



DN 2023

medzinárodný festival
international theatre festival

The programme of the International Theatre Festival Nitra not only as a response to suggestions from society

PRESS RELEASE

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The leitmotif of the 2023 International Festival Divadelná Nitra is **responses**. The conveners interpret the Festival theme as an interest in all that surrounds us, in knowledge about the state of those closest to us and the world, as an interaction that helps us survive and find the meaning of life. These themes are naturally reflected in the main programme. This year it features 4 international titles and 8 Slovak productions.

"The leitmotif of this year's Divadelná Nitra, odzvy/ responses, encourages us to examine the theatre makers' reactions to the events around us and our own attitudes. To evoke a response is the mission of art. During the holiday of art called the festival, the interaction of numerous visitors facilitates the achievement of the mission all the more intensively," explains Darina Kárová, Director of the International Festival Divadelná Nitra. "Unexpected and powerful is the statement of the Belgian productions *Mining Stories*, *Pleasant Island*, *Out of the Blue*, as a response to the destruction of natural resources and unique places on our planet. We also find responses to ecological themes in other productions, for instance in *We Are a Country* by The Jozef Gregor Tajovský Theatre from Zvolen. Today, many theatre makers reflect on the theme of war – from the Trojan war three millennia ago in the production of *Hecuba* by the Slovak Chamber Theatre in the city of Martin, to the most pressing issue of the day – the war in Ukraine – with the characteristic title *Danse Macabre (Dance of Death)* performed by the Ukrainian music and theatre group Dakh Daughters. In other items within the Festival programme, we find responses to historical events and stories of historical figures, echoes of the fate of migrants in Slovakia, the theme of re-examining traditions and the quest for identity – private and national, as well as testing the limits of human anxiety or the banks of an unknown river," adds Kárová.

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**DIVADELNÁ
NITRA**

22 – 27 sept

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME:

RESPONSE TO THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AND WAR IN UKRAINE

Most of the international programme is a selection from the works by the Belgian artistic duo Silke Huysmans and Hannes Dereere that represents the pinnacle of European documentary theatre. The authors analytically and, at the same time, artistically approach various challenges of the present day that ordinary people do not notice or are oblivious to their implication. At the same time, the authors use the latest technologies on stage, work with documentary and authentic recordings composed, at times, even poetically. The Festival features their works *Mining Tales*, *Pleasant Island* and *From the Bottom of the Sea*. The trilogy is a response to socio-critical, political, ecological themes. Each part bears an imperative message. All three productions are primarily documentary – journalistic in nature and their stage form is quite minimalist. Yet, they bear the potential to affect the spectators emotionally, to make them think in new contexts or even activate them.

The highlight of the international programme and the entire Festival is the unique cabaret *Danse Macabre (Dance of Death)* by the Ukrainian music and performance group Dakh Daughters that became one of the main symbols of résistance against the suppression of Ukrainian democracy. A group of six actresses led by stage director Vlad Troitskyi already featured at Divadelná Nitra already in 2016 with the thought-provoking cabaret *Roses*. It was for the first time the group brought up the theme of the war in eastern Ukraine. Songs that appear in *Danse Macabre*, are a mix of different genres from post-punk to Ukrainian folk music. Dakh Daughters connect them on stage with authentic stories of Ukrainian women and quotes from the *Book of Job*. The production is thus a testimony about war and exile, an indictment, a nostalgic memory of the native land, and a magnificent show in one.

SLOVAK PROGRAMME:

BETWEEN RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

In the Slovak section, 2023 Divadelná Nitra brings a remarkably balanced showcase of works by the state-funded and independent theatres. This year, the section is curated by the theatre critic Miro Zwiefelhofer. He explains his selection that it is conceived as "a collection of four thematic lines representing four challenges. Their mastery will define the destinies of the inhabitants of this country." He arranged the productions into four societies that function in a better future. "A society in which the voice of the weak finds a response" is presented by *Hecuba*, a production by the Slovak Chamber Theatre in the city of Martin, and the performative installation *In and Calm Voice*. "A society that respects the country it inhabits" is reflected in the production of *We are a Country* by The Jozsef Gregor Tajovský Theatre in Zvolen, and in the movement performance

Holding River. "Society of pilgrims" is presented by *M&H Pilgrimage* and *Pribina (Making of)*, a production of the Festival home stage – The Andrej Bagar Theatre. It is followed by "a society that knows and respects its élites" and the works *Endocannabinoid* by the independent Stoka Theatre and *Gotham City* by the Slovak National Theatre. "The connection between civil society activities and creative art represents a symbiosis that is distinctive of the International Festival Divadelná Nitra in 2023. After twenty-one years, the Festival coincides, yet again, with the date of the parliamentary elections, an event that represents the most widespread and fundamental form of civic participation in political life of the country," adds Zwiefelhofer.

