

# Goran Stefanovski

(27 April 1952 - )

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**BOOKS:** *Divo meso*, includes *Jane Zadrogaz* (Skopje: Mislà, 1981);

*Let vo mesto* (Skopje: Mislà, 1982);

*Bušava azbuka*, with Dušan Petričić (Skopje: Detska radost, 1987);

*Long Play* (Skopje: Dom na mladi, 1988);

*Černodrinski se vraća doma* (Skopje: Magazin 21, 1992).

**Collections:** *Odbrani drami*, includes the plays *Divo meso*, *Let vo mesto*, *Hi-Fi*, *Duplo dno*, and *Tetovirani duši* (Skopje: Mislà, 1987).

**Editions in English:** *Proud Flesh*, translated by Alan McConnell Duff in *Scena*, 4 (1981): 170-186; translated by Ralph Bogert, *Slavic and East European Arts*, 2, no. 1 (1983): 59-93;

*Hi-Fi* and *The False Bottom*, translated by Patricia Marsh-Stefanovska (Kansas City: Bookmark Press, University of Missouri, 1985).

**PLAY PRODUCTIONS:** *Jane Zadrogaz*, Skopje, Dramski teatar, 26 December 1974;

*Divo meso*, Skopje, Dramski teatar, 29 December 1979;

*Let vo mesto*, Skopje, Dom na mladi, 8 January 1982;

*Hi-Fi*, Sarajevo, Kamerni teatar, 28 December 1982;

*Klinč*, Štip, Dramsko studio, 17 June 1983;

*Duplo dno*, Sarajevo, Narodno pozorište, 17 December 1983;

*Tetovirani duši*, Skopje, Dramski teatar, 26 October 1985;

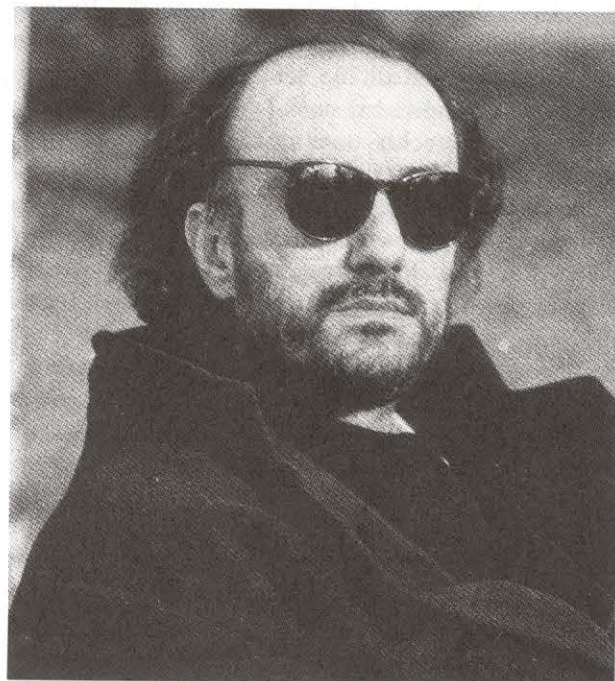
*Crna dupka*, Skopje, Makedonski naroden teatar, 10 February 1988;

*Long Play*, Subotica, Narodno pozorište, 3 June 1988;

*Kula vavilonska*, Skopje, Dramski teatar, 14 January 1990;

*Černodrinski se vraća doma*, Skopje, Dramski teatar, 31 January 1992.

**MOTION PICTURE:** *Hi-Fi*, screenplay by Ste-



Goran Stefanovski

fanovski, Vardar Film, 1987.

**TELEVISION:** *Klinč*, script by Stefanovski, TV Skopje, 1975;

*Soslušuvanyeto na železničarot*, script by Stefanovski, TV Skopje, 1976;

*Tome od benziskata pumpa*, script by Stefanovski, TV Skopje 1979;

*Naši godini*, script by Stefanovski, series in 6 episodes, TV Skopje, 1979;

*Tumba, tumba divina*, script by Stefanovski, TV Skopje, 1982;

*Bušava azbuka*, script by Stefanovski, series in 31 episodes, screenplay by Stefanovski and Petrichic, TV Skopje, 1986.

**RADIO:** *Čirakot Šekspir*, script by Stefanovski, Radio Skopje, 1975.



OTHER: "Hi-Fi," in *Ka novoj drami*, 3 (Belgrade: Tribina, 1983), pp. 1-68;  
 "Long Play," in *YU Fest 1988* (Subotica: National Theater Subotica, 1988), pp. 170-205;  
*Traviata*, Omladinski kulturni centar, Zagreb, June 1989;  
*Zodiak*, Makedonski narodni teatar, Skopje, 21 January 1990.

