

Dinka Jeričević – the Iron Lady of Croatian Scenic Design

The paper examines the theatrical career and artistic expression of Dinka Jeričević (Vukovar, 26 September 1947), a distinguished Croatian scenic designer and one of the few women in the profession, especially at the time of her formative years, when she also served as the only female technical director in Croatian theatres. Creating over six hundred scenic designs, collaborating with the most prominent Croatian theatrical directors, and working in almost all Croatian theatres, as well as several theatres abroad, as both an in-house and guest designer, Jeričević significantly influenced and personally marked the history of Croatian scenic design over the last fifty years. Furthermore, her long-standing educational work with directors and producers at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb and her passionate mentoring of emerging designers in theatre practice contributed greatly both to the education of numerous young theatre professionals and to shaping contemporary Croatian scenic design. Finally, by becoming actively involved in continuous and pertinent efforts of the Croatian Association of Artists of Applied Arts (ULUPUH) to improve the professional and legal status and working conditions of Croatian designers, she actively participated in the social betterment of Croatian scenic design(ers). Even though she is recognized and acknowledged in her professional environment, and presented with numerous prizes and awards, her career in the theatre has never been the subject of any scholarly analysis. The paper therefore attempts to address some of her design principles and contribute to the systematisation, valorisation and contextualisation of her multiple, diverse and outstanding artistic and professional accomplishments in national theatre.

Women and (Scenic) Design – the Struggle for Inclusion

A large portion of traditional theatre historiography has often been incomplete, dismissive, or gender biased with respect to the representation of women in theatre history and their involvement in a number of theatrical fields. This issue was not only recognized but also intensively addressed, questioned and reframed in many scholarly articles and books written over the last three decades in an attempt to make women's contributions to theatre history more visible and theatre historiography more inclusive, as well as to decompose/deconstruct and recompose/reconstruct traditional historiographic narratives to fully accommodate the range of women's fruitful participation in theatrical

life.¹ The same can be said with respect to women's status in theatrical scenic design, but also their status in design generally: in the introduction to her recently published book *Women Design: Pioneers from the 20th Century to Today* (2021),² author and curator Libby Sellers poignantly draws the reader's attention to the fact that international design historiography has to a large extent been a patriarchal, "predominately male, white, western- and Euro-centric"³ narrative, and that the role of women⁴ in design histor(iograph)y was therefore repeatedly marginalized and disregarded. Furthermore, Sellers adds that, more often than not, traditional design historiographies downplayed and even dismissed the artistic disciplines "normally" considered feminine and suppressed women's participation in seemingly male-dominated disciplines in favour of women's contributions to certain other fields of artistic creativity.⁵ Likewise, it appears that the historical consideration and appraisal of the role of women in design disciplines traditionally perceived as male was often clouded by the prejudice that women were less skilful in technical fields and less competent in solving mechanically complicated design problems. In theatre historiography, the first problem may be related to the long-lasting derogation of costume design as a "feminine" theatrical profession, and the second to the long-lasting misconceptions about women's artistic (and technical) accomplishments in scenic design, and both to inadequate or nonexistent representation, or sometimes even misrepresentation, of women designers in theatre historiography. However, it must be added that recent historiographic interests in both the history of women in theatre and the history of scenography and visual arts in theatre have contributed to new approaches and attitudes toward women in scenic design, as did the artistic, educational, theoretical, historiographic, and professional achievements of prominent women designers active in the latter half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries, such as Pamela Howard or Dorita Hannah to name a few, but also many others. In Croatian theatre (design) and theatre (design) history, scenic designer Dinka Jeričević can rightfully be considered the chief representative of those "many others."

The history of Croatian scenic design as an independent artistic discipline goes back to the first half of the 20th century, when prominent Croatian painters and

¹ For more information on feminism and theatre, theatre history and theatre historiography see, for example: CASE 1988.; DIAMOND 1988.; ASTON 1995.; BENNETT 2003.; SOLGA 2016.

² The book examines the pioneers in architecture, industrial, graphic, and digital design but also includes a chapter "On the stage" dedicated to the important figures of world scenic design, such as Alexandra Exter, Sally Jacobs, and Es Devlin.

³ SELLERS 2021: 7.

⁴ Besides women, she also adds minorities.

