

PRESS RELEASE

Real-life stories of persecuted priest, rebel, psychiatrist and agent. Divadelná Nitra will present their international and world premieres.

23 September 2013, Nitra – The stories of a psychiatrist, young rebel, secretly ordained priest, dissident or bricklayer – true stories of people whose lives definitely changed due to the communist regime, will be brought on stage at the Divadelná Nitra, starting on 27 September and running until 2 October. Its main programme will be dominated by the productions of the unique project *Parallel Lives – 20th Century through the Eyes of Secret Police*. The spectators will have a chance to see international and world premieres of six productions from six European countries prepared exclusively for the Divadelná Nitra.

The Slovak team of artists from the Bratislava-based SkRAT Theatre – director, actor and playwright [Dušan Vicen](#), and composer, actor and director [Ľubomír Burgr](#) have centred their production *The Inside of the Inside (Airing in Secret Police Archives in Two Acts with an Intermission)* around the still-unsolved case of the peculiar death of underground priest and double agent Přemysl Coufal of 1981. The ŠtB had swept the case under the carpet, and another controversial thing is the fact that in 1989, after the revolution, Slovak General Prosecution froze the case for 50 years. Therefore the authors did not have access to the file itself, but they managed to collect enough contemporary materials, which they consulted with historians at the Nation's Memory Institute. The second part of the production entitled *Paranoia Querulans* examines the machinery of relations between high-ranking secret police officers.

Czech composer and librettist [Aleš Březina](#) and award-winning playwright and director [Petr Zelenka](#) will bring onto the festival stage the only opera at the festival – *Toufar – The Torture Games*. Its central theme is the story of the “Číhošť miracle” of 1949, of which the ŠtB accused and soon after tortured to death innocent priest Josef Toufar. In their chamber opera, the authors compare Toufar's story with the legend of martyr St. Jan Sarkander. Apart from that, the opera raises the issue of the relations between two powers – the church and the state. Starring in the production, opera diva Soňa Červená will be accompanied by a children's choir and by musicians who will play instruments quite atypical for opera – a keyboard synthesizer designed by an American futurologist, electric guitar, percussions and cimbalom. The chamber opera *Toufar* celebrated its Czech premieres on 18 and 19 September 2013 at the National Theatre Opera in Prague.

In his production entitled *My File and I*, German director [Clemens Bechtel](#) will bring on stage nine real men and women from Dresden, whose lives have been cruelly affected by German secret police Stasi. Right in front of the audience they will read excerpts from their files. One of them will be Jürgen, who at the age of 14 found some western propaganda leaflets in the woods and his own father reported him for this to the secret police, another one is

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Peter, whose desire to study brought him to Moscow where he became a spy and real Stasi agent.

In her production entitled *Typography Majuscule (Performing Archives)*, world-famous Romanian playwright and director [Gianina Cărbunariu](#) will present a strong, almost ancient story of a young hero, who rebelled against the rules of his small town and the laws of his big country. His slogans written in chalk called for freedom in a totalitarian state. The production shows the practices of the Romanian secret police Securitate who, dismayed by this deed, at first were not able to discover the author of the slogans, but eventually gave the young rebel a real hard time. Mugur, aged only 16, had to be subjected to terrible interrogations, his father turned away from him, only his mother stayed beside him until the end. What is interesting about this production is that the actors who play the roles of Mugur's parents were born in the same year as the hero of this piece – in 1965, and in contradiction to Mugur's story they will include in the production their own childhood memories.



The Hungarian team of young director Dániel D. Kovács (<http://parallel-lives.eu/artist/daniel-kovacs/>) and playwright Péter Závada (<http://parallel-lives.eu/artist/peter-zavada/>) set their production entitled *Reflex (Meltdown)* in a mental institution, which during the era of communism became a “storage place” for political prisoners. The main storyline is the story of a young female psychiatrist whom the communist system turned into a psychiatric patient. In this absurd and humorous production, the mental hospital becomes a metaphor for the communist society where no one could be sure of anything and where being paranoid did not necessarily mean you were not being spied on.

For the sake of their production *Follow Me*, Polish director Radek Rychcik (<http://parallel-lives.eu/artist/radek-rychcik/>) and author of the text Tomasz Kireńczuk (<http://parallel-lives.eu/artist/tomasz-kirenczuk/>) drew inspiration from the archives of the state memory institution. That is why though already in the stage of preparing the script for the *Parallel Lives* project, they changed the intended theme. In their production intertwine the life stories of an infamous secret police agent and a young actress, daughter of a Polish dissident and emigrant, who plays herself, which results in a blend of fiction and reality.

Straight after the *Parallel Lives* performances, spectators will have a chance to meet and talk to the creators in debates.

After being featured at the Divadelná Nitra, these productions will be regularly played at the respective co-production theatres as part of their repertoire, and in 2014 they will be presented in the countries participating in the project in form of a touring *Parallel Lives Mini-Festival*. Before that happens, Divadelná Nitra will present two of the productions to the audience of the European Capital of Culture – Košice 2013. On 20 and 21 November 2013, the Slovak production *The Inside of the Inside* of the SkRAT Theatre and the production *Reflex* of the Hungarian *Sputnik Shipping Company* will be presented at the Kasárne/Kulturpark cultural centre in Košice.

During the Divadelná Nitra, the international *Parallel Lives* project will also bring to Nitra interesting accompanying *Parallel Lives PLUS* events, including

a public debate *Why memory?* discussing secret police corps and their activities before 1989. In it Michal Havran will host Romanian historian Marius Oprea and other interesting guests. In cooperation with the Slovak Nation's Memory Institute, an exhibition entitled *Top Secret* will be held revealing the history of the ŠtB in Slovakia. Visitors will also be able to enjoy an outdoor installation in the pedestrian street and on the Svätopluk Square entitled *Prague through the Lens of the Secret Police*. There will also be film screenings in the framework of the *Cinema PLUS* section. The Divadelná Nitra will pre-premiere a new documentary film by Peter Kerekes *Velvet Terrorists* (Zamatoví teroristi), and spectators will also have a chance to see award-winning Slovak and Czech films *Cervanová Cause* (Kauza Cervanová), *Murderer by Profession – The Suffering of Judge Karl Vaš* (Vrahem z povolání – utrpení soudce Karla Vaše) and *In the Shadow* (V tieni).



Tickets can still be purchased online directly on the festival website www.nitrafest.sk, or at the box office in the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra, Monday to Friday, 13.00 to 17.00.

Follow all the latest news about the Parallel Lives project at www.parallel-lives.eu, and the Divadelná Nitra at www.nitrafest.sk and <http://www.facebook.com/divadelna.nitra>

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