Within the framework of the four independent ensembles, spectators will see a wide range of creative approaches – from author's theatre and collective works to contemporary dance, stage installation and a staged event. At the same time, theatre makers will move a few times from brick theatre to non-traditional outdoor setting. With the first Festival performance, the convenors pay tribute to one of the emblematic names of the alternative scene in Slovakia, the stage director Blaho Uhlár. *Endocannabinoid* is a precisely acted montage that opens up a number of publicly critical topics with Stoka's idiosyncratic sharp sarcastic humour. During its existence, the Stoka Theatre overcame various difficulties; they had two performance venues demolished, and repeatedly did not receive state subsidies for their work. It is therefore quite significant that the Stoka performance is followed by a public discussion *Independent Culture in Peril?*, hosted by Oliver Rehák from the daily *Denník N*.

A differently conceived response to the current developments across the globe and in Slovakia will be presented by the performative project *In and Calm Voice* by the ensemble Uhol_92. Five people of different nationalities, ages and life experiences, led by the young talented and award-winning director Alžbeta Vrzgula, explore protest as a public expression. The site-specific movement piece *Holding River* by Eva Priečková and Katarína Poliačiková is a testimony that Slovak artists touch upon environmental issues. A poetic statement about the state of water surface and its interweaving with our bodies takes spectators to the Nitra River banks. Festival audiences will experience a different pilgrimage with female performers Monika Haasová and Heidi Šinková that starts from Mlyny, the most popular Nitra-based shopping centre. Performative event *M&H Pilgrimage* directed by Petra Fornayová is a response to the current consumerist lifestyle.

The four productions from the state-funded brick theatres have a common thematic denominator – criticality and commitment. At the same time, however, they all represent a distinctly contemporary view of theatre and drama in the entire spectrum of staging approaches. On Saturday, the Festival opens with the performance *We Are a Country: A Story of People, Land and Time* that

outlines a new line of work by The Jozef Gregor Tajovský Theatre in Zvolen. The piece is deemed to be one of the discoveries of the past season. The fate of Slatinka, a water dam that was never built, was brought to the Zvolen stage by one of the top representatives of contemporary Czech theatre – the award-winning director Petra Tejnorová. Further two productions in the Slovak programme, Nitra's *Pribina (Making of)* and *Gotham City* by the Slovak National Theatre, are linked by the stage director Rastislav Ballek, recognised for his inimitable staging poetics. His signature style is characterised by a sense of coherent layering of artistic approaches, an emphasis on visually evocative images and equally engaging music. Ballek's productions are often based on national themes with a critically ironic and considerably philosophical touch. The 2023 Festival edition presents, yet again, the Slovak Chamber Theatre in the city of Martin that regularly brings to Nitra the finest standard and thematically imperative works. It is no different in the case of the production of *Hecuba* that is undeniably among the highlights of the past theatre season. Text by the Irish playwright Marina Carr, as directed by the gifted award-winning Lukáš Brutovský, tells the story that contrasts two principles: the masculine, conquering principle and the defensive, feminine principle that protects not only the family, but also the community in general.

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME:

FROM DESTROYING PREJUDICE TO ENGAGEMENT

Every year, Divadelná Nitra also brings a lavish accompanying programme for adults as well as for children audiences. In addition to the traditional *KnihKupecká* and *A Tulip for You*, events and regular programme lines, such as the *Youth Theatre* and the *Festival to Children*, the 2023 Divadelná Nitra introduces a number of novelties, such as *Dance Hall WORLD*. The permanent fixture of bod.K7 aims to connect communities and break down prejudices through dance.

