rhetoric. All three textbooks were published in Sárospatak in 1652. For full bibliographical references see URBÁNKOVÁ 1959, 97, 103–104, 106. On *Atrium* see also DRUSCHKY 1904, 37–38. – According to an assumption made by Comenius in the treatise *Schola pansophica* (written in 1650–1651), the *Schola ludus* was to be performed only by actors from the highest class (*Atrium*). On the other hand, it is impossible that the author could speak about a treatise, which provably came to exist only in 1654, already in the period 1650–1651. This issue thus remains unclear. See KOMENSKÝ 1992, 220.

help as well (Pt. 3) – extracts from their study texts could also be found in the *Schola ludus* cycle for that matter; moreover, the plays included many easy parts where the actors uttered only one sentence. These parts can be frequently found in *Pars III*. (for instance in act III, sc. 5).¹⁵

Within eight days after a play was performed, new actors for the next performance were to be chosen so that there would be enough time to prepare the next play without detriment to the actual teaching (Pts. 4 and 18). In case the number of students was higher in the school, the individual actors were to be chosen via auditions from among the students understudying the role. Decisive factors in this case were a good oral presentation and gesticulation (Pt. 5). The audition was to take place approximately three days prior to the performance (Pt. 6). These auditions could have had several side effects – the students were more motivated to study their role and thus mastered the curriculum better, and moreover there were understudies available if the chosen students had fallen ill. Depending on the circumstances, it was also possible to organize another performance for the superfluous actors with a limited access for the public, so that these actors would not feel excluded (Pt. 6). In case of an opposite problem – that is an insufficient number of actors to choose from – the more able students were to perform more roles. The author also permitted cutting the text if some of the performers had a hard time memorizing it (Pt. 7).

The foreword thus contains a requirement to hold an audition for particular parts in the play, which was certainly not common in 17th century theaters. Yet it is not known whether these auditions were actually held during the time when Comenius was active in Sárospatak or whether the idea of one more performance for the second set of performers was put into practice. The purpose of this second performance was undoubtedly mainly educational, but even a less official performance would surely help young actors to gain theater experience too.

As follows from the foreword, a dress-rehearsal without the public was to take place one day before the actual performance (Pt. 6); unfortunately, no further details pertaining to this dress-rehearsal are available. Therefore, it cannot be exactly ascertained how and when possible rehearsals prior to the dress-rehearsal took place. Yet since the text contained the requirement to have enough time for the preparation of the performance, it follows that rehearsals were expected to take place. Moreover, some plays included complicated transfers of many actors that had to be trained in advance. For instance, most scenes in the second act of *Pars VII*. required a complicated arrangement because many actors had to regroup. The scenes depicted an election of officers for a newly founded town and the actors were to gradually form groups in order to agree on particular representatives and then to part again.

¹⁵ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 161–162.

According to the foreword, the actors chosen via auditions were to manifest good oral presentation, proper pronunciation, articulation and accent, as well as be able to gesticulate properly (Pts. 5, 11). When acting, the performers were to act with sufficient modesty, to speak readily and to know their lines by heart, and their gestures and approach were to be measured. The play also meant to teach how to act and behave in public. Nevertheless, there was one part that was not to be the subject of any audition. It was the role of King Ptolomaeus, which was not to be given to the most talented actor, but to important students from among the nobility (if needed, it was to be decided by drawing lots). The aim was to guarantee that the ruler would bear himself sufficiently nobly (Pt. 8).

4. The plays as a source of detailed information on acting

4. 1. Characters/actors as a fictional audience and managers of the play.

The previous paragraphs have already fleetingly touched on the topic of the relation between the actors and audience. As has already been observed by Jarmila Veltruská, in many of the plays of the *Schola ludus* cycle, King Ptolomaeus and his suite of advisers function as a sort of second, fictional audience¹⁶ directly in the play – it was because of the King that the various experts in different fields came to present their knowledge and art. Many characters of theater professors who entered the scene in schools depicted in *Pars V.* and *Pars VI.*, also brought their own students with them – that was other acting audience.¹⁷

The group of King Ptolomaeus and his advisers had one more role, though. These actors practically did not leave the acting space during the first plays of the cycle, and at some point they directed the performance. They often issued orders when one group of performers was to finish their performance and other characters were to appear. This role of the group was most striking in *Pars II.* in the three acts of which most scenes ended with the order for groups of actors to leave or enter. The ones that had explained human senses left in *Pars II.* (act II, sc. 4) so that their place could be taken by actors of the following scene. It was done through the following line uttered by the King: *“Acquiescimus: redire vobis ad vestra licebit. Ingrediantur verò, qui nobis mentis structuram affectuumque naturam explicent.”*¹⁸ Therefore, in such situations,

¹⁶ VELTRUSKÁ 2006, 160.

