

PALM OFF FEST 2023

Is it far?

POWERING POSITION

SEASON
2023–2024

DIVADLO
POD PALMOVKOU

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PALM OFF FEST 2023

Is it far?

13 October – 20 October 2023

7th edition of (not only) Central European theatres meeting

13. – 20. 10.		Constellation Underdogs Exhibition	Galerie Světova 1 (Světova 1, Praha 8) Opening hours Tuesday–Saturday 14:00–18:00 <i>Free entry</i>
13. 10.	17:00	Opening of Teodor Buzu's exhibition <i>Trans Action</i>	Foyer of the Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre The exhibition will be accessible during the shows until 20 October 2023.
13. 10.	19:00	GALA OPENING OF THE 7TH EDITION OF THE PALM OFF FEST FESTIVAL Valeria Schulczová et al.: 24	Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre Directed by: Valeria Schulczová Slovak National Theatre Bratislava, Slovakia Performed in Slovak, with English subtitles Discussion with authors follows after the show
14. 10.	16:30	Meeting with translator Martin Hilský Close and distant worlds of William Shakespeare	Pod Palmovkou Theatre Café
14. 10.	19:00	William Shakespeare: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM	Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre Directed by: Michal Lang Pod Palmovkou Theatre Prague, Czech Republic Performed in Czech, with English subtitles <i>Discussion with authors follows after the show</i>
15. 10.	19:00	Petru Hadârcă, Mariana Onceanu: SIBERIAN FILES	Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre Directed by: Petru Hadârcă Mihai Eminescu National Theatre Chişinău, Moldova Suitable for ages 16+! Performed in Romanian, with Czech subtitles <i>Discussion with authors follows after the show</i>
16. 10.	19:00	EASY THINGS	Behind the curtain of Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre Directed by: Anna Karasińska Stefan Jaracz Theater in Olsztyn, Olsztyn, Poland Performed in Polish, with Czech subtitles <i>Discussion with authors follows after the show</i>
17. 10.	17:00	Guided tour of the Constellation Underdogs exhibition in English	Galerie Světova 1 (1, Světova St, Prague 8) <i>Free entry</i>
18. 10.	19:00	Jeton Neziraj: THE HANDKE PROJECT: OR, JUSTICE FOR PETER'S STUPIDITIES	Behind the curtain of Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre Directed by: Blerta Neziraj Qendra Multimedia theatre ensemble Pristina, Kosovo Suitable for ages 16+! Performed in English, with Czech subtitles <i>Discussion with authors follows after the show</i>
19. 10.	17:00	Guided tour of the Constellation Underdogs exhibition in Czech	Galerie Světova 1 (1, Světova St, Prague 8) <i>Free entry</i>
19. 10.	18:00	Guided tour of Andres Serrano's exhibition <i>Infamous Beauty</i>	DOX Centre for Contemporary Art (1, Poupětova St, Prague 7) <i>Reduced entrance fee for festival visitors. You will find more information on the Divadlo pod Palmovkou website.</i>
20. 10.	19:00	CONCERT OF DUNAJ & ZA VODOU ANSÁMBL	Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre

**DIVADLO POD PALMOVKOU IS A THEATRE
OF THE CAPITAL CITY OF PRAGUE**



**THE PALM OFF FEST FESTIVAL 2021 IS ORGANISED BY DIVADLO POD PALMOVKOU,
ZENKLOVA 34, 180 36, PRAGUE 8**

**THE MINISTER OF CULTURE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, MR MARTIN BAXA,
TOOK OVER THE PATRONAGE OF THE 7TH EDITION OF THE FESTIVAL PALM OFF FEST
HELD FROM 13 OCTOBER 2023 TO 20 OCTOBER 2023.**

**THE EXHIBITION *TRANS ACTION* OF TEODOR BUZU AND THE PERFORMANCE *SIBERIAN FILES*
ARE HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA,
HIS EXCELLENCY, MR ALEXANDRU CODREANU.**

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FESTIVAL PRODUCTION MANAGER

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DISCUSSIONS HOSTED BY

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CZECH SUBTITLES

Jiří Našinec (*Siberian Files*), Anna Plasová (*Easy Things*), Easy Talk
(*The Handke Project, Or Justice for Peter's Stupidies*)

ENGLISH SUBTITLES TO THE SHOWS

SND (24), Easy Talk (*Midsummer Night's Dream, Siberian Files*)

PALM OFF FEST 2022 PROGRAMME BULLETIN MADE BY:

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Martin Ponec.

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Not for sale.



Dear spectators of the Palm Off Fest Festival,

I am very glad that the 2023 edition of the Festival comprises also the performance of the Mihai Eminescu National Theater from the Republic of Moldova - a premiere, which contributes to the better mutual knowledge between the peoples of our two friendly countries.

The *Siberian Files* production shares the tradition of this important multicultural festival to ask for answers to the many controversial questions of the past and present times. It conveys, with great emotion, a message about human resilience and the importance of memory – a message essential to understanding the present and to looking into the future. I am sure that this performance will not leave indifferent any spectator.

I am happy that the 7th edition of the Palm Off Fest Festival will also host the *Trans Action* fine arts exhibition of the Moldovan painter Teodor Buzu, and I congratulate him on his 99th solo exhibition.

Let me thank the organizers of Palm Off Fest in Prague for their fruitful cooperation with Moldovan partners, congratulate and wish them success for the current and future editions of the Festival.

I thank the audience for their presence, wishing everyone a memorable cultural experience!

Alexandru Codreanu,
Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova in the Czech Republic



Dear visitors, dear guests,

First of all, I wish the festival many satisfied spectators this year, a smooth course and a lot of success.

I am looking forward to the festival and am sincerely glad that it has earned itself a fixed place in the theatre calendar over the years of its existence and can be boldly described as 'tradition'. With one forced break due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now in its seventh year. Seven is considered a lucky number and I believe that this year's Palm Off Fest will bring satisfaction to the organizers as well as to the festivalgoers.

It has been a great honour for me to support the festival on behalf of our Prague 8 district. I am also very proud that we have such a great venue here in Libeň as is the Divadlo Pod Palmovkou Theatre, whose history is marked by great theatre masters. And last, but not least, I would like to express my gratitude for having a theatre of truly top artistic value right here in Prague 8.

Ondřej Gros,
Mayor of Prague 8

IS IT FAR?



Dear friends of theatre, dear festival audience,
dear festival guests,

When we opened the first edition of the Palm Off Fest at Pod Palmovkou Theatre in 2016, the idea that by this year it would have become an important traditional event that has earned its place under the sun and has become a respected and watched cultural event was almost utopian. Especially since the dramaturgical focus of our festival consistently followed the theatrical dimension of the word “off” in the title, focusing on theatrical works, themes, authors and cultures that for various reasons stood outside the (clearly popular) mainstream. Over the past six years, our festival has presented interesting and, in the Czech context, often original and inspiring works from Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine and the Czech Republic. Add to this an interesting accompanying programme that included contemporary art exhibitions, concerts, documentary film screenings, discussions with personalities of Czech cultural, political and social life and other events. Each year, the festival also offered its audience a unique opportunity to meet and discuss with the authors of the productions, whether they were famous authors or those at the beginning of their theatrical careers – and often became famous soon afterwards. The festival thus opened up new perspectives on the possibilities of contemporary theatre, brought current themes to the fore and encouraged dialogue between countries, nations and cultures. The performances presented at the Palm Off Fest influenced several productions of the Pod Palmovkou Theatre as the theatre invited artists, whose performances were presented at the festival and appealed to the audience, to collaborate with it; the influence of the festival has also been reflected in the shift of our theatre’s production style towards contemporary progressive European theatre. The unique and valuable experience gained during the organization of the festival and the festival as such translated into a healthy increase in self-confidence of the Pod Palmovkou Theatre in the field of international cooperation. The success of our festival has also stimulated and inspired other Czech theatres that took a path similar to ours. The past six years of the festival have been no walk in the park – from the beginning until today, Palm Off Fest has struggled with financial limitations, which have been offset mainly by the determination and skills of the theatre crew, without whose – often extreme dedication – the festival could never have taken place. The seventh year of our somewhat “nonobvious festival” is therefore a small miracle, and we are all the more pleased to invite you to participate in it.

This year’s Palm Off Fest motto is the question “Is it far?”. It is a question that refers to many themes at once. It doesn’t just ask about geographical distance, although the notion of distance is now as relative as the idea that major events taking place “far away” from our borders don’t affect us and that we can behave as if nothing were happening. The question is also directed towards the very essence of human life, where the last things in life may seem remote, but even this is very relative. It also refers to the relativity of the remoteness of historical events that took place decades ago, but which, despite being (relatively) far away from our present, can still fundamentally affect our present, and often do. Last but not least, the question also asks, with a slight irony, what is the situation of culture in our country, how close or distant

culture and art are to different people: are they important and necessary or remote and useless?

One of the ‘discoveries’ we made over the years of producing the festivals was the sad realization that culture and theatre often have a much better status in neighbouring countries than they do in the Czech Republic. Not because Czech culture is inferior or of lower quality, or that our artists are worse than those in nearby or distant countries (it is often quite the opposite), but mainly because neighbouring countries – even those economically weaker than us – have understood that it pays off to present themselves as confident, innovative, versatile, inspiring, building and representing their own identity, internally and externally. They have also understood that culture, and theatre in particular, can greatly assist audiences to orient themselves better in the flood of shortcut pseudo-solutions, cheap nationalism, misinformation and quick emotions. When compared to the situation in most neighbouring countries, it is obvious that our country has been moving in the opposite direction for many decades and is currently reaping the results in the form of lagging behind, as noted from many sides. But as long as the nearly 200-year-old and outdated Marxian notion that art and culture are “superstructures” actually parasitizing on the hard-working working class is promoted, our country has no chance of escaping the trap of outdated and energetically non-competitive industries, low-value-added production and cheap labour, nor to keep pace with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which, although in some respects they had worse starting conditions than we did in the 1990s, are successfully catching up and have already overtaken us in some aspects. This is a complex issue involving many topics and sub-topics, which we will try to discuss with our prominent guests from the theatre community at the International Forum on the Future of Culture, entitled this year Theatre as a Public Cultural Institution: Ideological Stereotypes and (Valueless) Pragmatism. We would like to cordially invite you to this event, which will take place in December 2023.

International theatre productions are, of course, the essence of our festival. The Main programme of Palm Off Fest 2023 will present, for the first time, exceptional productions from Slovakia, Poland, Moldova and Kosovo to the Czech audiences. *24*, a production by the Slovak National Theatre is a remarkable theatrical study based on real events and authentic materials, touching upon the event that probably affects Europe the most at present: the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the humanitarian crisis it has caused. The award-winning production *Easy Things* from the Polish Stefan Jaracz Theatre in Olsztyn, on the other hand, brings timeless themes related to the lot in life and the position of women in contemporary society (and in theatre) and opens up, among other things, the powerful and controversial topic of intergenerational dialogue. The Moldovan Mihai Eminescu’s National Theatre from Chisinau brings its award-winning and emotional performance *Siberian Files* and presents us with the broader historical context of Central and Eastern Europe by addressing the issue of the Soviet genocide of Romanians in Moldova during World War II, based on authentic memories and documents, and thus bringing a view of the Soviet army depicted not as a liberator but as a new occupier, which may be controversial for some. The last international performance of this year’s Palm Off Fest is a production by the internationally active

Kosovo theatre group Quendra Multimedia, aptly titled *Project Handke, Or: Justice for Peter's Stupidities*, which is a tragicomic and poignantly ironic theatrical reflection on the responsibility of an artist, and is based on authentic materials documenting the scandalous opinions of the laureate of the Nobel Prize for Literature. However, the performance also touches the now – sadly – very fashionable fascination of some intellectuals with nationalism and totalitarianism, as well as the desire to flirt with evil. International performances will be complemented by the Pod Palmovkou Theatre's production of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which will present Shakespeare's most performed play unconventionally staged and using state-of-the-art stage technology. The above-mentioned programme will be complemented by an exhibition of Moldovan painter Teodor Buzu, who combines Moldovan and Czech imagination in his work, by *Trans Action*, an exhibition of four fragments from four Prague non-profit art spaces held in the friendly Světova 1 Gallery, a guided tour of a remarkable exhibition by American artist Andres Serrano, which is offered at a discounted fee to POF festivalgoers by the DOX Gallery, and a meeting with the only Czech translator of the complete works of William Shakespeare and a prominent expert on Elizabethan England, Professor Martin Hilský.

