

1–6 OCT
2021



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

DIVADELNÁ
NITRA

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Enter deceased refugee territory, feel the power of women from the African diaspora, or witness a massacre in post-war Czechoslovakia. ITF Divadelná Nitra features suggestive theatre
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They offer more than a traditional show, blending diverse forms of art and combining theatre with technology. The foreign productions featured at the 30. International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra (1 – 6 October) follow the current trend of extending digital media into art. Spectators can look forward to suggestive and original works of theatre.

Last year's second coronavirus wave, which did not spare ITF Divadelná Nitra, was most felt in the festival's foreign programme section. As the pandemic situation took a turn for the worse, productions dropped out of the festival programme one by one. This time, so that spectators might encounter artworks from beyond our borders, the festival has prepared a special offer. *"This year, we composed the foreign programme of productions that will be screened in the theatre hall or online. We chose such works that retain their appeal even after being transposed to this medium, such as Dorothee Munyaneza's Mailles, as well as pieces created with the aid of new technologies for the online world – Eyewitness by the National Theatre Prague, and Arkadi Zaides' Necropolis,"* explain festival curators Martina Vannayová and Ján Šimko.

Maintaining the festival as a place of meeting in one time and space was of utmost priority for the organisers, and for this reason we conceived the format of high-quality theatre recordings screened in the theatre hall. *"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,"* says festival vice-director Anna Šimončíčová.

Maximum quality image and sound will be a given and a promise of a full-fledged spectatorial experience. *"From its beginnings on, theatre keenly responded to technological advancements in society and used emerging technologies in production. Digital media brought a sea of impulses for theatre work. They expanded ways in which theatre is made and generated new possibilities of its perception. A combination of live and virtual reality allows*

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one to magnify a play's space, the spectator's points of view, broaden the horizon of the stage, place it in diverse settings or set it besides them, directing our gaze into authentic contexts or documents," the curators explain. Many questions thereby come into the spotlight, such as what happens to theatre when digital media become the only means of contact for theatre-makers with their audience, or what kinds of narrative and aesthetic the online theatrical space has to offer.

"Our choice of foreign productions intensely reflects the theme of this year's ITF Divadelná Nitra – p r e s a h y / t r a n s c e n d e n c i e s. Be it transcendencies from the past to present, overlaps of reality and the virtual world, cultural overlaps, aesthetic and formal novelty or junctures of life and death. The fates of individuals who were driven out of their homes forever and thus into a search for their own identity, or even lost their lives in an unknown world, are questions that are again becoming highly relevant today," says festival director Darina Kárová. To substitute face-to-face encounters with artists, spectators will have a chance to join discussions with creators representing selected productions. These will take place with the aid of digital technologies in the theatre hall or online.

A call from the past

A chance to reflect on these ideas is offered in **Eyewitness** by the Drama Company of Prague's National Theatre, programmed for Monday 4 October in the Great Hall of the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra. It tackles one of the most tragic and taboo events on our territory after World War II. *"Post-war civilian massacres, of which Czechoslovakia saw multiple, are thought among the darkest moments in our history. They problematize simplistic narratives about the evil and guilt of aggressors who assailed our people, and especially about alleged re-establishment of justice and reconciliation with wartime wrongdoing,"* says Ján Šimko. *"They remain weakly*

documented and unexamined by historians, not least because they are traumatising both to participants – especially those made so against their will – and to witnesses. One such occurrence was the massacre at a mound near Přešov known as Švédské šance. It took place on the night from 18 to 19 June 1945 and resulted in the death of 265 Carpathian Germans, Hungarians, and Slovaks – largely women and children travelling from the Sudetenland, where they were displaced during the war, back home to Dobšiná, Kežmarok, and Gelnica."

These factors inspired director Jiří Havelka, for whom traumatic and ambiguous events are a central and recurring theme. *"Havelka wields the expressive resources of theatre as an instrument to probe complex historical happenings and shed light on their agents' motivations, always seeking to accommodate his material in a*

theatrical or filmic form that does not deliver drama or theatricality at the expense of authentic quality,” explains Šimko. Havelka, whose plays emphasize the power of the imagination, based *Eyewitness* on interrogation protocols recorded during the investigation of Karol Pazúr – the lieutenant who gave the execution order. As the pandemic rendered live theatre shows impossible, the creators of this piece recorded authentic witness accounts of the bloody event with actors on camera, giving us 34 powerful but equally harrowing testimonies. Worthy of mention are outstanding performances by actors Saša Rašilov, Matyáš Řezníček and others, who gave shape to intriguing micro-narratives bearing witness to our history. The theatrical film *Eyewitness* will be featured as a screening on the large screen in the Andrej Bagar Theatre’s Great Hall.