¹⁷ For instance, Medicus in *Pars V.*, act III, sc. 1, addresses the students during thesis defense as *“amplissimi auditores”*. On other occasion, in *Pars VI.*, act II, sc. 1, Philosophus moralis enters the rostrum and *“auditorium sic affabitur”*. KOMENSKÝ 1656, 302, 330.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

in the plays of the *Schola ludus* cycle, the King and his advisers did the work that was usually entrusted to a prompter in the 17th century professional theaters. The prompters were the only ones who had the entire text of a play at their disposal, yet it is not known whether the King and his advisers also had such advantage.

4. 2. Two types of texts and acting: presentation and mimetic acting

4. 2. 1. Presentation acting

The first type of texts and acting of *Schola ludus* focused especially on naming and showing the objects mentioned in the text and subsequently demonstrated in the play. It did not have to be only the actual objects, but also their models or depictions, as well as various activities, working procedures, experiments, school expositions, descriptions, and functioning of various machines, etc. This first type of acting was characterized by using numerous stage props. The acting was usually limited to showing the props or activities linked with them. In such cases, the author used expressions written in brackets (especially: *ecce, en, sic, iste, talis*); their aim was to prompt the young actors not to forget to show what they were talking about during their performance. It is not very likely that the students would actually reproduce these words,¹⁹ but on other occasions these expressions were written without the brackets and thus they were undoubtedly spoken out loud. Therefore, the main aim of these scenes and acting employed in them was to present various objects or activities. Both the author and actors openly addressed the present audience – if not the real one, then surely their fellow actors and the fictional audience, King Ptolomaeus and his advisers. This type of text and acting are dominant in the first three plays of the cycle.

As an example of the first type acting, a scene from *Pars V.* (act II, sc. 3) can be mentioned where scales and their functions are presented and their parts are named. In *Pars IV.* (act II, sc. 1), Notarius chooses a quill, adjusts it for writing, and then shows how Oriental nations write from the right to the left and from the top to the bottom. More complicated was the presentation of a production process in which hard liquor was made in a distilling apparatus or the scene in which a cook showed how to scale fish and manipulated with various ingredients for cooking (*Pars III.*, act II, sc. 5, 6). In *Pars I.*, the audience could watch the presentation of physics experiments (for instance act II, sc. 4).²⁰

¹⁹ Cf. for instance below footnote 36.

²⁰ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 41, 144–147, 184–186, 270–271.

A transition phase between scenes of the first and second type can be found already in *Pars III*. (act III, sc. 5): A Potter (Figulus) sits down behind a potter's wheel and explains that he uses it to make pots and other dishware. The student was not able to make new products, so the author had to give up on the idea to show the audience the real craft and thus prescribed the actor other program. The actor states that he could make dishware using the potter's wheel, but that it is not possible to make bricks on it, which he also demonstrates and then finishes in disgust. The note in the text reads: "*Tentet componere, illa verò dilabantur semper: donec pertaesus abjiciat et surget.*"²¹

4.2.2. Mimetic acting

Some plays of *Schola ludus* contained parts with a more complete storyline demonstrating interpersonal relations, common ceremonies held in the real world, models, and advice on how to behave in various situations, etc. It means that the portrayal was different in this case. The texts of the second type required a bit more advanced acting and gesticulation resembling real life; it thus went more in the direction of a mimesis. This second category also encompasses various scenes in the second act of *Pars VI*. depicting repulsiveness of character flaws and sins (gluttony, stinginess, ambitiousness and pride, excessive curiosity, unreasonableness, laziness), etc. These traits were often exaggerated and these scenes were not always of a realistic nature.

Psychologically motivated plots are absent from *Schola ludus*. Yet sometimes students had to portray not only physical but also emotional states: humble respect, amazement, unease, ignorance, deep contemplation, despair, etc. These fully fall under the second type of scenes and acting.