Macedonian theater and drama came of age in the years immediately following World War II, after Macedonian was formally established as a literary language. The first generation of Macedonian playwrights writing in dialects close to contemporary literary Macedonian wrote in the period between the beginning of the twentieth century and the end of the Second World War. This group includes Voydan Chernodrinski, Vasil Ilyoski, Anton Panov, and Risto Krle. The second generation of Macedonian playwrights includes writers educated in the period before World War II who were actively writing for the theater from the end of the war through the 1960s and early 1970s. The most important dramatists in this group include Kole Čašule, Tome Arsovski, Branko Pendovski, and Živko Čingo. Almost exclusively, this group of writers gained their fame in the genres of the novel and the short story. Their work is significant in the development of Macedonian theater and drama because they helped establish modern theater in Macedonia and give it its national identity. It is fair to say, however, that no significant dramatic texts were produced by this generation, nor did they have much influence on the next generation of playwrights. The youngest generation of Macedonian playwrights was educated in the 1960s and early 1970s and was influenced by the styles and themes of contemporary Western theater and drama. Although they all write in other genres, the dramatic genre seems to be their favorite. Among the most prominent playwrights of this generation are Yordan Plevneš, Rusomir Bogdanovski, and Goran Stefanovski.

Stefanovski is perhaps the most significant and prolific playwright in the short history of Macedonian theater. Educated in the spirit of contemporary Western theater, he, together with a small group of actors and directors, elevated the quality of theater in Macedonia to world-class levels. In 1974, at the age of twenty-two, he appeared on the theater scene with his play *Jane Zdrogaz*. The play was directed by Slobodan Unkovski, who is of the same generation and was educated in the same Western tradition as

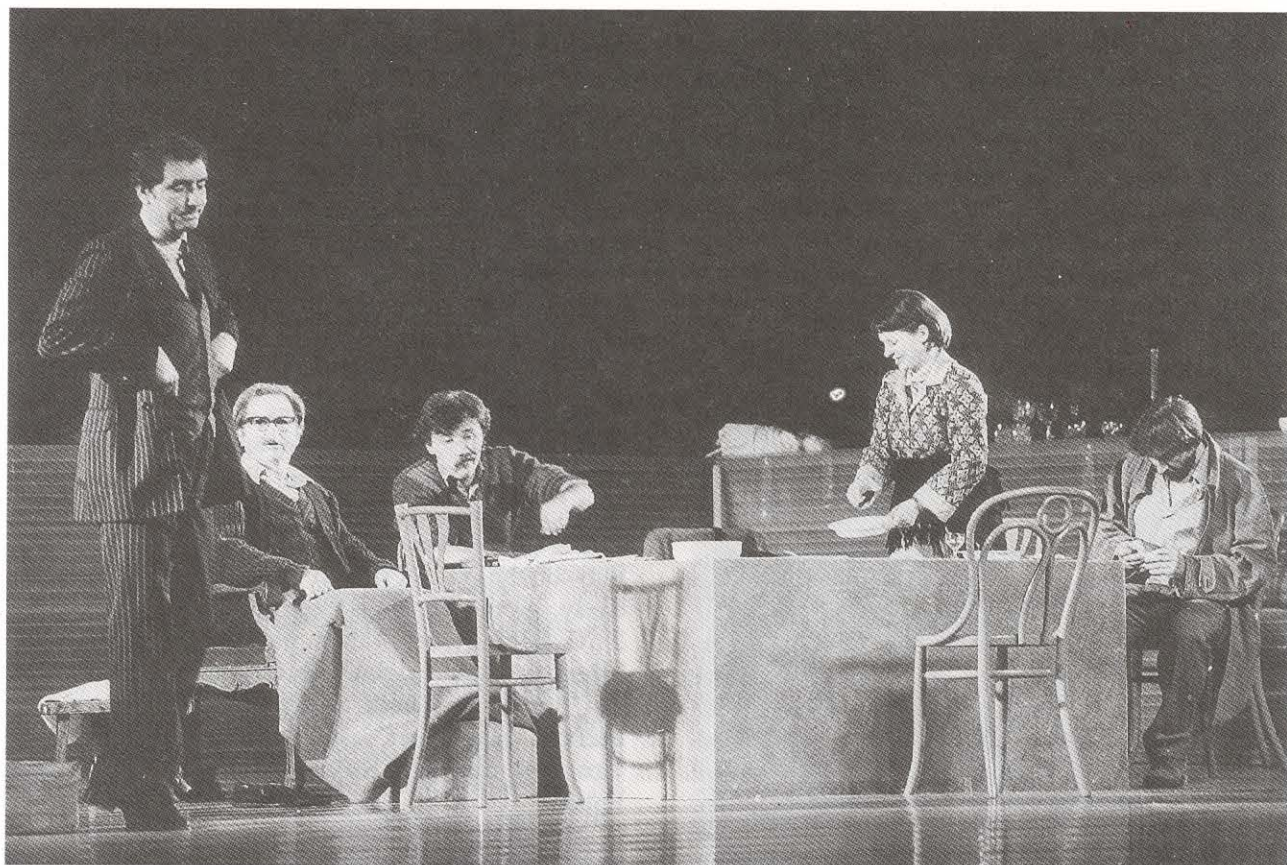
Stefanovski. This play marks the beginning of the Stefanovski-Unkovski tandem. Unkovski has directed all except two of Stefanovski's plays, and the playwright's most recent work, *Černodrinski se vraća doma* (Černodrinski Comes Home, 1992), is dedicated to Unkovski. The tandem are joined by a group of equally dedicated young actors at the Skopje Drama Theater.