A lost home in the depths of one’s heart

Each has a strong personality, potential as an author, and a unique life journey, but they all share common roots. Rwandan-British dancer and director Dorothée Munyaneza brings her charming project **Mailles**, featuring herself and a troupe of five artists hailing from Africa – Haitian storyteller Ife Day, British-African flamenco dancer Yinka Esi Graves, Danish-Somali poet Asmaa Jama, Dutch-Ethiopian philosopher and choreographer Elsa Mulder, and Rwandan dancer and choreographer based in France Nido Uwera. Together, they cast a mesh of collective energies on stage, blending diverse forms of art. *“The performers are mutual mirrors, completing each other and forming a plural female body of sorts,”* Ján Šimko describes their performance, where spectators will have a chance to reflect on the motifs of trauma and ties to one’s past.

“The women on stage share an African origin and simultaneously exile from the cities where they or their ancestors were raised. Thematically key here is the search for a common identity. As first- or second-generation immigrants, they are well aware of deriving their roots from memories of non-existent places. In fact, they make up their own imaginary locations, because neither they nor their parents have a chance to return to where they grew up. Their countries have been ravaged by war, the lives of their ancestors by colonialism, marked by slavery, sex trafficking, or other forms of violence. The women do not seek to return to these places or dream of them but strive to formulate the common experience of such people living in Europe, to give it voice, word and body. What would it really be like physically to return to a country you carry within?” asks Šimko. The result is a resonant and highly topical performance, an extraordinary representation of the experience of people of mixed identities living in the early 21st century and carrying their

ancestors' plights. Alluring music, original dance and unusual visual solution all add to the production's spectacular form.

Mailles by Dorothée Munyaneza (who already appeared at ITF Divadelná Nitra 2015 with her project *Samedi Détente*) will be featured in a unique festival format as a screening of a high-quality video recording on the large screen and as the festival's closing show on Wednesday, 6 October, in the Great Hall of the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra.

Bodies that deserve mourning

Six years ago, ITF Divadelná Nitra had director Arkadi Zaides stage his documentary film-dance project *Archive*, addressing the Palestinian-Israeli border conflict. This time, he invites festival spectators to join him and enter the land of the dead, honouring the memory of those who were less privileged in life than we. The French-Israeli-Belarusian production ***Necropolis*** gives voice to refugees who died on the thresholds of our European homelands en route to a better life. *"It is a voice that haunts us and forms a collective, unidentifiable body of sorts whose skeleton we inhabit. In Zaides' work this communal corpse becomes literally a map, which may help us find a way to ourselves and realize the importance and privilege of being able to mourn. After all, no one grieved for most of those laid to rest in the Necropolis,"* says curator Martina Vannayová. The artists rely on modern tools, visualizing gathered data about the deceased on a virtual map via the online platforms Zoom and Google Earth. A mobile phone camera points at locations where the victims have been buried, making spectators fellow travellers on a virtual journey through the dark places of our failed responsibility. *"The performance questions our stereotypical perceptions of democracy, law, and equality, and is made into an appeal. It is no case of moralizing but rather a symbolic farewell and tribute to dead, though unknown, people,"* adds Vannayová.

Through his participative project, which continuously integrates new data and is open to all, Zaides reminds us just how important keeping the memory of the dead is. ITF Divadelná Nitra will feature an updated version, paying tribute to refugees who died on Slovak soil; at present, information is being collected about migrant victims in Slovakia and surrounding countries.

By purchasing a ticket, spectators will receive access to an online show of the performance and an online discussion with the creators of *Necropolis* from their homes on 6 October. Festival visitors will have a chance to watch the video recording and online discussion within the festival's premises upon request and by showing a valid ticket.

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, Vila 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 co-organiser notices. 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

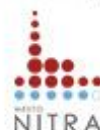
Co-organisers

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 Vrškom – 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.

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