⁵ SELLERS 2021: 12.

artists such as Tomislav Krizman, Ljubo Babić, Maksimilijan Vanka, Marijan Trepše, Krsto Hegeđušić and others began working as designers, some of them showing a more permanent interest in the design of the stage, and some of them only occasionally engaging in scenography. The same artists often designed theatrical costumes as well. A similar trend continued after the end of the Second World War, with the important difference being that in the 1950s theatrical costume design became recognized as an independent artistic profession, and the professions of scenic designer and costume designer were “split” into two artistic branches, with scenic design being done mostly by men and costume design by women, while only on the rare occasions did the same artist serve as both scenic and costume designer. Interestingly, one of the most prominent exceptions to the rule was a woman, a visual artist who worked as both costume and scenic designer, later occasionally even as a stage director, but was and is best known for her monumental and internationally recognized artworks in the field of tapestry, Jagoda Buić.⁶ The trend of the fine artists, such as painters or graphic artists, being involved in scenic and costume design continued well into the latter half of the 20th century, when some of the most distinguished painters, such as Kamilo Tompa, Edo Murtić, Miljenko Stančić or Zlatko Kauzlarić Atač, created scenic designs in numerous Croatian theatres. However, during the 1950s more and more professional scenographers became permanently employed in theatres: for example, Aleksandar Augustinčić in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, Miše Račić in the Zagreb Drama Theatre, Rudolf Bunk and Miodrag Adžić in the Croatian National Theatre in Split, Dorian Sokolić in the Ivan Zajc Croatian National Theatre in Rijeka, etc., and additionally, an increasing number of architects began to design for the stage (Božidar Rašica, Vjenceslav Richter...), which affected both the approach(es) to scenic design and the visual imagery of Croatian post-war scenic design.⁷ Dinka Jeričević’s contribution to Croatian scenic design in the latter half of the 20th century was equally important and ground-breaking as those of her male colleagues simultaneously active in the fine arts or architecture and in scenic design, but unlike them, she followed a somewhat different path.

“Scenography is my Calling” – a Life in Theatre

Dinka Jeričević began working in theatrical scenography in the mid-1970s after graduating from the Department of Architecture and Interior Design at the School of Applied Arts in Zagreb (1967) and studying interior design at the

⁶ In the 1950s, artist and designer Aurelija Branković occasionally also created scenic and costume designs, mostly at the Croatian National Theatre in Osijek, but also in several other theatres in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. See PETRANOVIĆ 2015.

⁷ For more details see BAKAL, LEDERER & PETRANOVIĆ 2011.; PETRANOVIĆ 2017.; and LEDERER & PETRANOVIĆ 2019.

Hammersmith College of Art and Buildings in London (1969) and gaining some experience in television and film set design and assisting theatre scenographers such as Miše Račić and Zvonko Šuler in several theatre productions during the Dubrovnik Summer Festival. Her talent was almost immediately recognized by the renowned theatrical director Vlado Habunek, and in 1974 he offered her the opportunity to work with him on the production of André Roussin's *The Slap* (in the Komedija Zagreb City Theatre) and Eugène Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb), after which her professional interest turned to theatre.

From the beginning of her design career to the present, she created almost six hundred scenic designs, several hundred sets for television series and entertainment shows as well as a dozen feature films, productively and imaginatively shaping performance spaces in three different artistic media, with theatrical scenic design being her primary professional preoccupation. As a scenic designer, Dinka Jeričević worked in almost all Croatian theatres as either an in-house designer (&TD Theatre, Komedija Zagreb City Theatre, Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb) or a freelance designer, as well as in several theatres abroad, especially in Slovenia (Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Ptuj and Nova Gorica), but also in Macedonia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Taiwan, Azerbaijan, and Lithuania. With equal success, she designed sets for large national theatres in Zagreb, Osijek, Rijeka, Split and Varaždin, and in (smaller) city theatres throughout Croatia (Zagreb Youth Theatre, Gavella Zagreb City Theatre, Kerempuh Satirical Theatre, Virovtica Town Theatre, Marin Držić Theatre in Dubrovnik, Istrian National Theatre in Pula, Zadar House Theatre), as well as private and independent theatres such as Exit Theatre, Gavran Theatre, Rugantino Theatre or the Histrion Drama Troupe. She worked with the majority of prominent Croatian theatrical directors of various generations and expressive styles, from Vladimir Habunek and Petar Šarčević to Ivica Kunčević and Krešimir Dolenčić, but often and successfully with a theatrical director Georgij Paro. Unlike many other Croatian designers who often specialise in drama, opera or ballet/dance productions, Dinka Jeričević was equally accomplished in different theatrical branches, from drama to opera and ballet, and furthermore, in collaboration with Croatian theatre festivals such as the Split Summer Festival or Dubrovnik Summer Festival, she designed numerous sets for non-theatrical venues and outdoor performances. She also designed for productions of various theatrical genres, ranging from comedy to tragedy, and from classic to modern and contemporary plays.

