

**1–6 OCT
2021**



**DIVADELNÁ
NITRA**

30. ročník Medzinárodného festivalu
30th edition of International Theatre Festival

Asociácia Divadelná Nitra | Divadelná Nitra Association – Štefaniková 7, P. O. Box 49 B, 949 01 Nitra, Slovakia
Mobil: +421 903 55 44 75 | e-mail: nitrafest@nitrafest.sk | www.nitrafest.sk

For three decades, International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra reflects on the world around us. The jubilee 30. edition takes place early in October

A search for answers to questions posed by our age. For thirty years, the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra responds to events happening all around. From the very beginning, a theme has been the staple of each year's festival edition. This year will be no exception – the jubilee 30. edition is subtitled TRANSCENDENCIES: Transcendencies as acts erasing boundaries between people, cultures and communities; transcendencies as connections between past and present, private and public; transcendencies as junctions of physical existence and spiritual life, life and death, nobility and baseness; transcendencies as mixture of genres and artforms. All this is reflected in a selection of ten productions in the main festival programme and a rich accompanying programme prepared for the visitors of ITF Divadelná Nitra from 1 to 6 October.

“We live in an age that reveals the limits of our possibilities brutally and without warning – of society, of politics, of science, of religion, of art, and of ourselves. An age that puts to trial our ability to defend our visions and goals, to renounce the inessential as well as that which is most valuable, to not give in to fear, hopelessness, violence, and falsity, to discover new forms of communication, new forms of solidarity, a new hope,” festival director Darina Kárová elucidates the selected theme. She continues: “The current pandemic has driven us to the edge of ruin, in order that we may realise what we have already lost and what we can still lose in the future – functioning society, trust in authorities, complete family, a clean environment... Much of what we experience now exceeds human understanding and pertains to the distant future. Many of us surpass our limits and relate diverse contexts of meaning and dimensions of being. “

Visitors will find forms of this theme woven throughout the whole festival programme. ITF Divadelná Nitra thereby follows up on its tradition of socio-political reflection on the world through high-quality, ranking it among the most

**presahy /
transcendencies**

important cultural events in Slovakia. One proof of this is that the 30. edition will be held under the auspices of President of the Slovak Republic Zuzana Čaputová.

“Over its 30 years of existence, the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra has become a prominent platform for the presentation of European scenic art and the development of critical reflection, and a model in work with audiences, marginalised groups and volunteers. It has built a position both at home and internationally. It is a source of inspiration by continuously tapping into progressive tendencies in contemporary art, a resilience to overcome unfavourable conditions, and by renewing the creative potential of its teams,” Darina Kárová reflects on the event’s history. During the past 29 years, ITF Divadelná Nitra has featured 424 productions from 32 countries in the main programme and almost 1 800 accompanying events. From 1992 until last year, the main programme clocked 146 154 visitors while the accompanying programme saw 192 842.

ITF Divadelná Nitra is one among many festivals that felt the effects of the COVID-19 and one a few that successfully executed its programme as planned – namely, live. The experience was highly demanding on organisation and tested the ability of our festival teams to adapt to extraordinary circumstances. The skills gained were reflected in preparations for the 30. edition, which will take place with special attention to safety but also to a high-quality spectator experience. All organisers will be fully vaccinated and the event will follow current anti-epidemic measures. (The organisers will inform of these in detail through our website www.nitrafest.sk and social media.)

If circumstances permit, the main programme’s Slovak section and accompanying programme will air live. In order that ITF Divadelná Nitra might also offer foreign theatrical artworks (impossible last year for well-known reasons), the organisers have decided to follow the trend of contemporary European festivals and feature stage productions in the form of impressive video recordings. Some will be broadcast online, while others will be screened in the theatre hall. Of utmost priority will be as high fidelity of image and sound as possible. *“We believed it important to maintain the festival as a place of meeting in one time and space. Although organisational-epidemic reasons compelled us to forgo presenting foreign productions live, we will strive to allow spectators to experience the festival as they are used to from previous editions. In a time of restricted contacts, this social aspect constitutes an important bonus,”* adds vice-director Anna Šimončíčová.

Roots of the past growing into the present world

As usual, this year's spectators at ITF Divadelná Nitra will have a chance to see ten progressive and notable productions. The selection is diverse, but each work carries encoded within itself the theme of transcendencias, though approached from a different angle.

The festival will open with one of the most remarkable productions by the Slovak National Theatre in the recent seasons – **War and Peace** directed by Marián Amsler. The director made use of a blend of theatrical action and live cinema, creating gripping scenes of battle that linger in the spectator's mind long after they have disappeared from stage. *"The production addresses war and peace on the battlefield and in the human soul, surpassing human limits, a decided plus is the use of techniques seamlessly synthesizing theatre and film,"* explains curator of the Slovak programme section Karol Mišovic. The director and his actors' collective, featuring Milan Ondřík, Ján Koleník and Petra Vajdová, have forged Lev Tolstoy's cult novel into a contemporary piece for today's spectator.