When Bohumil Hrabal, one of the most famous Czech writers, once wanted to describe his beloved residence in Na Hrázi Street near the Pod Palmovkou Theatre, he wrote about it (and the adjacent neighbourhood) that it was already part of the Eastern European Galicia because he found them similar in their mentality, spirituality and feelings, and thus distant, exclusive and different from central Prague and Bohemia. There is humour, brilliant observation and a great deal of irony in this... Nevertheless, in its almost eighty years of history, Pod Palmovkou Theatre has indeed always – and with success – been a kind of “eastern cultural gateway” to Prague, and the Palm Off Fest also fulfils this function. Also, its consistently focussed programme is unique in the Czech Republic to date. Therefore, we believe that the productions staged at our festival will be close to your heart in all respects.

We are looking forward to meeting you in the auditorium of the Pod Palmovkou Theatre during the festival and beyond.

Michal Lang,

*Director of Palm Off Fest festival
and Pod Palmovkou Theatre*

Ladislav Stýblo,

Dramaturge of Pod Palmovkou Theatre

FROM REVIEWS AND NEWS ABOUT THE PAST EDITIONS OF THE FESTIVAL

“Theatre ensembles from Central Europe gathered for the sixth time in Pod Palmovkou Theatre in Prague. The usually extremely concentrated dramaturgy of the event, called Palm Off Fest, was at its best after last year’s covid-induced stumble. All four international productions confirmed that thinking about theatre in a broader than aesthetic context is worth it and that the results can be of high quality (...) With each new edition of Palm Off Fest, it is obvious how carefully the visiting companies are selected. They are chosen not only by the director and founder of the event Michal Lang, who is inclined towards Polish and Central European production, but also by the dramaturge Jan Jiřík, whose basic requirement for theatre is to reflect society or politics. That is why each performance was followed by a discussion with actors and authors. The third edition five years ago had a provocative motto: ‘Have we got what we wanted?’ This year’s title gave an original answer: ‘We want something different!’”

Marcela Magdová, *magazin.aktualne.cz* (31. 10. 2022)

“The law of non-refoulement is a law guaranteeing safety to all people fleeing their country (where they would be at risk of torture or any other form of violence for political, racial or sexual orientation reasons), as it obliges the country to grant asylum to these people if they request it. These words opened *The Game* production by the Slovene ensemble Slovensko Mladinsko Gledališče, co-produced with Maska Ljubljana, which addresses the issue of refugees crossing Slovenia’s borders. Presented at the sixth edition of the Palm Off Festival, *The Game* takes a documentary approach to a social issue that has fallen into oblivion with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and reveals the real experiences of refugees, whose image is often distorted in our society (not only) due to misinformation and untruths told by some politicians. In the 21st century, few would have expected that freedom would not be a fundamental right but a game of survival.”

Veronika Holečková, *divadelni-noviny.cz* (25. 10. 2022)

“The international festival of Central European theatres called Palm Off Fest starts at the Pod Palmovkou Theatre. This year’s edition has the title *We Want Something Different!*, – a theme shared by all the productions presented and also the theme of discussion on present-day events, in culture and elsewhere. (...) Of course, the Czech performance *romeo&julie2022*, a multimedia digital thriller about life on social networks and the belief in the veracity of their content directed by the young Romanian director Alin Neaguțoiu, will also be presented.”

Sabina Vosecká, *praha.rozhlas.cz* (14. 10. 2022)

“The 5th Palm Off Fest theatre festival opened on Friday, October 15, with the *Alpha*. Operomanija, a Lithuanian experimental company dedicated to new opera, brought to Prague a genre combining modern opera and comics. (...) I’ve never thought I’d find the fusion of opera and comics so appealing, but after seeing *Alpha*, this connection seems natural to me. The static element that still appears in some opera productions today is not at all a nuisance here; on the contrary, one can safely take one’s eyes off the singer and enjoy the visual comics delight while listening to minimalist melodies, spanning over Spanish, synthetic and horror music. I wish this centaur of artistic genres with the body of an opera and the legs of a comics would gallop beyond the borders of Lithuania.”

Barboba Sedláková, *www.divadelni-noviny.cz* (18. 10. 2021)

“The Palm Off Fest theatre festival has become one of the most interesting Czech cultural events, where genres lost their importance, yet where all performances are linked by a clear theme. (...) The main programme presented a well-curated selection of Central European theatre: two performances from Hungary and one performance from Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. A clear concept, both aesthetic – and theme-wise, was even more obvious this year. The motto *Heroes Like Us*, borrowed by the festival’s dramaturges from Thomas Brussig’s book, was successfully used to cover a variety of performances that complemented each other well and accentuated the unclear border between heroism and anti-heroism, and the understanding of the imperfections in politically motivated decision-making. (...) As voiced at the discussion Festivaly, kam se podiváš, organised by Czech Radio Vltava, Palm Off Fest is seen as an event not restricted by genre categories but defined by a clear theme. This year’s edition again excels in continuous, well-thought dramaturgy and a natural political aspect of theatre – something we are still getting used to here.”

Ondřej Škrabal, *Alarm* (6.12.2019)

“Palm Off Fest, the international festival of Central European theatre (...) hovered around the theme *Heroes Like Us*. The excitement of a festival that has attracted attention since its beginning because of the renowned names of directors it brought and its clear focus on reflecting on the society and politics in our region has somewhat evaporated this year. (...) Despite that, it seems that the concept of the festival could remain functional in the future. The political situation and increasing social tensions in the Visegrad countries and Europe suggest that. The shows and performances presented at the fourth edition were pointing at the mechanisms and philosophical sources of such development, at populism, authoritarianism, and the danger of destroying democracy.”

Marie Reslová, *Divadelní noviny* (25. 11. 2019)

“The fourth edition of Palm Off Fest has just ended in the Pod Palmovkou Theatre. The focus of the festival has remained clear since its first edition: Central European ensembles, especially from Poland and Hungary, and political theatre. Created on a whim, the festival has already brought to Prague some very interesting plays, including Frlijič’s *The Curse*, applauded so much that it almost brought Brno down some six months later. This year’s edition is also proof that the wave of political theatre is gaining momentum in proportion to what extent opinions on political events divide the society.”

Jana Machalická, *Lidové noviny* (6. 11. 2019)

“Can we recognize a fascist in contemporary society? Is it necessary to help migrants? Are gay marriages meaningful? What is life like in the 21st century? These and many other questions were raised in the penultimate production at the Palm Off Fest. *The Opposite of Things*, a production by Swiss director and author Boris Nikitin was created in collaboration with Slovensko Mladinsko Gledališče theatre from Slovenia and its almost cabaret-like form sets a distorted ‘mirror to our present’.”

Veronika Holečková, *Divadelní noviny* (2. 11. 2019)

“Fortunately, Palm Off Fest offered political theatre of a different kind than the one brought by the annoyingly standardised general criticism of global capitalism from progressive leftist positions (to which many young Czech authors now adhere). The only title of this kind came from Slovenia. Hungarian and Polish theatremakers avoided generalisations: it can be guessed that they have enough concrete stimuli of domestic provenance for their politically engaged work.”

Vladimír Mikulka, Deník N (11. 11. 2019)

“The final three days of the Palm Off Fest were dedicated to various forms of European xenophobic radicalism. By far the most powerful experience for me was the Saturday marathon of documentaries, without which I would have had a much harder time understanding the theatre shows in the main programme. All directors succeeded in earning the trust of the anti-heroes of their films and in creating an honest portrait of people who are or were capable of committing or sanctioning cold-blooded brutality and were not ashamed of it.”

Barbora Etlíková, Nadvadlo (7. 11. 2019)

“Maybe it’s because of our shared history with the Hungarians, or maybe they just managed to accurately point out problems that are not necessarily local, but both evenings spent at the Pod Palmovkou Theatre left me with a strange bittersweet feeling. In a sense, it is amusing to see that we are not the only country dealing with cases where all one can do is shake one’s head in disbelief.”

Barbora Sedláčková, Divadelní noviny (1. 11. 2019)

“Following the clearly articulated dramaturgy of the Palm Off Fest and cult shows in its Studio Stage in the attic, the theatre succeeded in collaboration with the celebrated European director, Jan Klata. Pod Palmovkou Theatre keeps on showing us that theatre doesn’t need to be a language-bound local affair.”

Marcela Magdová, Opinion poll of Czech theatre critics – Theatre of the Year 2018, Svět a divadlo 1/2019

“The festival’s name, Palm Off Fest, refers to Prague neighbourhood and theatre, to which it is linked. It is not a huge festival, but its size doesn’t diminish its insistent and engaged voice. The festival creates an opinion platform based on belief that in Europe “stuff” happens both in cultural and political sphere. It shows how closely linked and unseparable these phenomena are. Indeed, some authors, dramaturges, and critics try to do so, but the result is a strange mix of two-faced aestheticism and a comic pretense of “high art” snobbishly overlooking pressing social issues.”

Martin Macháček, idnes.cz (23. 11. 2018)

“The Estonian Revolution, Polish Justice, and one of Oliver Frlijić’s most recent plays GO KI – Alternative for Germany? share the same vision, i.e. to begin a discussion in the society via unconventional staging. Revolution fights for culture as such while Justice moves on the borderline of theatre, journalism, and public hearing. Actors from the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin present a personal, aggressive drama that includes an application submitted to German extreme right-wing party. These three ensembles showed the possible looks of the future political theatre at Palm Off Fest festival which recently took place in Prague.”

Ondřej Škrabal, Czech Radio Wawe (5. 11. 2018)

“It is not easy to have a thoughtful dramaturgy that is well put together around a central idea. However, Palm Off Fest festival manages to do just that. Furthermore, it creates an opinion platform based on the important fact that the major, and quite problematic events in present-day Europe are taking place in both cultural and political field.”

Veronika Štefanová, Czech Radio Vltava (26. 10. 2018)

“Palm Off Fest was founded two years ago by Michal Lang, director and art director of the Pod Palmovkou Theatre, and Ivana Wojtylová, actress, teacher and former art director of the Těšín

Theatre. During the two past years the festival has become one of the most successful theatre events, both among general public and theatre experts. The festival succeeded in bringing shows by exceptional European theatre makers, such as Krystian Lupa, Jan Klata, Oliver Frlijić, Vilmos Vaidaj, Agnieszka Olsten, Eduard Kudláč, and Ewelina Marciniak.

luk – Praha.eu (12. 10. 2018)

“Palm Off Fest made a great start and has become one of the best and most meaningful cultural events in Prague.”

Jiří P. Kříž, Právo (17. 10. 2018)

“The sold-out shows of the 11-day festival attracted an audience of 1,253 spectators. The majority of visitors seized the opportunity to stay for discussions, thus witnessing debates of authors and experts commenting on political, social and religious issues. The most animated discussion followed the Polish production The Curse, attended by the entire theatre company, the dramaturge of the play Goran Injac, directors of the Teatr Powszechny, Paweł Łysak and Paweł Sztarbowski, and political scientists Jiří Pehe and Milan Znoj. As expected, the show became the highlight of the festival and provoked a very vivid discussion among experts and the general public, something rarely seen in the Czech context.”

Divadlo.cz (14. 12. 2017)

“For the second year in a row, Palm Off Fest offers socially engaged theatre despite the fact that it is not easy to secure its place among other comparable events: Prague Crossroads, which headed in a similar direction, emerged only a month before Palm Off Fest, and the Pragerteaterfestivals deutscher Sprache, which offers the best of – mostly political – theatre from the German-speaking region, takes place a month later. Yet, festival dramaturges didn’t get scared and came with theatre from the Visegrad Four countries. And not just any theatre. The festival succeeded in presenting the “best of”, namely, Polish production, thus beating the Pilsen festival DIVADLO, which also focuses on V4 countries.”

