Dear readers,

These words of playwright and director R. Mroué indicate the direction of his theatrical poetry, which can be called politically committed with well-defined social considerations. When reading his words I somehow realized that for some period already, that theatre in Slovakia is going in a direction that avoids direct confrontation with the present situation, whether political or social, and even artistic, which is even less pleasing. In the year a crisis hanged over us like “the Sword of Damocles,” and it was reflected in Slovak theatre. At first glance it would seem that culture, including theatre, is financially under-valued. But first and foremost there is a crisis in terms of mediocrity and lack of invention. But even in situations like this, there are from time to time productions that are interesting either by theme, dramatizations, directorial interpretation, or by linking form and content in a more original way. The English version of the KØD Journal offers you analyses and reviews of some of them. We focus specifically on creative Slovak production projects. Slávka Daubnerová’s theatre P.A.T. and the performing and physical dance company, Debris comp., represent theatres that have not ceased to enjoy experimentation and searching for new creative possibilities. Station Žilina Záriečie is a space which has been for several years exploring similar concepts. We describe the activities of these independent groups in review – Theatre P.A.T., an interview with Jozef Vlk, the founder of the Debris comp. and evaluation of KioSk Festival.

The legendary theatre Stoka celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2011. In the eighties Stoka created underground theatre with provocative poetry, authenticity and visual experiments, combined with the almost documentary capture of the reality in their texts. It was initiated by the playwright and director Blaho Uhlár. It is not by chance that we mention this. The fate of this theatre pretty much reflects the cultural reality and standing of theatres in a Slovak context. The Stoka theatre company is not operating today – the director remained alone in the rebellion. He is back staging in a semi-amateur theatre Kopanka in Trnava, and the Stoka building was demolished. For five years now KØD Journal has tried to draw attention to events in Slovak professional theatre. This is actually KØD’s aim and purpose. Although Slovak theatres, contrary to R. Mroué’s beliefs, only seldom carry his message to society and try to shake it, the concept of KØD is to reflect this.

Dáša Čiripová
Editor in chief of kød
Art and Culture are Important Components of a Modern Economy

“I am convinced that Europe’s advanced economies are experiencing a new economic revolution. During the past century we have passed from an agricultural economy through the industrial phase to a service economy. I think we are moving from the service economy to an economy that is fundamentally based on creativity. And this applies not only to the economy such as in Great Britain, which benefited for a long time from a free market enterprise. It seems to me that this applies also to the economies of developing countries.”

This quote from Chris Smith, former UK Department of Culture, Media and Sports Minister is followed by our interview with Zora Jaurová who is active in the Slovak and European cultural policy for several years.

Festival as a Creative Industry was the title of a conference that was recently organized in Nitra by the Theatre Institute, as part of the Nitra Theatre Festival. This term is widely used these days. Does the cultural industry as such exists in Slovakia? Culture as an industry in Slovakia exists, it is just not yet recognized as a specific sector of the economy and culture. We are still confronting, to some extent, the arts and business against each other. Creative industries are positioned somewhere between the two, having their own specifics and differences in respect to both – the classical understanding of artistic creation and the standard understanding of business. Today, culture as an industry is one of the fastest growing areas of the economy, and I mean worldwide. It is production based mainly on intellectual property – ideas, concepts – what people have in their minds, and therefore it provides big potential especially for developing economies without massive natural resources and developed traditional industries and services. The basis is creative people to whom we just need to provide appropriate conditions. Those countries, cities, regions which began to realize this fact are recording significant economic growth today.

You say that the creative industries are not recognized in Slovakia at the level of policies. But it seems to me that this term is not accepted in the sphere of art, which in an obsolete way still differentiates arts and commerce. It seems that the artists distance themselves from this category.

It is possible that the Slovak artists feel they are separated from economic processes. But they are not, even when seeking to distance themselves from them. At the core of the creative economy are the traditional artistic disciplines, which are in the principle pure creation. Around them, however, a huge zone of activities is created, which is industry and enters the economy, often by very significant inputs (advertising, software, media, etc.). This model demonstrates that art and culture are important components of a modern economy, which is based on creative ideas and innovations. It proves that countries which do not have the base in a form of high quality functional arts and cultural sector will not dominate the field of creative economy. What is important is to name and recognize the economic aspects and specific processes of the entire complex body of a creative economy and to promote properly the role of individual players. The debate on the creative economy is interesting because it puts art and the creation into an entirely different role than we normally attribute to them.
Could you give us examples from abroad where creative industries are supported by government policies?

In the UK there is a comprehensive strategy to support this sector since the 90’s and many local and regional strategies are derived from it. In the UK art in general is much more perceived as an industry. But to show the example of a country more comparable to Slovakia, we should mention Estonia, which has been systematically supporting the sector of creative industries for several years. They understand that this is an area in which they can become strong. Another known example is music from Iceland, which has become a music leader in Europe. Majority of European countries and a number of regions or cities have some kind of public policy in this area as well. One example of a country more comparable to Slovakia is Estonia. We should mention that their creative economy includes non-profit cultural organizations, commercial companies, independent artists and creative professionals such as architects and musicians, along with both physical and virtual infrastructure which supports their activities (e.g. education, research, skills development or lifelong learning and development).

In the current government program, the Ministry of Culture has a commitment to put together a concept for the promotion of cultural and creative industries. It is a very complicated task, which really does not fall only within the scope of the Ministry of Culture. The creative industries are a cross-sector issue that affects a number of areas (particularly the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Transport, etc.). The first step is to raise awareness and to bring the issue to the debate. I think a debate about this topic has already started and that is good. What I see as a problem, however, is that the leadership of the Ministry of Culture is at present working on a programming document, and that is why one can see real results. In this area I see the crucial role of the Ministry of Culture at the present time. It is important to understand the needs of the sector, to defend it against other interests (e.g. contribution policy and taxes) and in particular to create modern cultural policies.

What do you mean by modern cultural policies?

That is of course a very broad topic. In my view, it is essential to identify the role, if any, that the state in culture can play up to the State to organise culture or creativity. The role of national policies in this area is just to create conditions that those who know how to organize in this field, and those who can create, could be as free as possible. When saying conditions, I mean in particular infrastructure, resources and supportive cooperation. But what we see here at all levels (government and local government) is that state reduces its activity to organizing cultural events, which somewhat distorts the market in this area. The second issue is that public policies are not set up to support viable activities, but often the opposite. The Ministry of Culture in our country is perceived primarily as some kind of grant agency, while the existing support system is quite controversial and not very efficient. The primary role of the ministry is not to distribute money, but to create public policies, schemes, links of cooperation with Europe and the whole world, etc. It is known that I am promoting the idea of an “Arts Council” – an independent agency to support arts and culture. I think this model, based on the “arm’s length principle” is one of the most effective ways of promoting culture (the Audiovisual Fund is already applying this principle in our country). What is particularly important in culture is those support systems are most often linked to the role of the Arts Council. The question is whether there is such a minister of culture who would voluntarily give up the direct decision-making power concerning a relatively large pot of money.

Do you think that at time of the crisis there will be less and less money for culture?

I think that the widely understood concept of a creative economy is a recipe for bad times. The creative economy is all about ideas, about how to invent, how to search for completely new solutions, and links. That’s why I think that, contrary to the general trends, at times of crisis the creative industries can do it, and those who know how to organize in this area as well. I think this model, based on the “arm’s length principle” is one of the most effective ways of promoting culture. The Audiovisual Fund is already applying this principle in our country. What is particularly important in culture is that state supports systems are most often linked to the role of the Arts Council. The question is whether there is such a minister of culture who would voluntarily give up the direct decision-making power concerning a relatively large pot of money.
At the age of sixteen I saw Kafka’s The Trial that you directed in the Astorka theatre. I was taken aback by this production as I thought, until then, that I knew Kafka. I took my brother to the theatre to show him that, but suddenly there was a lot of sex, which made me – sixteen years old “Kafka expert” – quite upset. Sometime later Martin Porubják, who did dramaturgy of that performance, told me (and maybe he was telling your understanding of it as well), that when adapting the novel for the stage he did it the same way as one understands The Trial when reading it at time of puberty – feeling something sexual behind it and at the same time searching for this sexuality in there.

Nearly twenty years have passed since then. Has your attitude towards depicting sex on stage changed?

I cannot judge. Back then it was more aesthetic, today it is much harsher and cruel. And at the same time with greater insight as well.

And how it will continue?

I suppose it will be slowly inhibited. But apart from sex there were many other excitements. For example the absurdity and grotesqueness of the world. And the inability to understand it.

Do you focus on sex?

For years I have been trying to do Shakespearean type of theater. The characters meet in a dramatic conflict at the three basic levels – instinctive, psychological and social. Theatre production (drama) is good if it contains all three levels – instinctive, psychological and social. If there is only the instinctive one, the play is about animal instincts in humans, about eroticism, cruelty, killing, fighting, who is going to win over whom and other instincts. If the theatre play has only psychological level, then the result is a sexless intellectual game without a social context. If the drama has only the social level, it addresses only socio, communal, spiritual or political problems. Characters are sexless, lacking psychology. I try to focus with positive energy, survive this period healthy physically and mentally, and then after two years will I look back, evaluate what I did (not just for those two years), and progressively reduce the intensity of directorial work.

Do you have any artist currently living in Slovakia who inspires you and with whom you feel close?

I would love to have one, but unfortunately I do not. Currently I am immersed in projects spanning over next two years, I do not have time to overview what I do, or the theater as such. I do not confront myself with anyone or anything. I try to focus with positive energy, survive this period healthy physically and

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anti-communist feelings, because they were ideologues of communism. Abund times.

We all fought with our creative activities, we had a motivation that everything we do was anti-socialist. The natural feeling of col-
legality functioned in the theater community.

We agreed that the society in which we lived was a scam and that we were breaking it from inside with our creative activities. Of course, there were those who did not break it from inside, as they were forbidden to work. It is true that we did not achieve real results with such protests, maybe just the fact that the theater was more decent and the audience was laughing at allego-
ries and overtones. Very active discussions were held at festivals. We felt that art was important and that it could help people and society.

After the revolution, it all fell apart. Out of the monolithic theater community, suddenly appeared nationalists, nacionalists, leftists, rightists, former security service pe-
ople, real dissidents and the grey majority... I do not know how exactly to describe the current situation; I do not have a picture. I feel sidelined from an aggressive attack on the audience and society. I rather showcase fundamental human relationship problems and I want them to be portrayed convin-
cingly.

What has caused that you are no longer interested in the audience?

In my case it has been a gradual process. I am not suggesting that viewers are empty, fortunately, they still go to theaters. It seems that there are still viewers who want to esca-
pe from the virtual world and the media and they are looking for a communicating space. The theater has become a minority municipal space. Perhaps it was always so, but I realize that much clearer now.

You said that you are not following the political and social situation, but nevertheless it is felt from your pro-
ductions – namely The Misanthrope, The End of the Play – which kinds of problems do you face now?

You mentioned that some of your productions were protests. Re-
yourself in Bratislava. Perhaps only three or four people I knew did not have any more.

After the revolution in 1989 the theater and the artistic continuity was lost. Each person began to play for himself only,

and waited impatiently to find out who would win. Years ago there were many theatre plays

that I thought I would direct. Today it is more difficult for me to choose. I choose topics carefully. It is not easy to decide on a play and then to live with it for one year, or half a year. It is more difficult to be assured that it makes sense for me and the audienc-
e. The Misanthrope and Mina’s The End of the Play, however, were good choices.

Did you feel collegiality before 1989?

It is rather watch, that I lost interest in spectators – I do not want to open their eyes. I think that they are so blind that it is not worth it. I rather watch, observe how far they can get in dead-end street, and by doing that I am stuck as well. The clear and specific theatrical message is missing.

The same way as provocation prevails in your previous producti-
ons, now there is a strong emphasis on statement. It seems to me that your view has shifted to a more uni-
verseal message.

The clear and specific theatrical message is important and that it could help people and society. The theater has become a minority municipal space. Perhaps it was always so, but I realize that much clearer now.

The world with contrasting eyes. That was the time of full theaters, and theater critics at that time played an important role. Criti-
cism meant analysis and inspiration. In the beginning I was collecting critical articles and waited impatiently to find out who would write what. Today I am not interested any more. After the revolution in 1989 the theater and the artistic continuity was lost. Each person began to play for himself only, everyone needed to make a living some-
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thing. But maybe I am just uninformed.
But you did have the ambition to get to Bratislava?

Of course, everyone wants to get into a larger city, since the smaller cities have limitations as far as the theater audience is concerned. We should not pretend that it is not easy for a young director, meaning from somewhere else. A feeling of frustration to reach an audience.

You often cooperate with the dramaturg Dan Maľjáš. Does your cooperation function on the same principles as during your beginnings – you provide experience and receive energy?

Yes, it works exactly like that. I use the same model reversed. I am glad to have Maľjáš and the young scenographer Borák. Now I am the one with the experience and views, and I am looking for energy from them.

After many discussions on its function, the theatre DPOH has become the scene for anyone, in line with formula – the more commercial, the better. Is there really no theatre company or personality who would simply take over the scene which would open and would have the audience to convey it to. The tragedy of a dramatic theater in Bratislava is waiting for the director who would form it. The problem there is rather that they are waiting for the director who would form it. The Bratislava City Theatre (MD POH) is not equipped for that. This is what Bratislava lacks, and this is why it is so strongly asymmetrical.

You often work in the Nitra Theatre. Do you think that there is stronger actor’s potential?

Theatres in other cities – Martin, Nitra and Košice – generally possess sufficient internal acting energy. There are actors there, which are perhaps not such big stars at a first glance, but they want to work and they enjoy it. The problem there is rather that they are waiting for the director who would form them. The Slovak National Theatre (SND) and Astorka Korzo ‘90. The theatre Nova scéna is also a permanent competition for the Slovak National Theatre (SND), as it is not equipped for that. This is only a general theater, theater of the certain times. To break the ice, it is necessary to have a kind of hatchery for young people and theater artists. This is what Bratislava theatre lacks, and this is why it is so strongly asymmetrical.

As you often cooperate with the dramaturg Dan Maľjáš, you have a general idea. You do not see any hope?

As the director of the Slovak National Drama Theatre, I tried to create such conditions that mostly young generation could have slightly better starting options for confrontation, and I assumed that if someone does it well, then it would be good to continue. It is not easy for a young director, meaning from twenty to forty years old, to do a production professionally, to reach a wider audience and at the same time that the production does not become a cheap tabloid. They do not have many opportunities as new theaters are not created. What appeared during the past twenty years, has already disappeared, like the theatre Stoka. For twenty years already I am expecting a period of theatre boom, when new theaters with a message would open and would have the audience to convey it to.

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Has the situation not changed significantly since then?

It’s still the same. I managed to succeed as director because I had a better starting position – my colleagues were Pourojžik and Ciller, colleagues older by one generation. I gave them the energy and they provided their experience. Our joint productions were interesting exceptions in the Slovak context. I am missing the young generation of directors at present. I miss the kind of movement behind me that would manage to motivate me and show me a perspective different from my own. I have not felt such movement for many years now.

You do not feel such movement within you?

I don’t feel it.

But you know young directors, you have a general idea. You do not see any hope?

As the director of the Slovak National Drama Theatre, I tried to create such conditions that mostly young generation could have slightly better starting options for confrontation, and I assumed that if someone does it well, then it would be good to continue. It is not easy for a young director, meaning from twenty to forty years old, to do a production professionally, to reach a wider audience and at the same time that the production does not become a cheap tabloid. They do not have many opportunities as new theaters are not created. What appeared during the past twenty years, has already disappeared, like the theatre Stoka. For twenty years already I am expecting a period of theatre boom, when new theaters with a message would open and would have the audience to convey it to.

You often cooperate with the dramaturg Dan Maľjáš. Does your cooperation function on the same principles as during your beginnings – you provide experience and receive energy?

Yes, it works exactly like that. I use the same model reversed. I am glad to have Maľjáš and the young scenographer Borák. Now I am the one with the experience and views, and I am looking for energy from them.

After many discussions on its function, the theatre DPOH has become the scene for anyone, in line with formula – the more commercial, the better. Is there really no theatre company or personality who would simply take over the scene which once belonged to the Slovak National Theatre?

The tragedy of a dramatic theater in Bratislava is that there are already two permanent drama theaters – the Slovak National Theatre (SND) and Astorka Korzo ’90. The theatre Nova scéna is also a permanent company, but it is still looking for some drama profile. It has been a long time since there was competition between the Slovak National Theatre (SND) and Nova scéna. At present, Nova scéna is a musical theatre, theatre Astorka Korzo ’90 is not competition for the Slovak National Theatre (SND), as it is not equipped for that. This is only a general theater, theater of the certain opinion. To break the ice, it is necessary that the Bratislava City Theatre (MD POH) becomes a very strong theater which would be able to compete with the Slovak National Theatre (SND). And it would be ideal if a series of small theaters appear which would seek their specific poetry, theaters which could be a kind of hatchery for young people and theater artists. This is what Bratislava theatre lacks, and this is why it is so strongly asymmetrical.

You often work in the Nitra Theatre. Do you think that there is stronger actor’s potential?