In *Pars III*. (act II, sc. 2), representatives of agricultural professions were summoned to the court, and according to an introductory note to this scene, they were to behave with the humble respect of common people upon their arrival ("*rusticâ... Regis adoratione*").²² In *Pars V*. (act II, sc. 5), two students find out during an exposition on geography that the Sun is much bigger than Earth – which they have just explored using a globe – and that all other stars are also bigger than Earth. They are both amazed, and according to the author's note this amazement should be portrayed as follows: "*Discipuli coelos suspiciant, manus complodant, suspirent.*"²³

²¹ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 160. As regards the potter's wheel, it was probably only a partly functional model rather than a real wheel since the real one was too heavy and thus difficult to manipulate with.

²² Ibid., 127.

²³ Ibid., 284.

University Beadle (Pedellus; *Pars V.*, act I, sc. 2) speculates about getting a university degree as well and in between he secretly (loudly in front of the audience) reads doctoral theses on law only to find out that he understands nothing. He thus rolls his eyes, shakes his head and after that he waves it aside, drops the idea of getting a doctoral degree and nails the theses to the door as he has been ordered to do.²⁴

In the opening scene of *Pars VI.*, we encounter for the first time Amphiethus, a young man who has found himself at moral crossroads and a life decision to make upon finishing his studies, who behaves as follows: “*Prodibit, lentè obambulabit, subsistet identidem; jam humi oculos fingens, jam ad coelum elevans, veluti profunde meditabundus.*”²⁵

Some characters scratch their heads to show unease. A bad father²⁶ who drinks, neglects his children, and makes them starve does so when a publican starts to demand money from him and he does not have it. Lazy peasant Corydon²⁷ lies around, scratches his head and stares at scattered wood for a long time wondering whether he should pick it up to deserve a breakfast that was offered to him. He attempts to collect the wood, but he fails, and then he tearily decides not to perform any work and he would rather go hungry, after which he abruptly sits down. The process of internal struggle between laziness and hunger is thus portrayed by Corydon in an acting piece that could have lasted up to several minutes (*Pars VI.*, II, 3).²⁸

In *Pars VI.*, there is a student reasoning with a Scrooge (Avarus) and explaining to him that he does not need several canes because having more of them could mean he might lose them all, to which the Scrooge has no answer. According to the author’s note in the text, this state of mind should be portrayed as follows (*Pars VI.*, act II, sc. 4): “[*Avarus caput tantùm projiciet: quasi respondere nolens aut nesciens.*]”²⁹

In the first act of *Pars VII.* (act I, sc. 6), one of the conversing fathers explains that he must separate from his adulterous wife. To express his despair, he “*abrumpet sermonem, complosis manibus, suspirioque et gemitu*”.³⁰

²⁴ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 308–309.: “(*Tum Pedellus oculos elevans et capite nutans dicit.*) *Sublimia haec sunt, nescio an omnia intelligam. (Et mox projecta manu) Mittam illas de doctoratu cogitationes.*”

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 322–323.

²⁶ In the list of characters, this one is labelled as “*Malus paterfamilias*”, in the text (*Pars VII.*, act I, sc. 4) mostly as “*Prodigus*”. KOMENSKÝ 1656, 368, 383–385.

²⁷ V. VERGILIUS 1915, 3, 18–21 (2, 1 and 7, 2–70).

²⁸ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 337.: “[*Ille aspectabit diu, scabet caput, tum se demittens prehendet tollereque tentans, gemit: Ah, Ah! Tandemque dimittet, istis verbis:*] *Essurire malo quàm laborare. [Et projiciet se ad sedendum.]*”

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 343.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 391.

4. 2. 3. Contact acting and live action.

