



PRESS RELEASE

14. 9. 2022

New names at the International Festival Divadelná Nitra 2022

***31st Festival edition to focus on young stage actors
along with established creative artists from the local and international
scene***

DNA of the International Festival Divadelná Nitra contains reflections on socio-political issues that reflect the existential sense of our contemporaries- creative artists and spectators.

The leitmotif of the 31st Festival edition is *f r a g i l i t y*. Fragility as an expression of a sense of threat or vulnerability. Yet, it also signals the opposite of violence – care, empathy, tenderness, in short, something is missing in this world. Throughout the Festival from 23 to 28 September 2022, fifteen productions within the main programme, along with the lavish smorgasbord of off-programme events, will present different forms of fragility.

The programming team wishes to draw attention to the issues reflected, highlight them and clearly communicate them to the public. The theme of *f r a g i l i t y* appears in international performances within the main programme in different forms and nuances, whether it is the fragility of an aging dancer's body (***Sad Sam Matthäus***), the fragility of the young generation's empathy vis-a-vis their grandparents (***Living the Dream with Grandma***), emotional fragility of artistic soul (***Jumpcore***), the fragile vulnerability of children and adolescents in contrast to the violence perpetrated by an institution (***Encyclopaedia of Pain. Chapter 1: Mum's the Word***), fragility of the border between the virtual and the real (***Virtual Ritual***), or just ordinary fragility of everyday existence (***Amando***).

Darina Kárová, the Festival director, explains the 2022 edition: *It is important that international connections are restored in a living form. Even though it was possible, during the past pandemic years, to hold Divadelná Nitra live and stick to the original date, an international festival without live presentation of international ensembles loses its meaning. This year, the 15 productions*



within the main programme include 8 international productions from 9 countries. Though it's not merely about numbers. What is invaluable is to focus on an utmost original theatre, a powerful and pressing personal statement about man and the time. The 2022 Festival edition leitmotif fragility also resonates as a result of the recent events all around us, which makes it remarkably timely.

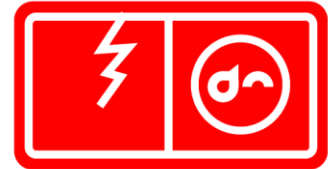
Two years on – back to normal:

The Festival main programme reigned by international productions

The last two editions of Divadelná Nitra, like the rest of the cultural world, were affected by the coronavirus and its consequences. After two non-traditional editions, in 2022 the Festival returns to the form we remember from the years before the pandemic struck. The main programme will feature as many as eight international works from Croatia, Austria, France, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Spain, and Slovenia. The Slovak programme section will bring seven titles from the local context. Three of the productions were co-produced by Slovakia with Hungary, Ukraine and the Czech Republic. In total, the main programme of the 31st Festival edition offers **fifteen titles**.

The international programme section focuses on minimalist, yet distinctive author's statements. It is governed by authentic actor's monologues and evocative dance solos that bring intimate confessions along with the themes that powerfully resonate in contemporary society. The curator **Martina Vannayová** explains the current programming direction of the Festival: *The international programme was created when it was not yet clear how the pandemic would develop and whether the Festival would be held at all. We asked and continue to ask ourselves the fundamental programming questions. To put it simply: What should a theatre festival say in contemporary era that reflects the paradoxes of Western civilization's values even more clearly than before the pandemic? Not to mention the ecological crisis, which is more present every year and its solution is lost in the yet another wave of barbarism.*

She adds: *Our path at this point is not to present increasingly expensive and elaborate productions of world-famous theatres. This year, we were much more interested in less formally sensational, yet more impressive pieces in terms of author's theatre. At the same time, we wanted to present artists who are, as yet, little known in Slovakia, such as Matija Ferlin, László Göndör, Paweł Sakowicz, Pablo Fidalgo, and Jan Mocek.*



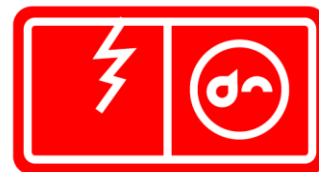
Divadelná Nitra presenting new names

The Festival opens with the acclaimed Croatian choreographer, stage director and performer **Matija Ferlin**. The 31st Festival edition brings his debut at Divadelná Nitra. Through the familiar passion story, Ferlin examines the body of an aging dancer, who can no longer move as he once did. In his solo **Sad Sam Matthäus** he is inspired by the most famous musical setting of the Gospel of St. Matthew, *The St Matthew Passion* by J. S. Bach. The monumental oratorio from 1727 will be heard in its entirety on stage of the great hall of The Andrej Bagar Theatre.