Theatres in other cities – Martin, Nitra and Košice – generally possess sufficient internal acting energy. There are actors there, which are perhaps not such big stars at a first glance, but they want to work and they enjoy it. The problem there is rather that they are waiting for the director who would form them. The Slovak National Theatre (SND) also had actors who were eager to work, but the situation there was problematic. When actors come to the Slovak National Theatre (SND) right after school, it is convenient for them and good that they are able to grow professionally, but at the same time there is a danger of losing individuality – they are too early at a place where they should be with some life experiences. Therefore, it is often the case that actors are internally frustrated and they go to look for something else.

Was a rocking element, which occurred in your earlier productions, part of your rebellion and protest? In the play The Boy Richard Müller did the songs. In Šokšpear it was Tono Popovič and Marián Gregka. When I use music in my productions I always base it on a topic. The play Boy had an anar- chist theme, so I was looking for this type of music. Together with Kamil Peteraj, we contacted several people, but you do not find a common ground with everybody. Then came Müller and Sebán and that was it. The same happened with Popovič and Gregka in Šokšpear.

Are you planning to do some musical theater?

I do not know. Currently my program is full till 2012 and then comes the end of the world, so we’ll see ... Currently I am doing O'Neill in Astorka Korzo ’90, and then Cikker’s Coriolanus, which has never been staged in Slovakia, is waiting for me in Banska Bystrica. After Cikker I should go to Martin to do Oedipus the King, later Corneille’s Le Cid in the Brno City Theatre. After that I should direct the theater Stoka

But you did have the ambition to get to Bratislava?

Of course, everyone wants to get into a larger city, since the smaller cities have limitations as far as the theater audience is concerned. We should not pretend that it is not so. Excellent performances in Martin were performed twenty times, the Italian play Ca- viar or Lentils performed twenty times, the Italian play

Anna Karemina (Slovak National Theatre, 2009).

photo: C. Bachratý

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in the theatre Arena, the title is not clarified yet, and finally Kafka’s The Castle in the the-atre Astorka should close the circle from The Trial to The Castle.

You say that it is very difficult at the present to choose text that appeal to you. You were recently a judge in a drama competition. How do you see the level of new young texts?

Majority of texts are inspired by the tele-vision type of thrillers and sci-fi, some are of the grammar-school-level or tabloid. But some texts are interesting.

Do you follow your productions af-ter the premiere?

I do not. Sometimes I go to see my produc-tions after one year, some I do not see any more.

You often return to Russian classics. Does contemporary Russia inspire you?

I do not need to confront myself with the Russian classics with Russia as such. It is rather that in those texts experience is encoded, not only of the people of those times, but universal issues as well. Exactly those which interest me – issues of erot-icism, love, faith in God, cruelty and tender-ness, conflict between parents and children, indifference, consumerism and strenuous-ness of humans and many other problems and contradictions of human life.

Were your dreams and expectations that you had in connection with the theater at the beginning fulfilled?

In certain periods definitely yes. I had the feeling then that this was it, that I was the one who could influence people by mean-ningful themes. When I was working in Ame-rica and Paris, I felt meaning in everything. I used to enter the theater the same way a Catholic steps into a church. I expected that viewers would believe the author, the stage director and their ideas.

And now?

My view of the entire theatrical stage is much more sober today. What I expected from life in terms of art I did not get in re-turn – satisfaction that I am doing something that makes sense. Today I feel that it does not have meaning.

JANA BEŇOVÁ
and DÁŠA ČIRIPOVÁ

In the year 1990 you began, toge-ther with Martin Ondriska and Mar-tin Piterka, to function as the Hubris Company. This was something new and original on the Slovak dance and theater scene: A dance the-a-ter that connects movement with theatrical and musical elements, including expressive artistic styliza-tion. Neither of you has been an ac-tor or a dancer. How did the idea for the Hubris Company originate?

It just started one day among a group of friends. There were more of those who participated. We felt a need for statement, because we were silent for too long and we had a tension in ourselves that had to come out. There were more options, but we de-cided to form Hubris. Back then, we wanted to be programatically opposed to the tra-ditional or classical understanding of the-a-ter. We hung on a variety of conceptual art videos, we were amazed by Wilson, Beckett, Kantor, and we loved completely different music than others, and responded sensitive-ly to the legacy of Artaud. We did not want the theater to be either corpses or dead. We tried to avoid the classic “eyeball” stage and put our testimony somehow else, do-ing something new, provocative, risky, non-standard and away from academic cliché. We did the installation in the Pool (Bazén), more specifically in the boiler room of the pool, at the Klarisky Church, in the Exposi-tion Hall of Arts Slovakia (Umelecká Bes-da Slovenská) etc. Marta Poláková played a significant role during our formation and in other activities. We on the other hand “penetrated” into her project from different angles. She also shaped our physical disposi-tion and consciousness about the body. Al-ready in the 1990s she has organized scho-larships for various choreographers from abroad. There we learned very fundamental things, which we were then able to imple-men-t as performers in the independent Hubris.

Bratislava’s underground in the late 80’s and early 90’s consisted of a number of highly interesting artistic personalities. These were very positive and inspiring times for Slovak art, charged with artistic experimentation and restless progressive exploration. Many people lost their breath in the during the search, and then either remained frozen at a certain point or they gave up on their ideals, falling into the satisfied with the mainstream. Jozef Vlk is one of those who has continued going his own way with an open mind, who has not let himself be absorbed by the majority, and who, more than anybody else, is never afraid of new challenges and experiments.

Before 1994, you created several productions that I still remember. Especially those made at the Pool, where you, as you say, “managed” to play. How do you today, with the hindsight, look at that period?

After the coup, the society breathed with enthusiasm and this was how it worked among us. We were proud of ourselves and our environment (Hubris means pride). The
After Hubris ceased to exist, you were the only one who continued with the movement theater. You founded the Debris company, which continued in the line of movement theater. Today you work with professional dancers. Debris has profiled itself as the professional company in contemporary dance, currently the most progressive one in Slovakia. What is that attracted you personally to the dance and movement theatre? Before you were in Hubris, you were known as an musician, an experimenter – this is what is still true today.

I was not just me, but Martin Piterka and Veronika Čertežni – Horn, when I found the hind the birth of Debris – remnants of pride, or logical consequence of Hubris (state of pride). Debris continually followed up on poetry, which was started by Hubris. Actually, shortly after the break of Hubris and in kind of abstract penalty for wantonness (ffonos theon), we created Code QT/INXYZ at the Pool, then the performance (fthonos theon), we created Hubris, you were known as a dancer, who is particularly well disposed, you can eventually dissolve in the air, or in the theatrical “dancing” something important, because it uses similar instruments. I am in the theatre evokes naphthalene and insects and that inspires me to more experimental vision.
The Debris Company recently celebrated its 21st birthday. Despite your systematic work you do not have your own space. Have you considered whether it is more a question of operational costs and a large financial input?

I can clearly anticipate operational issues of the theater space – what it requires or may require. It is clear to me that one needs to keep the administrative flexibility in relation to the artistic freedom. At the very beginning, already, at the times of Hubris, I was fascinated by the possibility of obtaining the above-mentioned Pool. The commission of the municipal office was enthusiastic about our project and very soon I received a positive opinion on the appropriateness of its use in accordance with our intentions. This lasted until the municipal authorities acknowledged a mistake, when they discovered that the space is under the jurisdiction of the City Magistrate. I tried to search for documentation at the City Hall, but at that time the City Magistrate was completely in a different state and the search started to resemble Kaftasque quest. The whole energy evaporated when I got to the information that the Pool was built on the aryanized land of the oldest Jewish cemetery in Bratislava. Then there were several more hectic attempts to get other places and they also ended up in vain. Everything was exhausted from me. I have a lot more stamina and luck. It was hard. I do not know, but maybe this is all how it is supposed to be. Everything bad is good for something and vice versa is true as well. And I do not like the term physical theater. It does not mean that the Pool is not just a normal theater. The concept of material comes at the end of the process. There can be a musical theme in the beginning, which subtly leads the work somewhere else. Sometimes we take concept and create individually and later we compare it from different perspectives, we improvise, evaluate, change and make it more specific. Stanka is incredibly resourceful and she reacts very fast. The same way as she creates something that completely fits our concept and moves it forward. So coincidence often inspires us. But mostly a lot, a lot of work…

Debris company is known as physical theater, what does this mean come from? I am asking because the term physical theater evokes me rather Grotowski’s theatre, and I would not place you there.

Currently we are closer to the expression of “a poor theatre”, because it seems that we are going to implement our unsuccessfully prepared proposal for our last show which was misunderstood and unsupported by official institutions. But in this sense it is just a formal playing with words from Grotowski’s pen. Grotowski argued that it is not words that are lost in the theater, but the way they follow from them and what is causing them. This concept is essential for me and I agree with this simple reference. We do not write the story, but we improvise, evaluate, create characters and make up the story. We are not guided by dramatic motifs. We do not know more. Only a handful of mainly young enthusiasts, or several older people. Hip-hoppers can perfectly define their genre using posters, words and by silence at the same time, and it is the strongest and most progressive art form. It is the strongest and most progressive art form which is difficult to grasp, too ornamental and aesthetical. It can become more theatrically intellectual.

There are also other reasons why we have chosen the label of the physical theater. Dance means for me an ‘iffy’ category and I would need some visual to understand what it actually is. Widow cannot imagine any more specific because they do not know more. Only a handful of mainly young enthusiasts, or several older people. Hip-hoppers can perfectly define their genre in music and dance. I am not mentioning folklore, because it has its traditions, attractiveness and the future. With ballet everything is obvious. The general public basically does not understand what the poster means and is confused when they see the word “dance”. They cannot incorporate it in their register of knowledge. The expression “dance” is misleading. For me a simple definition of “dance” means some kind of movement that is named indefinitely in the title. I wanted to avoid my limitation.

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You are often contacted from abroad, from the various festivals where you participate. And not only in Europe. You were in Singapore and it may be Korea and you will manage to travel more. You can also see how some is the strongest and most progressive dance scene today and why?
Several years ago a number of interesting projects have started to understand that this topic is so vital that we decided to invite Petra Jaška from the Slovak dance scene, which is trying to recover from the lack of audience’s interest and understanding. But you are permanently taking your own path which is individual and most importantly artistic, and not tributary to the low taste and mainstream tendencies.

It is very important that when one has to say something and not when it is motived. It was very good that I was not alone, because Martina Vánavyova used a completely different optics than me. In the next realization phase she was coming to rehearsals and became some sort of litmus test, which measured the intensity of narcissism in each of the characters. It is very pleasant to work with the dramaturgist, but it must be a person who is close to the director, the team and agrees with the way the team operates. Martina is such a good and close person.

The topic of narcissism is so vital that we have decided to invite Petra Jaška from the Belgian based Slovak Dance Collective for cooperation. For the nearly 10 years Peter worked abroad and gained incredible experience in the Brussels school F.A.R.T.S. He cooperated with choreographers like Si-dim Larbi Cherkaoûi, David Zambrano and did pedagogical work virtually around the world. Choreography to our currentopus was created by Stanka and Peter. We needed to move expressions in Debris a little further, as it is very good when performances “speak” differently. Therefore, we did not play other performances from our repertoire when rehearsing for Mono, so the chemistry from other performances does not interfere with the language we were constructing anew.

As a musician you are active in The Double Affair, does it function found-ed by you. Does it function on the same principle as the Debris Com-pany – you invite different musi-cians to work with you? Moreover, as you have already mentioned, you are doing music for movies. What is the difference between the work with a music band and unvocal art groups?

The Double Affair is a project which crea-tes transitory music arts. It is also my pseudonym, because I often compose and play myself. The production here does not have any connection with the Debris Com-pany, although this can happen easily in the future. Like in the Debris, in the Double Af-fair too there is a certain degree of indepen-dence in creating the process and freedom. When you work with someone it is often necessary to “sailor-produce” and to forget about the individuality, although you are of-ten provided “a carte blanche”. Sometimes I am even forced to virtually step out from the genre and look at things from a totally different perspective. And this is a challenge that pushes things further.
interviews – it was probably a Theatre

photo: I. Bruyère

Dolcissime sirene. D. Raček and S. Vlčeková

oneself. To change the air in the room and within oneself. I think that windows should be opened a window should be opened in such case.

Where are you taking inspiration in the creation, which is so diverse and most importantly continuous? After founding the theater group Hubris (later renamed Debris) he received several musical theater scholarships. He reports to the so-called theatrical theory of “selfmadement” and the active form called „Gesammtkunstwerk”. As a director and a music composer he cooperated with major artistic personalities on domestic and international musical and theatrical projects. He participated in successful productions staged in Slovakia and abroad (in the period from 1990 to 2007 he did 17 productions in Austria, Britain, Germany, Czech Republic, Holland, Switzerland, Poland, France, Slovenia, Hungary, and cooperated in out-of-genre projects in France, Senegal, Germany, Poland, Australia, ...).

At present he is mostly active in the area of contemporary and new electronic music, contemporary theatre and film. He organizes theatrical events and festivals in Bratislava. At present he is mostly active in the area of contemporary and new electronic music, contemporary theatre and film. He organizes theatrical events and festivals in Bratislava. Jozef Vlk is the Slovak author, director, composer, musician, performer and freelance producer.

Between a rock and a hard place /produced for ME SA Prague

1990 Comic mirror
1991. . . on the ground . . . a dato vs. hubris company/
1991 Scrching pipes of nothingness /hubris company/
1991 Point on the horizon /a dato vs hubris company/
1992 Ulysses /hubris company/
1992 Something in the way /hubris company vs a dato/
1993 UBU-celzia krona /hubris company/
1994 Murphy /hubris company/
1995 code:QUTNXZ84/8Y /debris company/
1995 Nobody knows /debris company/
1997 Ode to fith /theatre la fabriks du merlan vs debris company/
1997 Biology of an obstacle /debris company/
1998 Cosmidiot /debris company/
2002 Soliloquy /debris company/
2007 Dolcissime sirene /debris company/
2007 Ortopoetikum /maja hriesik vs. debris company/
2008 HExEN /debris company/
2010 Between a rock and a hard place /produced for ME SA Prague

What was the topic of your thesis and did it influence your current theatrical work in any way? When I graduated from the Philosophical Faculty of the Comenius University, the name of my diploma thesis was: Theatrical Periodicals between 1918 and 1953 (Divadelné časopisy od roku 1918 do roku 1953). I chose 1953, because that was the year when the periodical called Our Theatre (Hála divadlo) ceased to be published. The thesis was 250 pages long. The Department was quite horrid, but the intense labor and time I invested was quite beneficial. During this lengthy period of reading and analyzing theatrical periodicals, I got acquainted with authentic texts. I gained much knowledge from these scripts and I still derive much from it today – I either remember some fact or at least know where to find it. So my elbow grease has eventually paid off. What’s more, I managed to collect and study material for my first book – a brochure published by the Educational Institute under the title The Slovak Amateur Theatres Association – An Attempt to Outline its Activities (Uistredie slovenských ochotníckych divadel – pokus o náčrt činnosti). The fact that the institution was already considered bourgeois in 1966 made my work an attempt to rehabilitate it. Back then, each text had to be seen by the censor, who had already made some omissions, but the text eventually existed. For the first time, many amateurs as well as other drama people were informed about the activities of the Association and its major achievement – intense development of the Slovak theatre culture.

Looking back at your university studies, was there any professor the...
practical approach of whom influ-
enced you the most?
That’s difficult to say. I studied during the
first half of the 60s – a relatively liberal pe-
riod with a growing space for thinking, dis-
cussions and polemic debates and an open
atmosphere at the Department of Philoso-
phy. When thinking about those who’ve
influenced me the most... It was surely Mi-
lan Rifíns and his lectures and seminars on
modern literature, poet Pavol Bunčák who
gave us lectures on interwar literature, and
probably some professors from the Depart-
ment of History; I’ve had a thing for history
ever since I was eight or ten. So I got solid
knowledge of history, journalism and litera-
ture for my theatrical work.

What did you learn during your
journalism career, particularly in the
cultural section of the Šmena news-
paper?
I learned several things, such as the
sun and the newspaper come out every day
and you must find something to file regardless
of your current mood. So I picked up the
skill of being instantly focused, detached
from certain issues and to deal with the
medium, or the theatre critic or a theatro-
logist does not become an expert overnight.
Reading even ten books of wisdom is use-
less; one has to grasp things with ones own
hands, mind, and active involvement. That
is fundamental even at the cost of thrashing
one’s own pointing out possible discrepancies or
sones. The truth is that my first published works
dealt with professional theatre. Apparent-
ly, they were the reason the Educational
Institute asked me to participate in semi-
nars and competitions as a juror, etc. I was
invited by the script later described by
Peter Scherhaufer; an amateur theatre is
invariably the partner of other arts in Slovakia
in the 60s due to its ability to synthesize
the other stimuli, including mainly modern
arts, in order to engage the viewer with
certain issues of a national reverberation.
In the 60s, one could write about the the-
ater quite openly, even in terms of social
criticism. It changed during the normaliza-
tion when censorship and self-censorship
are active. To put it euphemistically, many authors were “not recommended”,
such a strange phenomenon when the audi-
ence and stage found a joyfully mutual
voice occurred. What was happening on
the stage in certain allusions, allegories or
encoded meanings in historical motifs of
classical national and foreign texts often
brought much understanding. The audi-
ence sitting in the dark suddenly started
accept critical notes, metaphors, images
and symbols that the audience was able to
experience in a free and active involvement. That
is fundamental even at the cost of thrashing
a few of your first works.

