



**Divadelná Nitra showed all of THE FACES OF FREEDOM, attracting over 6000 visitors**

Hoaxes, conspiracy theories and fake news took centre stage in a play titled *Moral Insanity*, Tuesday's final performance in the main programme of the 28th International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra. With a solo performance under the guidance of director Júlia Rázusová, actor Peter Brajerčík enthralled the audience with his powerful dramatic delivery and demonstrated just how fragile the freedom of speech can be. The play, which had garnered six nominations for the prestigious DOSKY theatre award, was received with a long round of applause.

On Wednesday, the festival continued with its working programme. As usual, the day began with morning artist talks. In the afternoon, these were followed by a unique festival evaluation event joined by participants from four educational and community programmes organised by Association Divadelná Nitra.

The six day-long celebration of theatre (27 September – 2 October 2019), themed THE FACES OF FREEDOM, presented 12 productions by theatre companies from six different countries: **Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Russia, Germany**, and – of course – **Slovakia**. The main and accompanying programme revolved around a common theme related to the 30th anniversary of the collapse of totalitarianism. It proved an occasion to commemorate the freedoms we have gained and a source of inspiration to reflect on the forms of freedom in the world as it is today.



20 performances featured in the festival's main programme were seen by 3 900 spectators. The off-programme, with 58 events, clocked up almost 2 000 visitors. The working programme, including artist talks and post-performance discussions, saw 350 participants. Overall, more than 6 000 visitors attended performances and events in the main, accompanying and working programme, arduously prepared all year-round by the organising team of the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra.

“We have offered a diverse programme, rousing interest, inspiring discussions and leaving a mark in the minds of our visitors. This year's theme, **THE FACES OF FREEDOM**, captivated both the public and media, it helped us identify the ideas involved in the individual works, and connected the main and off-programme, which produced a novel synergy. Most fascinating of all was to see how certain productions or accompanying events inspired our visitors. Either with their theme or form, or with a highly professional rendition. From the shocking introductory opera by the Czech national theatre to the final visual-musical-physical meditation by an independent Slovak collective. From performances and happenings for children to public discussions on important socio-political issues. The many faces of freedom we have explored in the main programme have been joined by another at the festival, the **freedom of the audience**,” said festival director Darina Kárová.

Divadelná Nitra 2019 opened ceremonially with a performance of ***Sternenhoch***, this season's hit opera from the neighbouring Czech Republic. The show was met with a thundering applause from the audience.

“Ivan Acher, who authored the music and congenial libretto, owns up to the vices and virtues of opera without any prejudice. He can compose marvellously cantabile numbers, he has a reliable sense for musical-dramaturgical contrast, works magic with tension and moments of surprise, and does not shy from expressiveness or pathos. He does not pose nor overly ‘intellectualize’ but simply draws in the audience into his musical-dramatic swirl,” music theorist Michaela Mojžišová reported.

The Bratislava Puppet Theatre undertook to find and tear down walls between those that are closest with their play ***Stories of Walls***, attracting schoolchildren on the very first day of the festival. One day later, they offered the same experience for both children and adult audiences. The presence of puppet theatre in the main programme was appreciated by the expert community at festival discussions.



The 28th year of Divadelná Nitra in particular saw lively interest in discussions with creators. After each performance, many audience members – both laymen and critics – raised interesting questions about the details of the plays' creation and production.

Saturday evening offered audiences a curious view of a crumbling relationship between a nearly impeccable pair through the eyes of a dog – a bull terrier bitch. **Holy Noodle** surprised festival visitors with an ethereal set design, a kitsch aesthetic and brisk dialogues. Later that day, the Great Hall of the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra was filled for a performance of **The Bible**, starring actor and theatre director at Divadlo Aréna, Juraj Kukura. His dramatic reading of Holy Scripture was enhanced in a musical-visual experience accompanied by the Slovak Chambre Orchestra.

On Sunday, Russian collective Teatr.doc staged their absurd comedy **A Man from Podolsk**. A pointless interrogation by police rendered in a perfectly unaffectionate style brought both laughter and chills to the spectators. In turn, Nitra's Andrej Bagar Theatre presented an adaptation of Heller's **Catch-22**. The studio suddenly transformed into a war zone, where planes zipped past the audience's heads, soldiers marched in line and actors excelled.

On Monday, the Hungarian production **Addressless – Vagabond Role Game** exposed visitors to social choice in an interactive play that took place in a culture house on the outskirts of Nitra. The audience actively partook in the fates of the protagonists – homeless people, as the course of the game was determined by their choices. A German production titled **Second Essay on Gymnastics** presented a theatrical catalogue of grotesque gymnastics figures, drawing on the results of research about the history of the German 'Turnen' athletic movement and its ideological backdrop in the past 200 years. **The Bacchae** transported us to the magical world of the Ancients with distinctive costumes, having earned the play a place on the shortlist for DOSKY. The actors from the Drama of the Slovak National Theatre paid careful attention to Euripides' text and adapted it in a modern idiom.

