

Two Faces of Home-based Theatre in 18th Century Dubrovnik

During the 18th century, due to the rising frequency of visits of Italian professional touring acting companies to Dubrovnik, the activities of local amateur troupes in the premises of the city theatre of Orsan were declining. Therefore, the only opportunity left for local amateur troupes to perform was in home-based theatres, a tradition that, in the form of wedding performances, dates back to the times of Marin Držić. In the 18th century, following the French fashion of the time, which also reached the Eastern Adriatic coast, this activity became an integral part of social pursuits of the salons. Evidence of this practice is the home-based performance of a play called *Pokrinokat*, an adaptation of the French medieval *Farce du maître Pathelin*, produced in Dubrovnik before the end of the century. In contrast to this fancy practice of home-based theatre, it is assumed that there were also performances associated with an intimate, family circle, or performances in the sphere of Dubrovnik's convents. These were Christmas pastoral plays, written by female authors such as Marija Betera, Benedikta Gradić, Lukrecija Bogašinović and Anica Bošković. Whereas we do not possess direct evidence of the home-based performances of these plays (they were primarily conceived as readings for Dubrovnik young girls), we can discuss the convent performances with more certainty. Thus we discuss two kinds of theatre as specific forms of social activity. The intention of this paper is to show these two practices of home-based theatre and to try to explore their social and performance features. Furthermore, it is interesting to notice that the production of *Pokrinokat* introduces actresses on the Croatian stage, although in home-based theatres, and that the authors, and most probably the producers of the Christmas pastoral plays, were also women. Therefore, our intention is also to comment these first appearances of women as active participants in the Croatian theatre.

Key words: home-based theatre, theatre as a social activity, Dubrovnik, Christmas pastoral plays, actresses