How would you describe the theater
you were writing about during the
most important part of your profes-
sional life – the second half of
the 60s to the 90s
I would probably describe it as a theatre in
motion. A theatre which developed and un-
derwent a certain process of emancipation
from the sovereignty of literature; gradu-
ally greater emphasis was put on scenic
interpretation, so literature was no salva-
tion anymore. In my opinion, the theatre
became a partner of other arts in Slovakia
in the 60s due to its ability to synthesize
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arts, in order to engage the viewer with
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sound harsh, the former members of ama-
teur theatres played a major role in Slovak
theater practices until the mid-60s, with an
exception of the national theatre. Many of
them were very talented, hardworking and
achieved good results, but the increasing
number of professionals – educated drama
creators such as dramaturges, directors
and naturally actors and scenographers
was an intense impetus of theatre develop-
ment. Their top productions exceeded our
national boarders and gained repeated in-
ternational success.

You’ve been as a juror, methodist
and a theater historian of amateur
theatre for many years already.
What’s behind such a fervent rela-
tionship with amateur theatre?
The truth is that my first published works
dealt with professional theatre. Apparent-
ly, they were the reason the Educational
Institute asked me to participate in semi-
nars and competitions as a juror, etc. I was
invited by the script later described by
Peter Scherhaufer; an amateur theatre is
the theatre of greater possibilities. In other
words, professional theatres were under
a strict political supervision and all ama-
teur ones were seemingly in seclusion, so
what was restricted in professional thea-
tres was staged there. It is no coincidence
the emphasis of the first amateur, Lubomír
Piotr, on Michealský, Jiho Bednárik,
Jozef Pražmári or Ľubo Majera directed
there. Why do I respect amateur theatre?
Because the vast majority does it out of love and great will. In addition, amateur theatres played a key role in the history of the Slovak culture as a foundation of our theatre culture, which I think is today still unappreciated. It still remains a certain reser- vor of talents, a locator of apt people. In my humble opinion and considerable expe- rience, the impact of amateur theatre on cultivating this nation or this country and the scope of its effect is very, very intense. It is a theatre of willingness which I was willingly involved in.

You became an associate professor and later a professor at the Univer- sity of Performing Arts. What do you think is the most important when studying a phenomenon as complex as theatre? That’s a difficult question. I’ll probably begin with a hint of sentiment. If one wants to ex- plore theatre and write about it, one must be willing involved in. Being a university professor, how do you see the perspectives, problems, hopes and prospects of artistic edu- cation? Do you think it has any fu- ture at all? I don’t think it doesn’t one should think it is a theatre of willingness which I was willingly involved in. Being a university professor, how do you see the perspectives, problems, hopes and prospects of artistic edu- cation? Do you think it has any fu- ture at all? I don’t think it doesn’t one should think it is a theatre of willingness which I was willingly involved in.

What are the current students of the University of Performing Arts like? Have you found some follow- ers, great talents who could partici- pate in your work? Fights for higher ambitions are prevailing and it’s no surprise that the National Theatre is auto- matically said, high school knowledge gaps are so enormous that university professors often have to substitute their high school colleagues and introduce the students to some elementary problems of culture – the theatre, in our case. Obviously, provided the current situation we can’t expect that an en- tire grade, usually rather small with twelve to fourteen people is full of great talents, young people with a lust for work, ability to read and comprehend, demonstrating a deep in- terest of all possible forms in what they want to study. I guess nobody is such an idealist to- day. So there are usually two or three people in each grade I consider perspective. I’d be glad if the students proved me wrong after graduation and showed that they were actu- ally far better than I expected.

Do you think that theatre criticism has currently any chance to exist? The chance exists, but it’s rather small, to be honest. The quality of the criticism is not the only problem; the quality of the thea- tre productions is problematic as well. We have been having a long tradition of critical writing for all aspects of culture. In the acting profession, the problem of the current state is anchored in the over- all understanding of these values. Society is heading in different directions and cultural issues are more and more distant even from the people expected to have certain cultur- al knowledge and awareness. The money and the fact that the theatre is now consid- ered as an entertaining and attractive part of social life, means a value which is not to mention the quality of knowledge they are equipped with after graduating. Diplo- matically, the Slovak National Drama Theatre is auto- matically said, high school knowledge gaps are so enormous that university professors often have to substitute their high school colleagues and introduce the students to some elementary problems of culture – the theatre, in our case. Obviously, provided the current situation we can’t expect that an en- tire grade, usually rather small with twelve to fourteen people is full of great talents, young people with a lust for work, ability to read and comprehend, demonstrating a deep in- terest of all possible forms in what they want to study. I guess nobody is such an idealist to- day. So there are usually two or three people in each grade I consider perspective. I’d be glad if the students proved me wrong after graduation and showed that they were actu- ally far better than I expected.

What book would you like to write if your creativity was peaking? What do you relate to and what kind of message would you like to leave for the Slovak theatre culture? I don’t think I will write any more books, as I definitely believe in my own book. However, I have written in ke 310
It’s probably the entire magic of theatre; the transformation of a material entity into a good director with a generally known text or an entirely unknown, newly discovered one. That always fascinates me the most – Martin. He also focused on theatrical issues during his work in the publicity section of the Slovak Television (1969-1974). He returned to the journalism as an editor of Nové slovo (New Word) (1982 – 1987) and the Editor-in-Chief of the specialized periodicals Javisko (Stage) (1975 – 1982) and Dialogue (1987-1990). Later he worked as the General Manager of the Slovak Radio (1990 – 1994) and in the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic (1994 – 1998). In 2003, he became the Editor-in-Chief of the magazine Smena (Stage) (1994 – 1998). Since 1996 he is teaching at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, first as an Associate Professor and since 2004 as a full Professor. His professional activities in the theatre criticism and journalism have gradually expanded into systematic scientific research of the history of Slovak amateur and professional theater, resulting in several valuable pioneering books including Slovak Amateur Drama from 1830 to 1984, a remarkable monograph on the Martin’s Theatre (Founded in 1975), the Nitra Theatre (Divadelné Nitro, 1989) and a monograph about Nada Hejná (1986), one of the most remarkable Slovak theatre actresses with career mostly outside the capital city of Bratislava. His book Slovak Drama 1938 -1945 provides a comprehensive study of the important era in the development of the Slovak theatre in the complicated period of the Slovak State during the Second World War. In Vladimír Štefko’s life and professional activity, the Slovak amateur theater has played a crucial role. He is its critic, evaluator, instructor and finally – a historian. He is one of the most prominent professional experts and critics who contributed to public acceptance of high criteria in theater productions, liberated from the dictate of the totalitarian ideology. In addition to Bratislava theaters, he followed with particular attention the theatrical life in his birthplace – Martin. He also focused on theatrical issues during his work in the publicity section of the Czechoslovak Television (1969-1974). He returned to the journalism as an editor of Nové slovo (New Word) (1982 – 1987) and the Editor-in-Chief of the specialized periodicals Javisko (Stage) (1975 – 1982) and Dialogue (1987-1990). Later he worked as the General Manager of the Slovak Radio (1990 – 1994) and in the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic (1994 – 1998). In 2003, he became the Editor-in-Chief of the magazine Smena (Stage) (1994 – 1998). Since 1996 he is teaching at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, first as an Associate Professor and since 2004 as a full Professor. His professional activities in the theatre criticism and journalism have gradually expanded into systematic scientific research of the history of Slovak amateur and professional theater, resulting in several valuable pioneering books including Slovak Amateur Drama from 1830 to 1984, a remarkable monograph on the Martin’s Theatre (Founded in 1975), the Nitra Theatre (Divadelné Nitro, 1989) and a monograph about Nada Hejná (1986), one of the most remarkable Slovak theatre actresses with career mostly outside the capital city of Bratislava. His book Slovak Drama 1938 -1945 provides a comprehensive study of the important era in the development of the Slovak theatre in the complicated period of the Slovak State during the Second World War.

In Vladimír Štefko’s life and professional activity, the Slovak amateur theater has played a crucial role. He is its critic, evaluator, instructor and finally – a historian. He is one of the most prominent professional experts and critics who contributed to the achievements and successes of the Slovak theatre since the early 60-ties.

He currently works as the professor at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava and is now working on a book about the history of Slovak Drama in the 20th century, both as an editor and author. He’s one of the most outstanding persons of our theatre history and left a significant trace not only on the stage but also as a professor at the University of Performing Arts and as a human, a friend. Lubomír Vajdička would probably be another one; he follows in Pietor’s footsteps and did a number of extraordinary productions.

How would you characterize yourself as a theatre professional? What do you personally feel the closest to?

It’s probably the entire magic of theatre; the transformation of a material entity into a work of art – more precisely the work of a good director with a generally known text or an entirely unknown, newly discovered one. That always fascinates me the most about theatre, so my critics could easily criticize my reviews, as I often tend to pay attention to attention to action or even scenography. However, the reason behind this is pure and simple – today, similarly to the past, each review has particular limits, and thus not everything can fit within that little space. If there is anyone capable of such a thing, he must be a genius and I’m far from one.

Vladimir Štefko (born in 1942 in Martin) is a theater critic, historian, theoretician and professor. Before graduating in studies of journalism at the Bratislava Comenius University (1965), he had worked as an editor (1964) and later as the head of the culture section of the popular daily Sme. From the beginning of his career, in his editorial and professional activities he mostly specialized in theatre and theater criticism. Since the mid-60-ties, he has been systematically monitoring, evaluating and commenting on Slovak dramas. Gradually he became one among the well-known Slovak theater critics who contributed to public acceptance of high standards in theater productions, liberated from the dictate of the totalitarian ideology. In addition to Bratislava theaters, he followed with particular attention the theatrical life in his birthplace – Martin. He also focused on theatrical issues during his work in the publicity section of the Czechoslovak Television (1969-1974). He returned to the journalism as an editor of Nové slovo (New Word) (1982 – 1987) and the Editor-in-Chief of the specialized periodicals Javisko (Stage) (1975 – 1982) and Dialogue (1987-1990). Later he worked as the General Manager of the Slovak Radio (1990 – 1994) and in the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic (1994 – 1998). In 2003, he became the Editor-in-Chief of the magazine Smena (Stage) (1994 – 1998). Since 1996 he is teaching at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, first as an Associate Professor and since 2004 as a full Professor. His professional activities in the theatre criticism and journalism have gradually expanded into systematic scientific research of the history of Slovak amateur and professional theater, resulting in several valuable pioneering books including Slovak Amateur Drama from 1830 to 1984, a remarkable monograph on the Martin’s Theatre (Founded in 1975), the Nitra Theatre (Divadelné Nitro, 1989) and a monograph about Nada Hejná (1986), one of the most remarkable Slovak theatre actresses with career mostly outside the capital city of Bratislava. His book Slovak Drama 1938 -1945 provides a comprehensive study of the important era in the development of the Slovak theatre in the complicated period of the Slovak State during the Second World War.

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**Martin Timko**
was part of Austro-Hungarian Empire or an independent national state, whether Slovak theater existed, etc. Of course, these facts have an impact on other architectures, but not to such extent on the architecture of theaters. It is not by chance that there is a saying that theater architecture is the most articulate of all typologies. Besides its immediate function, it also the accompanying phenomena, it depicts the social situation. In Slovakia, this is a unique publication, while abroad studies in the field of the theater architecture are common.

Our architectural literature is in its infancy. History of architecture in Slovakia started to be written in late 19th and early 20th century. Older nations were developing the history of architecture in second quarter of 19th century, with first attempts made several centuries ago. For us, this is a relatively young science. Not much research has been done, or is being done. The oldest preserved theatrical monument in Slovakia is from the early 19th century, and our research starts from that point. In the 20th century, we had already done research on 20th century architecture in Slovakia in general, we had a solid platform to start from.

The book is divided into two parts. The first one you devote to the historical development of theater architecture. The second section focuses on buildings that are functional and have architectural value. Historical developments of architecture are changing these values. What kind of a theater building would you call ideal today? Actually, one cannot avoid answering this question. I think in fact that even the most traditional theater space has some meaning today. This can be proved by many historic buildings that live very actively, that viewers like to visit because of their traditional theatre environment. The fact that such theater carries all the signs of the theatre art is what people like and what raises deep-seated emotions. Equally important is to feel the boundaries – where the theater can still be played. We chronologically finish our book in the eighties, when the new building of the Slovak National Theatre was designed. It was a period when theater artists, viewers and architects thought that the more complicated and complex the building was, the better staging possibilities it would be able to offer, thus making better theater performance possible. This turned out not to be true at all. It seems that the more perfect a space is, the opportunity for such research. The Theatre Architecture in Slovakia was a project that concentrated on this segment of the architectural space. It was a challenge for us. But as we had already done research on 20th century architecture in Slovakia in general, we had an opportunity for such research. The Theatre Architecture in Slovakia was a project that concentrated on this segment of the architectural space. It was a challenge for us.

Buildings and Back. 

Space affects the very atmosphere of theater and its productions and to some extent also its form. For example, Astorka used to be a cinema, and Studio 12 was a recording studio. These are in fact non-theatrical spaces. What are sought at pleasure Elledanse is situated in a former slaughterhouse. Why is it so?

I think this is a consequence of current trends in staging. Today we prefer ad hoc solutions or beauty of “ugliness”, not the beauty in the traditional sense. This is what attracts not only people from theater, but architects as well. Smooth theatrical spaces become binding in a sense that it pre-determines productions. It is no coincidence that we called the first chapter of the book From Complex Urban House to Mono-functional Buildings and Back. It appears now that the traditional portal theater is dead, but we returned to it later. You cannot say that the strong symbolic aesthetics, which characterized the historical architectural styles, is going to come back. That is probably not going to happen, although even that is possible. It seems that people increasingly tend to lean toward abstraction, perhaps because there is no need for straightforward information, as it was in the past. But I do not dare to evaluate, it is more for theoarchitects to do.

The role of the historian is also not to be influenced by trends. The book Theatre Architecture in Slovakia describes two centuries and we did not want to focus on spaces that are used today.

You often refer to the theorist and architect G. Semper, whose idea about the 20th century theater was fulfilled in Slovakia in the form of the Slovak National Theatre building, although only in the 21st century. A majority of the public perceives this building as non-aesthetic architectural object that does not resemble a theater building. What fulfilled of the Semper’s idea in the Slovak National Theatre? Semper was together with Wagner behind the theater reform in Germany. The bottom line was to open the traditional portal spa.
ce so the viewer is more in touch with happenings on the stage. This was related also with the fact that the Semper's theory of apparel in architecture was actually herald of modernism, reflecting view that the architecture has to talk about teonotics, about what functions are happening inside and so on. In connection with the National Theatre, this is only a remote parallel. What I meant was more that Semper in his revolutionary intention to reform the theater was claiming that the theater is the only area where imagination is present, where something is pretending and carnival candles are blinding. And I think that the new building of the National Theatre meets this criteria. As an architecture critic, I could reproach doverativeness of the new building, which does not correspond to the current ideas about architectural form. Ultimately, it is quite possible that this richness of decorations is not adequate, so people can realize better that rativeness of the new building, which does not correspond to the current ideas about the everyday one.

Once there were some trends addressing issues such as to where to place a door or a window. Can one see at the present such iterative processes in the theater building projects?

The current architecture systematically breaks spatial, structural and stereotypical forms. Avoiding the repetition is therefore on the everyday agenda, even in theater architecture. This is a principle which was brought to architecture and to art in general by modernity of the early 20th century. This was when for the first time originality brought to architecture and to art in gene

For a long time you have been active in the architectural theory, having produced several major publications. Do you have a favorite theorist?

It is hard to say. I do not feel to be an architectural theorist, actually I feel rather like an architectural historian. But it is true that everyone who interprets history is creating some theories. But perhaps I do not have a theory, whom I would prefer to others. In some theories. But perhaps I do not have a theory, which is exciting. Stories, different motives, what affects the creation of architecture... However, it is good when the architects themselves realize that the profession of a theorist or a historian has meaning, that it provides reflection which can enrich their own work.

Doc. Dr. Ing. arch. Henrieta Moravčíková

Head of Architecture Department at the Institute of Construction and Architecture, the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Since October 2010, Vice-dean for Science, Research and Graduate Studies at the Faculty of Architecture of the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava. Specializes in theory, history and criticism in architecture. She is also the editor and editorial board member of the scientific journal Architecture, Le Corbusier is chairing the Slovak DOCOMOMO Working Group – an international organization for research and conservation of modern architecture.