The emerging Czech stage and visual artist Jan Mocek will take the audience to the parallel world of online video games (MMOG - massively multiplayer online game). Through live video, 3D animations and YouTube formats, his **Virtual Ritual** reveals the unseen links between the real and virtual worlds. The original gaming performance also thematises the changes that video games have brought to our understanding of reality.

Paweł Sakowicz, member of the youngest generation of Polish contemporary dance, is already well established on the international scene. The 2022 Festival edition though marks his debut at Divadelná Nitra. He will perform two of his original solos, which were created five years apart. **Jumpcore** and **Amando** captivate audiences with their original dramaturgy, minimalist, yet impressive dance and movement expression, and startling musical ambience. By presenting both productions, the Festival programming team wishes to present the wide scope of the work of this young progressive dancer and choreographer, and to highlight different approaches to contemporary dance.

During one of the pandemic lockdowns, **László Göndör**, a 35-year-old Hungarian stage actor, decided to move in for over a month with his grandmother Éva Katona. She has lived a life that was rich in events yet by no means straightforward that lasted nearly a century. Göndör diligently recorded their time together and then processed it in the documentary production **Living the Dream with Grandma**. The curator Martina Vannayová places the production in the context of the Festival leitmotif *fragility*: *It is also a story about the fragility of human beings, about the relationships of grandchildren with grandparents, about family customs and humour, about the search for one's identity as an adult in the face of the image of oneself as a child in the eyes of a grandparent, about the history of (including our) geopolitical space and its pars pro toto imprint in the life of one strong woman.*



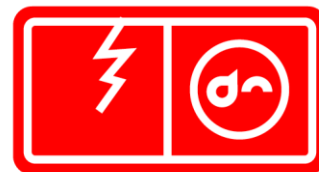
Spanish author and stage director **Pablo Fidalgo** in the production ***Encyclopaedia of Pain. Chapter I: Mum's the Word*** talks about institutional violence, about the experiences of several generations of pupils and students at Church schools. Like the aforementioned artists, Fidalgo will have his Nitra debut in the 2022, bringing his so far most personal and political text. *"Thanks to the captivating performance of the film and television actor Gonzalo Cunillo, Fidalgo as author and stage director in one, managed to make a deep probe into society using a highly personal story, and to make a striking production using simple stage methods,"* says the curator Ján Šimko about the production.

The main programme also includes **PRIMA**, the latest piece by **Viktor Černický**, one of the most acclaimed and award-winning Czech artists of Slovak origin. Working in Prague, he regularly connects different artistic disciplines, whilst primarily focusing on dance and movement theatre. In **PRIMA**, in addition to a group of professional performers, local residents will also become actors. The Festival convenors have launched a call for those interested in signing up for the project. Selected participants will be able to prove to themselves that everyone can really dance and move – with pleasure, enthusiasm, respect and empathy, spontaneously and without inhibitions.

Divadelná Nitra – space for Ukrainian artists

The Association Divadelná Nitra was at the birth of the extraordinary project ***Chronicles of War, Hate and Love***. The Ukrainian art group **WE: media theatre** started to document the war events and collect witness testimonies instantly after the outbreak of the war. Reports from different cities and towns are based on the need for artists not to remain passive and react to the war. The project result is an artistic record of the dramatic present in Ukraine through a performative presentation. The piece combines and confronts two levels of the documentary: the reality of war as a question, and the documentary filmmakers' inner response to the war. Film footage of the war, its consequences and interviews with eyewitnesses is combined with the testimonies of documentarians and artists on stage in the Nitra Synagogue. One of the project authors, **Sashko Brama**, is Ukrainian independent theatre activist, stage director, screenwriter and playwright. He already featured within the main programme at Divadelná Nitra in 2015 with a socio-politically engaged production *R+J*.

The **Nitra White Night** opens an exhibition of posters ***A Poster A Day. Neverending Posters?*** by the Slovakia-based Ukrainian graphic artist Mykola Kovalenko on the theme of the war in Ukraine. The Festival also



brings a discussion **Testimonies** with eyewitnesses of the war in Ukraine – Viera Dubačová, Lucia Štasselová and others.