Vladimír Hulec, Divadelní noviny (14. 11. 2017)

“Divadlo pod Palmovkou deserves a credit: without much fuss, it breathed life to a festival focussing on Polish, Slovak and Hungarian theatre and brings interesting productions for the second year in a row.”

Jana Machalíková, Lidové noviny (28. 10. 2017)

“What a great idea to mix theatre festival with the non-theatre crowd: philosophers, political scientists... Everything is interconnected, and theatre can reflect moods and events in the society fast, sensitively and efficiently.”

Jarmila Book in the Facebook discussion of the Palm Off Fest (12. 10. 2017)

“Let’s hope that Palm Off Fest festival will bring theatre productions from neighbouring countries like this one also in the upcoming years.”

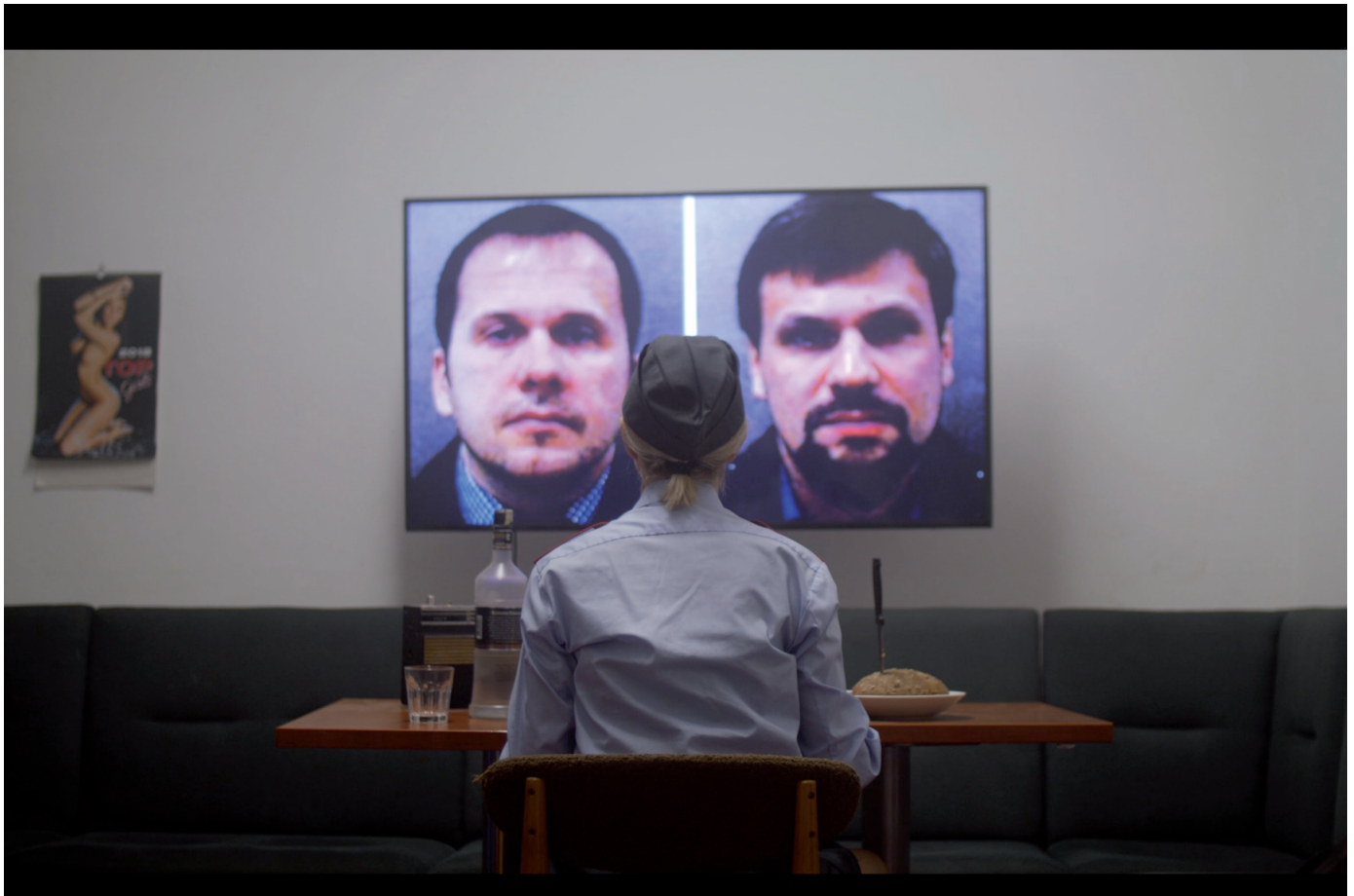
Divadelní noviny (6. 6. 2016)

PALM OFF FEST 2016-2022

Six festival years in photographs









Fotografier: Miroš Skácel



MAIN PROGRAMME



Valeria Schulczová et al.

24

Friday, 13 October 2023 at 19:00
Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre
**GALA OPENING OF THE 7TH EDITION
OF THE PALM OFF FEST FESTIVAL 2023**

Slovak National Theatre
Bratislava, Slovakia

A story that has become ours, too.

Directed by: Valeria Schulczová
Dramaturge: Darina Abrahámová
Stage design: Eva Kudláčová-Ráčová
Costume design: Lucia Šedivá
Music: Martin Hasák

CAST:
Zuzana Fialová
Branislav Bystriansky
Rebeka Poláková
Ivana Kuxová
Jakub Rybárik

Opening Night: 21 May 2022
Show duration: 1 h 25 min without a break
Performed in Slovak with English subtitles
Discussion with authors follows after the show

The story is based on real events. War in Ukraine made us discover a fear we weren't familiar with. The 24 performance is about all of us, about the values we want to defend, about the hope we try to find. It is about solidarity and humanity. The performance brings testimonies by actors, you will experience a stand-up comedy and will be directly addressed by actors who wrote parts of the text. Destinies of Ukrainian refugees, attitudes of the Russians, and primarily the way we relate to current events in Europe are what makes this performance exceptionally relevant. We need this booster to know we are not alone in the madness of history. In theatre, we can do that, at least for a little while.

The title of the production, 24, evokes the date when Russia invaded Ukraine, but it is also meant to evoke the number of hours we spent thinking about the war in Ukraine each day, at least in its early days. In an interlocking and colourful mosaic of human fates, five actors capture several powerful human stories, including their own. Their highly personal speeches are interspersed with news reports, interviews, newspaper articles and information from the press and television...

SLOVAK NATIONAL THEATRE (SLOVENSKÉ NÁRODNÉ DIVADLO)

The Slovak National Theatre (SND) is one of the most important Slovak cultural institutions. It began to write its history shortly after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, in the autumn of 1919 when the Slovak National Theatre Cooperative (Družstvo SND), charged with the implementation of the idea of a professional Slovak national theatre, signed a contract with the Eastern Bohemia Theatre led by Bedřich Jeřábek. Jeřábek's company staged its drama, opera and ballet performances in Bratislava under the name of the Slovak National Theatre for a short time between 1920 and 1922. The SND initially performed its shows in Czech due to the lack of Slovak plays and translations, as well as Slovak-speaking actors. However, the number of plays in Slovak increased rapidly, especially after the arrival of director Ján Borodáč in 1924. Between 1932 and 1938, the SND drama ensemble was divided into two parts, Czech and Slovak, which worked closely together. In the 1930s, the SND ensemble became significantly more professionalised, also in connection with the development of Slovak art education, the war years being an artistically significant stage of the SND's development. In the postwar period, with the arrival of the younger generation, a modern staging language and style was introduced, which (after a forced interruption during the "socialist realist" period of the 1950s) bore its fruits in the "Golden Era" of the SND in 1956-1968. This is when new drama practices drawing inspiration

from other countries, previously overlooked authors and themes, and strong acting and directing personalities came to the fore. The SND managed to maintain this trend despite the politically and socially problematic 1970s and 1980s and it was one of the most interesting cultural institutions in Czechoslovakia. In recent years, the SND has, among other things, sought to create space and opportunities for young and Slovak directors and actors, has focused on presenting contemporary international drama and encourages and seeks Slovak authors and works, while also being open to international artists. SND is a member of the prestigious international theatre organisation ETC and participates in international theatre shows collaborations and festivals.

The SND originally operated in the "historical" SND building on Bratislava's Hviezdoslav Square, which was built as a municipal theatre in 1886 to a design by the famous Viennese architectural firm Fellner and Helmer. This magnificent building originally served as a temporary stage for German and Hungarian theatre ensembles, and from 1920 onwards, the drama, opera and ballet companies of the Slovak National Theatre (SND) were housed there for thirty-five years. The capacity issues were partially resolved in 1955 when the new Pavel Orsaght Hviezdoslav Theatre was opened for the drama troupe near the old SND building, where the opera and ballet continued to perform. In 2007, all Slovak National Theatre ensembles moved to the new SND building on Pribinova Street. The new spacious building of the Slovak National Theatre has seven floors, more than 2000 rooms, three main theatre stages for opera, ballet and drama and a studio stage. The former headquarters of the drama company, the P. O. Hviezdoslav Theatre, was sold by the Ministry of Culture to the City of Bratislava, and the historic SND building was closed in 2021 due to its unsatisfactory technical condition and will be renovated.

"We stood up with tears in our eyes and applauded for a long time. Everyone left the theatre in absolute silence. Once outside, I couldn't speak for several minutes afterwards."

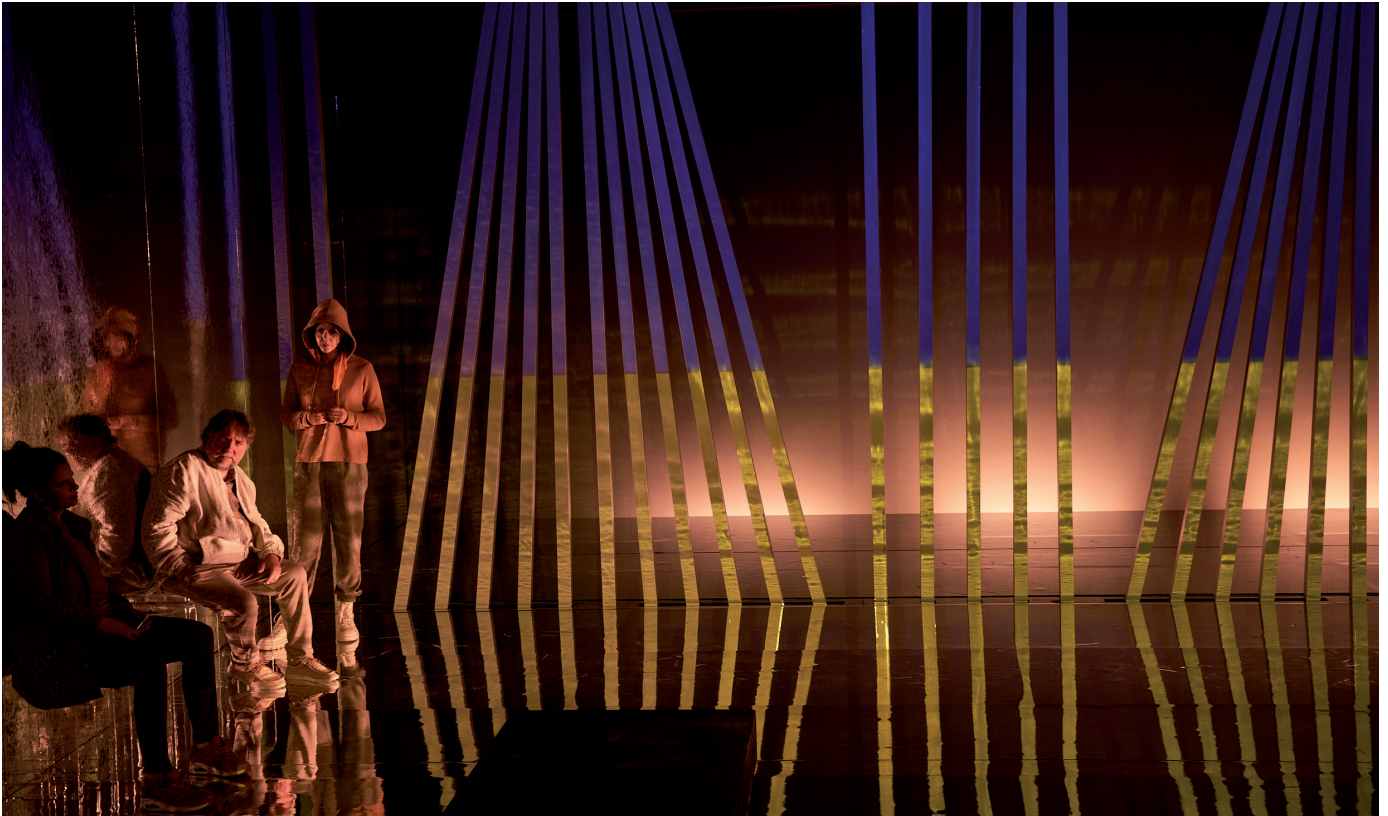
Slavomíra Henčeková, Týždeň, 1. 7. 2022

"The different perspectives of Ukrainians, Russians and Slovaks, influenced by historical events, media, posts on social media, targeted propaganda and political points scoring, intertwine with the personal accounts of the actors (...) 'The initial euphoria of solidarity and help coming from the Slovaks had to fade out in order to find out who we really are,' says director Valéria Schulczová. (...) The information war in our country is evident. 'We are losing our loved ones, and not only in battle. We are divided by war. We are building fences of hatred between us.' Will Slovakia stand up to this challenge?"