The Quieter Tone, The Better. photo: B. Konečný
We learn very little about the privacy of these three personalities who were so active on national issues. The play focuses on their professional lives, their work, their interest in writing and their doubts about their own talents. Their relationship to women, who are supposed to provide them lifetime support, is outlined only in a brief dialogue through their love letters. The beginning of the play stages these three writers as sitting in school desks, which are at the same time their working tables. This is where their correspondence begins. The contours of the characters are obvious from their first replicas. Vajanský is strong, strict, and active. He is challenging others to act in a revolutionary manner. Hviezdoslav is strongly critical, and active. He is challenging others to be immediately publicly criticized and analyzed, but Hviezdoslav tries to calm him down (this is his attitude to Škultéty as well). Replicas of their talent seemingly lighter. A heart humble for the talent, grateful, impatient, but speaking slowly. What is the most important – he puts all of himself into his poetry and finds himself in it, when, "he is himself," when he can "mentally ed." Heriban sometimes puts a smile on his face, making the burden of expectation disappear. Škultéty is an honest and hard working friend (Viliam Hriadel), very absent-minded boy. Although small, he hangs his coat at the highest position. He needs supervision and friendship of the other two, who guide him, for example that his hanger is elsewhere. There is kind of symbolism here as Škultéty in his literature work never accomplished as much as Hviezdoslav or Vajanský. It is evident that he regrets the lack of talent and patience, although he possesses determination. This is why he enthusiastically devotes himself to his the new literary and stage activity. Re-markable unity and cooperation of the trio is displayed in a situation when Škultéty misses pins in the game, and they jointly, seem-ingly correctly, kick all the standing ones. The family life of Škultéty is described more than of others. This completes the impression of these three personalities, of whom Hviezdoslav is the one most present in school textbooks. His poem Hájnikova žena (The Gamekeeper’s Wife) is “haunting” of this angry young man ceases during his stay in prison, where his mind cools and slows down.

Dano Heriban played Hviezdoslav as a kind of poet-škentuli. His work is gradually being publicly criticized and analyzed, but Hviezdoslav tries to calm him down (this is his attitude to Škultéty as well). Replicas of his talent seemingly lighter. A heart humble for the talent, grateful, impatient, but speaking slowly. What is the most important – he puts all of himself into his poetry and finds himself in it, when, "he is himself," when he can "mentally ed." Heriban sometimes puts a smile on his face, making the burden of expectation disappear. Škultéty is an honest and hard working friend (Viliam Hriadel), very absent-minded boy. Although small, he hangs his coat at the highest position. He needs supervision and friendship of the other two, who guide him, for example that his hanger is elsewhere. There is kind of symbolism here as Škultéty in his literature work never accomplished as much as Hviezdoslav or Vajanský. It is evident that he regrets the lack of talent and patience, although he possesses determination. This is why he enthusiastically devotes himself to his the new literary and stage activity. Remarkable unity and cooperation of the trio is displayed in a situation when Škultéty misses pins in the game, and they jointly, seemingly correctly, kick all the standing ones. The family life of Škultéty is described more than of others. This completes the impression of these three personalities, of whom Hviezdoslav is the one most present in school textbooks. His poem Hájnikova žena (The Gamekeeper’s Wife) is “haunting” students for decades. The director managed to achieve this by smoothing the spilling between different emotional states, with a continuous sinu-sivity and internal passions. The transition between situations is supported by music or by using the same requisites in a different way.

The trio of giants did not make all the important decisions while sitting melancholi-cally at their desks. As one of the ladies in the play “And We Will Whisper” meet at a picnic, Hviezdoslav, Škultéty, and Vajanský are playing the game of bowling. The situation is magically entertaining – to talk about poetry during the game.

At the creation of the third act three young actors to portray writers from their creative beginnings up to maturation. Šalacha presented Škultéty as a tangled and absorbed in himself, in her words: “Do not forget!” Vajanský bal-ances with an imaginary paper in his palm, as if he wants to bang angrily on it. Heriban is strong, strict, and active. He is challenging others to act in a revolutionary manner. Hviezdoslav did not make all the important decisions while sitting melancholically at their desks. As one of the ladies in the play “And We Will Whisper” meet at a picnic, Hviezdoslav, Škultéty, and Vajanský are playing the game of bowling. The situation is magically entertaining – to talk about poetry during the game.

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The exceptional literary work of the writer Rudolf Sloboda is one of the cornerstones of modern Slovak literature of the second half of the 20th century. Poetry, prose, drama, all the literary genres in an unforgettable philosophical-metaphoric form were embraced in his work by this poet of the extraordinary ordinaries. His drama opuses are existential extracts from his life story. This applies to Armageddon in Grba (1993), The Stepmother (1996), but also to The Master’s Blood (2011). The last one is from the pen of an experienced film and theatre scriptwriter and a dramaturg Andrej Šulaj who managed to congenially create such compilation of texts that the final product represents a comprised form of Sloboda’s essence and his characteristic style.

Director Juraj Novot has set the scenic narration, which was put together from fragmented images of scenes from Sloboda’s rural refuge, somewhere in the periphery of the city and in the countryside, with typical features of the village, but also with a castle, which is used by his mother Clara, his wife and daughter as a place from which they come and return to. These memories are anchored directly in his “Deviska” (the writer’s birthplace and permanent residency, Deviska Nová Ves near Bratislava), where the Master lives, along with cats, dogs, ants and fleas, together with his mentally sick wife. He is linked to the town through his work and thousands of other connections, including friends, enemies, parents-in-law, police, Ministry of Culture, writers, club etc.

Sloboda’s Freedom Of Speech Or Normally Unusual Messages

The Metaphoric philosophy of everyday imagery and unusual and unusual bizarreness is also present in Sloboda’s refined original sensibility, which provides an image of exceptional sensitization of a small man and of a small world, surrounded by the incomprehensibility of the larger world. This unique Sloboda-type sensibility is produced by the elements from his original world, where even the most average sentence often sounds like a new cognition. Sloboda does not seek to crack jokes or to make things look easy or simple. And yet his very strange, even archaic humor, reaches back to the archetypal layers of our being and affects us in unexpected places, lost and found again, just thanks to him and his perspective.

Novelist, poet and playwright Rudolf Sloboda quite unrepeatable connects the rural world with peripherals of town, rural and urban culture. Even in that he is new and original. Although he is anchored somewhere out of town, repeatedly convincing us of that by the nuances of his specific dialect, he is at the same time the man of city with his slang, while also being a nature-loving person who spontaneously sees the world as one. He is a spontaneous philosopher who derives his personal philosophy from his experience, but also from the experience of literary, philosophical or scientific giants, which he often quotes, whose statements he invokes for help, argues with them, or uses them for his own arguments.

His novel Blood (1991), written soon after the 1989 Velvet Revolution, became the basis for the story in The Master’s Blood. Intensive thinking about guilt and punishment, but also the daily struggles for normalcy of his personality, which is a leading element in his work and life, eventually culminates in 1995 after the completion of the play The Stepmother, when he voluntarily departed this world. Suicide motive is one of the primary and strongest themes of his work, as in the dramatization of The Master’s Blood.
Noga's acting is full of irony, self-irony and a very sober, factual, and yet a dreaming mely convincing interpretation by Miroslav words by which the Master, with an extre suicide and the actual departure: “Why. Master lays in the metal bath at the begin...
When one person of the couple leaves, it is as if that person has died. He/she has to be mourned, buried and forgotten eventually. The theme of parting and separation recurs regularly, but it is often not interpreted earnestly and in an inspiring way. And this is just how Sláva Daubnerová and Pavel Graus decided to interpret the sickened relationship in their latest stage performance Some Disorder.

The performance is one of those that leave the viewer in no doubt that Slovak theatre-makers often bring more real experiences than fancy “cool” dramas and their “cool” interpretations. Sloboďa’s ordinary-extraordinary messages will somehow get inadvertently and spontaneously under the skin. And there in lies their strength.

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At the present, there are not many artists in the Slovak theaters who can bring to viewers such a personal touching theme that would pull them into the intimacy of personal experience. This despite that one can encounter such experience in neighboring countries quite often (one of the examples was performed during this year’s Festival Theatrical Nitra by the Polish actor Wojtek Ziemilsky in his performance A Small Story, where he recapitulates his past).

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Sláva Daubnerová works with a similar vocabulary of movement as in her previous projects: a sudden change of gestures and their extinction are achieved by musical means. The disintegration of the relationship is based mainly on musical outputs. Short statements on how the relationship started, emotions and their extinction are achieved by musical means. It resembles a kind of “musical” undressing from loneliness, lethargy and nostalgia. Musical testimonies remind us of style and content of the “Cave-style” personal confessions, but in a lesser torn-apart form. By atmosphere, they are not very different. They interpret the emotional state of ending the relationship by permanently bringing up memories as if asking the same question: Is it possible to turn it back?

Diaries play an important part in the performance; they are factual and full of impact, in sharp contrast with the cautious expressions of both performers. Their singing is reconciled with the state of mind in peace, despite the disruption of the internal equilibrium and geometry in the relationship, with resignation, and when sometimes pathetic tones are sounded, subsequently the singing becomes at ease, without tension. This is particularly true about Sláva Daubnerová. Songs by Pavol Graus gives the impression of fragility, which is also delivered by the interior geometry of both performers. Their singing is reconciled as well: there is the cuckoo clock, black tiles in one part of the scene, drums, guitar, piano, and two screens. The space where one is supposed to forget, it requires time, and time controls the emotions, which start at the point where both partners realize that this is parting. All this lasts until the final emotional shock, when Daubnerová plays the drums, renews the cuckoo clock and leaves, while Graus lies down on the floor. This is the same scene as in the beginning – only in a reverse order. Memories are visualized on two screens, showing holiday videos from different locations, with their relationship in peace, not yet affected by any problems. The illustrations of idealized memories are supposed to play a kind of “non-dramatic” function in the whole structure of the staging. You can see a happy couple on a small screen which is later, in a live action, transformed into the state of mind of the edge of crying. Unfortunately, in the same way as in the case of other productions, songs, words and projections lose the effect of surprise, the insertion of images becomes familiar. Instead of answers – strong feelings remain.

Male-female perceptions of the relationship are stressed by the atmosphere, which both performers create on stage. A woman in Daubnerová’s interpretation looks more emotional, more physical in actions, which is justified, since she is the subject that the man is talking about. Graus describes the situation from a distance, suggesting problems and cracking. He is commenting on the situation, he is a narrator, and the story unfolds from his perspective.

Similar to the scenario, the space is fragmented as well: there is the cuckoo clock, black tiles in one part of the scene, drums, guitar, piano, and two screens. The space where one is supposed to forget, it requires time, and time controls the emotions, which start at the point where both partners realize that this is parting. All this lasts until the final emotional shock, when Daubnerová plays the drums, renews the cuckoo clock and leaves, while Graus lies down on the floor. This is the same scene as in the beginning – only in a reverse order. Memories are visualized on two screens, showing holiday videos from different locations, with their relationship in peace, not yet affected by any problems. The illustrations of idealized memories are supposed to play a kind of “non-dramatic” function in the whole structure of the staging. You can see a happy couple on a small screen which is later, in a live action, transformed into the state of mind of the edge of crying. Unfortunately, in the same way as in the case of other productions, songs, words and projections lose the effect of surprise, the insertion of images becomes finally too obvious and explanatory.

The project has been realized at the Bratislava Elëdanske Alternative Theater, which has a chamber character suitable such type of performances well. However, the viewers could benefit more had the visual effects, which are not that many as compared to the excessive scenic-ideographic ideas, been put in a greater distance from the audience. There are no props in the true sense, only some tools which performers use to express their inner pains and feelings.

Some Disordered Interior Geometries is so far a unique and remarkable performance presented on our scene (not only in the alternative theatre) and it is very different from other productions. Comparison with other productions cannot be made, not even with the previous productions of the P.A.T. The name could be paraphrased in a way that it is a dramatic disruption of established patterns of stone theaters (becoming kind of fossilized). The only comparison that can be offered is with the non-verbal statements used in the past in theatres Stoka and Debris Company. The latest productions of Sláva Daubnerová and Pavol Graus strongly outlines many emotional, more physical in actions, which is justified, since she is the subject that the man is talking about. Graus describes the situation from a distance, suggesting problems and cracking. He is commenting on the situation, he is a narrator, and the story unfolds from his perspective.

Similar to the scenario, the space is fragmented as well: there is the cuckoo clock, black tiles in one part of the scene, drums, guitar, piano, and two screens. The space where one is supposed to forget, it requires time, and time controls the emotions, which start at the point where both partners realize that this is parting. All this lasts until the final emotional shock, when Daubnerová plays the drums, renews the cuckoo clock and leaves, while Graus lies down on the floor. This is the same scene as in the beginning – only in a reverse order. Memories are visualized on two screens, showing holiday videos from different locations, with their relationship in peace, not yet affected by any problems. The illustrations of idealized memories are supposed to play a kind of “non-dramatic” function in the whole structure of the staging. You can see a happy couple on a small screen which is later, in a live action, transformed into the state of mind of the edge of crying. Unfortunately, in the same way as in the case of other productions, songs, words and projections lose the effect of surprise, the insertion of images becomes finally too obvious and explanatory.

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After two years, the newest production of SKRAT called The Stabbers and Lickers (Napichovači a lízači) continues in the tendencies of overcoming the characteristic features of their work. This time, words remain exactly what they are – words, but just like in other productions of SKRAT, they are often seemingly absurd and vague. The unity of space and also the structure of the particular scenes are changing. Almost all acts take place in one setting – a commercial company, the world of driven uniform players and their interpersonal communication and lies follow the business logic. O. Vicen, director and author of the visual concept, depicted the office space very authentically – an open space on the stage.

When the SKRAT Theatre produced a play called The Dead Souls (Mŕtve duše) in 2008, it was probably their most distinct attempt to overcome the boundaries of their own poetics based on brief, fragmented dialogues and monologues grasping mostly absurd, tragicomic actions of individuals, thus offering a new form. In The Dead Souls, words are replaced with music and pantomime performances of the actors about living corpses existing and residing in Bratislava’s prefabs housing estates. Very skilful in working with words and dialogues, SKRAT created a non-verbal production based on expressions, motion, gestures, music and video projection. They managed to prove their ability to talk without words in a very convincing, sovereign way.

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Work Sets Us Free… From Our Personal Lives

The Rumble Relationship (Rozdávaný Vzťah) is the only scene that is not set in the office but a flat in a different, elevated part of the stage in the back. The company is replaced by a private, intimate space, where the actors are no longer the business puppets following the false Arbeit Macht Frei slogan. Seated behind a table, a man and a woman are dealing with their relationship. This scene clearly does not fall into the exclusive business world the creators show at the beginning, but is still connected with it. The development of a relationship and private life of these two is a result of the outer, professional world. The dialogue of Romana Matlínová and Lubo Burgr frames one of subject matters of The Stabbers and Lickers’ story and helps to create the mood of the story. Subconsciously, work and privacy affect each other adversely. Who are the actual stabbers and lickers, the submissive and the dominant ones, the loved and the loving ones? Just like in reality, all of these categories are ambivalent on the stage. For example, the licker is an older employee six months before retirement (L. Burgr), who is very principled in the beginning, but when threatened with dismissal, he is willing to do anything to please his young female boss. He sees her as a stabs – the manipulative, yanking and preaching boss. But in reality, she is actually a licker herself. Most likely, she set up her career on personal rather than professional assets – she literally slept her way to the top. A young and ambitious woman in her thirties (L. Fričová) is both a licker and a stabs as well – she is an emulous careerist with plans for her professional as well as personal life. On the other hand, she is just like in other productions of SKRAT, they are often seemingly absurd and vague. The unity of space and also the structure of the particular scenes are changing. Almost all acts take place in one setting – a commercial company, the world of driven uniform players and their interpersonal communication and lies follow the business logic. O. Vicen, director and author of the visual concept, depicted the office space very authentically – an open space on the stage.

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With the system of private companies as a background, SKRAT and their new production depict a world in which people spend more time at work than home or with their true friends; the world which deprives them of common sense and real experience, the world in which you don’t even know your holiday destination, as price is the only thing that counts, not the holiday adventure itself – the world in which values and private lives are gradually changing. A modern person is hardly able to maintain long-term partnerships, not just private but also professional ones and turns into both the manipulative and the manipulated. He loses the ability to reflect, because it is more convenient to succumb to the trends of thinking and acting (baby boom, shallow advice and psychological counseling in mainstream magazines telling you that your relationship is abnormal if you two are not arguing, etc.) Any pursuit of a meaningful conversation fails and loneliness is the only thing that’s left. The character of a scrubwoman (D. Gudabová), the former co-owner of the company, serves as a memento rather relativizing and ironizing than preachy. The same goes for an ordinary clerk from the initial scene, asked by other employees for something as nonsensical as baby boom, shallow advice and psychological counseling in mainstream magazines telling you that your relationship is abnormal if you two are not arguing, etc.) Any pursuit of a meaningful conversation fails and loneliness is the only thing that’s left. The character of a scrubwoman (D. Gudabová), the former co-owner of the company, serves as a memento rather relativizing and ironizing than preachy. 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the symptoms of the modern society, but thanks to humorous and witty dialogues accenting absurdity and emptiness of such lives, they made a shift into controversy, paradox and ludicrousness. The actors of SKRAT condense and simplify, thus making the production more dynamic and the tone more striking. The subtle graphical effect of walking bodies resembling Homo sapiens. It's up to us to decide which trees and individuals will be defeated or saved.