Other productions deliver a message to the present age even if they are based on traditions and folklore. **The Tinker**, a comedy about the life of 19th century Slovak intelligentsia in multicultural Hungary, assumes a different shape in a production for the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra in head with director Lukáš Brutovský, becoming a provocative parody and grotesque about the maladies of Slovakia within the central European region. The piece offers an unconventional and head-on take on this classic comedy from the family silver of our dramatic literature. Among the greatest strengths of this adaptation of Palárik's play is its visual design – a rotating scene made of wood, and costumes blending folklore and modernity.

A brilliant and visually powerful synthesis of drama, movement and folklore is to be seen in **The Bonnet** (directed by Peter Palik), a play based on the acclaimed eponymous book by Katarína Kuchelová rehearsed at the Jozef Gregor Tajovský Theatre in Zvolen. The story is simple – Katka visits Il'ka to learn the traditional craft of sowing the bonnet. Yet the relationship of these two women is not just about perpetuating tradition but above all about understanding our woman's identity, our nation's mentality, and our country's character. Its force consists in unmasking stereotypes and prejudices to plead for tolerance and critical thinking, an issue as relevant now as ever. *"The Tinker and The Bonnet both upsettingly but artfully and specifically state the truth about the invariable Slovak nature,"* says Mišovic.

Past events seeping into the present are also at stake in the tragicomedy **Lebensraum** by the young collective of LAB Theatre, produced by the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. This production of a play from the pen of contemporary American dramatist Israel Horovitz directed by Kateřina Quisová describes a fictional situation where the German chancellor proposes to grant Jewish descendants the right to return to their forefathers' homeland. And it does not end there – as compensation for their wartime guilt, she offers them full naturalization and a guarantee of stable employment. Far from just addressing problems in German-Jewish relations, the production's message is universal: "what changes is always history, but never people." Can today's Europe, overwhelmed by immigrants, make sense of this?

A documentary production about one of the seminal figures in the history of Slovak theatre Janko Borodáč will be brought to Nitra by director Júlia Rázusová and the State Theatre Košice. It pays no pious homage but commits to an unsentimental search for the truth about a man both loved and hated. The spectators will witness a collage built on autobiographical material, extant archives and recollections of living witnesses. *"**Borodáč or The Three Sisters** does not simply offer an excursus into the history of Slovak theatre and the personal and professional path of its nestor Janko Borodáč but also a highly intriguing and comprehensible theatre form exploiting past themes to pose questions to our theatrical present. How have we progressed? What has changed during the one hundred years of our professional theatre?"* asks Karol Mišovic.

From stage to screen

"In the wake of seasons when theatre performances surfaced online, we looked for works that thematised or availed themselves of interesting overlaps between the internet, video-art, film, and theatre," Ján Šimko, one of the curators of the foreign programme section of ITF Divadelná Nitra, explains the mark which the pandemic left on the festival's programme.

One such piece is the Czech video-film **Eyewitness** by director Jiří Havelka, originally intended as a stage production. The COVID-19 outbreak thwarted the plans of the director and the Drama company of Prague's National Theatre, eventually giving us a suggestive and authentic filmic work about a post-war civilian slaughter not unparalleled in Czechoslovakia. The Přerov massacre took place on the night of 18 to 19 June 1945 and ended in the death of 265 Carpathian Germans, Hungarians, and Slovaks – mostly women and children from Dobšiná, Kežmarok, Gelnica, and other municipalities. A total of 34 authentic testimonies recorded by

the work's creators are reminiscent of video-calls – the home of most of our life during the pandemic. It stars numerous figures from the Drama ensemble of the Slovak National Theatre, including Saša Rašilov, František Němec, David Prachař, Jiří Štěpnička, Vladimír Javorský, and others. We will present this theatrical film, which boasts excellent acting, in a unique collective experience format – a screening on the big screen of the Andrej Bagar Theatre's Great Hall.