Jana Chvostálová, Denník Postoj, 25. 5. 2022

"For me, the production is a socially engaged gesture: as a society professing certain values, we have to unequivocally condemn injustice and brutal violence. It is important to show solidarity with the victims. It is equally important that the National Theatre—an emblematic institution—has not remained silent in such a situation and has presented a production with a strong opinion. Moreover, the subject matter, the way it calls for attention and is up to date, can attract the audience. The fact that we are so immersed in the situation, intensifies the urgency of the message conveyed."

Zuzana A. Ferusová, KOD č. 8, roč. 16, 2022



William Shakespeare

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Saturday, 14 October 2023 at 19:00
Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre

Pod Palmovkou Theatre
Prague, Czech Republic

Is it a dream, or a reality? A reality? Well, then that's a bad dream...

Translation: Martin Hilský
Directed by: Michal Lang
Dramaturge: Iva Klestilová
Stage design and costumes: Miroslav Kaczmarek
Video design: Natan Berkowicz
Music: Sebastian Lang
Movement collaboration: Mačko Prusak
Production: Eliška Zemanová
Voice advisor: Regina Szymiková

Opening Night: 21 April 2023
Show duration: 2 h 20 min with a break
Performed in Czech, with English subtitles
Discussion with authors follows after the show

CHARACTERS AND CAST:

Theseus: František Mitáš
Hippolyta: Rosalie Malinská
Lysander: Jaroslav Blažek
Demetrius: Jakub Albrecht
Hermie: Pavla Gajdošíková
Helena: Barbora Kubátová
Egeus: Ivan Jiřík
Petr Poříz: Martin Hruška
Mikuláš Klubko: Jan Teplý
Franta Pišťala: Radek Valenta
Tomáš Hubička: Martin Němec
Fortel: David Hirschhorn
Robin Stržlík: Daniel Krečmar
Oberon: Ondřej Veselý
Titanie: Vendula Fialová
Puk: Denny Ratajský
Baubo: Martina Krátká
Elf: Vojtěch Fůlep
Hrášek, Pavučinka, Prášek, Hořčička: Martin Němec, Daniel Krečmar, Rosalie Malinská
Dítě Titanie: Melichar Gojda

The story begins in the aftermath of a cruel war, in which Theseus defeats Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, in a bloody battle. He now prepares for his wedding, while Egeus plots for the death of his daughter, Hermia. Why? She will not agree to marry the man Egeus has chosen for her; she wants to marry her lover Lysander. The only solution available to the lovers is to elope. However, the Athenian woods, where they find themselves, are not a safe place. Oberon reigns here and his faithful servant, Puck, with whose help Oberon tries to humiliate his wife, Titania. Alchemy enables him to do that, and Oberon can laugh at how Titania entertains Bottom, a worker given an ass's head by Puck. The world comes back to its normal ways at dawn, however, not everything can be reinstalled to its original place.

A Midsummer Night's Dream by Pod Palmovkou Theatre is presented in a brand new, original visual version, using video mapping and enabling the audience to meet their dreams, fears and fantasies.

We invite you to a meeting with the poet, translator, university professor and scholar, expert on Shakespeare's works and the Elizabethan Era and our greatest translator of Shakespeare's plays, Martin Hilský, in the café of the Theatre pod Palmovkou.

DIVADLO POD PALMOVKOU (POD PALMOVKOU THEATRE)

The beginnings of the Divadlo pod Palmovkou date back to August 1948 when young actors formed a new theatre group. Later on, they moved to their present building, a site with a theatrical tradition dating back to the 19th century, when it was one of the few places where Czech plays were staged. In its first years, the theatre, then known as *Městské a oblastní divadlo*, staged a classical dramatic repertoire while also presenting new theatre plays. Later on, the theatre was renamed *Theatre of S. K. Neumann* and became a hotbed of actors who would significantly influence

the look of modern Czech theatre. In the 1960s, the Prague *Libeň's theatre* led by Václav Lohniský was one of the most closely watched theatres in the country and would often offer new views on the possibilities of the dramatic art. Back then, the theatre focussed on classic repertoire and musical comedies as well as new Western European plays—it was often the first Czechoslovak theatre to stage them. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Theatre of S. K. Neumann didn't maintain its quality level of the 1960s but remained one of the top Czechoslovak theatres with a company of quality actors. The theatre was renamed *Divadlo pod Palmovkou* in 1990, and it is now recognized as one of the premier Czech theatres. In 2002 and 2013 the theatre suffered heavy flooding; following the 2013 floods, *Divadlo pod Palmovkou* closed its doors for two years to embark on reconstruction. Michal Lang has been director since September 2013, and has put together a new, ambitious group of artists. In the past years, *Divadlo pod Palmovkou's* productions were the most often nominated ones in several critical opinion polls and theatre awards. *Divadlo pod Palmovkou's* productions were successfully presented to audiences in Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary and Slovakia. At present, *Divadlo pod Palmou* focuses on new versions of classic dramas, as well as on new plays, including theatre adaptations and author plays. The theatre has two stages: the Main Stage for an audience of 270 and the PALM OFF Studio for an audience of 80. In 2016 *Divadlo pod Palmovkou* organised the first year of Palm Off Fest, the international festival of Central European theatres; the 2023 edition will be the seven one. In 2018, *Divadlo pod Palmovkou* was awarded the Theatre of the Year by the *Geny divadelní kritiky Awards*. In 2021, *Pod Palmovkou Theatre* participated in Face to Faith, a large project of international collaboration of European theatres; in September 2022 it organised the Prague part of the international conference Forum on the Future of Culture and will follow this successful event in 2023.

"The production is full of modernisations (...) but also of references to various pop culture phenomena, whether it is the visual aspect, inspiration drawn from films, or Sebastian Lang's music. From this point of view, the production clearly targets young audiences. Its most striking feature is its explicit aggressiveness (it is certainly no coincidence that the structure of some scenes recalls the cruelty of computer games). Physical and psychological violence is present in relationships, human and fairy-tale alike. (...) The Midsummer night is governed by darkness, or at least a dim gloom, and the comedy becomes a bitter existential drama. The final wedding party is also slightly gloomy, with everyone seemingly hangovered after a wild party. So, is this the dream of early 21st century humanity?"

Jana Soprová, Lidovky.cz, 3. 5. 2023

"This is an urgent, cruel and humorous spectacle. (...) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Pod Palmovkou Theatre is a successful combination of a modern reading of a play over four hundred years old and the principles of Elizabethan theatre. It is up to each spectator how many layers and references they can decipher, or whether they can be swept away by sheer theatricality."

Marcela Magdová, Aktuálně, 27. 4. 2023

"The production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Michal Lang, is visually fascinating. You can dream this mysteriously exuberant dream about the intertwined relationships of four young Athenians, whose lives are complicated by the intrigues of supernatural beings, at the Pod Palmovkou Theatre."

Eliška Hankovcová, Deník N, 3. 5. 2023



Petru Hadârcă, Mariana Onceanu

SIBERIAN FILES

Sunday, 15 October 2023 at 19:00
Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre

Mihai Eminescu National Theatre
Chişinău, Moldova

Performance commemorating the attempt to eliminate Romanians during the Soviet occupation of Bessarabia. Based on the memoirs of the victims of communist regime: Ecaterina Chele, Margareta Spânu-Cemârtan, Ion Moraru.

Directed by: Petru Hadârcă
Scenography: Irina Gurin
Body expression: Irina Slobodeanuc
Video projection: Ian Onică
Stage fights: Oleg Mardari
Video footage: OWH Studio

Opening Night: 7 July 2019
Show duration: 2 h without a break
Suitable for ages 16+!

Performed in Romanian, with Czech and English subtitles
Discussion with authors follows after the show

The award-winning performance is based on real events that took place in the former Soviet Union during the interwar period. The Great Purge, launched by Stalin in the 1930s, hit hard the Bessarabian Romanian communities. The terror launched by the Soviet leader cost the lives of several dozens of thousands of people in what is Moldova today. To this day, the local society is coming to terms with its consequences.

Director Petru Hadârcă, who collected materials for the Siberian Files for over 10 years, says about the theme of the performance: "I was horrified to discover that next to us, the pioneers and Komsomol members, who cheerfully recited odes to Lenin and the Party, there were people who were suffering in silence, silently mourning their parents, sisters and brothers, grandparents and friends murdered by the hateful and perverse system created by those we so unknowingly glorified. I had no idea that in many homes my countrymen were dying slowly, in silent and unrequited grief. (...) The production is about this immense human suffering, but also about the power of fighting and resisting in the face of seemingly endless evil. It is also about those who tried to fight and defend their families and the lives they lived and loved until the 'liberators' came."

MIHAI EMINESCU NATIONAL THEATRE (TEATRUL NAȚIONAL MIHAI EMINESCU)

The Mihai Eminescu National Theatre (TNME) is a public cultural institution of the Republic of Moldova with the status of a national theatre. It follows the tradition of the National Theatre in Chisinau, the first theatre in Bessarabia (the historical name for the territory of present-day Moldova) performing in Romanian and inaugurated on 6 October 1921 by a decision of the Romanian government. It was also the flagship of the cultural space between the Prut and the Dniester rivers. Since its foundation, the theatre has gone through a series of reorganizations, several political regimes and also states: Romania (1918–1940 and again 1941–1944), the Soviet Union (1940–1941 and again in 1944–1991) and the Republic of Moldova (from 1991 to the present). The significance of TNME often reached far beyond the performing arts: although most of the Moldovan population speaks Romanian, the Soviet regime changed the original Latin alphabet to Cyrillic and forcibly imposed the term 'Moldovan' to the language used in Moldova. Artists using Romanian were persecuted by the Soviet regime and Romanian authors were banned or had limited possibilities of being published. Under these conditions, TNME was both a site

CHARACTERS AND CAST:

Ecaterina Chele: Olga Triboi
Margareta Spânu-Cemârtan: Draga-Dumitrița Drumi
Lealea Cojocaru: Olesea Sveclă
Ion Moraru: Dan Melnic
Dora: Diana Decuseară
Sofia Spânu's grandmother: Anișoara Bunescu
Pintilie Oloinicu's grandfather: Nicolae Darie
Gheorghe Cucu/Brigadier Berzinev/Terziev: Alexandru Leancă
Semionova / Doctor: Angela Ciobanu
Valentina Gafencu / Maria: Ana Tkacenko
Saveta / A deported woman: Doriana Zubcu-Marginean
Mother of Zinovia Moraru / A deported woman: Tatiana Saenco
Nicon / Karzubâi / Jozas Lukstas: Petru Oistric
**The chief political operative /
The Soviet national / Kiselev:** Ion Mocanu
Grișa / The Professor / A prisoner: Ghenadie Gâlcă
**Constantin Chele / Limon /
Petre Lungu / Andreico:** Alexandru Pleșca
The tankist / Vasile Terehov: Valentin Zorilă
Nicolae Spânu / Mikola / A prisoner: Iurie Focșa
**Melikian / Menekest /
The school principal / A soldier:** Mihai Zubcu
Margareta Spânu's child: Sofia Oistric
A child: Bianca Onică
Villagers, prisoners, spirits in choreography: Rusanda Radvan, Corina Rotaru, Igor Babiac, Vlad Ropot, Petru Marginean, Nicu Ciumașu

of "cultural resistance" and a platform that argued for historical justice and the preservation of historical memory.