**DÁŠA ČIRIPOVÁ**

**theatre critic**

Although Cikker composed approximately one hundred and forty orchestral, chamber, choral and vocal compositions, his work is dominated by video arts with rushing employees or numbers. The particular scenes are separated into fourteen images which are changing in rapid succession and which take place at different locations. Slovak theaters were probably not enthusiastic to tackle the difficult piece when the performance of Prague Opera House in Bratislava did not particularly well received by the audience. However, there might be another reason, hanging in the air, why the Slovak staging of this piece as Coriolanus is fragmented into fourteen images which are changing in rapid succession and which take place at different locations. Slovak staging of this piece as Coriolanus is fragmented into fourteen images which are changing in rapid succession and which take place at different locations. 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A hopeful promising consul Martius, winner from Coriolines, is approaching them. He seeks their favor in a so much humble posture that it must be false. The brave soldier wears a long white nightgown, and he plays scene by bowing deeply while humbly begging for the votes. He refuses to show his scars from battles, and his socks with holes show that he does not have any respect for the voters. Portraying congenially the title role, Marián Vach managed to win public court’s sentence that Coriolanus to be expelled from the country. The scene of the first image of the first act, after we already thought they could not allow this piece to embark on a world without backbone, where a person really could not allow this piece to embark on a world without backbone, where a person...
This year’s theatre festival was held in the spirit of “experimenting” with inventiveness, sexuality, relationships, politics, dullness and the cultures of the Far East. Many opted not only for audience attacks, but also for self-humiliation. It was a modest year and the festival has openly admitted it. It’s quite a shame. Neither financial nor creative endowments were generous enough. Thus, the festival served as a direct reflection of the current status of Slovak theatre. František Výrostko, the president of the festival himself admitted that although the program lacked the street productions due to insufficient funds, he deliberately kept the traditional length of the festival – an entire week to showcase the best productions of the Slovak theatres. This year, The Touches and Connections Festival proved that Slovakia tries to fight economical and creative depression, but often at the cost of producing ideas without motivations that could be retrospectively analyzed, causing some difficulties to the theatreologists… and many artists just shrug – everything was exactly the way it meant to be.

Nvota’s production The Farmer’s Blood (Gazdové krv), written by Ondrej Šulaj and based on Rudolf Stoboda’s prose, can be undoubtedly considered the best production of the festival and thus the best production of entire theatre season. It reflected themes close to Slovaks, such as dealing with a certain political past, its consequences and persistence in a very creative, metaphorical way using appropriate humor. The production rose questions of timeless love, marriage, sexuality, infidelity, addiction, lust, meanlessness, racism, serious illness, life and death. For example, the creators managed to transform the aspect of timelessness into a humorous idea of a traditional wavy wafer presented as “timeless sweet”, which survived from the political past, its consequences and persistence. The acting of Szidi Tóbiás, who was so charming when balancing between sadness and humor as a paranoid schizophrenic woman, would really deserve The BOARDS award. Overall, the performance of the actors in the spirit of the former specific poetics of the As-torka Theatre managed to fill the expectati-on and paid a respectable homage to their favorite playwright. The quality of Šulaj’s text enriched Slovak drama and turned Stoboda’s work from a biography into an artwork which can be performed on different stages, even though he didn’t manage to interpret each of Stoboda’s motifs (according to theatreologist V. Štefko), specifically dealing with faith and doubts. Regardless of some minor flaws and unpronounced motifs, the theatreologists agreed that The Farmer’s Blood is one of the Bratislava’s best recent productions. During the first, junior day of the festival, the students of the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica and the University of Performing Arts in Komárno presented a number of ideas artistically transformed into quite successful productions. The Blood Wedding (Krv v domě) directed by Liboštíšová Majerová showed great potential in the actors as well as the potential of other creators in their work with metaphors, music and chorus. The students from Banska Bystrica were particularly impressive when interpreting the motifs of water, nights and women’s plays. In Suchovská’s drama Torek’s Death (directed by Lukáš Brutovský), they exposed focused and dynamic acting, dominated by its main protagonist, talented Daniel Fischer. Other students from the University of Performing Arts prepared a production of Studio 12 in Bratislava called Barbados as part of The Milk Teeth Platform (platforma Mliečne zuby). The project of authors Júlia Rázusová and Monika Baláž presented a component of the Bratislava’s strong text was again outstanding, as well as the kind of ensemble acting very close to that one of MCHAT.

A Modest Annual

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While Martin Huba sought to depict useless relationships of a hectic age through tragic and gloomy characters, the creators of the following productions of other festival clas-
sic Shakespeare, relied on humor and the aforementioned experimentation charac-
tistic for the rest of the festival. The Theatre of Jonáš Záborský in Prešov set the plot of A Midsummer Night’s Dream in a gym. It was certainly an interesting idea and probably attracted viewers’ attention the most. In this setting, the actors played with corporeality in terms of sexual orien-
tation, but their dance moves were too me-
chanical, lacked emotions and energy and especially any inner motivation behind them. Moreover, many ideas were not brought to conclusion and many even inappropriate-
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chanical, lacked emotions and energy and especially any inner motivation behind them. Moreover, many ideas were not brought to conclusion and many even inappropriate-
ly exaggerated. For the first time, we had the chance to notice a motif which actually became a phenomenon of the entire festival – replacement of heads with something else. In this production from Prešov, a beast respectively a donkey was represented by a mask of a president of the former regime on an actor’s head. However, it was in no cor-
respondence to other elements of the sta-
gement. Nevertheless, – values in a (non)relationship demonstra-
ting metamorphosis into a bug, as well as the repulsive costumes and masks of other char-
racters. Sadly, the play was suffering from the beginning to the end. The production lacked gimmicks, the players pretended to be from further useless criticism. Just like Of-
hová’s Eliška/ Dora says in A Midsummer Night’s Dream: “It doesn’t make sense.”
Led by Dušan Vican, the SKrat Theatre from Bratislava presented experimental or civil acting in their production called The Stabbers or Erotic dobrodružstvá Bob de Niro (Adventures of Bob de Niro) and called for cooperation. Although the creators of the play sought to gain recognition and not dramatic enough. Despite the already familiar poetics (and methods) of SKrat referring to postmodernism and its fragmentariness were not very surprising in terms of improvisations. Even when they occurred, the improvisations appeared too affected and not dramatic enough. Despite being uncommon, SKrat still managed to convey the tragicomic scenes of searching for the lost story. However, the cooperation of Dušan Vican, Lubo Burgr and the ensemble of The YSTFUD Theatre Košice in the play called Exyt (Exyt Víchod) was not so successful. A massive departure of the audience during the performance and openly frustrated reactions of theatrologists explained everything. Many were disappointed by too strong but pointless carelessness, flat dialogues, lengthy tempo-rhythm, actor’s performance or their somewhat unnatural pursuit of art… The final evaluation of the festival confirmed that insufficient funds made the main program an absolute priority, so one would expect it to be attractive and artistically fulfilling. It failed to meet these expectations and did not even manage to meet the expectations of any viewer eager for theatre. However, the festival deserves to be praised for reflecting the current theatre reality. We learnt that theatre demands more than just great ideas, laughter, tears and experimentation and current themes surfaced superficially. We are asking for stories, meaningful conflicts and maybe something more. We are asking for a real theatre. The final performance of the festival of the Slovak National Theatre with their guest performance of HOLZKÖTZ only proved that we are capable of it.

The cards are dealt… With the fourth annual festival of independent Slovak theatre and dance, which took place in a cultural centrum Stanica Žilina Žarecko at the end of July, a new era began. Not that this was a prophecy of some seeress, but the associations linked with it are, even without the magic connotations of number four, simply indisputable. Among other thing, four is a number of stability and connotes four solid corners of closed rooms or boxes so fundamental for theatre criticism that proves to be useful only temporarily. Terms and phrases such as “site specific”, “performance”, “dance improvisation”, “installation” or “inhabiting the space” could all be easily put into one box labeled as “non-traditional staging forms”, but why be limited?

Conventional structures of thinking, authority of theory, orders from above – once in a while, they need to be destroyed and re-cycled in order that something new can be created – similar to a cardboard box… A hybrid artistic genre called “physical essence of dramatic text”, which festival’s dramaturge Michaela Filinová used quite loosely to describe one production after being unable to decide what she actually saw, explains it all. What’s pleasing is that the viewers managed to digest this year’s genre hotchpock suggested at KioSK beyond expectations. All performances were sold out, despite the exclusively vegetarian cuisine of Štamek sisters, who provided festival catering. However, the festival certainly offered some quality bites – both theoretical and practical, mainly thanks to one of this year’s introductions – the friendly morning debates with creators and initiative viewers eager for confrontations and new perspectives for

"New" Era of (No) Ambitions, Talents and Perspectives

Doktyčka a spojenja (The Touches and Connections) 7th annual of a festival of Slovak theatres June 20 - 26, 2011, Martin www.dotykyaspojenia.sk

Dotyky a spojenia (The Touches and Connections)

THEATRE

D. Dobiáš

STANISLAVA MATEJOVIČOVÁ

theatrollist

Michaela Filinová

Peter Šavel, Stano Dobák: Much to much. photo: D. Dobák
their experience of the previous day. These debates served as the basis for the following interpretations of "reality".

**First Interpretation: Narcissism – Reclassiveness – Mysticism**

Regarding this interpretation, we must take into account that the project, which was the main focus of the festival, in which the program took place. The surroundings of the Silica were the host of the site-specific performances, which created the narrowest form of the ambiguous concept of theatre as a building and an institution. Tomáš Danieš, a dancer residing in Aus-

tria, described his solo project The Garbage Man (Smetan) as something "on the edge of performance and installation", which he performed in an area nearby an underpass for pedestrians and cyclists.

In a 20-minute piece, the performer installed lights and projections screens, one of which was connected to a real-time camera and the other one a record of the performer's interpretation. He drew viewer's attention to the presence of narcissism. Another intense experience was delivered by the Slovak-Swiss project of T-d'U Group called ÔKÔ directed by Marek Daniels was designed as a symbol of hell out of which Helver, who was intricately functional scenography of Dušan Krníček served as a symbol of hell out of which Helver was strenuously disturbing other parts of the stage. Suddenly, the possibility of coming from seeing a hermetic space of environment – present and future – clearly the viewer to comprehend the relationships of the characters and the motivations behind their actions without being familiar with the context of the drama. Thus, the newly intro-

duced genre called "physical essence of text" required a different type of perception. Thanks to a questionable dramaturgy, only a few, disjointed thoughts of characters were revealed to the audience, as they were necessary to have an image of the world they lived in.

Another intense experience was delivered by the Czech and Slovak trio of dancers Hana Kalousková, Martina Lacošíová and Karolína Párová from the ME-SA group in collaboration with Debris Company called *The Garbage Man* – Mysticism. A short story of convergence, alienation and reunion of two souls alternately emerged and lost out of the viewer's sight in a mystical atmosphere of the night. As if Staniša Vlčeková and Emil Píš were dancing in an area nearby an underpass for pedestrians and cyclists.

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duced genre called "physical essence of text" required a different type of perception. Thanks to a questionable dramaturgy, only a few, disjointed thoughts of characters were revealed to the audience, as they were necessary to have an image of the world they lived in.

The third piece in the series of thoughtful and inspiring performances was *The Garbage Man* – Mysticism. A short story of convergence, alienation and reunion of two souls alternately emerged and lost out of the viewer's sight in a mystical atmosphere of the night. As if Staniša Vlčeková and Emil Píš were dancing in an area nearby an underpass for pedestrians and cyclists.
Piaček’s performance called Ludi Apollinares / Ludi Solnie (Apollínské hry / Žilinské hry). In Ludi Apollinares, Piaček focused on presenting quirky oral history of a town. Through the monologues of witnesses, he recorded the circumstances of Apollo bombing in Bratislava in 1944. The Plays of Žilina (Žilinské hry) are a special project and the result of searching for urban legends of this city. While Piaček was creating a background from sounds and music, another four co-authors were sitting with their notebooks mixing and reading the monologues of the characters, resulting in an original mix of spoken word, sound collages and intertextual references on particular legends. Several humorous combinations were created this way, among others also the question of whether you can take a picture of stink. However, the lack of visuals caused a feeling of monotonous over time. The entire project would probably be more interesting if the creators cooperated with a theatre director or spent more time on preparation (what we saw was the result of 12 hours of rehearsing).

A documentary theatre called The Last Historical Task of the Young Generation (Posledná histórická úloha mladé generácie) created in the Station Žilina – Zárečie in the event of the Velvet Revolution directed by Ján Šimko represented a different rare genre. The topic still strong and emotional for some people, especially its witnesses, caused rather perplexed response this time. The intention of the creators was to offer an original perspective of the revolution through the eyes of the people who sometimes didn't reach the podium, but it remained foreign for the viewers of the current young generation. The undoubtedly deep impact of such an important historical event, which the Velvet Revolution certainly was, remained hidden. Thank God everyone has the right to occasional failures.

Both performances coming from a past-time world – The Legends and The Final Task – were based on real records. Both of them were a certain form of the past being recycled from the contemporary point of view. Both were preceded with a precise terrain exploration and inspired by real events and places. Both were trying to reflect and comment on these events and places in an innovative way. But what was historical role in the theatre context? Only the future will tell.

**F o u r t h  I n t e r p r e t a t i o n: F r e e d o m  –  I n v e n t i v e n e s s – V i s u r**

As we already said in the introduction, the festival hosted “unconventional scenic forms”. Where the theory was insufficient, it was replaced with freedom of speech or English. The new dance genre, respectively occasionally called “inhabiting the space” following official ends of certain shows serves as an example. Dancers Jaro Víšňoť and Matthew Rogers from USA and Lucia Kalíšarová had about ten minutes to complete the shows with their own improvised physical comments. They took up the space with the remaining atmosphere, memories and feelings from the previous day intuitively, with the virtuosity characteristic for performers. For the most part, they only parodied the dance compositions of their colleagues, borrowed their gestures, responded to each other and attracted the attention of the audience permanently with their unpredictable stunts emerging there and at that time. The following ten minutes belonged to an exclusive interview with the creators. Jaro Víšňoť and Matthew Rogers were trying to be serious hosts, but lacked any conception or sense of inventiveness. Sadly, despite their deep interest in fundamental questions about life and work of the artists, this role was completely inappropriate for them also because the space was packed with energy, and emotionally drained from what was seen and seemed to be unable to bare any more words.

Apart from the aforementioned improvisations, choreographer and producer Lucia Kalíšarová, running a space for contemporary art called ALA III. Accompanied by Peter Machajdík playing the piano, Kalíšarová used every moment to “lobby” for attention and reflect the theme of performer’s existence on stage. Even before the start of her show,
The Tropical Festivals described as a dance-and-improvisation variation triggering his imagination and compassion. It elicits a complex emotion of the listener based on communication technique used in rhetoric in order to trigger pathos. Greek, where pathos named suffering or emotion. The etymology of the word came from ancient pathos analysis and its immediate grasp in the audience: they're quest is honest albeit weak and (non)dramaturgical concepts into appropriate expressive forms on stage. It was difficult to make individual interpretations and even the most profound abstractions about infinite number of perspectives or sovereignty of the viewer in creating the meaning of an artwork wasn't really helpful. One can fool ambitions but not talent. This is another finding of this "new" era.

And what for this prophecy would be this any promise of bright future? The award for the most interesting scene and lighting work called Light Kin21, awarded for the first time, could be seen as its foreshadowing. Jan Beneš and Jan K. Rolník, guests from the Institute of Light Design in Prague, decided to award it to the authors of Much To Much. An undoubtedly charismatic performance bursts of laughter, surprise and compassion. But not talent. This is another finding of this "new" era.

The Festival is not only an inspiring meeting place, but also a chance for discoveries. One of the remarkable aspects of the jubilee Nikki Theatre Festival was the return of those European directors who either started their career at the festival, or were recognized thanks to it. Today they come from better known, more focused, and maybe a little more mature. One such discovery was undoubtedly Grażyna Jarczyńska, who almost fifteen years ago stirred up waters here with her directorial debut – The Tropical Intoxication by Witkiewicz. This year Jarzyna opened the festival with the staging of the Polish author Marek Karpushin's, the Matter How Hard We Tried. The play managed to ask a question about the nature reflected in the memory of several generations. Jarczyńska's theatrical vision builds on the quality of the dramatic text, which he is teetering to the limits, suggesting that nothing is sacred to him. Beneš's plan of garbage, Maslova's attitude toward her native country is not condemning, although there is no shortage of irony and sarcasm. One does not choose a country or a period in which he/she is born. With its fine humor and insight, the play No Matter How Hard We Tried managed to think over the question of who we really are, who we were and will be. The starting point of the dramatic testimonies is a story. Even the very existence of a human being contains within itself the beginning and end; all of us are an integral part of this story, which still persists. During the six days of the festival, we were sometimes able to see human experience, identity and memory as a major theater of the world. And sometimes we were allowed to peek into the intimate space of the soul.

D e t e c t i o n o f T h e a t r i c a l M y s t e r y
(International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2011 – the twentieth anniversary)

Theatre Festival Nitra just celebrated its twentieth year. It is already a grown up, not only in terms of age. The festival, which in its early stages provided space for confrontation with predominantly domestic production, every year became more and more open towards the international community. At present, it provides a full-scale dialogue. This year, the main program gathered theater companies from ten countries, with fourteen productions. They tried to open the most hidden micro space of human consciousness and conscience, and think over the question of who we really are, who we were and will be. The starting point of the dramatic testimonies is a story. Even the very existence of a human being contains within itself the beginning and end; all of us are an integral part of this story, which still persists. During the six days of the festival, we were sometimes able to see human experience, identity and memory as a major theater of the world. And sometimes we were allowed to peek into the intimate space of the soul.