The final day of the main programme featured **The Depths**, a play by Czech collective Warriot Ideal, who put on an exciting stage performance with objects resembling an existential clown show. In **eu.genus**, the audience literally stepped



into an art atelier and musical studio and also figuratively into the minds of the creators as they reflected on their own lineage and identity. The main programme concluded with ***Moral Insanity***. This monodrama starring Peter Brajerčík warned of a phenomenon that plagues today's world and put the freedom of expression to a difficult test.

Various artistic achievements by productions selected in the main festival programme at Divadelná Nitra earned altogether 9 nominations for the DOSKY theatre season award.

Over the weekend, the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra featured almost 60 events in the off-programme – exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, discussions as well as events for children. The most notable among these included the exhibition **Podoby slobody / Faces of Freedom** organised by the Nitra Gallery (exhibitions runs until 24 November), discussions organised by the project **Agora Nitra** – a debate on the topic of freedom of faith and religion titled **A Christian, a Muslim and a Jew...**, a discussion on freedom of expression and the media in the V4 countries by **.pod lampou**, an ecological debate titled **(un)freedom in saving planet Earth**, and a digest of all sorts of freedoms at a live-streamed debate by **Café Európa**.

The square also saw lively commotion, with concerts and the Festival Tent, where visitors could also see a performance by Dano Heriban and his group **Something Amusing**.

The **Festival for Children** section featured several dozen events – theatre performances, workshops, games and happenings. At the Synagogue, **Young Theatre** presented pieces for an adult audience created by students or amateur collectives from Nitra and Slovakia. The Festival Tent was stage to other plays on the topic of different freedoms.

The weekend's off-programme culminated with the **Nitra White Night**, which included a guided tour through exhibition venues at Nitra's cultural institutions, as well as a concert, theatre performances and a balloon parade.



This year, too, and for the fourth time in a row, Divadelná Nitra welcomed young critics from the V4 countries and countries of the Eastern Partnership. The seminar **V4@Theatre Critics Residency**, a creative platform for theatre critics up to the age of 35, joined 18 critics and two mentors from 11 different countries.

Divadelná Nitra 2019 also continued with its year-round informal education project about theatre titled **How to Understand Theatre**, organised since 2008. The second part of the educational programme, **Visit at a Theatre Festival**, saw 15 participating students from three art schools (Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Nitra) and a mentor from the Czech Republic.

The festival also featured presentations by other educational community projects organised by Association Divadelná Nitra, such as **This is Art, Too** and **A Tulip for You**, the outputs and plans of a new international project titled **Be SpectACTIVE!**, as well as a project by the independent culture network Anténa called **School of Lighting Design**.

Nitra welcomed more than 150 professionals from the artistic, production, technical and organising teams of the collectives featured in the main programme and over 100 performers and staff in the accompanying programme.

Divadelná Nitra 2019 was prepared by an organising team of 23 members. As usual, this year would not have been possible without the help of volunteers, who have been a traditional part of the festival since its earliest years. Over 60 young people offered help in organising and shaping the atmosphere of the festival.

The final goodbye to the crews, guests and audiences also included a thanks to all those who contributed to the organisation of the 28th edition of the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra: 4 main co-organisers, 17 co-organisers, 17 donors from Slovakia and abroad, 43 partners, 5 main media partners and 13 media partners.

Divadelná Nitra 2019 is over. We already look forward to the 29th year of the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra, scheduled for 25 – 30 September



2020. For all information, please visit: [www.nitrafest.sk](http://www.nitrafest.sk) and [www.facebook.com/divadelna.nitra](https://www.facebook.com/divadelna.nitra)

*The International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2019 was held under the auspices of the Chairman of the Nitra Self-Governing Region, Milan Belica, and Mayor of the City of Nitra, Marek Hattas.*

**Main organiser of the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra:**

Association Divadelná Nitra

**Main co-organisers:**

Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra, Karol Spišák Old Theatre in Nitra, Nitra Self-Governing Region, City of Nitra

**Co-organisers:**

Anténa – Network for Independent Culture, Amnesty International, Critical Mass Nitra, Theatre Institute Bratislava, Esorg, Febiofest, Hidepark Nitra, Documentary Film Institute, Prague, Kinoklub Tatra Nitra, Karol Kmeťko Regional Library in Nitra, Regional Education Centre in Nitra, Motolino, Nitra Gallery, Prince Pribina Primary School, Primary Boarding School for Blind and Visually Impaired Children in Bratislava, Pokoj a dobro (c.a.), Nitra Museum, Post Bellum SK, Mareena, Milan Šimečka Foundation, Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation – Trees of Freedom, 'Nitra, Bike Up!', Stokráska, Dance Festival Prague, J. Rosinský Arts Elementary in Nitra.

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