**Trnka, Jiŕí (1912-1969)**

Jiŕí Trnka was the foremost Czech puppet animator and a major influence on all subsequent Eastern European puppet animators. He trained under master puppeteer Josef Skupa, but his attempt at running his own puppet theatre failed. After successes in painting, stage design, and children’s book illustration, though, Trnka turned to animated film in 1945. Eschewing the Disney model, he directed a few cartoons, notably *Pérák a SS* (*The Chimneysweep*) and the surrealistic *Dárek* (*The Gift*) (both 1946), employing modernist elements which significantly influenced Eastern European animation (more angular character design, simple backgrounds, emphasis on end poses). He then founded his own puppet animation studio and made the first Czech animated feature, *Špalíček* (*The Czech Year,* 1947). Trnka’s shorts and features often dealt with traditional Czech subjects and virtually always featured human characters rather than anthropomorphic animals and displayed a satiric component. His wooden puppets’ faces generally had unmoving painted features; personalities and emotions were conveyed through gesture, framing, and lighting. Though most Trnka films earned awards and critical praise, his last short, *Ruka* (*The Hand*, 1965), remains his most renowned work -- a grim tale of artistic freedom and oppression. It depicts a little sculptor/potter confronted by a giant hand demanding he make a monument in its image. Resisting to the end, the artist dies and then, ironically, is memorialized by the hand. The communist Czech government banned *The Hand* for two decades.

*[‘Jiŕí* *Trnka’ is pronounced ‘Yershy Trinka’.]*

**References and Further Reading**

Bendazzi, G. (1994) *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Boček, J. (1965) *Jiŕí Trnka: Artist and Puppet Master.* With illustrations by Jiŕí Trnka. Prague: Artia.

**Filmography (Films Directed by Trnka)**

*Zasadil dědek řepu [Grandpa Planted a Beet]* Animated cartoon (1945)

*Dárek [The Gift]* Animated cartoon (1946)

*Pérák a SS [The Chimneysweep]* Animated cartoon (1946)

*Zvířátka a petrovští [The Animals and the Brigands]* Animated cartoon (1946)

*Špalíček [The Czech Year]* Puppet feature (1947)

## Císařův slavík *[The Emperor’s nightingale]* Puppet feature based on a Hans Christian Andersen tale (1948)

*Árie prérie [The Song of the Prairie]* Puppet short, spoof of American westerns (1949)

*Román s basou [The Story of the Double-Bass]* Puppet short based on an Anton Chekh`ov short story (1949)

*Bajaja[Bayaya]* Puppet feature (1950)

*Čertův mlýn [The Devil’s Mill]* Puppet short (1951)

*O zlaté rybce [The Golden Fish]* Animated cartoon (1951)

*Veselý cirkus [The Happy Circus]* Paper cut-out animation (1951)

*Jak stařeček měnil až vyměnil [How Grandpa Changed till Nothing Was Left]* Animated cartoon (1952)

*Kuťásek a Kutilka [Kutasek and Kutilka]* Puppet short (1952)

*Staré pověsti české [Old Czech Legends]* Puppet feature (1953)

*Dva mrazíci [The Two Frosts]* Animated cartoon (1954)

*Cirkus Hurvínek [Circus Hurvinek]* Puppet short (1955)

*Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka [The Good Soldier Schweik]* Puppet feature based on the Jaroslav Hašek novel (1954)

## Sen noci svatojánské *[A Midsummer Night’s Dream]* Puppet feature without dialogue based on Shakespeare’s play (1959)

*Vášeň [The Passion]* Puppet short (1962)

## Kybernetická babička *[The Cybernetic Grandma]* Puppet short (1963)

## *Archanděl Gabriel a paní Husa* *[****The Archangel Gabriel and Mrs. Goose]*Puppet short (1964)**

*Ruka* [*The Hand*] Puppet short (1965)

**Selected Examples of Trnka’s Book Illustrations**

Bolliger, M. (1970) *The Fireflies*. With illustrations by Jiŕí Trnka. New York: Atheneum.

Horák, J. and Carruth, J. (1973) *Folk and Fairy Tales from Bohemia.* With illustrations by Jiŕí Trnka. London: Hamlyn.

**Paratextual material?**

Photo of Trnka on Schweik set: <http://www.kratkyfilm.com/galerie/photos/photo59.html>

Figures from Emperor’s Nightingale:

<http://www.kratkyfilm.com/galerie/photos/photo15.html>

(Both from Kratky Film Studio site)

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