Just as within the main programme, the accompanying programme offers responses to some of the pressing challenges faced by the contemporary world and to current public developments. In addition to other ensembles, the *Festival to Children* will once again bring to Nitra Divadlo na hojdačke that has long been dedicated to ecological themes. The regular programme line of the *Youth Theatre* will include, inter alia, *Divorce – a public matter*, the output of the collaboration between The Dezider Kardoš Private Conservatory in Topoľčany and the Prague National Theatre. The piece is dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Public discussion of the topic follows after the performance.

Little Ukraine in Nitra is a manifestation of civic activism and engagement, with which Divadelná Nitra has always identified. The event will be



held next to the Nitra synagogue on Sunday. The programme introduces visitors to Ukraine with all its war vicissitudes; presents local Ukrainian artists; premières a documentary, and offers specialties of Ukrainian cuisine. The event includes cars that will leave Nitra for Ukraine delivering humanitarian aid after the end of the programme.

Detailed programme is available at www.nitrafest.sk.

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

During the 32nd edition, the Association Divadelná Nitra offers, yet again, a number of learning events and participatory projects. The V4@Theatre Critics Residency is a creative platform for theatre critics up to the age of 35 from Slovakia and abroad. For the 9th time, critics will attend the performances within the main and accompanying programmes and then participate in analytical seminars, networking, discussions and lectures. The V4@Theatre Critics project brings to the Residency twelve young critics from the V4 and Eastern Partnership countries – from Albania, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The project is tutored by international lecturers – theatre specialists Stefan Tigges and Darko Lukić.

VOLUNTEERING

Divadelná Nitra is an opportunity to become a volunteer for everyone wishing to experience the behind-the-scenes of the Festival, work in the preparation of an international event and become part of an active community. During the 30 years of the Festival, over 1,700 volunteers helped its preparation, some repeatedly. All information about volunteering at the 2023 Festival edition is available at: <https://nitrafest.sk/projekty/dobrovolnici-a-prax/>.

TICKETS, FESTIVAL PASSES AND MUCH MORE

- Spectators can purchase tickets for the performances within the main programme and selected performances of the accompanying programme **online** via [GoOut](#); from 4 September in the Festival **Box Office** (bod.K7, Štefánikova street 7, Nitra) on Monday – Friday, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m..
- There is also a limited number of Festival passes for the entire Festival. By purchasing **empathy tickets**, festival participants can donate a cultural experience to someone who cannot afford it.
- Spectators can support the Festival by purchasing a **patron's ticket**
Divadelná Nitra is a festival friendly to students and professionals.



- Students of Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts will purchase tickets based on a special code and will be reimbursed by their school.
- Professionals – stage actors and journalists are entitled to a professional discount.
- Online presale: bit.ly/3YvNP0Q

The 2023 International Festival Divadelná Nitra is held under the **patronage** of the Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic Ms Silvia Hroncová, the Chairman of the Nitra Self-Governing Region Mr Branislav Becík and the Mayor of Nitra Mr Marek Hattas.

Main convener

Association Divadelná Nitra

Main co-organizers

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

Co-organisers

Botanical gardens at Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra; COMIN; Theatre Institute Bratislava/Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic; Bookstore and antique shop Pod Vríškom; Regional Public Education Centre in Nitra; Mareena; Mier Ukrajine; Nitra Cultural Heritage; Sekáč je láska; Slovenská Tepláreň; Joint boarding school for students with visual impairments, Bratislava; Tourist Information Board Nitra; Urania; Vila K; Za čiarou; Prince Pribin Elementary School in Nitra; The Jozef Rosinský School of Applied Arts in Nitra, and others

The Festival is supported by public funds by the Slovak Art Council – the main Festival partner and other partners.

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Projekty Asociácie Divadelná Nitra podporili



Projekty ADN z verejných zdrojov podporil Fond na podporu umenia, hlavný partner projektov.



Realizované s finančnou podporou Ministerstva spravodlivosti SR v rámci dotačného programu na presadzovanie, podporu a ochranu ľudských práv a slobôd a na predchádzanie všetkým formám diskriminácie, rasizmu, xenofóbie, antisemitizmu a ostatným prejavom intolerancie. Za obsah tohto dokumentu výlučne zodpovedá Asociácia Divadelná Nitra.



Tento projekt sa uskutočnil vďaka finančnej podpore UNICEF. Program Spoznajme sa realizuje Mesto Nitra v spolupráci s Nitrianskou komunitnou nadáciou.

Hlavní mediální partneri



Mediální partneri



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