The first phase of professional Romanian theatre in Chisinau lasted just over ten years: in 1935, the National Theatre in Chisinau was closed down by order of the Romanian government for financial reasons. The next stage of the theatre's activity began after the annexation of Bessarabia to the USSR when the Moldavian State Theatre of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic was founded in Chisinau (from 1954 the theatre was called the Moldavian Academic Musical and Dramatic State Theatre of A. S. Pushkin). In the years following the war, the theatre repertoire was limited to plays translated from Russian, which corresponded to conservative socialist realism. Gradually, however, especially in the 1960s, works by contemporary authors were staged in TNME and these performances were viewed by the public as an act of civic courage. In 1988, however, serious disagreements within the ensemble caused the theatre to fall into a deep collapse, culminating in the five-year closure of the building for renovations. During the reconstruction, the theatre was transformed into a studio theatre under the direction of Victor Ciutac and adopted the name of the Romanian Romantic poet Mihai Eminescu. In July 1994, when the reconstruction of the theatre building was completed, the theatre was officially named the National Theatre of Mihai Eminescu.

TNME now has its permanent seat in a historic theatre building built in the neoclassical style between 1931 and 1932. From an artistic point of view, TNME seeks to respect the balance between traditional and innovative stage means.

"The director evokes the suffering of those who had the misfortune to be deported to Siberia or the Caucasus, thus blending the time of memory and the present with the power of a brutal drama. In my opinion, the phrase 'exhibition of memory' used by Sorin Crișan in his book *Theatre and Knowledge*, which includes an important study of Tadeusz Kantor's theatre, especially *The Dead Class*, as a theatre of memory, can in many ways be applied to the performance of Petru Hadârcă. Here too, the priority is not to reconstruct the events but to provide a testimony serving as a vehicle of liberation from the horrific experience and memory of a nation. (...) Churchill said (I paraphrase) that we should look to the past in order to see the future. *Siberian Files* is a disturbing and topical production in which the actors complement each other organically, moving seamlessly from one character to the next, and they each contribute remarkably to the whole."

Dana Pocea, *contemporanul.ro*, 12. 5. 2020

"Don't avenge us, but don't forget" is the leitmotif of the production (...) The *Siberian Files* speaks about the exile of hundreds of thousands of Bessarabians without a staged trial, but also about the harsh experience of the gulag; it is a concentrated documentary expression of passion... of the yearning for freedom in contrast to the exaggerated glorification of monstrous violence and hate-mongering in the USSR, a terrorist state the bloody Kremlin Statue of Liberty dreams of recreating (...) The monstrous social engineering experiments, which aimed at creating a new man, an ideal (fascist/communist) citizen, physically, mentally and ethically perfect, failed miserably, and the spirit of solidarity grew in proportion to the terror."

Larisa Turea, *tnme.md*

"*Siberian Files* is a shocking production and speaks for itself: it exposes the long chain of suffering endured by the Besarabs, including their children and their individual fates, destroyed under the guise of false slogans. If not now, perhaps later they will impress Stalin's open or silent admirers. No ideal, no 'achievement' can justify anyone's crimes."

Nicolae Negru, *ziarulnational.md*, 23. 12. 2019



EASY THINGS

Monday, 16 October 2023 at 19:00
Behind the curtain of Main Stage,
Pod Palmovkou Theatre

Stefan Jaracz Theatre in Olsztyn
Olsztyn, Poland

Is it possible to capture the contradiction between the existence of an actress on the stage and a woman in the world and the position of a woman exposed to various pressures and perspectives leading to self-denial?

Directed by: Anna Karasińska

Opening Night: 12 April 2021

Show duration: 55 min without a break

Performed in Polish, with Czech subtitles

Discussion with authors follows after the show

CAST:

Milena Gauer

Irena Telesz-Burczyk

This is not your ordinary performance: its director prefers to call it a project and the audience meets in it two charismatic, popular and celebrated artists, Irena Telesz-Burczyk and Milena Gauer. They both are experienced actresses who have performed a long list of lead roles and over the years have proven how varied their acting can be. However, this time, the actresses got very unusual tasks and took an altogether different approach. They didn't receive a final text; the text took its shape during the rehearsals, thus creating a non-traditional shape that escapes all theatrical schemes. Under the influence of various situations and perspectives, the actresses reconstruct the forms of their bodies and destinies. Gradually, the performance transitions from a classical theatrical situation to a performative one, triumphantly restoring subjectivity to the performers and their bodies, allowing them to see themselves outside of established schemes.

In 2022, *Easy Things* was awarded one of the main awards at the Divine Comedy International Theatre Festival in Krakow, Poland. The director, Anna Karasińska, is one of the most celebrated Polish directors of the young generation.

DIVADLO STEFANA JARACZE V OLŠTÝNĚ (TEATR IM. STEFANA JARACZA W OLSZTYNIE)

The theatre was founded in 1925 as a gift to the citizens of Allenstein (the German name for the town of Olsztyn founded in the Middle Ages by the Teutonic Knights) to celebrate the results of the 1920 plebiscite that annexed the town to Germany. Hence the original name of the theatre, "Der Treudanktheater" (meaning the "Theatre of Gratitude for Loyalty"), under which it operated until 1945. During this period, in addition to German-language drama, the repertoire also included opera and operetta (also performed in German). On 18 November 1945, the theatre presented itself for the first time as a Polish venue under the name Teatr Warmii i Mazur (named after the name of the regions of which Olsztyn is the centre). In the difficult post-war conditions, Gabriela Zapolska's play *The Morality of Mrs. Dulaska*, directed by Artur Młodnicki, was staged in the theatre. Since 1946, the Olsztyn theatre has borne the name of the important Polish actor and theatre organiser Stefan Jaracz. In addition to performing on the Olsztyn stage, the theatre also toured the region and neighbouring voivodeships. Until 1975 it also operated a stage in the nearby town of Elbląg and participated in national festivals and shows as well as festivals abroad. Until the end of the 1960s, the Olsztyn Theatre had the character of a provincial venue, but over time it succeeded in significantly outgrowing this dimension. In the 1990s, the Olsztyn Theatre also staged performances for children and musical

programmes combining words with music, dance and singing. In 1991, the Aleksander Sewruk High School of Acting specializing in drama was founded and significantly contributed to the development of the Olsztyn Theatre. In 2006, the Stefan Jaracz Theatre in Olsztyn was granted the status of a national cultural institution and became the first cultural entity of this type in north-eastern Poland. In 2013, the modernisation and extension of the theatre building was completed and a new Margines Stage was built. The Grand Stage of the Olsztyn Theatre was rebuilt, and the Chamber Stage was also renovated. A new direct connection between the theatre and the building of the High School of Acting, which also has a theatre hall (Scena u Sewruka), was created. In addition to its regular repertoire activities, the Stefan Jaracz Theatre organises three theatre festivals during the theatre season: Olsztyn Theatre Meetings, the VIA CARPATIA International Theatre Festival and the Gothic Castles Open Air Festival. Another important element of the theatre's programming strategy is the drama education programme, which seeks to provide the audience with an active experience of theatre; the 'Performative Reading' series, which presents texts by authors unknown to the wider public and works by authors from Warmia and Mazury; and the 'Theatre Chase', during which secondary school students gain theatre experience under the guidance of Olsztyn theatre actors.

"On an almost empty stage, they use their life and acting experience; with a quiet but decisive voice and spare gestures, they invite the audience to share the experience and surprise them with the power of their cleansing humour. With the masterful precision and aesthetic minimalism characteristic of her work, Anna Karasinska has created a unique work of art. *Easy Things* serves as a critical reflection on the depiction of reality and deconstruction of social mechanisms and narratives belonging to traditional theatre. This is made possible thanks to the unique experience of the actresses who co-create the performance. It focuses our attention on the possibility of resistance to the world offered by the solidarity and mutual support of women in theatre."

excerpt from the statement of the jury of the Divine Comedy festival, e-teatr.pl, 15. 12. 2022

"Karasinska is not afraid of silence. She draws on the tension between the actresses, which arises less from the stories they tell, but more from how anchored they are in their bodies, from the setting in space, the gestures and words of the older actress repeated later by the younger one; and finally in the unexpectedly sketched vision of death, whose spectre often hovers over the theatre of the director. Both Milena Gauer and Irena Telesz-Burczyk are deftly aware of the theatrical form and carefully tune their stage performance – even when their lines are ridiculous or tragicomic."

Witold Mrozek, Dwutygodnik.com, 1.2.2022

"The use of the female perspective in *Easy Things* creates a space for learning to see oneself and others more fully, for exchanging women's experiences and professional competencies in a horizontal relationship, for revising the history of Polish theatre, which, in theatre, is maturely inscribed in the #metoo movement, and finally for (self-)criticising the institution, representing women on stage and asking for attentive listening to women and expansion of the theatrical imagination. A. Karasińska's production shows the direction of change, the dream of a safe theatre without violence, which will become a repository of feminine experiences, captured, at least for now, by women. A new view of theatre needs more themes, scope and shifts, it needs a watchful eye and a sensitive language. It will not be easy to achieve this, but it is worth trying."

Jowita Mazurkiewicz, Dialog, 9. 9. 2022



Photo: Klaudyna Schubert



Photo: Wojciech Habdas

Jeton Neziraj

THE HANDKE PROJECT: OR, JUSTICE FOR PETER'S STUPIDITIES

Wednesday, 18 October 2023 at 19:00
Behind the curtain of Main Stage,
Pod Palmovkou Theatre

Qendra Multimedia theatre ensemble
Pristina, Kosovo

*Why is art transgressing borders of elemental decency,
humanism and ethics appreciated and celebrated?*

Directed by: Blerta Neziraj
Dramaturge: Biljana Srbljanovic (SRB)
Artistic collaboration: Alida Bremer (CRO/DE)
Stage design: Marija Kalabic (SRB)
Music: Gabriele Marangoni (IT)
Choreography: Gjergj Prevazi (AL)
Costume design: Blagoj Micevski (MKN)
Light design: Yann Perregaux (CH)
Sound design: Leonardo Rubboli (IT), Tempo Reale
Assistant director: Sovran Ndrecaj (KS)
Production manager: Aurela Kadriu (KS)
Costume designer assistant: Flaka Rrustemi (KS)

CAST:
Arben Bajraktaraj (FR)
Ejla Bavecic (BiH)
Adrian Morina (KS)
Klaus Martini (IT)
Verona Koxha (RKS)
Anja Drljevic (MNE)

Opening night: 3 June 2023
Show duration: 1h 10 min, without a break
Suitable for ages 16+
Performed in English, with Czech subtitles
Discussion with authors follows after the show

The Handke Project: Or, Justice for Peter's Stupidities is presented by Qendra Multimedia (Kosovo) in collaboration with Mittelfest & Teatro della Pergola (Italy), Theater Dortmund (Germany), National Theatre Sarajevo & International Theater Festival - Scene MESS (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Where does freedom of expression end for the artist and the need to be politically aware begin? Can we create art without being insensitive? Can we separate the art from the artist? Central to the production is the controversial decision to award Austrian writer Peter Handke the honorary title of Nobel Laureate in Literature, despite his well-documented support for Slobodan Milosevic.

