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PRESS RELEASE

The Lure and Mystery of the Klementinum Manuscripts of the 13th-14th Centuries

Nové Hrady 18th May – 20th June 2007

The Nové Hrady Residence, open daily from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm

The touring exhibition *Půvaby a tajemství klementinských rukopisů 13. - 14. století/ The Lure and Mystery of the Klementinum Manuscripts of the 13th-14th Centuries*, organised by the **National Library of the Czech Republic**, is open to the public in **Nové Hrady**, Southern Bohemia, from May 18th to June 20th. It is housed in restored spaces of the historical seat of the Buquoy Family, known as **The Nové Hrady Residence**. The National Library thus continues the tradition of touring exhibitions in Bohemia. The exhibition is organised by the National Library of the Czech Republic in association with The Town of Nové Hrady and the Residence Nové Hrady a.s. (joint-stock company), and it is held under the auspices of the Governor of the Region of South Bohemia RNDr. Jan Zahradník. The touring exhibition of the Clementinum manuscripts, to be presented also in Český Krumlov (The E. Schiele Gallery) this September, could be realised thanks to the kind support of **Budějovický Budvar**, the General Sponsor of the National Library of the Czech Republic.

The National Library displays hand-made copies of unique manuscript works, such as *The Paris Fragment of the Latin Translation of the Chronicle of the So-Called Dalimil*, *The Velislaus Bible*, *Passional of Abbess Kunigunde*, *Antifonary of Sedlec*, and *A Pontifical of Renauld de Bar*, the value of which is around CZK two million. Not only is the exhibition aimed at simple presenting the manuscripts themselves, but it also includes interesting facts and moments connected with the displayed works. Each manuscript is featured as an individual work that originated in specific circumstances of the time and for the certain cultural and spiritual environment. The dates of origin of the unique manuscripts range from the 13th to the 14th centuries, when the Czech lands unusually flourished both politically and culturally. On the individual folios of the manuscripts, there is depicted in details the period of the last Přemyslid Kings of the 13th century as well as the unique advanced period of the 14th century, both periods are connected with the Luxembourgs on the Czech throne, above all with the greatest of them - Roman Emperor and Czech King Charles IV.

The works, selected for the exhibition, help to map significant phenomena in the life of the medieval society. The series is organised chronologically, it starts with the oldest of the exhibits, the large **Antifonary of Sedlec** that was given its name after the original place of discovery. The Antifonary shows the distant and attractive world of the 13th century, the period of the Přemyslid Kings on the very turn of the Romanesque and Gothic styles. For example, there is a scene presenting the Virgin Mary and the Jesus Baby that is really

extraordinary in delicacy of execution and sublimity. The manuscript also shows the world of crusades.

Passional of Abbess Kunigunde invites the visitors to enter the world of the 14th century. It hides in itself several "*the most ..*". The manuscript originated and was kept in the rich Cloister of St. George at the Prague Castle, the oldest monastery in the Czech lands, where the Přemyslid princesses and dowagers found their place of shelter as well as the daughters of eminent Czech noble families. Part of the cloister was also a library, unusually large at the time. Most part of its collections has been preserved in the present National Library and the Passional of the Abbess Kunhuta is one of the most precious works preserved. Its mystical contents ranks the Passional among the most interesting works of the first half of the 14th century. On the title page, there is portrayed enthroned the purchaser of the manuscript - Přemyslid Princess and a daughter of Czech King Přemysl Otakar II, the Abbess Kunhuta, as well as the author of a part of the texts - the main inquisitor of the Czech royal court Kolda of Koldice, and also the author of the other part of texts, scribe and illuminator, the Canon Beneš.

The Church is a complicated organism, where on the one hand there are monasteries, convents and cloisters, and on the other hand, there is the secular Church, like bishops, clergy etc. A lot of manuscripts, often richly and clearly decorated, were produced especially for education of priests. Among them we can also count the so-called **Pontifical of Regnaud de Bar**, representing in our collections the works that originated out of the Czech lands, this one comes from France. Its purchaser was the Bishop Regnaud de Bar, famous for his extremely ambitious nature and positive relation to everything beautiful. On the pages of the manuscripts, apart from the serious scenes related to the individual parts of the Mass, there is depicted the "*opposite*" world of the medieval society - a playful whirl of allegorical animals and caricatured figures.

The Velislaus Bible represents a natural bridge between the monastery and the court. Its production was ordered by the Protonotary Velislaus, an outstanding personality of the Luxembourg court. The work comes from the mid-14th century and was made in the form of cartoons. The richness of depicted scenes from both The Bible and the lives of saints surprises us still nowadays. The unique character of The Velislaus Bible rests i.a. in the fact that hundreds of drawings also include scenes from the every-day life of the medieval people, like the details of clothes, crafts, and military weapons.

Of course, we cannot omit one of the most important discoveries of the recent time - **the Paris Fragment of the Latin Translation of the Chronicle of the So-Called Dalimil**. Through the mediation of rich illuminations, the manuscript records scenes from the earliest Czech history. Its origin has not been revealed yet. We suppose that it was made for a rich purchaser, maybe even for Charles IV himself, in all probability in the 1330s or the 1340s. The Czech Republic represented by the National Library, acquired the manuscript in the auction in Paris for EUR 339 000 on March 18th 2005. The funds for the purchase were given by the Czech Government. There is also another copy of **The Chronicle of the So-Called Dalimil** on display, it is its younger Czech version. Its text could serve the Czech nation as a guideline to look for its own national pride. Incidentally, the text itself makes a certain imaginary flagship of Czech aristocracy with St. Wenceslas, the patron saint of the Czech lands, in the vanguard.