The actors of *Schola ludus* were not to avoid mutual physical contact. Characters in many plays shake hands; a graduation officer ceremonially kisses a newly qualified doctor (*Pars V.*, act III, sc. 4). The above-mentioned bad father (*Pars VII.*, act I, sc. 4) coarsely pushes away his starving sons, one of the onlookers pulls the rogue's ragged clothes, and when the guilty father attempts to run away, his creditor catches and holds him.³¹ In a scene depicting a students' celebration, *beania*,³² two university novices are being kicked and their hats knocked down from their heads with a stick; Depositor who conducts the entire ceremony in the end pretends that he symbolically rids them of worldly morals using axes and saws (*Pars V.*, act I, sc. 4). The top example of contact acting – which is usually attributed to more popular or comic performances – is the scene with two Revelers (Helluones) in *Pars VI.* (act II, sc. 4), which is basically conceived as a serious one. The note in the text reads: “[*Tum prodeant Helluones duo, ventrosi et buccosi; alter patinas gestans, alter urceos tres vel quatuor cingulo appensos habens, unum verò maximum in manu: titubans uterque et lapsans, amplexantes tamen se interdum cum júbilo incondito; rursusque rixantes et pugnos sibi intentantes aut etiam ingerentes. Quos aliquamdiu spectans Professor cum suis, tandem dicet ad suos:*]...”.³³ This live action – which had to last quite some time in order to show everything the author had required – was not backed with any text; the students were supposed to improvise the quarrel and fight. It follows from the examples mentioned in this paragraph that the participants of this drunken brawl had to move quite energetically at some points.

4. 2. 4. Special cases of acting action

The above-discussed two types of acting and scenes are not always clearly delimited and separated. Slightly outside the two above-mentioned types of acting and gesticulation are prologues of the plays. Calm entrances of characters reciting the prologues were meant to pacify the audience and help to control it. For instance, in *Pars I.*, Prologus “*prodibit... cum reverentiae gestibus, restitans, taciteque circumspectans*”.³⁴

³¹ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 383–385.

³² *Ibid.*, 315. As regards the *beania*, Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchton wrote an approving testimony in 1540. Luther's testimonial was later included in a publication on this type of students' celebration accompanied with engravings that show what such a scene could approximately look like in Sárospatak. See DINCKEL–LUTHER–WIDEBRAM 1578.

³³ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 253, 340.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 21. Generally formulated encouragements to show respect are probably the most frequent instructions in the *Schola ludus* cycle pertaining to the gesticulation, as all newcomers to the acting space necessarily had to show respect for King Ptolomaeus.

Other special type of acting appeared in scenes in which the students were showing the audience some instructional or entertaining game that could take place in the real life as well. In *Pars IV.* (act IV, sc. 2), this concerned a Latin grammar game in which the actors – that is the students playing the game – were switching places according to the order which followed from their performance in the game.³⁵ Especially telling was the scene in *Pars VII.* (act II, sc. 9) in which the founders of the town had elected their representatives and they could finally discuss the issue of which form of entertainment will be allowed in the community. The approved children's games included a spinning top propelled with a stick, flicking marbles into the hole, and ninepins, etc. A young boy was talking about these games and showing them at the same time. It is difficult to tell to what extent the boy was really demonstrating the games to the audience and to what extent he was just playing and thus showing the audience the reality, not the acting.³⁶

Unreasonable and absurd behavior portrayed through a dramatic parallel can also be counted as a remarkable and special piece of acting. The pedagogical principle (as well as life wisdom) that a properly chosen aim can be achieved only through the proper use of appropriate means was stressed by showing the exact opposite: unreasonable behavior was alternatively portrayed through description and demonstration of futile and meaningless bow shooting. The actor in *Pars VI.* (act II, sc. 2) says: "*Vidi sagittarios, qui sine scopo jaculabantur. Vidi, qui cum se scopum petitorios jactarent, sagittas in aversissima mittebant. Vidi, qui sagittarum locò stramenta, funiculos, plumas, lutum, et quidvis arcui imponebant, magnòque nisu et spectantium risu emittebant. Erant denique, qui quum conspectam in arbore avem dejicere minarentur, tam diu tamen et cunctanter rem egerunt, donec avis avolaret. ... [Haec gestibus ad vivum repraesentabit omnia et singula.]*"³⁷

4. 2. 5. Voice modulation

Comenius's descriptions of the required acting here and there include brief information on the sound aspects of acting. The character reads something "*clarà voce*" or "*clarè*", at other times "*inclamabit*" (*Pars V.*, act I, sc. 3, 4; act III, 1)³⁸. Somebody says something "*voce sublatà*" (*Pars VII.*, act II, sc. 1); a peasant fleeing from the horrors of war comes running in front of the audience "*lamentans*" (*Pars*

³⁵ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 217–219.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 418.: "*Puellus parvus in medium progressus. Quid autem lusiones nostrae pueriles, etiamne prohibebuntur? Nempe versatio turbinis flagello [ostendat et verset], elisio stupeae glandis è sambuceo sclopo. [Sic.] Et ejaculatio globulorum in scrobiculos [sic], aut jactatio globi ad dejiciendum conos...*"

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 333.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 249–250, 300.