"We tried to factor in transcendencies of substance as well as form. The online format in itself transcends the theatrical space to which we had been accustomed before the pandemic, namely physical space where spectators and performers meet in real time, into virtual space," says curator Martina Vannayová. Overlaps between diverse artforms feature in the charming production **Mailles** by the French ensemble Compagnie Kadidi. In it, the stage becomes a junction of the fates of six women, six stories about the past that forms us, about our ancestors and their experiences – better or worse. For her performance, dancer and director Dorothée Munyaneza mustered six female artists of African origin – a Haitian storyteller, a British dancer, a Danish poet, a Dutch philosopher, a French choreographer, and last but not least herself – who relate their experience with oppression. But they do not cry or confess to rouse sympathy. *"Their dramatic, verbal and physical presence and song are a celebration of feminine power. Having lived through oppression and violence, they oppose and refuse to yield to it. They were not frightened. They did not curl up in the shell of personal trauma,"* observe Martina Vannayová. We will present the production in a unique festival format of a screening of a high-quality, moving video recording on the screen in the Great Hall of the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra.

The trio of foreign productions will conclude with the French-Israeli-Belarusian work **Necropolis** by director Arkadi Zaides, who already appeared at ITF Divadelná Nitra six years ago with his documentary project *Archive* addressing the Palestinian-Israeli border conflict. His new work leads the spectator into the land of the dead to honour the memory of those who were less privileged in life than we. It will pay tribute to all refugees who died on European soil, but doing so through a specifically Slovak prism. The festival will feature an exclusive updated version of this theatrical documentary, for which the creators are currently collecting data about migrant deaths in Slovakia and the surrounding countries. *"The work is interesting by a deeply appellative political-critical and humane dimension as well as its form, original use of video and digital media in contrast to a deeply human theme – bodylines, the question of death as taboo in today's consumer society,"* remarks Ján Šimko. By purchasing a ticket, spectators will gain access to an online recording of the performance and an online discussion with its creators from their home. Festival

visitors will have the possibility to watch the video recording and online discussion within the festival's premises upon request by showing a valid ticket.

Postponed world premieres of Slovak dance productions

Spectators at ITF Divadelná Nitra can look forward the postponed premieres of two international productions that could not be put on last year due to the COVID-19 outbreak. These were created for the European project Be SpectACTIVE! By undertaking these projects, Association Divadelná Nitra fulfils its ambition of supporting Slovak artists in international production and promoting their position on the world theatre scene.

Blue is the Colour (or Why Rinse a Plastic Yoghurt Cup if Some People Fly to Thailand Four Times a Year) is the title of a multi-genre artwork by choreographer and performer Petra Fornayová exploring diverse visions of the future of our world. *"If apocalyptic predictions about climate change do come true, even partly, then we are in for a dystopia rather than some utopian miracle, and the 'moral law in us' will be tested in due time,"* says Fornayová, whose scenic work asks what will convince our civilisation of a need to change its dominant discourse. This participative production was created in Slovakia and at a creative residency programme in Slovenia. Additional planned residencies in Ireland and Belgium were prevented by the pandemic. In the end, these were replaced by research via digital technologies and rehearsals at home

The dance production **ICARUS**, created in collaboration between professional dancers and teenagers from Prague and Nitra, digs into feelings caused by our age and impending adulthood. The young performers and a trio of artists – including Marie Gourdain (France), Jaro Viňarský (Slovakia), and Václav Kalivoda (Czech Republic) – unfold a mythological story about Daedalus and Icarus, which is not rendered illustratively on stage but serves a starting point for the piece's combination of symbolism and abstraction.

Accompanying programme

As usual, the festival's main programme will be accompanied by numerous events of all kinds – discussions, concerts, programme for children and the young, stand-up comedy, and guided tours.

The festival's 30. anniversary will be commemorated by the theory event Transcending Divadelná Nitra 1992 – 2021 joined by the authors of a prepared

jubilee publication of the same name. We will organise Artists talks – discussions with creators, and the Large Public Debate Presahy / Transcendencies about the festival theme with special guests, streamed live by Denník N and moderated by Oliver Reháč.

The evening spotlight in the Square will belong to concerts by Vydrapená Bužírka, Punk System, Genius Locci and Sto múch. Later, stand-up comedians Samo Trnka, Peter Petiar Lachký, Gabo Žifčák, Simona Salátová and Joe Trendy will speak their mind and hold nothing back.

Visitors will not miss out on a rich children's programme titled Festival for Children, featuring several performances – a contemporary French fairy tale adaptation The Big Word Factory by the Karol Spišák Old Theatre in Nitra, a story about an ordinary Max with an extraordinary imagination titled Wild Things by the independent theatre company ODIVO, a tale full of songs Laughter is the Best Medicine by ZáBaVKa Theatre, a production of the well-known story Popolvár with unusual puppets by BABADLO Theatre, the aerial laboratory Aero for anyone who feels like flying away by ODIVO company, and Tomík the Clown's interactive stories Circus Topsy-Turvies and his Bubbly Fishing happening.

The Festival for Children will also feature an all-day integrational workshop for visually disadvantaged and sighted children A Tulip for You with a drum session by Thierry Ebam, while adults can pay a visit to the Black Box pen – a zone for the sighted and unsighted.

