



GRAND HOTEL BOHEMIA
PRAGUE



Boccaccio Ballroom

For over 80 years the breathtaking beauty of this most charming part of the Grand Hotel Bohemia has been hidden under the surface. When Mr. Steiner opened his hotel in 1927, he also introduced an underground ballroom Boccaccio to the public. A masterpiece of artificial marble, gold and crystal glass unique in its glittering details, immediately became one of the favorite places for Prague's high society's social events. Afternoon "5 o'clock teas" and evening "Soirées dansantes" were held daily to entertain people like Jan Masaryk, a Minister for Foreign Affairs, or the US ambassador to the Czech Republic and many others. It was said that the whole Masaryk family (including Tomas G. Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia) had reserved the huge box over the bar area and therefore it is called a "Presidential Box" nowadays.

In the afternoon, ladies arrived with their daughters to introduce them to the high society and search for a possible husband. Later in the night, the place turned into the most luxury nightclub in Prague – strictly men only. Friendships were sealed, business was discussed and politics was made in a company of beautiful girls, sparkling wines and Cuban cigars. A couple of Czech movies remembering these times were made here. Boccaccio was very often, even in times of the communist rule, used as a movie interior. It was so opulent, that it excellently fit the communist image of "a capitalist place of vices and filth". Just check some of the movies' names "Devil with an Angel Face", "Angel Seducing Devil" or "The Sinful People of Prague".

Nevertheless, when the communists took over the hotel, they did not only shoot the movies about "bad old times", but they also organized wild parties for the party officials, foreign visitors and just for their fun too. It is said that some of the parties were so wild that even gunshots holes were found in the ceiling during the reconstruction in 1993. The parties and a lack of care for 40 years meant the same for the Boccaccio as for the rest of the hotel. Fading off gold decorations, broken mirrors and light fixtures, dirty walls and furniture, the Boccaccio shone bright with its name throughout the times – reminding us of Giovanni Boccaccio and his Decameron.

In 1993, the reconstruction started to bring back the best times of the Boccaccio. Artificial marble was restored, all wall decorations and paintings were recovered and newly gilded, statues of little cupids, hanging music instruments or arrows of love just under the ceiling were carefully reconstructed, mirrors and light fixtures replaced. And despite the horrible state before the reconstruction, the original beauty has been saved.

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Today you can admire the original parquet floor made of wooden cassettes. Each cassette consists of 9 different types of oriental wood. Time and thousands of dancing shoes made it so hard that it even survived a huge flood in 2002, when it was full of the river Vltava water for 3 days. The floor is placed on a wooden grid to be flexible for dancers' feet. The feet don't hurt so much and you can stay for another drink.

The central chandelier also escaped the damage, was carefully taken down and each of its 4000 hand-made pieces was cleaned and hung back so you can admire its glittering beauty today.

At present, the Boccaccio still remains one of the most interesting ballrooms in Prague. It is often used for celebrations, parties and weddings as well as seminars and conferences. It does not serve its initial purpose anymore – as a dancing ballroom or a nightclub, but it is definitely as beautiful as it was when Mr. Steiner introduced it to public.

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