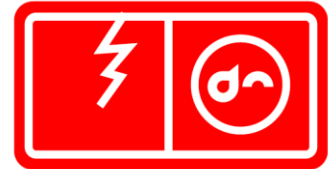
Slovak programme – focus on different dialogue forms

“Close cooperation (international and interdisciplinary) is a significant overlap of the five works that made it to the final selection of the Slovak part of the main Festival programme. These are productions and performances of state-subsidised and independent scene that engage in valiant and in-depth fragile dialogues between content and form, theme and means that reveal and layer the theme,” **Mária Danadová** explains her curatorial selection. The actress, stage director and author, representative of the most definite and progressive part of the Slovak theatre scene, chose five diverse works. Two come from an independent creative context, two are productions of brick theatres, and one is the result of international cooperation.

Timeout Burnout is an original author's solo by **Lukáš Bobalik**, member of the youngest generation of Slovak contemporary dance. This one-man dance tennis match is a game of endurance. To find the right rhythm, the dancer plays in all directions, ultimately essentially against himself. He is accompanied by a pair of excellent musicians – the singer Peter Mazalán and guitarist Jakub Mitrík. They adjust to his game, add, rouse, while dance moves mix with forehands and backhands, and tennis nets encircle the dancer's body. *Timeout Burnout* is a sports event, installation and performance depicting human dance on the edge of the ruins of a burned-out society.

The **Pôtoň Theatre** is an established feature at Divadelná Nitra. In 2022, it comes with the production ***Swing Heil!***, made by the artistic duo **Iveta Ditte Jurčová and Michal Ditte** in cooperation with **Horácke Theatre Jihlava**. The piece is the story of the dancer, choreographer and artist Nina Jirsíková, who was perhaps the only Czech woman deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp for dancing in the ballet production *The Tale of Dance*. The production also talks about the fate of Anna Goldsteinerová from the town of Pulkau in Lower Austria, who was beheaded for allowing local young jazz and swing aficionados meet in her flat. As is customary with the Pôtoň Theatre, the visual and movement performance is captivating and imaginative, whilst bearing a powerful appeal. It exposes and condemns manifestations of nationalism and extremism.

After the successful production of *Rúkverc/Spiatočka (Reverse)*, the Košice-based Theatre Thália makes a comeback to Divadelná Nitra after seven years. They bring a production about addiction from the perspective of a child. ***Father, Mother, Booze*** depicts growing up in the shadow of an



addicted parent. This partly autobiographical monodrama in the Hungarian language is also the return of the actor Róbert Lucsky to the Thália Theatre after more than twenty-five years. The multi-genre stand-up is also supported by two outstanding stage artists – the director **József Czajlik**, and the playwright and dramaturge **Miklós Forgács**.

The other dance piece in the current Slovak selection is the experimental performance ***Soft Spot***, created in collaboration with Slovak dancers **Soňa Ferienčíková** and **Martina Hajdyla**, and the progressive Hungarian choreographer **Adrienn Hód**. It is performative research into the relationship between body, personality and meaning, where the faces of dancers are concealed by black masks until the last moment. *Soft Spot* is also an installation of two non-specific, genderless bodies, and a dance concert of two distinguished and award-winning Slovak dancers, who distinctive with their poetics of movement.

Slovak Chamber Theatre in the city of Martin is a regular feature at the International Festival Divadelná Nitra. At the 31st edition, the group is arriving with their award-winning production ***D1 (working title)***, an ironic take on the still missing motorway between Bratislava and Košice, as well as on Slovak national mentality. The Slovak Chamber Theatre has one of the most gelled ensembles, which is no barrier to the actors retaining their highly distinctive style. This is also demonstrated in the production *D1 (working title)* written and directed by **Lukáš Brutovský**, the artistic director of the Martin Theatre. The production already featured at all major Slovak festivals and has already received a number of awards, such as the Grand Prix and the Bratislava Audience Award at the 2021 Nová dráma/New Drama festival and the Academy of Theatre Artists Award for the best stage production in the 2020/2021 season.

The work of **Mária Danadová**, the curator of the Slovak programme section will be presented at the Festival with the extraordinary puppet production ***Ignis fatuus***. The distinctive theatre group **ODIVO**, co-founded by Danadová, collaborated on the piece with the outstanding puppet technologist and puppeteer Ivan Martinka. The character of Lightbearer comes to life as a combination of a live actor and a puppet in a fairy-tale imagery, and in a technologically brilliant performance. The authors ask in the piece: “Where does light end and darkness begin? Where does fear end and fascination begin?” to answer that, after all, “Where there is shadow, there must also be light.”