A particularly inspired segment of her creativity is the body of work related to theatre for children and youth, including a puppet theatre. She worked with great enthusiasm in children's and youth theatres in Zagreb (Mala scena Theatre, Trešnja City Theatre, Žar ptica City Theatre, Zagreb Youth Theatre and Zagreb Puppet Theatre), collaborated with the independent theatre scene (Triko Cirkus

Teatar, Zagreb), and developed scenic designs for numerous children's plays in theatres throughout Croatia, from Osijek and Virovitica to Rijeka, Split and Dubrovnik. The directors with whom she often collaborated on children's plays, such as Ivica Šimić or Krešimir Dolenčić, appreciated her commitment and dedication in designing for children, and Georgij Paro pointed out that "her inspired stage suggestions perfectly match children's imaginations," and thus "greatly help the youngest viewers to actively enjoy their earliest theatre experiences."⁸

In this regard, it seems legitimate to say that Dinka Jeričević has created one of the most comprehensive, diverse, and inspiring scenographic bodies of work in Croatian theatrical history and that her long-term work in national film, television, and especially scenic design can also be viewed as an example of the scenographic profession *par excellence*.⁹ Moreover, it should not be overlooked that during the time of her professional growth and affirmation in the Croatian theatre community, and during a good part of her professional career, Dinka Jeričević was still one of the few if not the only woman in the male company of Croatian professional scenic designers. In short, for Jeričević scenography was not just one of the artistic disciplines to which she occasionally turned her creative interests, as was often the case with many painters, sculptors, designers or architects who occasionally worked for the stage, but rather her sole and primary occupation to which she fully dedicated her entire professional career. It is therefore no surprise that in one of her rare newspaper interviews she openly declared her passionate commitment to scenic design and readily admitted: "Scenography is my calling."¹⁰

"Theatre is Teamwork" – Basic Design Principles

As she herself stated on multiple occasions, in dramatic productions she usually drew inspiration from the text and plot and in operas and ballets from the musical scores and librettos, but the guiding principle behind her scenic design in general has always been the concept of creative collaboration with the artistic team behind the production. Throughout her career, Jeričević persistently emphasized that theatre is a collective art, and that theatre production is a result of the joint efforts of all team members. She strongly believed that the primary task of her scenic designs was to reflect the general meaning of the play or the spirit of the music, and the idea conceived by the director whom she considers the first among equals and the team leader. She accorded great attention to the harmony of her designs with those of the costume and light designers, but she especially tended to the needs of the performer(s) who use the stage space she creates and interact

⁸ Cf. Georgij Paro's unpublished text about Dinka Jeričević. Private archive of Dinka Jeričević.

⁹ The same can perhaps be said about a scenic designer Drago Turina.

¹⁰ JERIČEVIĆ 2011: 3. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are those of the author.

with and move through it. On more than one occasion, she repeated that one of the best lessons about scenography was given to her by a well-known Croatian designer, sculptor, painter, filmmaker and theatre artist, Zlatko Bourek, who once told her that the best scenographer is the one who best serves the production. Jeričević took his advice seriously and turned it into her own artistic motto. Her basic approach to scenography can therefore be summarized in the maxim that the scenic design(er) must work for the production without imposing oneself, or in her words: "Theatre is teamwork. I am not here to show myself through scenography, but to participate equally in the creation of the whole."¹¹ Nevertheless, the versatility, imaginativeness and functionality of her designs contributed to the authority of the scenic designer within the team in many theatre productions, making her an invaluable and indispensable team member. Moreover, Krešimir Dolenčić, a director with whom she worked on numerous occasions and for whom a scenic designer is one of the closest associates, once said that he owes some of his most imaginative stage renderings to Dinka Jeričević.¹² The vitality of her visual, spatial and interpretative contributions to the dramaturgical structure of the production as a whole was repeatedly identified and highlighted by theatre critics as well.