M i l a n Z v a d a
theatre publicist
To Experiment or not to Experiment – that is the question

Issues of the human mind, experience, being and not being were raised in The Deer House performed by the Belgian Need-company of Jan Lauwers. The multifunctional style of performers who also dance and sing, promised an extraordinary experience. The play, inspired by the story of one of the dancers whose brother was killed in the Kosovo War, is to some extent a description of the story of creation. The Deer House is a mythical place with dimensions of an ancient Greek tragedy. Viviane de Muynck, a leading Belgian artist, expressed in the discussion his intention not to display reality on the stage but reality. However, the need to show humanity and the reality of everyday life that inexorably flows seemed to be lost in a spectacular cluster of words and scenic effects. And even the spectacularly ethereal artificial tears were not of a great help.

Those viewers who had tickets for the second performance of that evening by the Prague Comedy Theatre experienced a remarkable contrast between the spectacular debate about the meaning of life and fate and not so remarkable fate of the writer Karl Weissenstein, developing in the chamber and gloomy space. Both productions were talking about life and death, and the actions for which one must take responsibility. However, Prague staging of Weissenstein in its modest presentation managed to bring emotions, which was somehow lost in the wandering after the Nitra Theatre Festival after successful Shakespearean productions from previous years and brought a fresh wind with all that. And the major highlight of the festival was probably performed in the middle of it. Alfoldi came to Nitra this time with a production that was perfectly in line with this year’s theme – to disclose or not to disclose one’s own secrets. The Hunting Scenes from the Lower Bavaria by Martin Sperry is a cruel game when the majority-chases an individual. This cannot fit into the categorization of normalcy. But even he is not blameless. An excellent text situated in postwar Germany Alfoldi has elevated in such a way that it can be played anywhere, anytime. The feeling of participation was magnified by the of stage design – the audience sat on uncomfortable bags and watched the events in full lights. We became members of the community that was judging, and subjects of judgments at the same time. Alfoldi himself said that he does not consider The Hunting Scenes to be an avant-garde or experimental, although the productions of the Budapest National Theatre, of which he is the director, confirms his creative courage and ambition.

Slovak trail

On the issue of creative diversity, the festival-visitors were able to compare foreign productions with domestic ones. This year, the organizers, inspired by global trends,
asked curator Rastislav Ballek to choose Slovak productions. It is therefore quite logical that such a concept is purely subjective and can be easily criticized. Since the majority of the productions in the main program were rather unconventional ambitious projects compared to classic performances, four Slovak productions were of a similar nature, perhaps with the exception of The Graduate by Terry Johnson, which almost did not differ from the film version. Visiting director Jakub Krusňa, however, managed to present a theatrically playful layer that builds on a simple story. Witty and imaginative stage design, with skillfully arranged songs, performed live, was a pleasant experience, although not shocking in any way. Maybe because it did not "pretend", its integrity paradoxically exceeded other more ambitious productions. The traditionally unique SKRÁT Theatre presented to the Festival Buggers and Suckers showing contemporary man and the machinery of the emptied world, where he lives without a chance of becoming a hero. The live performance of the play which is apparently meant to be a gift, but rather becomes a destiny. Several excellent stage solutions that seemed to become one of the characters of the play, if not the major one. The festival Awards received by Peter Polgár for the stage design and costumes were fully justified.

End of story

The world is the theater, the theater is the world. Human existence has ceased to be a gift, but rather becomes a destiny. Several productions of the festival highlighted the loneliness of the individual, the problem of human identity and its inclusion into the environment. The Void Story by the British performers Forced Entertainment, placed the characters in an absolute deadlock. Since the whole story is built on their attempt to escape, we are gradually linked to each other only by material issues or sometimes even animal instincts, behind which we live a pleasant experience, although not shocking in any way. Maybe because it did not "pretend", its integrity paradoxically exceeded other more ambitious productions. The traditionally unique SKRÁT Theatre presented to the Festival Buggers and Suckers showing contemporary man and the machinery of the emptied world, where he lives without a chance of becoming a hero. The live performance of the play which is apparently meant to be a gift, but rather becomes a destiny. Several excellent stage solutions that seemed to become one of the characters of the play, if not the major one. The festival Awards received by Peter Polgár for the stage design and costumes were fully justified.

Emptiness of this story lies mainly in the lack of emotions, which cannot reach the viewer from the big screen. The emotional coldness, however, intensified the overall atmosphere. The performance Small Talk worked on a similar principle, in which the Polish artist Wójtik Ziemilski tried to cope with a traumatic revelation that put a blemish on his family, leaving a permanent mark. Ziemilski selected the form of lecture with the absence of any emotion. But even when he does not attack, he encourages people to think. The production is part of an international co-production project, Parallel Lives – 20th century through the eyes of the secret police. The final performance of the Festival was the play Paranoia by the Argentinean playwright Rafael Sprengelburd performed by the French Théâtre de Lucioles. They decided to perform a play which is apparently impossible to stage. The play is one part of the heptalogy Seven Centralsins inspired by Hieronymus Bosch and represents a kind of grotesque statement about our civilization. Apocalypic drama from the distant future, which describes the superficial presence, which has a great thematic potential right from the beginning. However, the form exceeded the content. Perhaps the main problem was the language barrier and the unfamiliar context. Sprengelburd is not only a playwright, but also an enthusiastic linguist, who loves dictionaries. Non francophone audience thus lacked the opportunity to enjoy all the little text nuances. Instead they had to watch mostly external aspects of the production. Paranoia restless cre- ates parodies, quotes in many words. If Sprengelburd thinks that humanity cannot create an original story, do any limits exist in the theatre?

Epilogue

The theater is unpredictable and its charm lies mainly in the possibility of surprise. If one somehow expects catharsis, it finally arrives at a different, inconspicuous moment. Maybe even in the attic of Karol Spišák Old Theatre in Nitra of where one finds himself absolutely alone for four minutes in a three-dimensional sound installation. In 2011, the Theatrical Nitra was revealing secret, while in the very beginning of the Festival in 1992 it was focusing on thematic inspiration. Thus let’s wish the theater not to lose the ability to inspire and to surprise us. After all, its beauty is hidden in its uniqueness.

“We are looking at the body. The body abruptly ends with feet and hands. This is where it ends. There is nothing more, like a rocky slope overlooking the sea. Suddenly lost.”

(Wojtek Ziemilski: The Small Story)

TEREZA HLADKÁ
theatre publicist

Divadelná Nitra 20th annual of the Nitra International Theatre Festival
Do (not) reveal your secrets
Maybe something that happened this year will be remembered as a kind of a twist. Twenty years after the creation of an independent, experimental, alternative theatre called Stoka, lead by the theatre director and its founder Blahoslav Uhlár, we started to realize that the glorious era of Stoka has left a deep imprint in Slovak theatre history. An extraordinary and significant achievement of a small group of theatre makers has influenced the entire modern development of our theatre culture in the context of alternative movement. Blahoslav Uhlár founded the Stoka Theatre in 1991 as a reaction to the stagnant theatre atmosphere of the times. For a moment, theatre creators were pulled out from inertia by the Velvet revolution, only to fall into the new and more evident inertia again, this time less obvious and evident. In the times when “everything was allowed” the auto-censorship of pragmatism led by an effort of “living ones life in the most comfortable modus vivendi possible”). Human nature doesn’t change much, for the majority it is still a priority to provide for ideal life conditions and the most comfortable status. Today we call it the consume-rist way, in the past we denominated it as a bourgeois way of life…

Two decades of Stoka theatre has been celebrated at a moment when Theatre Stoka has already become a feature of the past. For his exceptional activities in the field of experimental theatre, theatre director Blahoslav Uhlár was given the prize “Theatre Obstacle” last year, given annually by the Department of Theatre Studies of the Theatre Faculty of Academy of Performing Arts on March, 27th, World Theatre Day. This year, the prize was given to Lubo Bunge, his follower, disciple and creator, for his outstanding activities connected with the Theatre SkRAT. The two of them met face to face on April, 4th 2011 on the small scene of Theatre Ar- teatro (on Biela ulica, Bratislava), to collect their “Theatre Obstacles” and to congratulate each other as well as to celebrate it... Thanks to that, the guru of the alternative theatre Blahoslav Uhlár and his continuator finally met again at the same stage (long after the active years of Stoka ensemble in the 90’s).

When Stoka company was given the main prize at the festival MIMOS in the French town Périgueux, for the French this company came from a fairly unknown country (one could say that it still remains unknown), the festival director Peter Bu congratulated his own countrymen very cordially. I was a judge in the awarding of this prize and I have to admit it wasn’t easy for me and Peter Bu to explain our colleagues in the jury – experienced French critics, theatre creators or theatre theoreticians – that what Stoka has presented was an entirely new and original creation. Experienced French colleagues, who have been cultivated by seeing more than one world-class production, were trying to prove that the method of the company is rooted in the theatre director, but at the end he was already separated us from any kind of epidemia of “bourgeois and imperialistic art”. After long debates the jury reached the conclusion that Stoka brings novelty and originality to the approaches familiar to Western Europe and US performance companies (at least from the late 60’s) by discovering different thematic, genre or spatial territories in the known methods. Stoka Theatre received the main prize of the festival MIMOS in France in 1993 and has entered into the limelight, not only Slovak and Czech Republic cultural life but also that of the French. That same year the company was invited to represent Slovak culture in the French town Die thanks to the efforts of cultural attaché of Slovak Embassy in Paris, a translator Michaela Jurová. They performed not only Impasse but also Dondrim and The Concert. Until then, they gave host performances mainly in Czech Republic or Hungary, but only for the French success were they also invited to Swiss Lausanne and Italian Cividale del Friuli.

Their fame spread quickly through entire former Czechoslovakia, but mainly through Slovakia, that was already an independent country. Peter Bu was intending to become part of their theatre agent for the francophone countries as well as for the German speaking venues with which he had been already cooperating with in the past. In those years Stoka was wanted possibly even in the most sought after venues, where the audience would hang out long before and after the end of performance in lively discussions or vibrant atmosphere of its bar, enjoying the friendly and creative mood that was provoked by the company and its leader Blahoslav Uhlár.

Stoka Theatre formed an informal community of lovers or supporters of independent theatre culture in such a spontaneous way, on the basis of sharing opinions on life, politics, culture and human existence, Uhlár foresaw the coming of the company and the main characteristics of its poetry in his theatre manifestos written in 1989 even before the Revolution and the fall of Communist society in Slovak republic, 1989, (n.4). Decomposition was the main goal of his rebellion against the official theatre. He started ed with it as first a member of Trnava Theatre for children and youth and later in an even more intense way in Ukrainian national theatre in Prišov. When performances Quintet, Where is the North and The Penultimate Supper were created, Blahoslav Uhlár was part of the Trnava theatre. In this theatre he played more than fifteen years (1976-1999) as a full time director, but at the end he was already spiritually distanced from the collective. His quest for the new approaches was very soon visible in his performances. He entered the Trnava theatre immediately after graduating from theatre direction studies at The Theatre Faculty of The Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, where he was a student of Josef

Song of STOKA

Or On the Trail of The Collapse and Nox more Dyp inaf and also Impasse and Hestato into the deep waters of the alternative theatre Sami meri vari, therefore From The Distance twenty years after
Stoka Theatre started its famous era immediately after the Revolution in 1989, but only fully came to life after gaining its own premises at Pribinova street, right next to the Boatman’s House (Dom lodníkov), Trnava, April 29th, 1988.

The theatre created an atmosphere that left a big imprint on the entire Slovak theatre. Living theatre, La Mamma, or the Theatre of the Oppressed of a celebrated Augusto Boal in South America).

Decomposing, dividing the motivations, multi-thematicity, and absence of determination creates the new estetics of the dramatic creation” – says in the first Slovak theatre manifesto Blahoslav Uhlár (1988).

In the second Slovak theatre manifesto addressed to the People, People, People he called out: “Postmodernism is dead,” and adds, calling for the “supersubjectivism”: “In the context of the new esthetics the interpretation of the author should be equal to any of the interpretations of the audience.”

And adds: “Decomposition means:
- Negation of structure of the storyline
- Additional way of constructing the piece by calling out: “Chosen ones are dead,”
- Emphasizing the continuity and independence of separate events and their absolute equality
- Representing the world in a non narrative form negating the beginning and the end of the piece
- Continuous affirmation of the nonnatural character.”

In manifestos, which Blahoslav Uhlár created together with Milosl Karásek at the end of the 80’s, shortly before the Revolution, the most pronounced was a theme of the pro-test against the banality of the official, conservative theatre.

“Momently, the state of arts in Slovak theatre is tragic. The most of the theatres are deeply rooted in the 19th century and are strangling their audience with their traditional understanding of titian!” – says Milosl Karásek in the first Slovak theatre manifesto titled Theatre of the Crisis (in the bulletin of the performance So what? DISK 1988).

The theatreologist and eyewitness

ZUZANA BAKOŠOVÁ-HLAVENKOVÁ

theatrelolgist and eyewitness

When I attended the world congress of AIUT/UATA with the theme of Collective creation – dead or alive? in Cologne AITU/IUTA with the theme of Collective creation – dead or alive? in Cologne, 1988.

The manifesto is finished by an appeal: Freedom to the actors Freedom to the audience Peace to the world

When I attended the world congress of AIUT/UATA with the theme of Collective creation – dead or alive? in Cologne in 2004 and later in Italian Urbin with an essay The Stoka Theatre? The New Alternative? Yes or No? Nox as a Night Full of Nightmares (The Analysis of the performance Nox, 1995), the tumbling approach that left a big imprint on the entire theatre

What was surprising for almost all was the similarity of the atmosphere of this theatre reality and the one related with the alternative theatre of the 60’s (revolt theatre Living Theatre, La Mama, or Open Theatre, or even the Theatre of the Oppressed of a celebrated Augusto Boal in South America). The whole professional curriculum of the Stoka Theatre is already carved into the historical memory of the Slovak theatre history. There is no doubt that Stoka, thanks to the director Blahoslav Uhlár, created an important era in the development of Slovak theatre and bridged the Slovak theatre with the methods and poetics of the theatre alternative of European and American independent theatres. Modern theatre trends of the second half of 20th century are still a well of creative energy. We can still experience it strongly, again and again, when we concentrate on any of the intense creations of the Stoka Theatre. Luckily, the videos of the performances exist and are as appealing as the original performances...

Especially if they come with a commentary of one of the creators or the witnesses, they haven’t lost a bit of their power.
The New Dramaturgy

Maybe this article isn’t going to say anything new, maybe a lot of people have been thinking about it lately, maybe I am the first one to do so. In any case, I am writing this article with the help of numerous colleagues with the intention to give inspiration to theatre makers. I have offered the article to many journals, including the foreign ones, but with a condition, that they can publish it only after it has been published in Slovakia.

The inspiration for this essay came from a seminar at the Academy of Performing Arts (VŠDŠ) in Bratislava. I find it natural that the monthly journal lód – konkrétno o divadle (concretely about theatre) publishes it first.

From Sophocles to Ibsen and from Ibsen to McNicholl. Theatre went through a lot of changes. The changes manifested not only in dramaturgy but also in the way of performing and staging drama. The intention remained however the same – to get as close as possible to the spectator and touch his soul, to provide the liberating catharsis by continuous stimulation of the senses. The Futurists would let out the rats among the audience, they faced them with shocking images of the rotting raw meat, and others shocked by reduction moving on stage to the minimum. Introducing new ways of using the image, sound and other available expression means was the starting point of creating new inter- national theatre movements/trends.

This way much more through formal elements than by playing with the inner meaning of the text. I have been interested in the reform of this “inner” content of the text. How to preserve the values taken into consideration the possibilities of literature and drama and at the same time put through the changes, that will make Sophocles and a contemporary text accessible to the nowadays? “3 second generation?” Is it possible to ignore its infinite punctu- tion, to bore a spectator by declaration of the slow texts? Let us think about the spectator of today. Film and television of the 20th century has brought the revolution of image and sound, they have made the way of visual and auditory informa- tion faster, but also, they have made the relation- between the sound, image and human understanding faster. We haven’t become better, but we understand things faster that are of no interest to us. In the second half of the past century, thanks to film and film mont- age techniques the 3-6-9 second generation was born. This is the spectator of today. I call today’s generation a 3 second one. It is a generation that grew up watching TV and films and finds classic Ferenc Mol- nar quite an interesting author but simply too slow. This generation goes to theatre out of its own free will only in cases such as “my girlfriend is crazy about theatre”, “It is the obligatory school visit”, “I didn’t fol- low it, I watched a movie on my mobile” and so forth, there are a lot of similar com- ments I picked up during the intervals, com- ments I picked up during the intervals, com- ments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picked up during the intervals, comments I picker...
First Steps to Become Independent

In 2011 we introduced the section Ad Fontes - to the sources in our magazine. There we publish rare documents from the Slovak theatrical past, which have been preserved in the archives and the documentation of the Theatre Institute. They managed to survive, outlined their origin and now remain a potential resource for theatre historians, thanks to the devotion of our former as well as present colleagues. Materials were thematically selected to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Theatre Institute on November 28, 2011. The history of the Slovak theater is not identical with its own past or roots, which it retained. The real history happens to be past that clearly relates to our present and future. The core of the published documents will thematically focus on important personalities of the Theatre Institute - longtime worker Nelly Stúrova and two theatrical historians Stanislav Vrbka and Ján Jaborník. From the archives of their personal collections we have selected previously unpublished works, but also those already published in magazines or newspapers that have remained relevant to our present.