The exhibition *The Lure and Mystery of the Klementinum Manuscripts of the 13th-14th Centuries* was completed by **PhDr. Renáta Modráková** from the Manuscripts and Early Printed Books Department, National Library of the Czech Republic. As early as during her studies at the Philosophical Faculty, Charles University, Prague, she focused her attention on the world of medieval manuscript monuments and history of women's Benedictine cloisters in the Czech lands. In this connection, she tries to capture the interesting world of medieval women's cloisters and their position in the society of the time as well as to make the medieval monuments accessible to the large public.

The Nové Hradý Residence

It is not quite three years ago, when the reconstruction works were started, and now a part of the unique historical Buquoy Residence is being open to the public on the occasion of the exhibition *The Lure and Mystery of the Klementinum Manuscripts of the 13th-14th Centuries*. The Residence dominates the Town of Nové Hradý, being located on the whole eastern part of its square. ***"Restoration of the buildings is one of the greatest works set up in last years by our company that is majority owner of the a.s. Residence. Our objective was to give the town back a unique architectural monument and renew its spa tradition, whose renown had lasted until the 19th century,"*** says Jan Nedvěď, Chairman of the Managing Board, MANE HOLDING a.s. (joint-stock company) He reminds that in less than three years they managed to finish three building periods of the reconstruction and thanks to that it is possible now to open one part of the restored Residence. Total reconstruction expenditures reached nearly CZK 230 million. Out of that most part was given by the joint-stock company Residence Nové Hradý a.s. The significant part of the costs was also covered by grants from the European Union, the South Bohemia Region, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Culture. In this connection, it should be mentioned the support of most part of the regional representatives and deputies of the South Bohemia Region, no matter what political party they are.

In the last autumn we started the third period of building works that include, among other, the roofing of the second courtyard. Restored is also the most imposing space - the Rococo Hall, which houses now the aforementioned unique exhibition of the Clementinum manuscripts and then, congresses, balls, and festive meetings of the town council will be organised there.

History of the Residence is connected with the Count Buquoy family. An originally separate Rosenberg's house was incorporated into the complex of buildings, constructed between 1634 and 1644 by Countess Marie Magdalena, the dowager of the Imperial General, Count Karel Bonaventura Buquoy, the winner of the Battle of the White Mountain. A higher southern wing was built as late as 1718. The Buquoy family had used the Nové Hradý Residence as their main mansion until 1806, when they moved in a newly built castle at the outskirts of the town.

Both the management of the company and that of the Town are sure that the opening of the Hall to the public, together with the restaurants and cafés, is the first step to change the Residence into a modern spa centre offering the capacity of 160 beds and the corresponding number of restaurants to satisfy the guests. The central spa hotel will offer the guests complex services including massages, mudpack and mud bath, and in addition to that, the guest services will be complemented by those of the reconstructed spa Lázněčky in Terčino údolí (Valley).

"To save this important cultural monument is the priority for the Town. I hope that as soon as 2008 the spa complex will start to work according to our ideas and Nové Hradý will become an important tourist centre in the south of Bohemia," emphasizes Mayor Vladimír Hokr, who reminds that the Town bought the Residence in 1996 for CZK 10 million from the company Státní lesy in a very bad condition. Thanks to the support of the State, the Town started to reconstruct it gradually, but the decisive step to renew its faded beauty was made thanks to the cooperation with a strategic partner that is the Residence joint-stock company.

The Town of Nové Hradý

Nové Hradý is a border town with many historical monuments. It is a starting point of the Novohradsko region and the Novohradské Mountains. The earliest preserved written record about the Nové Hradý Castle dates back to 1279 and, as soon as 1284, Nové Hradý are mentioned as a town. In 1359, the lords of Landštejn sold it to brothers Petr, Jošt, Oldřich, and Jan of Rosenberg. The town was fortified by ramparts in the 2nd half of the 14th century and its citizens were given similar rights and privileges like the inhabitants of royal towns. The Town of Nové Hradý can take advantage of its rich history still at present, since it can offer the tourists a number of interesting monuments. Apart from the aforementioned Castle, it

is namely the Chateau surrounded with a park, the monastery, the church, the Buquoy Residence, the Baroque pharmacy, the Buquoy vault, the Nové Hrady blacksmith's shop and the Town Hall. In the south-west of the Town, there is located the National Natural Monument Tereziino údolí (Valley) - a romantic park with a man-made fall. On the hillock above the valley, it is to be found the medieval fortress Cuknštejn, ranked among the best preserved and the most interesting monuments of the sort in South Bohemia.

The population of Nové Hrady is 2 580 people at present. Tourist season has already started there. The most important monuments of the Town are open to the public as part of the project *Welcome to The Region of Nové Hrady*. In summer, you can come to various cultural events organised there, such as the festival of sacral music **Musica sacra** (June 1st-3rd), in which participate the choirs from Bohemia, Moravia, Vienna, and Lower Austria, or the festival of harmonic music **Novohradské znění** (July 13th-15th). During the tourist season, the Town of Nové Hrady also organises many other cultural, sports and social events and symposiums. More detailed information are to be found at: www.novehrady.cz.

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**18th May – 20th June 2007 / Open daily 10.00 am– 5.00 pm
The Nové Hrady Residence – Square of Nové Hrady
Admission fee: CZK 30,-**

Cooperation on the Project: Barbora Šiftová

Sponsors of the Exhibition

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