The Handke Project: Or, Justice for Peter's Stupidities, is a production about the writer whose books and opinions fabricated and twisted the facts about the wars in the former Yugoslavia, who encouraged and supported the ideology of the "scorched earth" and who was capable of praising militant poets and filmmakers turned into "engineers of genocidal projects". During the funeral of the war criminal Milosevic, Handke said that he "did not know the truth" and was therefore "close to Milosevic, close to Serbia" and compared the suffering of the Serbs to the suffering of the Jews under Nazism...

A red line is looming in Europe today in front of those Russian artists who in one way or another support Putin and the war. Meanwhile, however, Handke and the European "Handkists" continue to move freely despite the eight thousand graves of the victims of Srebrenica. And so, as University of London professor Eric Gordy so beautifully put it, 'Handke is kitsch'. But then the Nobel Prize is also kitsch for him. In fact, Handke's supporters are also kitsch. Finally, European hypocrisy is itself the greatest kitsch...

QENDRA MULTIMEDIA

Qendra Multimedia is a cultural organization based in Prishtina, Kosovo. Its main focus is in contemporary theater and literature. It is considered to be one of the most interesting and provoking theatre companies in South Eastern Europe. Qendra Multimedia was founded in 2002 by a group of young artists aiming to create an alternative form of art production to address political and social issues with clarity and imagination. Qendra Multimedia produces and coproduces fresh and innovative theatre performances and other literature and cultural events, for local and international audiences. Artistic exchanges with international partners are crucial in the work of Qendra Multimedia. The leader of the group is Jeton Neziraj, an award-winning playwright whose plays have been translated into many languages and former artistic director of the National Theatre of Kosovo; the main director of the theatre group is his wife, award-winning theatre director Blerta Neziraj.

Since 2002, Qendra Multimedia has organized more than 100 artistic projects in Kosovo, as well as in other places in Europe, USA and Africa. Qendra's community of collaborating artists/experts create its own events and also creates and facilitates artistic opportunities for others. Qendra Multimedia's productions have been successfully touring to more than 100 international theatres and theatre festivals. Qendra's work has been featured widely in the international press, including in The Guardian (UK), Der Spiegel (Germany), La Repubblica (Italy), The Stage (UK), New York Times (USA), Theater Heute (Germany), Danas (Serbia), Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Germany), American Theatre, Der Standard (Austria), Linköping (Sweden), Hystrio (Italy), Cassandre (France) and others.

Qendra Multimedia's repertoire now offers 22 theatre productions, projects and theatre performances. These include uncompromising paraphrases of classical works applied to contemporary political and social situations, dramatic and author's new pieces and projects as well as, for example, Neziraj's version of Václav Havel's Audience. For the thirteenth year in a row, Qendra Multimedia organizes, in collaboration with international partners, the international literary festival POLIP (<https://polipfestival.wordpress.com>) in Prishtina. The Handke Project: Or, Justice for Peter's Stupidities follows the successful tour of Qendra Multimedia with the performance Balkan Bordello, which was performed in many venues in Southeastern Europe and also in the legendary La MaMa theatre in New York.

"An excellently directed play, but with an even better, perhaps the best theater text by Jeton Neziraj so far... this is a play for those who are susceptible to fascism and human misfortune. He [the author] was clearly inspired to write on the subject of intellectual and ideological transformation by one of Europe's most respected writers, behind whom - 'quite by chance' - bloodstains still remain. As he walked through the battlefields, he took nothing from them but the questions he capitalized on in Serbia to the point that even ecclesiastical canonization could soon take place, as *The Handke Project* predicts. (...) Once amazed by Peter Pan, Peter Handke becomes Captain Hook who now uses his lethal prosthesis as a device to create worlds of evil."

Saša Ilić, Pešćanik (Serbia)

At Slobodan Milosevic's funeral, BDSM actors get excited at Handke's funeral liturgy. Captain Hook with dove wings faces Peter Pan who has bat wings, wielding a dangerous hook. These are just some of the most intensive moments of the play *The Handke Project, Or Justice for Peter's stupidities*, written by the Kosovar author Jeton Neziraj, defined by the German critics as 'the Kafka of the Balkans', and directed by Blerta Neziraj. (...) And if the applause for the premiere in the Kosovan capital Prishtina was long - something to which I too attend, it is also due to the powerful echoing of the text of the meaning between the not yet forgotten Balkan wars and the current one in Ukraine."

Corriere della Sera (Italy)

"Neziraj is widely regarded as Kosovo's national playwright, akin to what Václav Havel is to Czechoslovakia. And Neziraj shares Havel's innate playfulness and awareness of cruel, bureaucratic absurdities - all serving as a thin mask for the author's fury. All of these qualities emerge in flashes and clashes, like a fireworks display, through Blerta Neziraj's staging. Together, writer and director transform fury into an artistic bullet."

Steven Leigh Morris, Stage Raw (Los Angeles, USA)



CONCERT: DUNAJ & ZA VODOU ANSÁMBL

Pátek 20. 10. 2023 od 19:00
Velký sál Divadla pod Palmovkou

The Dunaj band was part of the Brno alternative scene in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2018, it resumed its activity, and in the autumn of 2022, after 26 years, it released a new studio album *Dunaj Za vodou*. Now it comes with a new program, which includes both new songs and the old Dunaj hits. The concert of Dunaj at Divadlo pod Palmovkou will be an exceptional event because the basic three-member line-up of the band will be completed by both music producers of this album - Petr Ostrouchov (formerly Sto zvířat, now Blue Shadows) and Ondřej Mikula (Aid Kid, Zvíře jménem Podzim, Kittchen) and will be joined by singer Bára Zmeková. The only time the band performed in the same format in 2023 was at the Colours of Ostrava festival.

Dunaj

The alternative music group Dunaj was founded in 1989 in Brno. The band's musical expression rose from the classic big-beat of the 1980s into an original musical form, which was initially classified as "art rock" for lack of better terms, and later became known as "Brno alternative", which included Brno bands performing similar styles of music. In addition to the big-beat basis, the band's work also shows the influence of musical minimalism, punk and, in the early days, the "Prague New Wave". The authors of the often picturesque and original and poetic lyrics were the artists Vladimír Kokolia, Karel David, Pavel Fajt and Vladimír Václavek. The group enjoyed a considerable reputation and popularity and played a number of concerts abroad. In 1997, however, the band ended its intensive activity due to disagreements within the band - this happened at a time when Dunaj was de facto at its peak in terms of popularity. The hopes for a possible future resumption of the original line-up of the band were finally dashed in 1998 when the band's frontman Jiří Kolšovský died at the age of forty-three. In 2018, the remaining members of the band came together during the filming of the film *Dunaj vědomí* and decided to revive Dunaj. Vladimír Václavek took over the singing part of the late Jiří Kolšovský and the comeback of the group became one of the most watched events in the Czech music world last year.

Dunaj Discography:

Dunaj a Bittová, 1988
Rosol, 1991 a 2001
Dudlay, 1993
IV., 1995
Pustit musíš, 1995
Lalalai, 1996
Za vodou, 2022





ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME



CONSTELLATION UNDERDOGS EXHIBITION

Světova 1 Gallery (Světova 1, Praha 8)

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday 14:00–18:00

**Guided tours: Tuesday, 17 October at 15:00 in English
and Thursday, 19 October at 17:00 in Czech**

Free entry

The *Constellation Underdogs* exhibition will present four fragments from four non-profit art spaces outside of Prague that may seem as distant as the stars in the night sky. The exhibition will allow us to explore the significance of these spaces as key pillars in the structures of our cultural environment. We pause at these fragments of different perspectives on creation to reflect on our current states and discuss multifaceted issues such as the need for sustainability, balance and harmony.

Světova 1 Gallery

The gallery is located in the street of the same name in the neighbourhood of the Pod Palmovkou Theatre. SVĚTOVA 1 is a non-profit art space and platform focusing on contemporary, queer and social issues. It is a holistic entity led by artists that reacts to current events in the World through exhibitions and public programs. It is not only what we present that is important, but also how - we aim to be an art, education and research institute. Our goal is to express ourselves fully, to achieve total sustainability and to offer refuge to those who need it.

www.svetova1.cz

S1



TRANS ACTION EXHIBITION OF ARTIST TEODOR BUZU

Foyer of the Main Stage, Pod Palmovkou Theatre

Opening night: 13 October 2023 at 17:00

**The exhibition is accessible during the shows
from 13 October 2023 to 20 October 2023**

Originally from Moldova, artist Teodor Buzu (born on 3 May 1960) will present his 99th solo exhibition at the Palm Off Fest. The artist's unique colourful world is a reflection of his Moldovan and Romanian culture, education at the Kharkiv Academy of Art and Design and life spent in the historic Czech town of Tábor. The majority of Buzu's work consists of colourful watercolours, always featuring realistic details and an original symbiosis. His works have been successfully presented at 125 collective exhibitions and have won numerous awards, including The Romanian Order of the Comandor (2003), the Main Prize of the International Art Competition (Passau, Germany, 2004), the AJV Intersalon Award (České Budějovice, Czech Republic, 2004), the In Recognition of Outstanding Creative Excellence Award (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2005), National Gallery of Moldova Award at the International Biennial of Painting 2013 (Chisinau, Moldova), Mihai Greucu Medal, Uniunea Artistilor Plastici din Republica Moldova (Moldova, 2021), First Prize in the international art competition BRÂNCUSI. MOTIVE ŞI SIMBOLURI (Târgu Jiu, Romania, 2022). Teodor Buzu was also awarded the honorary title Maestru în Artă (Master of Arts) by the President of Moldova, Maia Sandu (Moldova, 2023).

Teodor Buzu says of himself and his life: "I was born on a Tuesday and it was a good choice. As a child, I herded geese, then cows, and that showed me that life is beautiful. At the age of ten, I got accepted to an art school. There, I understood that there are two sides to a painting: the one you see and the one that is hidden in the way it's painted. After school, I got into the Academy of Fine Arts. On the Odessa-Kharkov train, I met my wife, with whom I have two sons. I served a year and a half in the Soviet army. Those who served in the Soviet army don't laugh in the circus. Here in the Czech Republic, I've come to understand that the world belongs to those who want it. I am a realist and I believe in miracles." Svetlana Michaljšová, the curator of the Modern Art Collection of the National Gallery in Prague, says about Teodor Buzu's work: "In his work, the values of Eastern and Central European culture come together in a unique symbiosis. The colourful sensitivity and the temperature of Bessarabian optimism complement in a unique way the moderation of Central European thinking. A significant part of Teodor's work is watercolours, which perfectly sum up his talent, in which passion and delicacy alternate seamlessly. To be a good watercolourist, you need to master the watercolour technique, have a sure hand, be guided by inspiration, and have a perfect sense of composition and shaping, while at the same time, details must be handled with great sensitivity. The colourful narrative is always underlined by a realistic detail and thus has a connection to the real world where things happen or exist that deeply touch the artist's soul."

The opening will be celebrated with Moldovan wine and tones of the Celtic harp and cello of the Bárka duo.



*Teodor Buzu: Růže našich předků
(The Roses of Our Ancestors)*

MEETING WITH TRANSLATOR MARTIN HILSKÝ: CLOSE AND DISTANT WORLDS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Café of Pod Palmovkou Theatre

Saturday, 14 October 2023 at 16:30

A meeting with poet, translator, university professor and scholar, expert on Shakespeare's work and Elizabethan England, and our greatest translator of Shakespeare's plays, Martin Hilský, will be an unusual opportunity to look at the work of one of Europe's most staged playwrights from unexpected angles. What worlds does William Shakespeare depict in his plays, what makes them close to us today and what makes them distant? What issues and themes to solve does this present to the translator into a contemporary language? How does Shakespeare work with the themes of dreams, magic, or fairy tale motifs? How does he work with the "effect" of the intermingling and interacting worlds of humans and supernatural beings in his plays? What role do witch characters play and what forms do they take in Shakespeare's plays? How does Shakespeare perceive women in his works and what are Shakespeare's female characters actually like? Why is Shakespeare considered to be a writer who has been domesticated in the Czech lands to the extent that he is considered a pillar of Czech theatre? The exceptional opportunity to encounter the work of William Shakespeare and Martin Hilský, the only Czech translator of Shakespeare's complete works, will take place on the day of the performance of Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Pod Palmovkou Theatre.