Stefanovski's plays have all enjoyed a high degree of popularity, and they have all been staged in theaters throughout Macedonia and other Yugoslav republics. Many have been staged abroad in the United States, Great Britain, Poland, Hungary, France, Germany, the republics of the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria, and Venezuela. *Divo meso* (Proud Flesh, 1979) and *Crna Dufka* (The Black Hole, 1988) were awarded the Play of the Year Prize in 1980 and 1988, respectively, at the Sterijino Pozorje Drama Festival in Novi Sad. Stefanovski's plays have been published in their original Macedonian and in various translations—both as separate editions and in literary magazines and anthologies—in Serbo-Croatian, English, Russian, French, Czech, and Polish.

Stefanovski was born on 27 April 1952 in Bitola, Macedonia, a city in the southwest part of the southernmost republic of Yugoslavia. His introduction to the theater came through his parents. His father, Mirko, was a theater director in Bitola, and his mother, Nada, was an actress. Both parents are deceased. There is a story told by Unkovski about how the theater in Bitola passed a resolution in 1952 that Nada Stefanovska was not "permitted" to give birth that year because the group was too busy rehearsing for the season. Contemporaries recount that it was not unusual to see Nada nursing young Goran during rehearsals and between scenes. Some of Stefanovski's earliest childhood memories are from life in the theater, watching his mother being killed on the stage night after night in the role of a tragic heroine.

Stefanovski spent his college years in Skopje, the capital and cultural center of Macedonia, studying in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Skopje, from which he graduated in 1974. During these formative years he became acquainted with English and American literature and began to read the original English-language texts of William Shakespeare, Samuel Beckett, and other British and American writers. The year 1974 is also important for Stefanovski because it is the year he met his future wife, Patricia, who at the time was





Scene from Dramski theater production of Stefanovski's *Divo Meso* (*Proud Flesh*), about a family in Skopje on the eve of World War II

a British lecturer of English at the University of Skopje. She is the English translator of his plays. Stefanovski and Patricia have two children.

The person most responsible for nurturing Stefanovski's talents as a dramatist during his early twenties was his uncle, Risto Stefanovski. He is a well-known theater historian, and for many years was the managing director of the Skopje Drama Theater where Stefanovski's first play was staged in 1974. At the Skopje Drama Theater, his uncle was instrumental in introducing Stefanovski to the theater craft and to two generations of theater professionals: the generation of his parents, and the younger generation of actors and directors, who at the time were eager to experiment and were looking for new and exciting texts. Stefanovski also received professional training as a dramatist during his one year at the Belgrade Theater Academy. At that time, the academy was the single most important place in Yugoslavia for the training of professionals in theater, film, drama, and television. Among the faculty at the academy were some of the most experienced and gifted Yugoslav directors, critics, and playwrights.

Outside the theater Stefanovski's strongest interest is American rock music. One can find thematic and stylistic influences of this genre in several of his plays. He has also worked closely with his younger brother, Vladko, who also joined the artistic world at an early age as a student at the University of Skopje. Together with two of his friends, Vladko formed a rock band, "Leb i sol" (Bread and Salt), which became popular among audiences in Macedonia and throughout Yugoslavia. Goran has written the lyrics for several of the band's songs, as well as the libretto for the rock opera *Zodiak*, which was performed by "Leb i sol" at the Macedonian National Theater in Skopje on 21 January 1990. "Leb i sol," in turn, performed the music for Goran's play *Let vo mesto* (Flying on the Spot, 1982).