Youngsters will have several dedicated evenings reserved in the accompanying programme. Within the Young Theatre section, theatre companies from the J. Rosinský Elementary School of Art in Nitra will perform the productions A Story About Love and Darkness, Dora and Diaboliade. Adults can enjoy a puppet play about the end of World War II titled Dukla, Death Valley by Dezorz Puppet Theatre, or the tragicomedy The Other Death of Joan of Arc by the New Theatre, telling us what God planned with his son Jesus, Joan of Arc and the executioner.

The commented tour Where Culture Dwells will guide those interested through the locations of Nitra's culture venues, which shape the city's cultural environment – from the Karol Spišák Old Theatre in Nitra to the brand-new bod.K7 culture centre. Vila K, the Kollmann family's formerly-owned functionalist villa, will host one of the events for Nitra's candidacy for the European Capital of Culture 2026 titled Nitra Bygone / Stories from the 20th Century, featuring screenings of interviews and a

presentation of a documentary project with living witnesses of events during the 20th century.

A series of events will be in store at Kupecká street – concerts, readings, discussions – under the heading KníhKupecká. Throughout the festival, Nitra will also see numerous events by co-organisers and programme online. For a detailed overview of the accompanying programme, visit www.nitrafest.sk.

Transcending themes, transcending visuals

The festival theme can be read between the lines of individual production annotations as well as in its visual concept, prepared for ITF Divadelná Nitra by graphic designer Tomáš Vicen. The design's final form consists of literal overlaps – transcendencies of living and inanimate objects that physically enter each other: ladder/balloon, radiator/ice, chair/cactus. *"The purpose was to find unusual, unreal or even absurd combinations in a desire for discovering something new. That 'new' is meant as opening one's mind and space to divergent interpretations. In other words, to 'take pause!' and move from a primary reading such as 'I want, I don't want, I need, I buy' to understanding substance. A possibility to unlock the ossified positions objects take inside our heads and their corresponding relationships or connections,"* explains the author, who thinks it important to thematise conflict between objects or our default reactions to certain stimuli, such as 'breaking or thawing ice on a radiator'. The visual design has a simple, minimalist and clear form reminiscent of product catalogues, hinting at yet another overlap between the worlds of art and commerce. In this case, however, the products are the overlaps themselves.

The 30. International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra will take place in the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra (Great Hall and Studio), Svätoplukovo námestie, Zobor Monastery, Párovské Háje Culture House, Vláda K, the Synagogue, Kupecká ulica, and the premises of other festival partners (Regional Education Centre Nitra, Karol Kmeťko Regional Library in Nitra, Nitra Gallery, Nitra Region Museum, Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra).

Association Divadelná Nitra and all co-organisers will ensure compliance with all hygienic and anti-epidemic measures during the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2021 in accordance with current regulations of the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic, directions of the Regional Public Health Authority

in Nitra, the epidemic notice of the Director of the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra, and valid notices of co-organisers. For more information about current measures, visit www.nitrafest.sk.

Events organised during ITF Divadelná Nitra 2021 directly by the festival are classified under following 'Covid Automat' categories: indoors – OTP, outdoors – Basic.

Tickets to shows can be purchased online via GoOut and from 6 September 2021 at the festival box office (bod.K7, Štefánikova trieda 7) on working days from 3.00 PM to 5.00 PM. Given higher concerns for health and safety, the organisers recommend visitors purchase their tickets online.

The International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2021 is held under the auspices of President of the Slovak Republic Zuzana Čaputová, Chairman of the Nitra Self-Governing Region Milan Belica, and Mayor of The City of Nitra Marek Hattas.

Main organiser

Association Divadelná Nitra

Main co-organisers

Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra
Nitra Self-Governing Region, The City of Nitra

Co-organisers

Architecture Days; Botanical Garden – Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra; Elementary Boarding School for the Visually Impaired Bratislava; iks Theatre, Bratislava; J. Rosinský Elementary School of Art in Nitra; Karol Kmeťko Regional Library; Nitra 2026; Nitra Cultural Heritage c.a.; Nitra Gallery; Nitra Region Museum; Nitra Tourist Board; Nitra Tourist Information Centre; Očami prírody, c.a.; Pod Vríškom – bookstore and antiques; Prince Pribina Elementary School in Nitra; Regional Education Centre Nitra; Theatre Institute Bratislava; Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra; Vila K, c.a.

Projects of Divadelná Nitra Association Supported by



Projects of Association Divadelná Nitra are supported using public funding by Slovak Arts Council, main partner of the projects



Main Media Partners



Media Partners



presahy /
transcendencies



Partners