Martin Hilský

Hilský was born in 1943 in Prague into the family of architect Václav Hilský and Japanologist Vlasta Hilská, who originally studied English. In 1960 he graduated from gymnasium, then continued his studies at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, where he took English and Czech. In the course of his studies, he left Czech and switched to Hispanic studies, from which he graduated in 1966; he obtained his degree in English a year earlier. From the second year of his university studies, he interpreted for the Ministry of Culture. After graduation, he joined the English Department of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University. In May 1968 he won an audition for a one-year PhD at Oxford University, as a junior research fellow at Linacre College. After his return from Oxford, he returned to the Faculty of Arts, where he has been teaching and researching until the present. Besides his work in academia, he began to work as a translator in 1973 (translating, among others, the works of T. S. Eliot, J. Steinbeck, D. H. Lawrence, P. Shaffer, J. M. Synge, etc.), to write peer reviews and insightful prefaces and afterwords for books published by Odeon, a publishing house specialising in the publication of translations of international authors. Martin Hilský made the first translation of William Shakespeare's play in 1983 and it was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He is the only translator who has translated Shakespeare's complete work into Czech. Hilský's translations are highly regarded, especially for his extraordinary sense of language, his deep knowledge of context and the dramatic possibilities they offer. This is why they are frequently staged by Czech theatres. In 2020, Hilský's monumental study Shakespeare's England: A Portrait of an Age was published. Martin Hilský was made an Honorary Member of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II (2001), he was awarded the Medal of Merit for Services to Culture and Education (2011) and the State Prize of the Ministry of Culture (2011) for his translation work. In 2015, he received the National Award of the Czech Head Project for his complete translation of Shakespeare's work into Czech. Hilský's translations of Shakespeare's plays *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are currently part of the repertoire of Divadlo pod Palmovkou.

GUIDED TOUR OF ANDRES SERRANO'S EXHIBITION *INFAMOUS BEAUTY*

Centrum DOX (1/793, Poupětova St, Prague 7)

Thursday, 19 October 2023 at 18:00

Reduced entrance fee for festival visitors. You will find more information on the Divadlo pod Palmovkou website.

Andres Serrano is an American artist who was born in 1950 in New York, where he lives until today. The exhibition *Infamous Beauty* is made of two separate parts, which complement each other and are thematically intertwined. In the exhibition hall, a collection of more than sixty works selected from the artist's long career is presented under the title *Beauty*. However, Andres Serrano's work is not presented here in closed chronological cycles, but as a dialogue between recent photographs and older works from the series *Bodily Fluids* (1986-1990), *Immersion* (1987-1990), *Nomads* (1990), *Mortuary* (1992), and *Objects of Desire* (1992), *America* (2001-2004), *Sacred Works* (2011), *Torture* (2015), *Made in China* (2017), and *Robots* (2022). The comparison of more recent works with those over three decades old reveals surprising and powerful connections.

The *Infamous* series is presented in the mezzanine. Andres Serrano has been dealing with the themes of racial intolerance and inequality for many years, first in the early 1990s in his cycles *Nomads* and *Clan* (both 1990). The apparent picturesqueness and false nostalgia for the 'good old days' that emanate from some of the photographs are sharply confronted with their dark side. Such contrast is one of the essential characteristics of Serrano's work - even the darkest places are depicted with respect and a longing for beauty. The curator of the exhibition, Otto M. Urban, will guide you through the exhibition.

DOX Centre for Contemporary Art

DOX is located on the site of the former Rossemann and Kühnemann factory buildings. The factory in Holešovice changed owners several times (for a short time products for the AVIA aircraft factory were manufactured here). After nationalisation, it became the seat of the state-owned enterprise ZUKOV. In 2002 the building was purchased by Leoš Válka. Thanks to the initiative of Leoš Válka, his business partner Robert Aafjes and other private investors a space appropriate for showing contemporary art in Prague was finally created. DOX Centre has been fulfilling its mission as a non-state, non-profit and non-collecting institution since 2008.

The DOX Centre is an example of cutting-edge international contemporary architecture. The internationally acclaimed project of re-purposing an old factory in Holešovice into a multifunctional space with over 3,000 m² of exhibition area, a café, a bookshop and a design shop is the work of architect Ivan Kroupa. In 2008, DOX was nominated for the prestigious Mies van der Rohe Award and the prestigious The Phaidon Atlas of 21st Century World Architecture included it among the most interesting architectural projects of the past decade worldwide. In 2016, a unique architectural intervention called the Gulliver Airship was created on the roof of the DOX Centre. The project has earned another nomination for the prestigious Mies van der Rohe Award.

While in the early years the focus was primarily on exhibition projects and their accompanying programmes, as time went on, it broadened to include additional genres. Like a number of similar institutions in other countries, DOX gradually grew from its original „kunsthalle“ concept into a true cultural centre with a scope and focus that has no equal on the contemporary Czech cultural scene. Exhibition projects, lectures, debates, conferences, film projections, theatre performances, and many other formats all follow a common thread: an effort to develop critical contemplation and discussion of current social issues and questions. DOX also offers a unique model of informal education and programmes for families with children.

THE PLACE WHERE GOLEM WAS MOULDED...

A short guide to Divadlo pod Palmovkou's surroundings

Divadlo pod Palmovkou theatre is located on one of the main streets in Libeň, former suburb, now an inner-city district of Prague. The area was inhabited as early as in the Palaeolithic period and the first written mention dates back to 1363; however even before that time, a stronghold was built by local noble family, owners of the land, on a rock above the Rokytká stream. Later it was rebuilt into an impressive castle, a building which now houses the Municipal Authority offices. A village spread out around the stronghold, benefitting from the strategic location near Vltava river ford and on a crossroad of important routes going to Silesia and Lusatia.

Since the 16th century, Jews started to settle down in Libeň as plots of land were reserved for them in the former wetlands situated right in front of today's Divadlo pod Palmovkou theatre. The Jewish community was quite large for the period and soon they obtained major privileges from the nobility, namely self-administration. The famous legend of Golem, in one of its many versions, is set in this area at the time of the first Jewish settlement, when Rabbi Loew allegedly moulded Golem from the soil from Vltava river shore in Libeň.

Different noble families had owned Libeň village until 1662, when it became property of the Old Town of Prague. Local Castle became summer residence of the mayors of Prague, and later on residence of Habsburg monarchs and their families during their visits in Prague.

Several other settlements, vineyards and orchards were founded around Libeň and the area became a favourite one-day trip destination of inhabitants of Prague. In the 19th century,

the area underwent a dynamic development thanks to its proximity to Prague and at the same time the availability of free land; large industrial sites were built – an engineering plant, foundry, two breweries, distillery, cement-tube manufacturing plant and several textile and leather processing plants, but also a trans-shipment port (later transformed into a shipyard) and a number of other industrial sites. In just 25 years, the population of Libeň increased by 12,000, thus transforming a small town by Vltava and Rokytká rivers into a dynamic industrial suburb of Prague. A regular tram line connecting Libeň to the city centre opened in 1896 and offered a great opportunity for local theatre entrepreneurs producing theatre and musical shows in the former inn “U Deutschů” (the current Divadlo pod Palmovkou building is located on the same plot of land). Libeň became part of Prague in 1901.

The industrial plants, alongside tenement buildings, small factory workers' houses, shops and pubs scattered around the irregular and varied landscape gave the neighbourhood its unique genius loci and attracted extraordinary inhabitants with extraordinary destinies.

The idiosyncrasy of Libeň was made immortal in the novels of the famous Czech author Bohumil Hrabal who spent the happiest time of his creative life in the vicinity of Divadlo pod Palmovkou. Unfortunately, in the 1960s and 1970s, the neighbourhood underwent a major rehabilitation and a large part of the old houses, streets and nooks was destroyed. The present-day booming new development is gradually transforming the area around Pod Palmovkou Theatre into a new modern urban centre. However, some remarkable places from the past have resisted...





1. Divadlo pod Palmovkou theatre

Zenklova Street 34, Prague 8

An inn called "U Deutschů" used to stand where today's Divadlo pod Palmovkou theatre is located and theatre and musical productions had been staged here since the beginning of the 19th century. Thanks to its location on a busy street, which progressively became a main avenue, the inn thrived and its shows were quite popular also because they were performed in Czech language. In the 1880s, a wooden theatre was built in the yard of the inn, which was later turned into a hotel. The wooden theatre was soon rebuilt into a stone theatre, which underwent several reconstructions; the current building, in Art Nouveau style and sporting some remarkable original architectural features, dates back to 1907. It is worth mentioning that the then newly built theatre was the first venue to stage Franz Lehár's Merry Widow after its premiere in Vienna. However, the theatre business failed to flourish in Libeň and the repeated attempts to set up a permanent professional theatre group failed. In 1920s, the hotel with its theatre hall was acquired by the Czech Social-Democrat Workers' Party who turned it into "The People's House" and a cinema called "Svépomoc" (Self-help). During the Second World War, the theatre hall served as Wehrmacht's non-military arsenal warehouse. In the 1950s, the building was acquired by the then Městské a obecní divadlo (Municipal Theatre), and today's Divadlo pod Palmovkou, which has been housed in these premises ever since. The facade of the building is a result of many reconstructions: at the course of the years, it changed from an exuberantly decorated facade in romanticising style into a minimalist one. A major reconstruction took place in 2002 following the catastrophic floods during which the level of water on the ground floor and in the theatre hall reached the height of over two meters. The last large reconstruction of the interiors and the ground floor facade took place in 2014.



2. Libeň Castle

Zenklova Street 1/35, Prague 8

The Castle was built at the end of the 16th century on a rocky outcrop between Vltava and Rokytkva rivers where a medieval fortress used to stand. It underwent several major reconstructions and modifications; the current building is mainly in rococo style and dates back to the late 1700s. In 1608, Emperor Rudolf II and his brother Matthias signed the so-called Libeň Peace Treaty in the Libeň Castle, by which Rudolf conceded to Matthias the rule of Hungary, the Austrian Danube countries and Moravia and the succession right to the Bohemian as well as the imperial throne, while he kept the rule over Bohemia, Silesia and Lusatia. The Castle later became property of the Old Town of Prague and the summer residence of the mayors of Prague and then of the imperial family during their visits in Prague. Today, the Castle houses the Municipal Authority of Prague 8 and hosts many cultural events during which it is possible to admire the richly decorated interiors with beautiful paintings and the chapel, a remarkable piece of architecture.



3. St. Adalbert's Church

U Meteoru 599, Prague 8

One of the most valuable early Art Nouveau heritage sites in the Czech Republic, the church was built between 1904 and 1905 according to the design of the architect Emil Králíček. The church is mostly wooden, a rare occurrence in this country, as it was initially intended as a temporary building for a period of five years. In 1987 it was declared an intangible cultural heritage site and in 2001 it underwent a costly renovation. St. Adalbert's Church is remarkable thanks to its impressive system of vertical masonry structures and complexly shaped and richly decorated timber roof trusses. The roof, which is 23.7 m high, takes the shape of a four-sided helmet with a tip and a poppy capsule. The interior arrangement of the uniquely preserved temple features a triple vault with a 7.2 m clearance. This impressive site with an extraordinary architectural and artistic value serves as a Roman Catholic parish church.