From 1974 to 1977 Stefanovski worked as a dramaturge in the drama section of Skopje Television. It was during this period that he wrote several screenplays for television, two of which were directed by his friend and colleague Unkovski. From 1977 to 1986 he was a lecturer in English literature at Skopje University. In 1979 he received his master's degree from the



Faculty of Philology at Belgrade University. The title of his thesis was "Stage Directions as the Foundation of the Theatre of Samuel Beckett." Soon after receiving his M.A., Stefanovski began working on his Ph.D. The subject of his research was contemporary British drama and the playwright Edward Bond. He spent the 1979-1980 academic year at Manchester University in England, conducting research on this subject. While in Great Britain he wrote the screenplay for the television drama *Tumba, tumba divina* (1982).

Stefanovski has traveled to the United States several times. In the autumn of 1984 he spent three months as a guest of the Iowa International Writing Program. He also spent one semester in 1990 at Brown University on a five-month Fulbright Outstanding Artist Scholarship, where he taught a course, "Introduction to Dramatic Writing," in the Department of Theater, Speech, and Dance. While in the United States he also lectured at Harvard University, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of Missouri, Kansas City. He currently teaches playwriting and the theory of drama in the School of Dramatic Arts at the University of Skopje.

When Stefanovski's first play, *Jane Zadrogaz*, was staged at the Skopje Drama Theater in 1974, audiences were delighted by the playful and animated dialogue, the simple, folk-inspired plot elements, and the general theatrical approach to the production. Critics were unsure which direction this new, gifted playwright would take next, and they had to wait five years to see another play by him. It became apparent each new play would be a new experience.

*Jane Zadrogaz* marks the beginning of his career as a playwright, as well as the beginning of his association with the Skopje Drama Theater and with the director Unkovski. The subject for the play comes from Macedonian literature, specifically from folktales collected by Marko Cepenkov (1829-1920) in the nineteenth century. The story deals with an imaginary kingdom ruled by an evil queen. The kingdom is terrorized by a dragon that no one can kill. The queen is pregnant, and everyone is waiting for a prince to be born who will liberate them. The queen has been pregnant for nine years. She finally gives birth to three sons, and they attempt to kill the dragon. They are joined by Jane Zadrogaz, a small, weak mischief-maker. Jane Zadrogaz fights the dragon first, but in no time she is swallowed by him. The dragon convinces the three princes that he would like to be their father and to rule

together with their mother. The queen and the princes agree to the arrangement, but the rest of the people will not hear of it. They kill the dragon, liberate Jane Zadrogaz from his belly, and chase the queen and the princes out of the kingdom.

The play consists of ten scenes and is framed by the historical character Marko Cepenkov, who in the prologue informs the audience that today is a holiday celebrated with songs, dances, and performances, and the people will put on a performance for their enjoyment. He comes onstage again at the end of the play to thank the audience. This play-within-a-play structure Stefanovski repeats in his latest play, *Černodrinski se vraća doma*. Theater critics were in a predicament in approaching the text and the performance of *Jane Zadrogaz*, perhaps because neither followed the classical structure of a play, and the subject matter, plot, and characters were too simple to require deep analysis. But it was exactly this "lightness" and theatricality that delighted the theater public the most. The plot and characters are subservient to the rich folklore elements, especially the language. It is obvious that before working on this play, Stefanovski carefully read Cepenkov's ten-volume collection of Macedonian folklore. From this material Stefanovski includes in this play elements from folktales, laments, prayers, beliefs, blessings, curses, secret languages, descriptions of trades, diseases, curses, and more. The language and dialogue were of the type that the spectator might have heard from grandparents—archaic, yet familiar. The play is meant to be more of a theatrical piece than a dramatization of Cepenkov's folktales.

Stefanovski's second play, *Divo meso*, was written and staged a full five years after *Jane Zadrogaz*. The action in the play takes place in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, in the 1930s, on the eve of World War II. At this time in its history Macedonia was a part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Serbia's Vardar region. The play explores the social disintegration of the traditional urban family structure. Dimitriya, the family patriarch, is an invalid; he was a master bricklayer who fell and broke his legs while building his own house. Mariya, the mother, upon whom everyone depends to keep the family together, has lost her sanity. There are three sons in the family. Simon, the oldest, is a waiter and an alcoholic. He hates his job and detests his wife because she can not give him a child. Stefan works as an executive at a branch of a German automobile factory. He is the most ambitious of



the three and looks to Europe for an exit from the depressing situation in Skopje. Andreyka, the youngest, works as a salesclerk and is active in the labor movement.

