

DIVADELNÁ NITRA
ÚZEMIE ÉTOS/TERRITORY ETHOS
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Art boldly reflecting on society and politics. This is one of the faces of Divadelná Nitra 2020

2020 was officially declared the Year of Slovak Theatre. Celebrations were cut short unexpectedly by the coronavirus outbreak, and theatre was suddenly put to a historic trial. Events that affected Slovak society – and, with it, art – are the theme of several productions programmed for the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra (25 – 30 September 2020). However, they do not remain events confined to the past but form overlaps with the present and provoke important questions about morality.

Three decades ago, they spoke from the stands, jingled their keys and believed in freedom and democracy. Emília Vášaryová, Emil Horváth, František Kovár, Richard Stanke, Ingrid Timková and numerous other **actors were instrumental in the Velvet Revolution and nowadays still appear before public gatherings to represent the voice of society. No Show Tonight** from the Slovak National Theatre allows us to reminisce about the role of theatre-makers during November 1989 but also to see how it is reflected by the youngest acting generation. This documentary-fantastical cabaret, a collaboration between Czech director Jiří Havelka and an intergenerational team of actors, reconstructs the revolutionary events in an intelligent, original and often witty kaleidoscope of scenes. *“The creators polemicise – sometimes more, sometimes less theatrically – about ways in which the values actors represent on stage imprint themselves in their civil attitudes, about what is theatre, what reality, and whether there is any solid boundary between the two. They point out the vulnerability and sometimes idealism and naiveté of artists who have in good faith aided and still aid the activation of civil society in Slovakia, though frequently to mixed results,”* writes curator Milo Juráni, who believes what spectators will carry away will depend on their age and experience, as well as their sympathies toward a certain view or ideology. Accordingly, they might see nostalgia, a critical view of the intermingling of politics and art, or discern associations with the present day. *“While society faces the impacts and consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, we once again see how weak a priority culture has been in the public sphere. While No Show Tonight confirms our nation’s first stage is open to current trends, risk and creative experiment, it is also a useful production about the value of art, artists, and the ethos involved in its making,”* adds Juráni.



They think money gives them all the power in the world and that they can buy anything and anyone. **The Czech Comedy about the Rich Man and Lazarus**, a Biblical revival rehearsed at the Slovak Chambre Theatre in Martin, **unmasks and brutally pillories the pride and egoism of all such people**. This old Renaissance morality play by Pavel Kyrmezer couched in Biblical Czech remains relevant even 450 years after it first saw the light of day, and in a production by Lukáš Brutovský holds up a mercilessly critical mirror to today's consumer-materialist society, so effectively in fact as to bitterly embarrass the spectator. *"Whether today's 'Rich Men' are certain political elites, showbiz celebrities, or the oligarch crème de la crème, and whether we take Lazarus as a token for a migrant or a pauper from one of Slovakia's hunger valleys, we are all equal in the hour of death. This message rings loud in the Martin production,"* observes curator Martina Mašlárová. The tight-knit actors' team delivers a focused performance dominated by Tomáš Mischura as the smug egotistical Rich Man. *"Good theatre should reflect the time when it is made; to me, the festival is a place of meeting, accumulation or collision between these reflections of our age. The Czech Comedy about the Rich Man and Lazarus is a morality play, and that is no common sight in theatres these days. We have approached it as one big, decadent party, and it is up to the audience if they choose to quietly look on or join in,"* says Mischura.

The Slovak National Uprising and the critical days of World War II have never been so close. A unique experience is promised in one of the first pieces of immersive drama staged in a traditional theatre in Slovakia titled **Silent Night, Lightless Night**. The audience will begin their adventure with a shuttle from Nitra to Zvolen, where they will enter the Jozef Gregor Tajovský Theatre fully to immerse themselves in historical events. *"The Frontline Theatre in head with Andrej Bagar gave moral encouragement to partisans, the injured and hospital personnel. Actor – the first Slovak Jánošík – and director Paľo Bielik documented the situation on the front,"* curator Milo Juráni outlines the historical background of the production's multiple storylines. Czech duo consisting of dramaturge Marie Nováková and director Ivo Kristián Kubák have crafted an impressive work that takes authentic documents such as memoirs, correspondence, diaries and films, and renders them through powerful dialogue, compelling imagery and unforced acting. Performers Richard Sanitra, Ondřej Daniš, Veronika Slamková and others build a precise illusion of a parallel reality anchored in real history. *"While the production is a gripping reflection on a turning point in Slovak history and the history of theatre, it shows that the value of art does not lie in creation alone but also in the values of its originators. Those remembered in Zvolen were ready to keep an ethos that stood on the side of freedom, justice, mutual help and democracy even and especially during the most demanding of times,"* concludes Juráni. This performance will see the premiere appearance of the Zvolen theatre at Divadelná Nitra.



Outside the curatorial selection, the organisers of the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra have programmed **The House**, a production based on a script by Czech author Anna Saavedra directed by Marián Amsler, in the Festival Extra section. It was rehearsed at Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra more than 40 since the premiere of the legendary production of Federico García Lorca's play *The House of Bernarda Alba* by director Jozef Bednárík. This production in no way attempts to the well-known scenic work but is a new adaptation of Lorca's play, **delivering a report about the current state of society incapable of responding to otherness.** *"Our House is a very topical stage poem, dense with emotion, surrealist images and metaphors. It is about tearing down certain walls, stereotypes, prejudices. It is also, of course, about helplessness, about loud cries against injustice, about dark passion, about unfulfilled love, but especially about a great desire for freedom,"* the play was described by actor Daniela Kuffelová, who performs as the lead character Bernarda Alba. Alongside her, the cast features Žofia Martišová, who portrayed Bernarda 40 years ago and who now performs as her Mother. The character of Federico García Lorca is played by Peter Oszlák. Spectators will also discover other currently resonant themes in *The House*, such as bigoted adherence to tradition, social norms, prejudice and social condemnation, all against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War.

The 29. International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra will take place in the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra, the Jozef Gregor Tajovský Theatre in Zvolen, the Synagogue, Villa K, and at Svätoplukovo námestie.

Tickets to performances can be purchased via the online marketplace GoOut from 7 September 2020 and at the Festival Cash Desk (main entrance of the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra) daily from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM. In view of current safety measures, the organisers recommend visitors purchase their tickets online.

Association Divadelná Nitra will ensure compliance with all hygienic and anti-epidemic measures in accordance with current instructions of the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic and the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra during the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2020. For more information about current measures, please visit www.nitrafest.sk.



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