4. T. G. Masaryk Library (Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences)

2362/10 Gabčíkova St, Prague 8

The Masaryk Institute and its library, established at the instigation of the first Czechoslovak President T. G. Masaryk, can be compared with only a few similar institutions and book collections in the world. The library was established within the T. G. Masaryk Institute as a philosophical study library for the professional public, to which T. G. Masaryk added his personal collection of 70,000 volumes in 1932 as a cornerstone, his personal archive, and 13 million crowns to contribute to the Institute's further development and purchases. Many of the books bear Masaryk's signature, his cipher Ψ , notes in the text or comments on the frontispiece. The library originally consisted of over 300 selected fields and sub-fields of study and includes a number of rare copies. The fate of the library was constant moving and relocation. Originally, the Masaryk Library was located at Prague Castle. During the Nazi occupation, the T. G. Masaryk Institute was closed and part of the library was taken to other institutions but after the war it reopened. In 1954, however, both the library and the T. G. Masaryk Institute (which included the archives of Edvard Beneš and the associates and family members of the first two presidents) were closed again - this time for over thirty years. Back then the number of volumes reached 204,611 volumes. Part of the volumes and the archive was moved to the Institute of the History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, while the rest of the books were put to the Basic Library of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the National and University Library. In 1990, the Institute of T. G. Masaryk was reopened by decision of President V. Havel's decision and he succeeded in getting back the library and archive (or what survived of them) as part of the restitution. In 1995 the administration of the library was taken over by the newly established Masaryk Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, which continued the activities of the original institution. In 2006, the institution was transformed into the current Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The total number of volumes in the library of the Institute is now about 160,000, which represents approximately 3,800 linear metres... In 2016, the entire library moved to a newly adapted depository in Prague 8, in the immediate vicinity of

the Institute building. At the end of June 2023, the T. G. Masaryk Library and its invaluable book and archive collection were inaugurated by President Petr Pavel.



5. a 6. Jewish Quarter and Jewish Cemetery in Libeň

Koželužská Street (fragments of the Jewish Quarter) and Libeň Bridge opposite to the Palmovka tram stop (Jewish Cemetery)

The oldest mention of Jewish settlement in Libeň dates back to 1561. In the 16th century, it was the second largest Jewish settlement in Prague and there were more Jews than Christians living in Libeň. In the 18th century when Empress Maria Theresa expelled Jews from Prague, the Jewish community in Libeň counted 744 members. The very centre of the Jewish ghetto was located just opposite today's Divadlo pod Palmovkou in Koželužská street. On the other side, the ghetto stretched to the bank of one of Vltava river branches – the reason why the entrances of some of the houses were on the first floor. During the Second World War, almost all members of the Libeň Jewish community were murdered by the Nazis. One of the rare survivors was Arnošt Lustig, the famous writer born here. The Jewish cemetery (6) was located near to the ghetto. It was established in the late 1600s, was last used in 1892 and was gradually reduced in size. First in 1875 to make space for the construction of a railway station; then in the 1920s because of the construction of a bridge. It was definitely destroyed between 1964 and 1965, as part of the “embellishment” of the area when the last remaining, and the most valuable, part was covered by soil and debris. There is almost nothing left of the Jewish quarter today. Most of the buildings were destroyed during the insensitive rehabilitation in the 1950s and 1960s which was completed in the 1990s. Today, in place of the former Jewish ghetto, you can find spacious office buildings; only a few last houses remain in the vicinity of the restaurant “U Horkých”.



7. Palmovka Synagogue

Ludmilina Street 601/4, Prague 8

The old Libeň synagogue was located in the heart of the Jewish ghetto. Once the discriminatory laws banning Jews from living outside of the ghettos were repealed, a new synagogue was built at a prestigious location near the main Libeň street, then called Mayor's Street (today's Zenklova Street). The founding stone of the new synagogue was laid in 1846 in the presence of Archduke Stephen. It was built in Neo-Romanesque style with oriental features. The original facade had distinct decorative stucco most of which was not preserved. The impressive interior of the synagogue, which used to be richly decorated, is built in basilica style with a high three-nave structure and side galleries, each placed atop five pillars. The synagogue was heavily damaged during the war and during the communist period, when it was used for many different purposes. Today, it is entrusted to Serpens Association that opens it regularly to public, organises concerts, theatre show and exhibitions. It has been kept in the state in which it was preserved as a memento of the past.



8. Old Libeň and the former house of Bohumil Hrabal

Na Hrázi Street, Prague 8

In the immediate vicinity of Divadlo pod Palmovkou, near the staff entrance, you will find 326/24, Na Hrázi Street: there used to stand a small house with a ground-floor flat situated in its courtyard, a former blacksmith's workshop, which was rented out in 1950 by Bohumil Hrabal, the very famous and one of the most widely-read Czech writers. It was in this very house, in Na Hrázi Street (Dyke Street), which Bohumil Hrabal used to refer to as “the dyke of eternity”, that he wrote his first books and some of his most famous novels. The ground-floor flat was not very suitable for living, but it appealed to the artist inspired by surrealism by its out-of-the-ordinary and decadent atmosphere. It became a meeting point of Hrabal's friends, such as Egon Bondy. The house is referred to in several of Hrabal's novels, as are its surroundings and the entire Libeň neighbourhood. The house was quite conveniently located near Hrabal's workplace he left shortly before becoming famous. In fact, Hrabal worked as a stage technician in the then Divadlo S. K. Neumanna theatre, today's Divadlo pod Palmovkou. He was also cast in several minor roles and recalls this time in one of his short stories. He was forced to leave his beloved flat in 1973 because it became unfit for living. The house no. 326/24 was pulled down together with other houses in 1988 because of the metro line and the construction of the oversized bus station that has never been fully used. Opposite to the staff entrance of Divadlo pod Palmovkou you will find a memorial stone, which was supposed to become the founding stone of Hrabal's centre. Not far from there stands Hrabal's wall, a piece made by the artist Tatiana Svatošová who covered the wall with a number of Hrabal's quotes, a large portrait of the writer and several authentic objects from his house.



9. and 10. Park promenade alongside the Vltava River and Libeň Bridge

U libeňského mostu Street and U českých loděnic Street and adjacent parking grounds

A2, probably the most important, most frequented and also the most beautiful Prague cycling path, runs through the historical centre of Prague and passes near the Libeň Bridge. Near Pod Palmovkou Theatre the path undergoes a landscape and park re-development. The total length of the cycling path that crosses the city and its surroundings from south to north is 31 km. It starts in the Central Bohemian village of Vrané nad Vltavou and ends in Roztoky u Prahy. In the Libeň area, it passes close to the sites where important industrial buildings were once located, including the famous Rustonka engineering factory, which was one of the first engineering factories in Prague (a large steam engine factory was built here in 1832, and in 1850 it was purchased by the British manufacturer Joseph Ruston, who expanded it considerably). Rustonka became famous for the production of machinery and parts for the sea and river steamships, bridges and roof structures, and included a large river port. Since the 1960s, the site of the engine house has been gradually abandoned, and buildings demolished in 2006-2007. The heritage-listed boiler house was demolished in 2014. A part of the site has been converted to a park. Also worth mentioning is the Libeň Bridge, considered an architectural gem of interwar architecture. It was built in 1928 according to the plans of architects František Mencl and Pavel Janák and is listed

as the only cubist bridge in the world. It is also remarkable that it is not one bridge, but a complicated system of six bridges. The most valuable part is undoubtedly the part stretching over the Vltava River, which is made in a completely unconventional and very impressive way, perfectly summarising the modern aesthetic sensibility of the interwar era. The promenade along the Vltava and the A2 cycling path continue below the **Libeň Chateau (2)** and to Thomayer's Gardens with rock formations. Directly below the Libeň Chateau, near the confluence of the Rokytka River with the Vltava, there is another interesting monument – the Löwit's Mill. The heritage building of the former large water mill dates to 1747 in its present-day form, but the first written mention of a mill on this site dates back to 1530. The mill building was thoroughly renovated in 2000 and has since been used for cultural events. However, after the disastrous floods in 2002, when the water reached up to the roof, it was not used for cultural events until September 2019. The former site of Libeň River Port and Czech Shipyards the vicinity of the Mill are now gradually transformed into a new neighbourhood with luxury housing. Thomayer's Gardens, situated on the banks of the Vltava River and the adjacent rocky hillsides, are a nature trail and the St. Adalbert spring springs up in the Liběňka well. The park also includes the White Rock natural monument - the rocky promontory significant for its rare organisms was named after Eduard Štorch's novel The Mammoth Hunters, which partially takes place here.



11. Velký mlýn (cultural centre Velký mlýn) and Panský pivovar (Studio ALTA)

U Českých loděnic St, Prague 8

Velký mlýn (The Great Mill), also called Löwit's Mill, is a listed building of a former water mill located near the Libeň castle near the confluence of the Rokytka and Vltava rivers. The current Baroque appearance of the mill dates back to 1747, but the first written mention of a mill standing on this site dates back to 1530. The remarkably well-preserved mill building was thoroughly renovated in 2000 and has since been used for cultural events. However, since the disastrous floods of 2002, when the water reached the roof of the main building, it has been unused for a long time. In September 2023, after a generous renovation, a branch of the City Library with a café was officially opened in the Great Mill, and other areas of the building were adapted for use by local clubs, institutions and organisations as a cultural, creative and community centre. In addition to the usual library services, the library in Velké mlýn organises cultural events focusing mainly on literature, culture and art. There is a concert and lecture hall on the ground floor of the main mill building and an impressive exhibition space in the attic (under the historically valuable truss roof). In the immediate vicinity of the Great Mill is the building of the former **Panský pivovar (Manor Brewery)**, which now houses Studio ALTA - a cultural centre, collective and creative unit. Studio ALTA was founded in 2008 with the aim to provide space for interesting ideas germinating, society needs and to create a safe space for dreams and action. The group started in Prague's Holešovice neighbourhood, then moved to Invalidovna in Karlín. In 2023, it acquired a new base in the former Manor Brewery in Libeň - a long-unused and large late baroque building built in the early nineteenth century. The ALTA group aims to create a cultural and community centre for the general public here. As stated on Studio ALTA's website, "Our programme is based on bold, innovative works that aim to inspire engagement, creativity, sharing and constructive dialogue with otherness, which is the foundation of an open and healthy society."



12. Operation Anthropoid Memorial – place of the ambush on Deputy Reich Protector R. Heydrich

Zenklova Street, near Vychovatelna tram stop

On May 27, 1942, the plot to assassinate one of the most influential Nazi officials and main architect of the Holocaust, the Deputy Reich Protector and Chief of the Reich Police Reinhard Heydrich was successfully carried out at this very place by Czechoslovak soldiers Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš. They were trained in Britain and sent to the Nazi-occupied territory of former Czechoslovakia by the Czechoslovak Government in exile as part of the Operation Anthropoid. The assassination was carried out in a tight curve in Libeň while Heydrich was driving by in his open car on his way from his country residence in Panenské Břežany to his headquarters at the Prague Castle. It took place between 10.31 and 10.35 AM. The explosion of a specially modified anti-tank grenade wounded Heydrich in the face and on his body, causing damage to his lungs and spleen. Kubiš and Gabčík managed to escape. The bicycle wounded Kubiš used to escape was left behind at the then Bata shoe shop – today's drugstore – in the vicinity of Divadlo pod Palmovkou theatre. Unfortunately, the bicycle was later used to find the soldiers in hiding. Heydrich died of his wounds on June 4, 1942 in Bulovka Hospital near the place of the attack. Massive and brutal reprisals and investigation followed: the Czechoslovak paratroopers, members of the commando, were eventually discovered in their hiding in the crypt of St. Cyril and Methodius Church in Prague. On July 6, 1942, 800 German soldiers laid siege to the church. The seven soldiers were able to resist for an unbelievable 7 hours. After using all their ammunition, the surviving paratroopers committed suicide. The Nazi retaliation resulted in thousands of Czechs being imprisoned and murdered, and two villages, Lidice and Ležáky, burnt down. The attempted assassination is considered the most successful operation of the Czechoslovak resistance movement. In 2009 the Operation Anthropoid Memorial was erected at the very place of the attack. These historical events inspired several successful films and many books. A production discussing operation Anthropoid is now prepared by Divadlo pod Palmovkou: the premiere of Tomáš Dianiška's play is planned for June 18, 2020, marking the day when the paratroopers died in the uneven battle with the occupants in the crypt of St. Cyril and Methodius Church.

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