The cataclysm begins with the arrival of Klaus, a representative of the German firm where Stefan works. He comes to Skopje to oversee the operations at the plant. The Skopje branch of the plant is run by Hercog, a Jew. Stefan is most excited about Klaus's arrival, because he looks to him for an opportunity to leave Skopje for a better life in Europe. Stefan and Klaus become friends, but Klaus is a homosexual and has different intentions for him. Stefan refuses his advances, and as a result loses his job and the opportunity to go to Europe. Andreyka is arrested for organizing a strike. Stefan looks to Sivić, a Serb, and Klaus to help get him out, but they both refuse, and Andreyka is sent to a labor camp. Simon is drafted into the army, from which he escapes; he is eventually found dead in the room of a prostitute.

In the final scene the total physical, social, and moral disintegration of the family is clear. The family house has been torn down to make room for an expansion of the automobile plant. The survivors—father, mother, Stefan, and Simon's wife—stand in the midst of the ruins. Mariya, the senile mother, has no concept of what has just taken place. She invites the workers who have demolished the house for some food and drink. The father plays some discordant tunes from a wooden flute that he has been carving during the entire play. Among the ruins, Stefan finds a gun that Andreyka had hidden and fires it in the air.

The title of the play, *Divo meso* (more correctly translated as "wild flesh"), comes from an expression that Mariya uses to describe her belief that if one swallows hair, it gets stuck in the throat, where it takes root and grows to the point of choking the individual. The wild flesh metaphor has been interpreted by critics to stand for the outside forces that control the destiny of each individual in the Andréevic family. Before his death, Simon tells his brother Stefan that he can already feel this flesh growing in his throat.

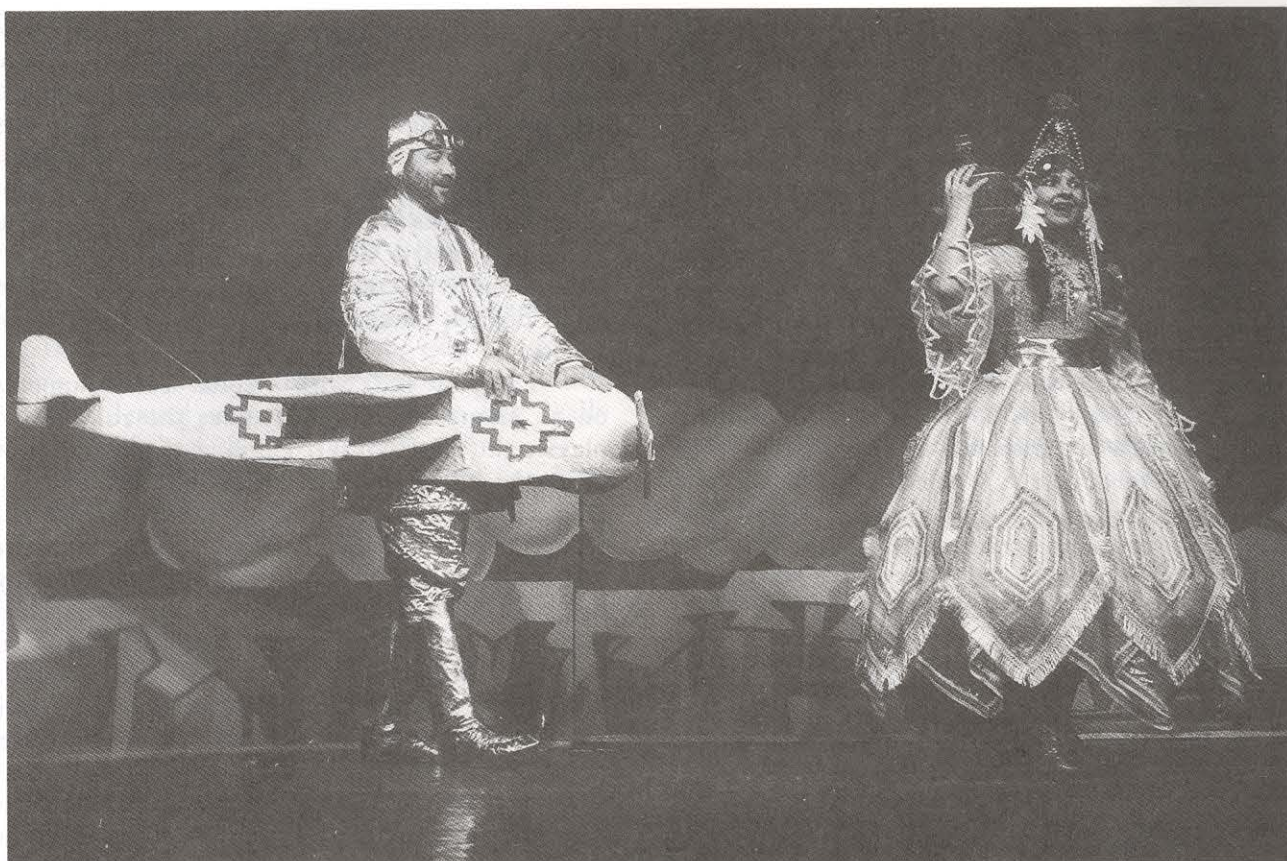
Most critics of this play agree that it is both a sociological and a political play. It shows the impact of the political and economic forces of the period on the relationships among the members of the Andréevic family and their personal reactions to the same forces. Critics have noted that each family member represents the view of a different part of Macedonian urban society on the