Jeričević normally viewed the scenography as an empty space which has to be imagined, designed and filled in accordance with dramatic action, firstly by solving the floor plan and stage space to be used by the performers, actors, opera singers or ballet dancers, and only secondly by adding the visual artistic component of the stage world. In contrast to some other (Croatian) scenic designers, she rejected visual grandeur or spectacle as an end in and of itself, believing that the most important purpose of scenic design is to visually express, summarize and convey what a play wants to say, and that the visual component of a production must always be able to transmit the basic directorial thought and the idea and/or emotion behind the production. She believed that the fascination with the visual was only one, temporary and fleeting segment of both scenic design and production, and she therefore claimed that the artistic component of scenography should only be considered and evaluated in the context of the production as a whole, not separately. That of course does not mean that her scenic designs lacked visual attractiveness or allure when needed, just the opposite: Jeričević created many visually lavish, stunning and complex stage solutions, but she always conceived and developed them from the idea of production and with a focus on its central message, emotion or thought.

The functionality of the performance and purposiveness in developing the story and visual imagination guided her in her scenographic ideas, regardless of whether she designed more complex and elaborate stage constructions for

¹¹ JERIČEVIĆ 1995: 26.

¹² Cf. Letter of Recommendation written by Krešimir Dolenčić. Private archive of Dinka Jeričević.

operas and ballets in large national theatre houses, or used only one or two basic elements such as, say, a curtain, a carousel, a wall, several differently decorated and arranged pillars, frames, arches, etc. to shape and open the necessary stage spaces in smaller theatrical venues and theatres for youth and children. One of the key requirements that she tried to ensure through scenic design was the fluidity and smoothness of necessary stage space changes, underlined by her tendency to make those space changes as meaningful as possible, and to turn space changes into a dramaturgically relevant and significant process. She thus implicitly incorporated the temporal dimension into her designs as well. In her creative vision, scenic design is seldom a static and immovable object or background, rather on the contrary, stage elements can be easily (re)moved and manipulated, modified and transformed to create various stage spaces, and they can functionally engage in active interplay with performers who move and reverse them, sneak in and out of them, walk on them and around them, move through and with sets, creating not only new forms and spatial relationships but also new meanings. Moreover, it is not uncommon that her designs for a particular stage element outgrow their primary or initial purpose and take on symbolic meaning which encapsulates the idea of the play and acts as a kind of central motif or a key to understanding the production.

Jeričević used a variety of materials and technological solutions in her designs, but the element with which she was particularly fascinated, on which she deeply relied due to its (trans)formative, semantic, and metaphoric potential, and which she used extensively in creating stage space and developing spatial strategies, especially in interaction with transparent fabrics and materials, was stage lighting, as well as the expressive power of projections in relation to the actor on stage and various spatial plans. Moreover, she explored the possibilities of light design well before light design became an independent theatrical profession in Croatia, and in a way significantly participated in the process of its artistic affirmation and in the exploration and perfection of its artistic qualities.

In ballet and opera designs, besides the visual interpretation of stage worlds implied by the libretto and score, she demonstrated great skill in creating a suitable spatial ambience, but also in opening a large enough stage space for the ballet ensemble to move freely around the stage and perform complex choreographic ideas and dance figures, and in ensuring a suitable acoustic environment and appropriate placement of choirs and opera singers in opera productions. When she designed for non-theatrical or open theatre venues, she took a different approach to the spaces that were less marked by historical, urban or cultural meanings and implications, and to those that were marked by either the context and connotations of the architectural and urban environment within which they are located, or by the layers of historical and cultural heritage. Normally, she refrained from extensive

or radical scenographic interventions to the latter and reduced her scenic designs to the level of absolutely necessary and non-invasive details and symbols. In her designs for the Split Peristyle or venues in Dubrovnik's Old Town, for example, she normally used only a few non-intrusive elements, like curtains, light design and so forth.