The Slovak programme further includes ***Until Silence Reigns***, a production by **The Andrej Bagar Theatre** in Nitra. The astonishing project of the author and dramaturge Slavka Cíváňová, stage director **Iveta Ditte Jurčová** and the



Nitra Theatre ensemble speaks of the need to protect fragile nature and the environment. The piece combines interactive audio and video installations with performative input by actors who present a contemporary view of man's relationship with the landscape and the state of Slovak forests, drawing from documentary material (civic protests against unauthorised logging in the valleys Tichá and Kôprová dolina in 2007). The performance includes a learning programme for children and their parents.

Off-programme events for all ages

Every year, the International Festival offers visitors a lavish off-programme menu of events for all ages: discussions, concerts, street shows, open-air theatre performances, the works of young emerging theatre artists or night adventures during the Nitra White Night on Saturday. The off-programme also includes the customary event **KníhKupecká** and related poetry declamations, music performances, readings, literature and authors, encounters and discussions with influential figures in Slovak cultural and public life.

Debates

Major public debates are a major feature at the Festival. Special guests address key public issues, always in the spirit of the Festival leitmotif. In 2022, the moderator Oliver Rehák and his panellists will seek answers to questions related to the theme of **fragility**? The discussion is convened by the Association Divadelná Nitra in cooperation with the daily *Denník N*.

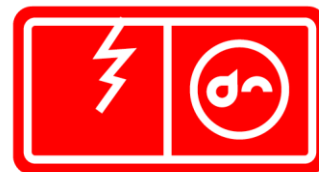
Kids

A number of events await the youngest viewers within the **Festival for Children** programme line. They include stage performances **A Girl with Great Ingenuity** by the Tuš Theatre, **Wakey–Wakey** by the young independent group Divadlo Veteš, **Water Cycle** by Theatre on the Swing (Divadlo na hojdačke), or an unconventional stand-up for children **Jobus Stories** by Braňo Jobus. The New Theatre offers a production **Book Thief** for audiences aged 10+. After *Anne Frank*, the Nitra ensemble led by stage director Šimon Spišák presents yet another powerful WWII story, now based on the international bestseller by the Australian author Marko Zusak.

Festival for Children offers, yet again, a day integration workshop for visually impaired children and those without impairment **A Tulip for You**. In **Black Box** – the Festival permanent installation, visitors can experience environment for the those with and without sight impairment.

Young artists

The Festival annually offers space for presentations to young, emerging



theatre artists. The **Youth Theatre** section features this year as many as three ensembles: Elementary School of Art in Vráble ZUŠ with **Man** – stage adaptation of texts by the Australian artist and writer Shaun Tan; The Dezider Kardoš Private Conservatory in Topoľčianky with **Breaks**, a production of the text by the Slovak playwright Michaela Zakuťanská; an original adaptation of the Ödön von Horváth play **Don Juan Returning from War** will be performed by students of the Nitra Private Conservatory.

Revisiting the past

The street show **Balaton 1982** brings together artists and art groups from the countries of the Visegrad Four group. The entertaining and interactive blend of pantomime, physical theatre and clown show is a sardonic excursion into the fashion and music of the uniform era of the 1980s. It is a reminder of the times when Lake Balaton in Hungary was the main holiday destination for many (not only) Czechs and Slovaks.

Concerts

On the concert stage, Festival visitors will be able to listen to the singer **Zuzana Mikulcová**, who combines jazz, soul, pop and folk in her work, or to the distinctive music-working group **Vrbovskí víťazi** centred around Branislav Jobus. **Katarzia**, a native of Nitra with her own musical temperament, will present her latest album **n5**, inspired by the pandemic period. Her concert will open the programme of the Nitra White Night that will also draw audiences to a range of culture centres in Nitra city centre. Performance and an exhibition opening at the Synagogue will close the Nitra White Night.

Inclusion

“Long-serving along with new co-organisers and partners, with whom we take the cooperation to a higher level through regular brunches this year, will get their space in the off-programme events. Our joint effort brings, for instance, a series of events with the Mareena association dedicated to the inclusion of internationals living in Slovakia and the development of multicultural dialogue,” explains Miro Zwiefelhofer, programming director of the off-programme menu, the creation of the smorgasbord.

Visual identity as emergency packs

The theme of **f r a g i l i t y** is also reflected in the visual identity of the 31st Festival edition. The author, who is also the Festival court graphic designer Tomáš Vicen, created **vacuum bags**. They represent concrete packages that epitomise, for example, the loss of home (Teddy Bear, keys), impending famine (grain) or wild nature (rosemary). Vicen presents his concept: “In the first plan, it is about thinking about the future, about fear, about rescue. From



the outset, I perceived fragility in relation to disruption. I imagined how one disruption in the entire system is enough to fully affect the whole." The original inspiration of climate change and the pandemic period later expanded to include the war in Ukraine. "I was intrigued by the evacuation backpacks that people threatened by war have by their doors in preparation for immediate escape and the loss of everything. There was a need to select the necessary and mark it as fragile. And so, vacuum-sealed packages were born, designed to preserve this fragile product," Vicen.