VIII., act I, sc. 8).³⁹ Lazy Corydon in *Pars VI.* speaks “*lentâ voce*” and when attempting to work he “*gemet*”. Drunken Revelers enter “*cum iubilo*”. The Scrooge pulls a chest with a treasure behind him “*anhelus et gemens*” and when the students at the school of morals chase this socially unacceptable character out of the stage, they him “*clamando esibilent*” (*Pars VI.*, act II, sc. 3, 4).⁴⁰ Sporadically, a pretended whisper can be encountered when one character addresses the other and “*in aurem quiddam dicet*” (*Pars VIII.*, act I, sc. 4).⁴¹ However, instructions as to which of the dramatic characters should be addressed by a speaker are rare in Comenius’s commentaries. Instructions as to which mode of voice should be used were less numerous compared to the instructions regarding the gesticulation. Comenius’s instructions often include only general and unfortunately not very telling encouragements to perform this or that as “*gestu et sono decorô*”, “*voce et gestibus ad rem accomodatis*”, etc. (*Pars V.*, act III, sc. 2; *Pars VI.*, act I, sc. 1).⁴²

4. 2. 6. Facial expressions

The author’s notes give only very few details on facial expressions. The instructions were often limited to eye movements or to indications as to the direction actors should look (“*obtruebitur Regem*”; “*respectabit Regem*” – in *Pars IV.*, act III, sc. 4 and act IV, sc. 4). Amphiethus contemplates and this inner process is manifested outwardly by him standing “*jam humi oculos fingens, jam ad coelum elevans*”; at other times, he hesitates whether to join the company of bad people “*circumspectans tacite per omnes*”. Seldom (*Pars V.*, act I, sc. 4), a note can be found saying that a character smiles (“*subridens*”).⁴³ Quite exceptional is the note on nose movements in the scene about the students’ celebration, in which Depositor walks around the novices accepted to the university “*naresque crispans et obturans*” because they excrete the odor of barbarism.⁴⁴ Another unique note (*Pars VII.*, act. I, sc. 4) is the one according to which the bad father who neglects his children reacts to threats by an onlooker not only verbally but also with grimaces: “*Sannas illi exhibens...*”⁴⁵ Elsewhere (*Pars VIII.*, act I, sc. 3), an instruction talks about the breathlessness of an actor who “*advolabit festinatione anhelus*”⁴⁶ or about gasps of amazed students (see the section on gesticulation above, part 4.2.2).

³⁹ Ibid., 396, 453.

⁴⁰ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 337, 340, 342, 345.

⁴¹ Ibid., 448 (but the text by mistake says “*quidem*”).

⁴² Ibid., 310, 323.

⁴³ Ibid., 214, 235, 281, 322–323, 325. On Amphiethus see also above part 4.2.2.

⁴⁴ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 252.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 384.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 445.

5. Comenius and Lang

5. 1. Rhetoric and scenic gesticulation

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the issue of gesticulation during orations and preaching was discussed in special chapters of rhetorical handbooks, but it was also the subject of various independent treatises.⁴⁷ Experts on the art of rhetoric were of the opinion that elements of scenic gesticulation should not be part of orations. It was so because the gesticulation used in acting was basically considered as something lower, since acting was (similarly to theater) only imitating the unattainable reality,⁴⁸ while gesticulation used when delivering orations (or during preaching) mediated authentic feelings of the speaker to the listeners.⁴⁹ However, next to handbooks on rhetoric and preaching, independent works on this topic focused on stage gesticulation slowly started to emerge. The article will attempt to roughly compare Comenius's opinions on this issue contained in the notes of the *Schola ludus* plays with the views on acting held by the native of Munich, Jesuit Franciscus Lang (1654–1725).