Viktor Varga

The Scientific Council of the Slovak Museum Theater Department met in Bratislava on November 28, 2011. The idea of this transition was elaborated mostly by Andrej Smolinský who developed the draft proposal and the reason- ing report. Members of the Scientific Council agreed with this proposal. They considered the Prague Institute to be a better guarantor and that the Theater Department can profit from its expertise. The whole process became quite successful.

The Music scholar Andrej Smolinský graduated from Janáček Academy of Music and Performing arts in Brno and devoted a substantial part of his professional activity to mostly musical theater. His career has not received a salary for months as the Theater Department was no longer financed by the SM and finances have not been approved in Prague. Despite of all the obstacles the process managed to be completed by the admin- istrative agreement signed on April 25, 1961. The Theatre Department became the branch office of the Prague Theatre Institute.

The music scholar Andrej Smolinský graduated from Janáček Academy of Music and Performing arts in Brno. Although his professional activity is mostly musical theater, he contributed significantly to the establishment of the institutions in a broader social and cultural context.

Gizela Maďuľová was another important pro- fessional who has worked at the Bratislava branch of the Theatre Institute. She was a professional who could be found in the office of the Prague Theatre Institute.

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Nelly Štúrová
photo: Theatre Institute Archive

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Nelly Štúrová started to work at the Theatre Institute after finishing an internship with Erwin Piscator, the major German theatreologist. From the beginning, she focused systematically on the documentation of Slovak theatre personalities. She prepared anniversary portraits and created indexes of Slovak theatre personalities. For the Theatre Institute’s archive, she produced short profiles of theatre artists at their anniversaries and translated articles, especially those about Erwin Piscator. The Theatre Institute is also the only institution which systematically collects all valuable factual material, making accurate documentation of achievements within theaters in Slovakia, as well as throughout the Slovak cultural scene, in cooperation with the Theatre Institute Archive of the Slovak National Theatre. It is planned to collect theatre documentation enabling the Theatre Institute to create theatre documentation of the Slovak theatre, which is not only material about the past, but by its versatil use it effectively promotes the development of contemporary Slovak performing arts.

Theatrical documentation management system consists of the following:

1. Card indexes containing all data about the particular performance (name of the author, name of the play, premiere, name of the theatre, director, actors, etc.)
2. Indexes of all the page numbers of programmes to the archive following the list of programmes in the archive of the Slovak Dramatic Artists Encyclopaedia at the Theatre Institute Archive
3. Card indexes containing the names of all the authors and translators
4. Indexes of programs from the archives
5. Photographs, clippings with reviews and theatre programmes
6. Documentation of the Slovak theatre, which is not only material about the past, but by its versatil use it effectively promotes the development of contemporary Slovak performing arts.

The documentary-research Department of the Theatre Institute, consisting of sections for dramatic arts, musical performing arts (opera, operaetta, ballet), puppet and set plays, and for theatre documentation (besides the Theatre Institute’s mission, it involves research, collection and processing of all facts and documents about Slovak theatre, from its inception in 1920 through to the present. Its Theatre Institute’s detailed and thorough documentation has created the only theatre documentation of Slovakia. In cooperation with the Theatre Institute, artists indexes and their anniversaries and translated articles, especially those about Erwin Piscator. The Theatre Institute is also the only institution which systematically collects all valuable factual material, making accurate documentation of achievements within theaters in Slovakia, as well as throughout the Slovak cultural scene, in cooperation with the Theatre Institute’s archive of the Slovak National Theatre. It is planned to collect theatre documentation enabling the Theatre Institute to create theatre documentation of the Slovak theatre, which is not only material about the past, but by its versatil use it effectively promotes the development of contemporary Slovak performing arts.

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High Time to Discover Dance

Contemporary dance in Slovakia has a number of very distinguished representatives. So distinguished that they often don’t fit within the boarders of Slovakia as the conditions for their development is not ideal here. That is why they choose to broaden their creativity and originality in one of today’s Meccas of contemporary dance – in Brussels, London, New York, Vienna, Salzburg and of course in next door Prague. They are strongly committed and therefore in demand as performers and also as pedagogues. The strong generations of creators, pioneers in the field of contemporary dance in Slovakia, which appeared after the Velvet Revolution, were trying to catch up with the world trends. They were dynamic, open to innovation and pedagogue Marta Poláková (Theatre Institute, 2010) was in this sense a break through, and in order to understand the way this book is conceived, its meaning in the local context) as well as the historical context of improvisation (its open way – passionately embracing both the practice and theory – to do the seemingly impossible – she joins the roots of the world trends.

The main intention of the author Poláková never promises any such thing. She repeatedly stresses the importance of intensifying self-awareness. She understands the improvisation as a way of thinking of self-knowledge, but also admits that using improvisation techniques doesn’t automatically provide less of those things. And Poláková never promises any such thing. She emphasizes on several places that contemporary creator has to be aware of the possibilities, to be open to new impulses but he has to also be able to choose intentionally among them. Except for the influence on development of the personal and creative path, a theatre maker, who doesn’t think exclusively of creative research – has its logical place in this book. Potential addressees of the book Freedom to Discover Dance are numerous – such as practitioners, experienced in improvising, a dancer-beginner, looking for the inspiration and tools for finding one’s own creative path, a theatre maker, who doesn’t think that it is sufficient to simply understand the text and articulate it in sound. But it can also be a primary school pedagogue of stage dance, who doesn’t think that teaching children to dance means to simply teach them steps and moves of a choreography, nor that contemporary dance expression is what we see on commercial TV stations.
Elixir of Laughter

“Maybe we are today witnesses of a possible destruction of mankind”

In grammar school, I once had privilege to be present at the filming of the Rihák’s film Smutný valčík (The Sad Waltz). While the crew was settling down, I sat on a bench and was reading a book. Mr. Jozef Kroner, the master himself, sat right next to me. We did not know each other, we did not talk, we just smiled at each other. I was happy to have the actor from the Oscar-winning movie sitting next to me. Then he suddenly clearly, kindly, sadly and knowingly told me: “You should not want to be an actress.” I understood that he did not want to say more and that I should not be asking. Nor did I dare. I often thought about this message presented so suggestively by the artist who in 2000 became the best Slovak actor of the century. And only now, after reading the book, Zuzana Bakolóva Hlavenková et al. under the title Elixir of Laughter. Jozef Kroner and Kroner Family, I finally got the explanation.

“Max Švabínsky once declared that every other man in Slovakia can be put to study painting or sculpture. That this is one of the most gifted nations ... Nature bestowed this small piece of land by incredible beauty and we somehow do not know how to live in this beauty responsibly and nicely... Where is this vandalism this rudeness, the insensitivity to beauty responsibly and nicely... Where is this we somehow do not know how to live in this small piece of land by incredible beauty and most gifted nations ... Nature bestowed this painting or sculpture. That this is one of the other man in Slovakia can be put to study.”

Why those words ... Fortunately, his hidden dramatic acting, which expressed closest the innermost master's depressive feelings, were noticed by our southern neighbors. A sad memento is that not only during the artist's life were his works prohibited to Slovaks, but even now Jozef Kroner remains to us unknown as a film actor who won many Hungarian and foreign prizes for playing main characters in several Hungarian movies. But the publication Elixir of Laughter with the subtitle Jozef Kroner and Kroner's, which was carefully prepared for several years, is not only about Jozef Kroner. A prominent Slovak theatrologist Zuzana Bakolóva-Hlavenková, the author of the research project Elixir of Laughter foreshadows in her Foreword what the reader may expect in the book. She describes it as follows: “...landscapes of the country, the excesses and beauty of decisive road of connection to the area of humility and asceticism, a profound understanding of the inner worlds and their visibility.” What follows are comments and most accurate descriptions of the characters and the particular acting charm of Jozef Kroner, his wife Terézia Hurbanová-Kronerova, their daughter Zuzana Kronerová and her cousin Ján Kroner. They are described in the following pages in analytical, reflective, rational, emotional, novelist-type, lyrical and dramatic manner – in a form of individual studies by several authors (Zuzana Bakolóva-Hlavenková, Vladimir Štefko, Nadežda Lindovská, Ján Jaborník, Vladimir Mítolík, Vladimír Rusko, Gizela Mihálková, Roy Mittelman, Richard Kramárík, Valéř Mikula, Vladimir Rusko, Vladislava Fekete), which are followed by key interviews with (Vladimír Štefko with Jozef Kroner, Zuzana Bakolóva-Hlavenková with Zuzana Kronerová and Ján Kroner), as well as testimonies by Juraj Jakubíško, Milan Čorba, Jaroslav Rihák, Boleslav Polívka and Charles Mourier. The chapters are...
named after the four representatives of Kroner’s family. Each of these four chapters is concluded by the artist’s biographic data, which were accurately compiled by the author of the book Z. Bakošová-Hlavenková. They contain basic biographical and factual events of the life of the family of Martin. Illustrious characters are presented in a chronological order. Family data are in the fifth chapter Kronerovci, following a family album. All other chapters are also illustrated by carefully selected photos and reproductions of documents that present the artistic and humanly unique expressions of the Kroner’s family. They aptly capture and illustrate the work, life events and fragments discussed in texts by the authors of the book. Zuzana Bakošová-Hlavenková discovers in Jozef Kroner, inter alia, “unusual humility”, “his habit of the theatre to admirable while atypical in the city of Martin. Illusions, connections which were revealed in the above mentioned, their infinity in theater, television and films, Kroner’s gestures, mimics, movements, "clown piece, acting as an essential elixir”.

Macek is unusually and provocatively stiffly. His two creative periods – hyper-reality and television. Valér Mikula points to the actor’s pleasures and traumas, as for example in Dezider Janda’s staging of Jozef Kroner’s wife – Theresa Hurbanová-Kronerová. Theatroleogist Ján Jaborník paints her portrait in a very detailed way, with rich knowledge and many experiences. At the ceremony on the occasion of presenting the book Elixír of Laugh to readers by Milan Čorba and Éva Kríšková on January 24, 2011 in Bratislava Pante Rhei on Poštová Street, it was said that it is unlikely that a similar study about the leading actress of the certain epoch of the Slovak Chamber Theatre in Martin is ever going to be done. It records actress’s successes and failures on various Slovak theater stages, her responsible approach to the family, and her ability to be supportive and give way, or to adopt. The third section, called Zuzana Kronerová, was written mostly by Zuzana Bakošová-Hlavenková. As a theatroleogist who specializes mostly in acting, she gives a detailed analysis of the acting activities of this known and appreciated Slovak actress. And Vladimir Ruskó describes Kroner’s radio mastery. The most comprehensive testimonies in the role of Kroner’s primary years of film-making – as told by Juraj Jakubisko, Milan Čorba, Jaro Astorka '90. The actress has shown in her work with various directors her genetic predisposition for presenting characters, creating magic of tragic grotesque, rough gentleness, laughter and tears, as well as the dramatic roles, to have looked in a detailed analyses of acting in a monodrama Shirley Valentine, which revealed the fundamental essence of acting by this drama actress, who was also recognized and got several prizes in the neighboring Czech Republic. The actress herself summarized this essence in an essay-type habilitation lecture Acting – search for meaning (2006). The theatroleogist Bakošová-Hlavenková in a detailed and extensive interview with the actress and teacher Zuzana Kronerová titled Kroner style – a research for Meaning also addressed this theme. The fourth part is about the youngest but important member of the genus Kroner. His two creative periods – hyper-reality and acting realism – are described by Vladimír Felceta in her essay titled Soul Trip. Interview with Ján Kroner was done again by Zuzana Bakošová-Hlavenková. Last, the sixth part of the book was published in collaboration with the Academy of Performing Arts and the Theatre Institute. It is a printed version of the compiling inventory of Jozef Kroner’s works on theater and film characters. It was written mostly by Zuzana Kronerová, Zuzana Kronerová and Ján Kroner. How Jozef Kroner and his family loved the performing arts and what it meant to them is convincingly described by the actor’s words in the introductory motto and message of the book: “Our art is about man and the people, we are reflecting in it on what we have experienced and endured. Sometimes we say it silently, sometimes we shout aloud. I’ve always respected when the theater in the biggest darkness produced light and was not afraid to tell the truth.”

But the question remains, who actually drank the extremely precious elixir of laughter? Was it the most talented Kroner’s family who sacrificed a lot for acting, or their audience? In any case, it has certainly intoxicated many readers, as is already evident by the fact that, for two years, Milan Čorba and I have received daily requests for reprint are clear evidence of the quality of this extremely rare, professional publication of colorful style, which is nevertheless addressed to the wider public.
The Culture Programme 2007-2013 of the European Union aims at promoting cooperation among a wide range of artists from different countries and cultures. A project of the Slovak Tetra Gallery in Poprad called Making Education More Artful: Music – Dance – Visual Arts (EduMEMA), is one of the projects supported under this program. It is one of the two projects in 2011 that succeeded in international competition and gained the Slovak status of coordinating organization. According to the authors, the mission of the project EduMEMA is to contribute to a deeper understanding of art through its support of education. We talked about the project and its origins with the creator of the project, musician and art manager Ms. Anna Hrindová.

• Please describe the project Making Education More Artful: Music – Dance – Visual Arts (EduMEMA) and its main purpose.

The Central European Music Academy (MEMA), this time at EduMEMA, offers, for the second, time a unique educational and art project focused on music, dance and visual arts in a European context. All mentioned artistic disciplines are connected to the interdisciplinary educational activities. Master classes, concerts, workshops, lectures and discussions are primarily aimed at domestic and foreign students of secondary and higher art schools, but also for young professionals and educators. For these target groups, the EduMEMA provides opportunity to deepen their knowledge, get new ideas, establish contacts and create platforms for public presentations.

For the general public, we prepared a special program of music, dance and visual arts events, which are supposed to contribute through educational means to the cultivation of artistic taste and promote general artistic sophistication.

The main themes in the area of music in 2012 are issues of style and the possibilities of the application of the so-called principles of historically informed performance on modern instruments. This approach is accepted by the majority of our national cultural institutions sometimes lack professional background and international experience – despite the fact that we have a lot of capable people, knowledgeable and with linguistic proficiency. Perhaps we are missing more, enthusiasm and belief in the possible successful realization of cultural events of high standards.

• For whom is the project aimed and who is the target group?

The EduMEMA is aimed at cultural public, young professional musicians, dancers and photographers, artists, teachers, students, professionals and all those who want to learn, who want to better understand the arts and who are eager to discover something new.

In Slovakia, apart from small “expeditions” to Bratislava, our target areas are still technically and practically limited.

• Which countries and institutions are involved in the project?

EduMEMA is based in Slovakia, but it connects several European countries, cities and cultural organizations through art and education. The project involves the Slovak cultural institutions Tetra Gallery in Poprad, Košice European Capital of Culture 2013, the Municipality of Poprad and its Culture Department, other educational institutions the, Vienna Conservatory, Mimar Sinan University in Istanbul, Cyprian Capital Larnaca, the Turkish dance company Fire of Anatolia and my Prague Impresariat.

The program is relatively simple, understandable and accessible when a candidate has studied it thoroughly and has adhered to the rules from the very first steps of preparation. Is there something that is not perfect? Perhaps the accessibility of the program and processing applications in other languages, other than English, German or French. I think these possibilities are still technically and practically limited.

• How were the project prepared?

I consider the transparency in project appraisal to be of the highest quality. During the competition, each applicant receives a very precise evaluation of its application: The Executive Agency and experts devote very detailed attention to the assessment of each project. You are not left in the dark at the mercy of some acquaintances or chance... The process is encouraging for all serious candidates. I also recommend using services of the Cultural Contact Point Slovakia, which provides all the information and may help in the preparation of applications in detail.

• Is there anything that you would change in the grant program?

The program is focused on music, dance and visual arts events, which are supposed to contribute through educational means to the cultivation of artistic taste and promote general artistic sophistication.

All the information is already published on the website www.eduema.eu. For more specific and detailed information please contact our press manager at press@eduema.eu. In addition, I would like to remind potential candidates that receiving the grant is only a first step towards success, it will be reflected in the application. I would also like to remind potential candidates that receiving the grant is only a first step towards success, which is followed by great responsibility in the implementation of the project for the benefit of its target groups.

• What would you recommend to the applicants for grants in the future?

If the applicant has a good project and sincere intention, with solid managerial expertise and professional background, there is a great chance of success. In addition to a clear and reasonable project plan, all the formalities must be completed well and it is necessary to choose appropriate co-organizers. One has to allocate enough time for preparation, because it will be reflected in the application. I would also like to remind potential candidates that receiving the grant is only a first step towards success, which is followed by great responsibility in the implementation of the project for the benefit of its target groups.

• How do you perceive the position of Slovak grant seekers in international projects?

I am sorry that there are so few applications originating from Slovakia and the neighboring post-communist countries. I speak about that on every occasion I visit Brussels, when I talk to people who could, in the future, influence it positively. Central Europe has its cultural history, which is obvious. We have something to develop and develop further, and we have a historic responsibility to do so. There is not enough money for culture in the national budgets, so I see the EU-co-financing, especially in case of large international projects, as one of the available solutions.