In short, regardless of the theatre space or type of theatre production, her designs were always characterized by the same fundamental values and principles such as: creativity, precision, and functionality of design, fluency of changes in stage space and time, coordination between the design(er) with performers, unison in the relationship between design and costume and light design, the firm association of design with the underlying structure of the play, and the inventiveness, resourcefulness and meaningfulness of design in the visual transposition of dramaturgical assumptions and the layers of each production.

“Hopefully, Someone Learned Something from Me, Too” – Technical Director, Teacher, Curator

Working as a professional scenic designer, Jeričević was, as already noted, one of a small number of women active in that profession, especially during her formative years in the 1970s and 1980s. At the same time, she was also the only female technical director and in-house scenic designer in Croatian theatres. Jeričević was employed as a technical director at the &TD Theatre in Zagreb (1976–1983), and as an in-house scenic designer at the Komedija Zagreb City Theatre (1983–1992) and the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb (1992–2009). That meant that she was supervising the production of her own scenic designs but also that she was responsible for the complete scenographic production of these theatres, and for the smooth operation of theatre workshops and theatre property related to the scenographic segment of a theatrical production. Speaking about her beginnings at the &TD Theatre in the late 1970s, Jeričević recalled the initial suspicions of her male colleagues in this traditionally male-dominated sector of theatrical business, but she also remembered how those reservations melted away after she had proven herself skilled in the craft of scenic design, thanks to her knowledge of the technology of the materials and technical drawing, and her previous technical and production experience in television and motion pictures. It was not much different when she became an in-house designer at the Komedija Zagreb City Theatre and later at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, because it was a job traditionally reserved for men, but her education, experience, diligence and persistence helped her overcome gender-bias obstacles.

Furthermore, holding the positions of technical director and in-house designer allowed Jeričević to deepen her theatrical knowledge and helped her in both the

creative and technical segments of her scenic design. She believed that the final result of scenic design relied heavily on the quality of theatre workshops and the quality of communication between the designer and theatre artisans, so nothing in her scenic designs was left to chance and every detail of scenography was carefully elaborated, not only in terms of ideas and artistic qualities but also in terms of their technical implementation.¹³ She was therefore well-known, and appreciated, as a designer who accorded considerable attention and respect to the artisans employed in theatre workshops and who recognized them as the designer's most important collaborators, indispensable to bringing the designer's ideas into life. She even claimed that her commitment to thorough artistic and technical preparation, accuracy and precision in the clarification of ideas, and mastery of the craft as the fundamentals of effective and universally comprehensible theatrical communication helped her overcome many design barriers, including linguistic ones when she was invited to work abroad or in different cultural milieus.

As a scenic designer, she successfully adapted her ideas to various theatre venues, regardless of whether they were the large stages of national theatres for which she often created monumental stage structures, small stage spaces which she literally or symbolically expanded through her imaginative scenographic concepts, or stages that could not count on typical theatrical techniques. She has always taken care that her scenography can be easily dismantled and set up again in another place, in both conventional and non-conventional theatre venues throughout Croatia. It is also noteworthy that she designed the original stage for the Mala Scena Theatre in Zagreb, where she later frequently created and developed numerous imaginative sets.

Reflecting on the initial phases of her creative process, Jeričević once said: "Blank paper is an incentive. You just need to start drawing, sketching, talking, discarding, and drawing again. Paper has never failed me".¹⁴ Inspired by a text and/or music, and depending on the occasion, inspiration or step in the design process, Jeričević's sketches differ in formats and techniques, ranging from simple, tiny pieces of paper on which all relevant details for the basic concept of a set design can still be discerned, to larger and more attractive art formats in pencil, felt-tip pen, ink, collage, tempera, pastel or chalk, to technical drawings in Indian ink. Further differentiation of her sketches includes several subcategories: croquis drawings and sketches of random ideas that do not necessarily become part of the final design; visually detailed designs of individual acts, scenes or

¹³ In that respect, perhaps closest to her position is Sarajevo-based scenic designer Marijela Margeta Hašimbegović, who served as scenic designer for the National Theatre in Sarajevo but also as head of its Technical Staff (2000–2016, 2018–) and its general manager (2016–2018). For more, see HAŠIMBEGOVIĆ 2021.