eve of World War II. Dimitriya, the invalid father, represents the old generation that is both resigned and ineffective. Stefan is the pragmatist and survivor, who will look even to his enemy to better his life. Andreyka is the young Communist who sees revolutionary action as the only means to end the oppressive conditions. At the end, however, she realizes that her action is useless against forces of such great magnitude. On the political level the play depicts the political situation in Macedonia during this period. Macedonia is not yet an independent state, and the language spoken by the Macedonians is considered to be a southern dialect of Serbian. Both politically and economically the region is dominated by outsiders. They are the "wild flesh" that suffocate the aspirations of the new generation.

*Let vo mesto* (Flying on the Spot, 1982), Stefanovski's third play, is set in the year 1878. This is the year that Macedonia was expected to be given independence at the Berlin Congress after the Russo-Turkish War of that same year. Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro were granted independence, but Macedonia remained under Turkish political rule and under Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek cultural domination. Macedonian schoolchildren were taught in Serbian; the economy was controlled by Greek merchants; and all of Macedonia's neighbors wanted control of its religion and churches.

The story centers around the fate of a Macedonian monastery and the individuals that have interest in it. In the priory of the monastery live two brothers, Mihaylo and Evto, Evto's wife and child, and their elderly mother, Sultana. The brothers, who are masons, are ordered by the Turkish governor and by Panaiotis, a Greek, to cover up the monastery's frescoes so that new ones can be painted in the Greek style. The conflict begins when the question is asked as to what should be the appropriate response to such an order. In the midst of this foreign political, economic, and cultural dominance, the frescoes on the walls of the monastery are the only tangible images that point to an independent Macedonian identity. Evto, a pragmatist and realist, is ready to do anything for his own survival and the survival of his family. The question of Macedonian national identity is too large for him to grasp or to be concerned with. For Mihaylo, covering up the frescoes is equivalent to wiping away Macedonian cultural history, an act that would allow foreigners to deny its existence. The characters in the play, and the conflicts among them, paint a complete picture of the political,





Scene from 1992 production by Dramski theater of Stefanovski's *Černodrinski se vraća doma* (*Černodrinski Comes Home*), a play about the father of Macedonian theater

cultural, and social conflicts of the time. When placed in the historical context of the period, the conflict is not always between Macedonians and outsiders, but among Macedonians and among outsiders as well. The conflicts among the outsiders are the result of their greed for power and domination. In *Let vo mesto*, as is characteristic for all of Stefanovski's plays, one finds no resolution to the conflict at the end of the play.

In *Hi-Fi* (1983) Stefanovski deals with the problem of oppression and with the conflicts among three generations of a contemporary family. The story in this play, as in all of Stefanovski's plays, is simple. Having spent five years in prison for murder, Boris, the grandfather, returns home to find chaos in the household. His apartment has been taken over by his grandson, Matey, who is obsessed with jazz and has long hair. He rebels against his mother and against all social order. Matey's mother represents the middle generation. She is a young widow, but her marriage had fallen apart even before her husband died in an automobile accident. Unable to deal with her son, she looks to

Boris to bring order in the house. Boris's war and prison experiences have taught him that only through force and mental torture is it possible to change the behavior of an individual and to bring order in a social group. In the second part of the play Boris attempts to forcefully reeducate his grandson. At the end he realizes the futility of such an approach; Matey has become a transvestite and a spiritually empty, submissive individual.

Thematically the play is less about a conflict between generations than it is a depiction of what can happen when force is used in moral reeducation. The title of the play reveals its central theme. Boris notices the word *Hi-Fi* on Matey's stereo and wants to know its meaning. He perverts the meaning of the word *fidelity* (faithfulness, devotion, loyalty) and believes that these are exactly the things that are missing in Matey's lifestyle. The end of the play makes it obvious that a Hi-Fi existence cannot be forcefully imposed on an individual; force creates perverted characters such as Matey and Boris. Thematically, this play is one of Stefanovski's most



universal pieces, which accounts for its immense popularity in Yugoslavia. Although the characters are Macedonian and the action is set in Macedonia, the themes are recognizable in any culture. The play was performed by fifteen theaters throughout Yugoslavia, and it was made into a feature film in 1988.