It is not known which of the ancient or modern-age rhetoric manuals were studied by Comenius. The handbook entitled *Zpráva o naučení a kazatelství* [Report and Instruction on Preaching] – written in the 1590s and giving instructions on how to become a successful preacher – includes only one paragraph on the gesticulation which urges to use moderate gestures. Preachers' movements and gestures were not supposed to be exaggerated or histrionic, but preachers were not to stand still either. Natural and simple gesture and mimic were recommended in line with the preachers' words and personality as suitable. It was not necessary for the speaker to strictly adhere to numerous rules prescribed by various authorities.⁵⁰ Generally speaking, the gestures and mimic was to be governed by the principles of moderateness and soberness. However, it does not follow from this brief note which authorities and rules were meant by Comenius when cautioning against their servile application.

5. 2. Franciscus Lang and his treatise

Lang's work entitled *Dissertatio de actione scenica* (published only in 1727 after

⁴⁷ See for instance Brendel 1693.

⁴⁸ Ibid., section I, para. 9; BREITINGER 1624, fols. B iijj[r]–B V[r]; STAŠKOVÁ 2012, 12.

⁴⁹ BRENDEL 1693, section II, para. 3.

⁵⁰ KOMENSKÝ 1983, 93.

Lang's death) was intended as an aid for teachers rehearsing theater plays with their students since plays formed an integral part of Jesuit approach to teaching.⁵¹ It is assumed that the work reflects the situation of the period that had prevailed earlier. This is confirmed by the fact that Lang quoted works on rhetoric by 16th and 17th century authors who were mostly members of the order as well.⁵² However, in addition to these works, Lang surely drew from handbooks on acting too because the basic space for acting and the resulting stage walk that the author requires to be used on the Jesuit stage⁵³ were naturally not discussed in handbooks on rhetoric. The gesticulation described by Lang is stylized, the acting does not require physical contacts between actors, and cultivated movements, to which preaching and oration conventions gave a fixed meaning, have to be carefully rehearsed. There also existed a number of faults that were to be avoided according to Lang.

When actors perform some activity on the stage, they should only hint it since it would be ridiculous to really carry out manual work or activities when it clearly follows from the text what is meant (the listed examples namely include chopping wood, bow shooting, beating with a stick, kicking the ground, and throwing a ball).⁵⁴ Yet the plays of the *Schola ludus* cycle are largely based on directly demonstrating various activities and crafts. One character shows how to work the land using various hand tools, other demonstrates how to thresh grain, a young actor cleans fish in front of the audience, another student is not throwing a ball for that matter, but he demonstrates how to play with a spinning top or to flick marbles. One of the plays of the cycle even includes bow shooting, although intentionally imperfect and unsuccessful (as has been described above, part 4.2.4).⁵⁵

Furthermore, Lang maintained that demonstration of anything disgraceful or not sufficiently polite should be avoided. However, Comenius incorporated such – from

⁵¹ LANG 1727; JACKOVÁ 2006.

⁵² The quoted authors included Jesuit Nicolas Caussin (1583–1651) and his treatise *De eloquentia sacra et humana libri XVI*. (first published in 1617); Capuchin Amadée de Bayeux (Amadeus Bayocensis, died in 1676) and his work *Paulus Ecclesiastes sive Eloquentia Christiana*; Spanish Jesuit Ciprian Suárez (1524–1593) and his treatise *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (first published in 1591); Jesuit Jean Voel (Joannes Voelus, 1541–1610) and his work *Generale artificium orationis*; Jesuit Joseph de Jouvancy (Josephus Juvencius, 1643–1719) and his handbook *Magistris Scholarum inferiorum Societatis Iesu de Ratione discendi et docendi* (first published in 1691). On the topic see also KLOSOVÁ 2017, 133–136, 139–140.

⁵³ Lang devoted the entire fourth section of his work to stage posture and walk: feet were never to be oriented parallelly; one should always point in oblique direction, since it enables the actors to easily shift into motion according to Lang. He called this basic posture the “stage cross” and similar position of the feet should be maintained also during stage walk: “*Quem standi et eundi modum deinceps lubeat crucem scenicam dicere...*” LANG 1727, 18–25.; JACKOVÁ 2006.

⁵⁴ LANG 1727, 35–36.; KLOSOVÁ 2017, 136.