¹⁴ JERIČEVIĆ 2011: 3.

entire performances; accurate technical drawings of scenic designs or elements of scenic design; concise depictions of alternating scenery solutions for individual scenes; and sketches of individual scenery details and props. To her, they all play a significant role in her design process and are all equally important, whether they are related to the conceptual and creative part of the design process turned toward the artistic team headed by a stage director, or to the technical part of the design process turned toward the theatre artisans in theatre workshops.

In most of the aforementioned, Dinka Jeričević differed considerably, if not substantially, from many other Croatian scenographers, and these are also the principles she tried to pass on to her students with the idea that, as she puts it: "Hopefully, someone learned something from me, too."¹⁵ Throughout her artistic career, Jeričević worked as a theatre educator, sharing her understanding of scenic design with younger generations as a part of institutional academic education at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb, where she lectured to film and theatre directors, and later to production students, and within theatre practice, where she used the system of apprenticeship to train many future scenographers, such as Ivo Knezović, but also women designers like Marta Crnobrnja or Tanja Lacko. Her teaching career at the Zagreb Academy began in 1978 and lasted until her retirement in 2012, parallel to her artistic career, with the exception that she stayed active in scenic design even after she retired from teaching.

She strived to teach her students how to read and understand the play, to think in terms of stage space, to comprehend the course of the design process (sketch – scale model – scenography), and to cope with the technical and financial aspect of scenic design. She retired as a full professor, and her long-standing academic work with theatrical directors and producers at the Academy, her participation in shaping various university-level courses and programmes, and her passionate mentoring of emerging designers in theatre practice, especially over a very long period when there were no institutions for educating scenic designers in Croatia, contributed immensely to the education of numerous young theatre professionals and the development of contemporary Croatian scenic design and theatre in general. Today, women designers are far more numerous in the Croatian theatre community than they were before, and that is surely Jeričević's legacy as well.

Teaching at the Academy and taking apprentices in theatre practice allowed Jeričević to participate in the transfer of knowledge, while working as a technical director and in-house designer in three Zagreb theatres for more than thirty years and allowed her to set the professional standards for executing her own designs and those of all other designers. However, along with her fruitful artistic and academic career, Jeričević also vigorously fought for the profession of scenic designers and actively participated in the efforts of the Croatian Association of

¹⁵ JERIČEVIĆ 2011: 4.

Artists of Applied Arts (ULUPUH) and its Theatre and Film Arts Section, whose members are costume, stage, light and puppet designers and various theatre artisans, to improve the professional and legal status and working conditions of Croatian designers.¹⁶ She also served as a member of various boards, committees, and working groups associated with theatre and scenic design, and took part in a number of round tables and conferences dealing with the position of scenic design. Furthermore, she curated several exhibitions of Croatian stage and costume design, for example at the Prague Quadrennial, where she served as a curator of the national team on several occasions (1995, 1999, and 2003), including the award-winning exhibition of war-damaged Croatian theatres in the mid-1990s.¹⁷ Her selfless efforts have therefore immensely contributed to the social and professional advancement of Croatian scenic design, and to shaping the cultural history of Croatian scenic design.

Conclusion – “The Iron Lady” of Croatian scenic design

Dinka Jeričević always was, and still is, highly appreciated in the Croatian theatre community. She has received numerous prizes and awards for her designs, such as the Sterijino pozorje Award (1988), the Marul Award (1995), the Ljubo Babić Award (1996), the Croatian Theatre Award (several times), the Rudolf Bunk Award (2008), etc., and her designs have generally been included in all relevant, however scarce and rare, overviews and exhibitions of Croatian stage and costume design, such as, for example, the first comprehensive retrospective exhibition of Croatian scenography, “100 Years of Croatian Scenic and Costume Design (2009),¹⁸ or the biannually held exhibitions of present-day scenography organized by ULUPUH under the distinctive title Contemporary Theatre and Film Scene in Croatia (since 2003). However, her scenic design has never been the subject of any article and scholarly analysis, and an exhibition of her scenic design for youth and children’s theatres, held as part of the Art Programme of the International Children’s Festival in Šibenik in June 2022,¹⁹ was her first solo exhibition.