The range of vacuum bags will be gradually expanded. Viewers themselves can intervene in their form. Anyone who has an idea for other item that embody fragility can send their ideas to nitrafest@nitrafest.sk. Please enter the word **Vizual** in the email subject.

Learning & participation

Emerging specialists

During the 31st Festival edition, the Nitra Theatre Association offers a range of learning and participatory activities. **V4@Theatre Critics Residency** is a creative platform for theatre critics under the age of 35 from Slovakia and abroad who were selected based on a public call for applications. For the 8th time already, critics will attend performances within the main and off-programme and then join analytical seminars, networking sessions, discussions and lectures.

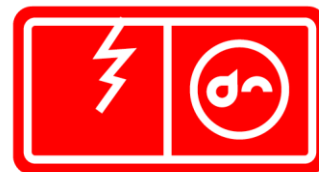
Slovak secondary school and university students can also participate in the Festival through the project **How to Understand Theatre**. During the six Festival days, the participants will attend the performances within the main programme. They will have a specially designed programme that includes regular meetings – **lecturer-led workshops and discussions with the creative teams** of the productions. Participants were recruited via an open call.

Public participation

The Festival also brings culmination of the work with the Nitra residents who have been actively involved in programme selection through the **Audience Programme Board** since 2019. It is part of the long-running international project **Be SpectACTive!**

This is Art, Too

Since 2014, the project **This is Art, Too** has been to highlight works of art in public space that fell into oblivion, to raise public awareness of cultural values, to support culture tourism, to facilitate the rediscovery of the identity of the city and its residents. The website <https://www.ajtotojeumenie.sk>



shows the objects that the Association Divadelná Nitra has identified in the previous years of the project. Visitors can also download a map with the identified spots where the works of art.

Všetkým, ktorí chcú zažiť festivalové zákulisie, prácu pri organizácii medzinárodného podujatia a stať sa súčasťou aktívnej komunity, festival navyše ponúka možnosť stať sa dobrovoľníkom:

Volunteers

The Festival offered an opportunity to join in as volunteer to all wishing to experience the behind-the-scenes of the Festival, work in the organisation of an international event and become part of an active community. Divadelná Nitra is a wonderful opportunity for volunteers of all ages and walks of life. The Festival now prides itself in generations that have been giving the Festival helping hand. Over the 30 years of Divadelná Nitra, more than 1,700 people have joined the ranks of volunteers. This year will be no different.

Tickets

Online sales via GoOut

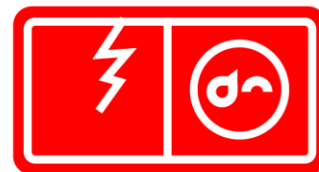
Festival Box Office at **point bod.K7** (Štefánikova trieda 7, Nitra) is open Mon – Fri from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Further information about performances, online ticket sales, purchase options and ticket reservations is available at the Festival Box Office or by phone at +421 949 853 333 and via email vstupenky@nitrafest.sk.

COVID-19

Throughout the 2022 International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra, the Association Divadelná Nitra and all co-organisers shall ensure compliance with all hygiene and anti-epidemic measures in line with the currently valid regulations of the Slovak Public Health Office, with the modifications of the Regional Public Health Office based in Nitra, with the epidemic decree of the director of The Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra, and with the valid decrees of the co-organisers. We will keep you informed about the measures at www.nitrafest.sk.

KREHKOSŤ / FRAGILITY



Patrons, convenors, partners

International Festival Divadelná Nitra 2022 is held under the auspices of Mr Milan Belica, the Chairman of the Nitra Self-Governing Region and Mr Marek Hattas, the Mayor of the City of Nitra.

Lead convener

Association Divadelná Nitra

Main co-organisers

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

Co-organisers

Botanical Garden of the Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra, Domof Creativity, Regional Public Enlightenment Centre in Nitra, Creative Centre Nitra, NGO Mareena, Gallery of Nitra, NGO Nitra Culture Centre, Nitra Regional Museum in Nitra, Books and Second-hand Booksellers Pod Vřškom, Joint Boarding School for Pupils with Sight Impairment, Bratislava, NGO Vila K, The Prince Pribina Elementary School in Nitra, The Jozef Rosinský Elementary School of Art in Nitra