*Duplo dno* (False Bottom, 1983), Stefanovski's "confessional" play, deals with art and the role of the artist in a bureaucratized society. In a commentary about the play Stefanovski remarked: "A man who is truly alive can counteract the petrified world of oppression in three ways: through art, insanity, and revolution." The play is in three parts, labeled *Art*, *Insanity*, and *Revolution*. Each part is a play within a play. The action is set in three historical periods: part 1 is in the future, in the year 1999; part 2 takes place near the turn of the twentieth century, in 1911; and part 3 is set in the present.

Part 1 is set in a fallout shelter; an atomic war has just started. Hiding in the shelter are Božo (the minister of culture and a writer), his wife, Paraskeva, and their daughter, Kristina. They lead a monotonous existence until the entertainer, Yakov, arrives and offers to provide entertainment. Yakov asks Božo what the artist's role should be in these cataclysmic times. Božo tells him to keep taking the free sedatives that the government offers everyone. Yakov realizes that in this bureaucratized social order people are much happier in a spiritually dead existence. Although he recognizes the futility of the artist in such a world, at the end of part 1 he states that he refuses to be alive "by inertia," and he swears that he will use all his means to free the human spirit.

Part 2, *Insanity*, is set in the salon of Božo's expensively furnished house. In this part the same family appears along with Yakov, the artist, now tied in a straightjacket. Bozhin has just finished reading the manuscript of a play, which is actually part one of *Duplo dno*. Yakov asks him to comment on the characters and the action in the play. In this part Yakov withdraws from society into madness to save true art from bureaucracy. The other choice is to turn into a false artist, as did his school friend from the university, Nove. Nove, also a writer, is totally dedicated to conventional morality and order at any cost. As in part 1, Yakov fails in his attempt to show Božo that his life is spiritually empty and that bureaucracy destroys true art and individuality.

In the third part, *Revolution*, Yakov appears as an artist-revolutionary. The play begins just as

Božo completes reading parts 1 and 2 of *Duplo dno*, written by Yakov the anarchist. Yakov comes to judge Božo for his crimes against art and the freedom of the artist. Although Božo has written volumes of artistic and scholarly works, Yakov accuses him of being functionally illiterate, since his works were created without consideration for true art. Through his revolutionary act Yakov wants to create a world where art is free of all dogma, bureaucratic restrictions, and political fears.

The play ends with a coda. Yakov appears on an empty stage and assumes the role of the playwright, Stefanovski. Holding the manuscript of *Duplo dno*, he addresses the audience. The artist realizes that any role he takes against bureaucratized art is futile, but he swears that he will continue working to free the human spirit by using all his means. He throws the manuscript up in the air and leaves the stage with the statement, "Nothing is like my play, and I don't know what is my reality." This three-part play did not enjoy the popularity of Stefanovski's earlier plays. It lacks the theatrical element necessary to move the action along; it also differs stylistically from earlier plays in that Stefanovski departs from the short-scene structure. *Duplo dno* is a play of ideas, and as such it is much more interesting as a text. Through the character of Yakov, one sees clearly Stefanovski's views about the function of art in society and about his own craft.

Stefanovski's next play, *Tetovirani duši* (Tattooed Souls, 1985), deals with the lives of Macedonian émigrés in a large American city, most likely New York. Voydan, a young Macedonian graduate student, comes to the United States to conduct ethnological research on Macedonian émigrés and to search for his father, whom he has not seen for many years. He becomes disoriented because the characters he encounters do not seem to fall into the stereotyped categories he imagined before his arrival. He meets people from many walks of life and believes that he knows everything about them and the forces that move them. From the time of his arrival his positivist, Marxist ideological preconceptions clash with the reality of everyday life in America.

At the beginning Voydan believes that he can discover everything about the individuals in question by having them fill out a questionnaire. He becomes disappointed and frustrated when he discovers that the questions he is asking are irrelevant to the people in the new reality. He can not figure out how some have assimilated totally



into American society; some desperately want to assimilate but can not; some have joined the criminal world; some want to go back to their roots; some have brought their problems with them into the new world; and some have lost their sanity. His attempt to find his father ends without success. He is told by Altana, the owner of a small restaurant, that his father died in an automobile accident. Another person tells him that his father is in an insane asylum. When he meets the man from the asylum, who has his father's name, they do not recognize each other. Voydan leaves not knowing if he has really found his father.