There are several reasons for that, I presume. First and foremost, the history of Croatian theatre in the last quarter of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century has only been partially studied, and most recent Croatian theatre historiography is dedicated to playwriting, acting and directing, showing little or no interest in the visual disciplines in theatre such as stage, costume and light design. Thus far,

¹⁶ She held the position of the Section president (1985-1995) and served as a member of ULUPUH’s artistic board.

¹⁷ Usually, she also designed those exhibitions as well.

¹⁸ Cf. the exhibition catalogue BAKAL, LEDERER & PETRANOVIĆ 2011.

¹⁹ Cf. PETRANOVIĆ 2022.

the history of Croatian visual arts also has not demonstrated a deeper concern for applied artists such as scenographers. Moreover, if we look at the names of Croatian scenic designers who attracted the greatest historiographic interest, if any, it is quite clear that the majority of them were well-known painters or, later in the century, sculptors and architects, who had already established themselves in other artistic fields, especially in the fine arts. One can therefore say that Dinka Jeričević, along with many other Croatian scenic designers, was caught in a sort of (inter)disciplinary gap between theatre studies and art history studies, existing on the margins of both. When it comes to Croatian theatrical historiography, the situation has only recently begun to change in favour of scenic design, primarily due to the efforts of ULUPUH (and HAZU) in hosting exhibitions and publishing monographs and catalogues dedicated to Croatian scenic design. Another reason why Jeričević may seem to be somewhat overlooked in Croatian theatre studies is that in contrast to some of her prominent women colleagues abroad, such as Pamela Howard in the United Kingdom, or Meta Hočevar in nearby Slovenia, she never took to directing, nor did she write about scenic design in general or her personal artistic views in particular.

However, as I hope I have shown in this paper, it can be rightfully claimed that Dinka Jeričević is a prolific, imaginative and three-dimensional artist who considerably influenced and marked the history of Croatian scenic design over the last fifty years. Her outstanding artistic achievements in scenic design, her teaching energy and drive, and her commitment to advancing the status of the profession testify to the scope of her contributions to the artistic, professional, academic, and social affirmation of scenic design. Furthermore, by readily and resolutely, if not necessarily purposefully and intentionally, challenging the roles given to women in the theatre profession, she contributed to the reconsideration of the woman's professional and artistic identity in traditionally male-dominated theatrical fields, and to a new understanding and distribution of gender roles in theatre. By being an active practicing artist and teacher, she paved the way for other women scenic designers and inspired the expansion of the artistic, social and professional paradigm available to women in the Croatian theatrical community in general.

While she was working as an in-house designer at the Komedija Zagreb City Theatre, the staff of the theatre workshops gave her the nickname "Iron Lady". They did so because she employed many iron constructions in her scenic designs, and because she was knowledgeable and skilful, resolute and relentless in professional matters of both theatre design and theatre leadership. The nickname was not disrespectful; on the contrary, it reflected the authority and respect that Jeričević earned for herself due to her profound theatrical knowledge and experience, and to her already mentioned appreciation of the profession of theatre artisans. When

we look back to her versatile and impressive professional achievements in theatre, we may justifiably extend the aforementioned nickname to her career in general, and call Dinka Jeričević the Iron Lady of Croatian scenic design.

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Dinka Jeričević – Željezna dama hrvatske scenografije