⁵⁵ KOMENSKÝ 1656, 128–129, 143, 353, 418.

this point of view problematic – situation into *Pars VI.* (act II, sc. 4). The aim of the scene is to condemn the vices of drunkenness and gluttony, but one cannot fail to notice that before these vices are fiercely condemned by the Professor of temperateness (*Temperantiae professor*), both sins are vividly demonstrated in an improvised scene of two fat Revelers. The drunkards were to abundantly holler, staggeringly hug each other and to threaten with their fists and punches etc.⁵⁶ This demonstration of rude behavior has its purpose in Comenius's play, and it is a bit more realistic than compared to Lang who would spare realism in such situations. What Comenius describes is a realistic row which was alien to Lang's stylization.

The gestures considered by Lang as unacceptable⁵⁷ include *inter alia* also the scratching of one's head, since as Lang maintains "*caput aliamve corporis partem [ungvibus] scabere indecorum est*".⁵⁸ As we know, this gesture appeared in *Schola ludus* as well, where two characters feel unease and scratch their heads. Both embody the examples of problematic and low characters: the bad father and lazy peasant Corydon. Respectable and thoroughly polite characters express their contemplation and hesitation through other means: they pace up and down, sigh, look around, or turn their eyes towards the sky.⁵⁹

6. Conclusion

It follows from the above-quoted excerpts from *Schola ludus* that notes in the text of scenes pertaining to theatrical rendition were very numerous. Additional information and recommendations can also be found in the detailed foreword addressed to the curators. In Comenius's older plays, *Diogenes Cynicus redivivus* (1640) and *Abrahamus Patriarcha* (1641), instructions regarding the theatrical rendition usually concerned only the two lead roles. In *Schola ludus*, the author's notes are addressed to many appearing characters whose function in the individual plays – not to mention the entire extensive cycle – cannot be regarded as especially important. In the case of the cycle, the theatrical rendition directly contributes to demonstration of activities and various objects in the parts focused on presentation. The actors directly address the audience (especially the fictional audience directly involved in the plays) for whom they demonstrate the given objects, phenomena, activities, or experiments. In parts where the acting rendition goes more in the direction of mimesis, imitation of the reality in theater, the actors' behavior not coming directly out of the world of the play suitably supplements the author's words (prodigal father who finally had to face

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 340.

⁵⁷ LANG 1727, 35–36, 38.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁹ Like Amphithus, see above parts III.2.2. and III.2.6.

the consequences of his badness) or even substitutes the words in situations where the author considered such form of dramatic rendition more efficient – such as in the improvised scene of a drunken row or in the almost wordless scene with lazy Corydon. From the description of the individual actors' actions, it clearly follows that the performers were not to avoid mutual contact and energetic movements and that the rendition of Comenius's characters on the stage was to be realistic, in principle. The instructions left by Comenius with respect to the theatrical rendition show that he had a clear idea what this aspect of the performance should look like. What the result really looked like when performed by the inexperienced performers from the Sárospatak school is not known, though. On the other hand, since Comenius wrote these instructions, he was probably sure that the performers would manage to follow them. His emphasis on the theatricality of the rendition helped to cover one undisputable given fact of the plays: the plays from the *Schola ludus* cycle were only dramatization of the textbook which did not offer many dramatic moments. It is obvious that Comenius was clearly aware of the fact that acting can significantly influence the impression the audience would have from the performance, as well as the way and how joyfully young actors/students would study their parts and thus repeat the curriculum.

A brief comparison of the author's notes on the gesticulation and acting by Comenius and the work *Dissertatio de actione scenica* by Jesuit Franciscus Lang shows that Comenius required more realistic acting from his actors, which had nothing in common with Lang's manual. In the case of the *Schola ludus* cycle, it would have been impossible to insist on stylized acting and especially on the "stage walk" required by Lang, since both of these things required demanding practicing, but Comenius and the students had only roughly six months to write and rehearse the eight plays.

Although the rules of preaching and rhetoric gesticulation were shared by both Catholic and Protestant authors,⁶⁰ it does not seem that the style of acting outlined by Comenius in *Schola ludus* would draw period criticism in Western Europe. Does it mean that this type of acting was also considered acceptable? It is likely that the acting required by Lang was not established in Central Europe where and when Comenius lived there. And we can only speculate as to whether Comenius's opposition to strictly prescribed rules of gesticulation stemmed from the long-time aversion of his Church to everything overly artistic and thus needless.

⁶⁰ For instance BRENDÉL 1693.