Nothing in America seems to be like Voydan imagined; he must throw out the forms, become part of the chaos, and start his research from the beginning. In this play Stefanovski presents a picture in which reality has no recognizable definitions: it is foggy, imprecise, and moved by blind forces. The theme of the life of immigrants in America is a universal one. In this play Stefanovski avoids sentimental and nationalistic treatment of the subject, and in this sense the conflict between Voydan and his expatriates is recognizable among other émigré groups in America.

The play *Crna dupka* (Black Hole, 1988) was inspired by the folktale "Silyan the Stork," which is part of Cepenkov's collection of Macedonian folklore. The main character in *Crna dupka* is also named Silyan. Like the folktale character, he is a young man who does not care about family responsibilities. He refuses to take care of his father, his wife, and his children. He is unhappy with his job and his life, and decides to run to past and present girlfriends for comfort and pleasure. He is obsessed with sex and looks for new experiences in every encounter with a woman. In every sexual experience he looks for the ultimate pleasure. And since none of his lovers can provide it, he mistreats them.

In the second part of the play Silyan is hallucinating, and his late mother appears in his hallucination. She tells him the story of the two birds, Sive and Čule. Once upon a time they were one bird, but they were cursed by their mother to look for each other in the fields increasingly but never find each other. The scenes in the remainder of part 2 are repetitions and variations of those in part 1. Silyan watches each scene from part 1 repeat itself. He observes the characters but can not be seen by them. Various characters take the role of Silyan in each scene. From this position he can observe himself as oth-

ers saw him; he can gaze at the misfortunes of those he could have loved.

*Černodrinski se vraća doma* (Černodrinski Comes Home, 1992) is Stefanovski's most recent play. Both structurally and thematically it is the most unique of all his plays. While *Duplo dno* was his homage to art, this latest play is Stefanovski's homage to the theater craft. It was dedicated to his friend and director, Unkovski, in appreciation of twenty years of cooperation. The play is about the "father" of Macedonian theater, Voydan Černodrinski. One can get a better grasp at Stefanovski's approach in this play by reading his notes in the introduction of the published text:

We leave intentional and unintentional traces in the lives of strangers. With every action, word and mood, we touch others, strangers and acquaintances . . . In the theater these traces are thick and sticky. Every stage preserves the energy of the shadows of all those who have passed through it. In world theater, Shakespeare's traces are the deepest; in our theater, the traces left by Voydan Černodrinski . . . The play follows traces that have been covered up. Some are real and necessary, others probable and possible. . . . You make a doughnut by starting with a hole and building a ring around it with dough. The concept of the doughnut is in its organized empty middle. This play describes a circle using tangents.

The "dough" in this play consists of thirteen scenes. Each scene is actually a short play with its own plot and characters. They are all connected to the "global" text by the name *Černodrinski*. His name figures in each scene for various reasons. In scene 1, for example, a young student is trying to write an essay about Černodrinski, about whom he knows nothing. Scene 3 describes a love relationship between a married woman and a person who pretends to be a member of Černodrinski's acting group "Skrb i uteha." Each scene is a dramatization of the intentional or unintentional "traces" that Černodrinski may have left in the lives of acquaintances and strangers.

Above all, Stefanovski is an intellectual and a self-made philosopher who passionately questions, debates, and argues about any subject that deals with the unique individuality of people, with Macedonian history, and with the Macedonian psyche. Like many other Slavic intellectuals, he believes that it is much more interesting to raise the appropriate questions than to provide appropriate answers. Some of the most frequent questions and themes with which his plays are concerned include: how human beings react to



forces over which they have no control; how a contemporary Macedonian understands history; what it means to be Macedonian; what causes the breakup of traditional family structures; and what the function of art is in a bureaucratized society. Dramatic dialogue and the theater stage seem to give Stefanovski the best means to express his philosophical and moral concerns.

The style in Stefanovski's plays shows the influence of Western dramatic traditions, namely Shakespeare, Edward Bond, Beckett, and vaudeville. Stefanovski gives up entirely on the traditional play structure of acts and prefers the short scene as the basic structural unit. Many scenes in his plays are only of several lines, and each one is framed in intense dialogue. This style is appropriate for Stefanovski's dramaturgy, because on the thematic level he believes that large philosophical, historical, and moral questions are faced by simple individuals that can react to them only from their own little microcosms. Such questions and problems are irrelevant outside the world of the individual. They become relevant only at the point when they leave the world of the abstract and enter the everyday life of the individual. In Stefanovski's plays one rarely finds scenes with masses of characters or ideas that are belabored through several scenes.

Because Stefanovski is closely involved with the staging of each of his plays (he is always present for rehearsals), he has learned much about the craft of acting and directing, and in his plays he gives both director and actors flexibility to experiment with the text. The short-scene structure and emotional dialogue contribute to

this flexibility and to the wildly theatrical productions.

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