Rad istražuje kazališnu karijeru i umjetnički izričaj Dinke Jeričević (Vukovar, 26. rujna 1947.), istaknute hrvatske scenografkinje i jedne od rijetkih žena u toj profesiji, posebno u vrijeme njezinih formativnih godina kada je obavljala funkciju jedine tehničke ravnateljice u hrvatskim kazalištima. Stvarajući preko šest stotina scenografija, surađujući s najistaknutijim hrvatskim redateljima i radeći u gotovo svim hrvatskim kazalištima te nekoliko inozemnih, kako kao stalna članica tako i kao gostujuća scenografkinja, Dinka Jeričević značajno je utjecala i osobno obilježila povijest hrvatskog scenografskog stvaralaštva tijekom posljednjih pedeset godina. Čvrsto je vjerovala da je osnovni zadatak njezinih scenografija odražavati opću svrhu predstave ili duh scenske glazbe, te zamisao redatelja, odbijajući vizualnu površnost ili spektakl kao svrhu samu po sebi. Za Dinku Jeričević, ključni zahtjev koji scenografija mora zadovoljiti jest fluidnost i glatkoća prijelaza između potrebnih scenskih prostora, naglašena njezinom sklonosti da promjene prostora učini smislenima i da ih pretvori u dramaturški relevantan i značajan proces. U njezinim scenografijama scena rijetko ostaje statičan i nepomičan objekt ili pozadina, već se različiti scenski elementi mogu lako i jednostavno modificirati i transformirati kako bi stvarali različite scenske prostore. Oni istovremeno mogu funkcionalno stupati u aktivnu suigru sa scenskim izvođačima, stvarajući nove forme i prostorne odnose, a time i nova značenja. Nadalje, njezin dugogodišnji pedagoški rad s redateljima i producentima na Akademiji dramske umjetnosti u Zagrebu, te strastveno mentoriranje mladih dizajnera u kazališnoj praksi, značajno su doprinijeli obrazovanju brojnih mladih kazališnih profesionalaca i oblikovanju suvremene hrvatske scenografije. Predavanjem na Akademiji dramske umjetnosti i vođenjem asistenata u kazališnoj praksi, osigurala je prijenos svojeg scenografskog znanja i iskustva, a radeći kao tehnička ravnateljica i stalna scenografkinja u tri hrvatska kazališta, osigurala je profesionalne standarde za izvođenje scenografskih ideja, kako vlastitih tako i drugih scenografa. Aktivnim sudjelovanjem u radu Hrvatske udruge likovnih umjetnika primijenjenih umjetnosti (ULUPUH) te mnogih odbora i radnih skupina, kao i sudjelovanjem u organiziranju izložbi hrvatske scenografije i kostimografije, zalagala se i za poboljšavanje strukovnoga i pravnog statusa te uvjeta rada hrvatskih scenografa, kostimografa i oblikovatelja svjetla, pridonijevši značajno njihovome društvenom unaprjeđenju i umjetničkom priznanju. Unatoč velikom poštovanju i priznanju u svom neposrednom profesionalnom okruženju i široj hrvatskoj kazališnoj zajednici, te unatoč brojnim nagradama, njezina kazališna karijera do sada nije bila predmet znanstvene analize, a prvu samostalnu izložbu imala je u lipnju 2022. Stoga je ovaj rad pokušaj da se doprinese sistematizaciji, vrednovanju i kontekstualizaciji

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Cljučne riječi: scenografija, Dinka Jeričević, hrvatsko kazalište

Keywords: scenic design, Dinka Jeričević, Croatian theatre

Martina Petranović
Croatian Theatrical History Division, Croatian
Academy of Arts and Science, Zagreb
Iločka 18, Zagreb 10000
martina_petranovic@yahoo.com

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ZAGREB 2023.

RADOVI ZAVODA ZA HRVATSKU POVIJEST
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Knjiga 55, broj 1

Izdavač / Publisher

Zavod za hrvatsku povijest
Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu
FF-press

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Tel. ++385 (0)1 6120191

Časopis izlazi jedanput godišnje / The Journal is published once a year

Časopis je u digitalnom obliku dostupan na / The Journal in digital form is accessible at
Portal znanstvenih časopisa Republike Hrvatske „Hrčak“
<http://hrcak.srce.hr/radovi-zhp>

Financijska potpora za tisak časopisa / The Journal is published with the support by
Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa Republike Hrvatske

Časopis je indeksiran u sljedećim bazama / The Journal is indexed in the following databases:
Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCO, SCOPUS, ERIH PLUS, Emerging Sources Citation
Index - Web of Science

Naslovna stranica / Title page by

Marko Maraković

Grafičko oblikovanje i računalni slog / Graphic design and layout

Marko Maraković

Lektura / Language editors

Samanta Paronić (hrvatski / Croatian)

Edward Bosnar (engleski / English)

Tisak / Printed by

Tiskara Zelina d.d.

Naklada / Issued

200 primjeraka / 200 copies

Ilustracija na naslovnici

Muza Klio (Alexander S. Murray, *Manual of Mythology*, London 1898)

*Časopis je u digitalnom obliku dostupan na Portalu znanstvenih časopisa
Republike Hrvatske „Hrčak“ <http://hrcak.srce.hr/radovi-zhp>*

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