I suspect the following reasons to play a role as why we have so few applicants. They cannot be answered. The preparation of applications cannot be completed in one ‘weekend’ sitting, it requires a few months. Furthermore, one has to invest in the preparations considerable time and money that are expensive. Perhaps we are missing more, enthusiasm and belief in the possible successful realization of cultural events of high standards.

• How can you assess the project and its achievements?

No and no. If the project is good, realistic and all the formalities are fulfilled, then the chances of success are good.

• The Culture Projects are submitted directly to the Executive Agency in Brussels. What is your experience of communication with Brussels and the overall experience with the Culture Programme?

The Culture Programme is aimed at cultural public, young professional musicians, dancers and photographers, artists, teachers, students, professionals and all those who want to learn, who want to better understand the arts and who are eager to discover something new. In Slovakia, apart from small “expeditions” to Bratislava, our target areas are still technically and practically limited.

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ANNA HRINDOVÁ
University Teacher (September 1995 onward)
Prague Chamber Orchestra, Czech Republic
Comenius University, Faculty of Philosophy, Department for Musicology, Bratislava, Slovakia
Orchestral leader (September 1995 – September 1998)
Prague Chamber Orchestra, Czech Republic

NATÁLIA URBÍLKOVÁ
head of the Cultural Contact Point office
Peter Janků
The Stones of Life

Peter Janků received for his play Kamene života, together with the dramaturgist Zuzana Ferancová for her text Babyboy, the first price in the contest for the Best Drama. This was Peter Janků’s first dramatic text and is based on our recent historcal past.

Characters:

VERONIKA
Child, girl, and elderly lady. In the individual scenes, she enters different stages of her life and acts accordingly.

JOURNALIST
Young, ambitious man who likes to expose social vices. He experienced the era of pioneers, but missed the socialist youth movement. He has been in the media for some years now.

JOZEF
Veronika’s father, a local trafficker of people across the border to Austria. The communist law.

COP 1, COP 2
An old and a young member of the National Security Corps, reliable enforcers of the law.

CAMP COMMANDER
A seasoned officer who has a few marks cut into the butt of his rifle, all in the name of protecting socialism.

LUJZA
Veronika’s mother. She is forced to live a double life – even though we get to know her as a young woman, she seems to have aged before our eyes.

JOZEF’s fellow inmate in prison camp.

INTERIOR MINISTER
Representative of the current Ministry of Interior.

ANOTHER PRISONER
A few times… He starts coughing. His sleep

CAMP COMMANDER (to Jozef, in a reporting style, with pathos): Jachymov Hell – this is where I was for ten years ago to get to know the place where my father was born. My grandpar-

tants left in the twenties, during the crisis, for America. To make money. He was two when his mother died. Grandfather wanted her to bury at home. And so they came back. I guess they should have stayed.

ANTON
No, I'm not. At least I don't know if I am... And I have no idea why you ask...

JOURNALIST (to Veronika): If my grandfather had only suspected what his son was to go through… You know, maybe this stone will somehow find places he touched before he died here...

JOURNALIST (turns off the camera): The time of the burial cannot be determined. The gravedigger is to be given instructions to dig the grave without specifying the name of the person buried, to make sure that the location of the grave in the cemetery remains unknown, that is, the location of the grave will be determined only after the interment of the corpse. The gravedigger is to be given instructions to dig the grave without specifying the name of the person buried, to make sure that the location of the grave in the cemetery remains unknown, that is, the location of the grave will be determined only after the interment of the corpse.

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Representative of the current Ministry of Interior.

ANOTHER PRISONER
A few times… He starts coughing. His sleep
We're located in the village of Zahorie. 1950. Jozef is building a crib. Scene 5

VERONIKA Uncle Klement? Other kids call their fathers daddy... While she's living in my house, she'll listen to me like to her... KLEMENT Veronika, sit down and eat. Father, daddy, uncle... While she's living in my house, she'll listen to me like to her. Scene 6

JOZEF Don't worry. He might be a communist, but he's not a bad guy. KLEMENT His mother. LUJZA Places Jožef's hand on her belly.
Scene 7
A village in Zahorie, 1950. Night time. Jozef is at the post office. He needs to write a letter. He sits down at a desk and opens the letter and takes out the envelope... He writes the letter in the presence of the police. It's a letter to Veronika... It is a boy, he'll be named after grandpa. Jan.

LUJZA (starts crying) Don't go, please, at least today, don't go... JOZEF And if it's a girl, she'll be... Veronika. There's knocking on the door. JOZEF What in God's name is going on? Luiza opens the door. The door flies open and policemen from the National Security Corps burst in.

COP 1 So comrade is dreaming about God...

LUJZA What's the matter?

COP 2 Jozef Enholz?

JOZEF Yes...

COP 2 In the name of the law, you are arrested.

JOZEF The bastard...

COP 1 So comrade feels like swearing?

JOZEF I know, honey. But he's the only one who was able to help them find freedom. That was why he had to do it.

COP 1 So comrade is dreaming about God...

JOZEF Yes...

COP 2 Luiza Ernholz?

JOZEF Luiza is crying furiously.

KLEMENT (calming her) Even if I wanted to swear, I couldn't. The Party... Luiza is crying furiously.

KLEMENT... doesn't allow it.

Scene 8
At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov.

KLEMENT You have to... We have it... The price we have to pay for Jozef not listening to you. You have to... Do you know how many people might be experiencing the same thing as you now? What we went through you would try to do... That you get to see what it is like to do something to get you out of there soon... And that you should be glad you weren't hanged.

KLEMENT (reeds) He also said he'd do everything to help you... To break all ties with Jozef. Veronika takes a picture of her father out of her bag.

JOURNALIST Is that him?

LUJZA Jozef Ernholz?

KLEMENT Jozef?

JOURNALIST May I record it?

LUJZA Veronika?

KLEMENT If this can help anybody like you said, OK, do what you think is right. (Stores at the picture.)

Scene 9

JOZEF (opens the letter and takes out the picture of baby Veronika, reads...) Hello, my dear Jozef, I think about you every minute of every day. Our baby is beautiful, we just celebrated her second birthday. We had her picture taken to work to plant a tree... To break all ties with Jozef. LUJZA Klement, thank you for everything... It's just that Jozef is still my husband and Veronika's father. KLEMENT You don't have to thank me. But we can't change that. LUJZA It's the only way I can be in... KLEMENT I know. But we have to be careful. It's not over yet.

LUJZA What's not over?

KLEMENT You can't imagine what effort I had to make to get to you and out of the picture... To break all ties with Jozef. LUJZA Klement, thank you for everything... It's just that Jozef is still my husband and Veronika's father. KLEMENT You don't have to thank me. But understand that Jozef is now a class enemy... of the people. LUJZA How dare you speak like that! That's a fact! And it wasn't even for you, never see Veronika grow up. She would have ended up somewhere in an orphanage, and you...? In a prison camp like Jozef.

LUJZA Klement, are you threatening me? KLEMENT No, I'm just trying to explain that it's not a good idea to write to him so of- ten... It's not a good idea to write to him all the time... It's not a good idea to write to him at all... My neck on the block too. LUJZA That's why you aim for him to do? KLEMENT Until Veronika grows up, we shouldn't mention Jozef at all. It could hurt her, as well as us, if she blurted something out... LUJZA I can't do that.

KLEMENT You have to... We have it... It's the price we have to pay for Jozef not listening to you... You have to... Do you know how many people might be experiencing the same thing as you now? What we went through you would try to do... That you get to see what it is like to do something to get you out of there soon... And that you should be glad you weren't hanged.

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JOURNALIST Is that him?

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residence outside of the municipality of their current residence. A custodian court, in case an adequate upbringing of under-

age children is at risk, shall command the upbringing of such children in appropriate institutions which are designated for such purposes. Exceptions from the procedures stipulated by this directive are allowed only in grave political cases, which have to be agreed upon with the mother of the relevant national council, regional commander of State Security and regional prosecutor.

Scene 10

At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov. VERONIKA My mother and I were categorized as bourgeois elements. Klement managed to ensure that our family wasn’t forced to move outside of the region. Since he declared himself to be my father, I was lucky not to have been sent to an orphanage. We moved to the next village, into the house where Klement was born. The sad fact that my father wasn’t mentioned at home, or indeed anywhere else, was the price we had to pay for our freedom. He threatened us with the orphanage. That apparently they set spies to watch him. And why should she marry him at last. And how he’s supposed to explain all this at the headquarters... When he was at his wit’s end, he threatened us with the orphanage. That’s why I have no idea, no clue how I offended you Lord, all my sins... Though I could swear to my family? Klement, but they don’t say here that he escaped. KLEMENT They can’t write in a medical report of all. A single cell without any light. It was nothing.

Scene 11

A village in Zahorie, 1956. Night time. Re-

turning to the spot on the door. LUZIA What is it? What’s happened? KLEMENT What’s going on? COP 1 We’re sorry, but we have to do a search here.

KLEMENT What’s that... comrade, I... COP 2 Out of the way, comrade, we have our orders.

KLEMENT I should know something about that. COP 1 Jozef Ernholz escaped from the prison camp and has been missing for a few days. We’ve got to search all possible plac-

es where he could be hiding.

LUZIA (bursts into tears) No, not here, my daughter’s sleeping... COP 2 We have to look everywhere...

LUZIA (wakes up) Mum, mum... COP 2 Hey there, young misses... Has your crabby daddy been here by any chance? COP 2 looks under the bed. He makes a ges-

ture which is utterly inappropriate for Ve-

ronika. What about in the closet... (opens the closet) Nothing. KLEMENT Well that’s enough comrades. At least not in front of our daughter.

COP 1 (looks at daughter, then at Luza who lowers her head) We’re just obeying orders. Comrade father.

KLEMENT All right, comrades. We’ll talk about this... Goodbye, comrades!

COP 1 COP 2 Comrade. COP 1 and COP 2 close the door.

LUZIA (calming Veronika) Don’t worry, dear, the men just came to make sure every-

thing’s all right and now they’ve gone again. VERONIKA But why was that man looking for dad in the closet?

KLEMENT Dad?... KLEMENT Did he say “dad”? I’m sure you just misheard him... Off to bed now. It’s late. Scene 12

Jachymov 1956. Solitary confinement – the so-called lock-down room in the prison camp. JZEFZ (staring, sweating) Forgive me, Lord, all my sins... Though I could swear to my family?

JZEFZ (through his teeth) What’s happening to my family? KLEMENT If you don’t talk, your family is heading towards big, big trouble.

JZEFZ (through his teeth) What’s happening to my family? KLEMENT WARREN Speak! JZEFZ No one helped, nobody, nobody... KLEMENT I don’t know anyone with that name... Nobody... Jzef Please, how is my daughter?

KLEMENT You... You don’t have a daughter... Lock him up.

Jozef raises his head and spits at the war-

den’s feet. Jozef was a God of war. LUJZA (notices Jozef’s hands entwined just misheard him... Off to bed now. It’s late. Jozef in prayer)

WARDEN peeks through the bars and makes a deci-

sion about his fate without him. As if he made a decision about his fate without him. His sentence was changed to life. And as if he made a decision about his fate without him. As if he made a decision about his fate without him. Warden notices.

KLEMENT I'm really sorry. She starts crying.

KLEMENT They can’t write in a medical report of all. A single cell without any light. It was locked up there for three months until they made a decision about his fate without him. His sentence was changed to life. And as if that hadn’t been enough, he was put in the highest-security camp. I think it was some-

where around here, where we’re standing now. JOURNALIST Did you know about it? VERONIKA Surely Klement knew. KLEMENT Veronika Questions about our past were prohibited. And mum was afraid of Klement. Just like Klement was afraid. And he spread his fear to the whole family. Saying that al-

legedly they set spies to watch him. And why should she marry him at last. And how he’s supposed to explain all this at the head-

quarters... When he was at his wit’s end, he threatened us with the orphanage. That’s why I have no idea, no clue how I offended you Lord, all my sins... Though I could swear to my family?

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KLEMENT They can’t write in a medical report of all. A single cell without any light. It was locked up there for three months until they made a decision about his fate without him. His sentence was changed to life. And as if that hadn’t been enough, he was put in the highest-security camp. I think it was some-

where around here, where we’re standing now. JOURNALIST Did you know about it? VERONIKA Surely Klement knew. KLEMENT I’m really sorry. She starts crying.
child grow... the child I brought up. I... Lu- jza. This is reason enough for you to forget about him now. Let it go, Luiza. This is your family now. He’s no longer here.

VERONIKA Mum, who are you talking about? KLEMENT Think about what you’re going to say. He’s the past and I... We’re the fu- ture... It’s up to you now, Luiza. Don’t ruin it. Klement leaves and shuts the door behind him.

LUIZA Sweetheart, come sit here... are you a big girl now?! VERONIKA Yes, mum. LUIZA I’m sorry about this, sweetheart, so sorry... but you have to know. (Cries.) VERONIKA Mum. LUIZA Do you remember, I used to tell you about this cuckoo that lays eggs in other birds’ nests? VERONIKA Yes, mum... And the little cuckoo that hatches from that egg has to be brought up by another birdie.

VERONIKA Cuckoo? LUIZA Mum.

VERONIKA Mum told me the whole story. She told me that Klement wasn’t my father and that I would never meet the man who was it. It was the strangest Christmas present I’d ever got. I couldn’t fully understand the sorrow my mother felt and realized only much later that I had been born again on that day. Born into a life I started to experience more inten- sively than the everyday life with Klement. After some time, mother gave me this picture. At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov. VERONIKA Mum told me the whole story. She told me that Klement wasn’t my father and that I would never meet the man who was it. It was the strangest Christmas present I’d ever got. I couldn’t fully understand the sorrow my mother felt and realized only much later that I had been born again on that day. Born into a life I started to experience more inten- sively than the everyday life with Klement.

VERONIKA Klement never told us. He was even more secretive than the everyday life with Klement. After some time, mother gave me this picture. At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov.

Scene 16
A village in Zahorie, 1968. LUIZA Klement, can you do something for me? KLEMENT (summoning through papers, tearing and shredding some of them) I’m all ears.

LUIZA Sweetheart, I’m sure he’s up here. He’s looking at us right now from up there in heaven, and I believe, I do hope that he’s praying for me up there, that he can’t do anything to me for having renounced him like this... I am sorry... Veronika, I’m so sorry. (Cries.)

Scene 15
At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov.

LUIZA Klement, can you do something for me? KLEMENT (summoning through papers, tearing and shredding some of them) I’m all ears.

LUIZA Sweetheart, I’m sure he’s up here. He’s looking at us right now from up there in heaven, and I believe, I do hope that he’s praying for me up there, that he can’t do anything to me for having renounced him like this... I am sorry... Veronika, I’m so sorry. (Cries.)

LUIZA You think that if she were to hear it from you, she might forgive you. If you just told her the truth – on the spot where Jozef had died.

KLEMENT Truth? The medical report is the truth. He died of pneumonia. LUIZA If that’s the case, then why are you so afraid? Just put some flowers on his grave... Together with my daughter... and your “for- mal” daughter.

KLEMENT I have no idea where his grave is... But I don’t know what would be the point of that.

LUIZA It’d be a formal end of all that has happened. The times are changing and it would mean a lot to Veronika.

KLEMENT Tell me, Luiza... what’s the point of reopening old wounds? What? Who’ll ben- efit from it? If you love me at least a little bit, do this for me. Forget about Jozef at last.

VERONIKA I expect what you’ve done for us. I want to respect it. But I’m sorry, I can’t for- get just that. I can’t because of her. If you don’t explain it to her now, when do you want to do it?

KLEMENT I have nothing to explain. Not to you, not to Veronika, not to anybody.

LUIZA Klement, can you do something for me? KLEMENT One has to live. This riffraff will be gone soon and you’ll be glad you have me. ODRAlusms threaten again.

KLEMENT These are the facts. Neither you nor I can change something that is bound to happen. And you can rest assured that it will happen sooner rather than later.

LUIZA So you’re not going with me?

KLEMENT Not another word about this. LUIZA We’ll go without you. KLEMENT I doubt it.

VERONIKA Mum, how long are you going to let someone manipulate you... someone who can’t even tell you what happened to dad? (Shows picture.)

KLEMENT What’s that? Give it here! VERONIKA Mum, what could you tell me forever? I know very well that you’re not my father. I know he is my dad.

KLEMENT These are the facts. Neither you nor I can change something that is bound to happen. And you can rest assured that it will happen sooner rather than later.

LUIZA Mum, how long are you going to let someone manipulate you... someone who can’t even tell you what happened to dad? (Shows picture.)

KLEMENT What’s that? Give it here! VERONIKA Mum, what could you tell me forever? I know very well that you’re not my father. I know he is my dad.

KLEMENT Explain what?

LUIZA I’m sorry about this, sweetheart, so sorry... but you have to know. (Cries.)

KLEMENT Tell me, where will you go when you come back? Because there’s no place in my house for a woman to whom someone sacrifices his whole life and she still doesn’t seem to know who she should love, or what’s good for her and her daughter.

LUIZA Klement...

KLEMENT Then I don’t have another choice. You understand.

LUIZA Mum. Veronika enters. She’s dressed as if she was about to go out.

KLEMENT You’re not going there! VERONIKA Everybody’s going... KLEMENT You and my family, we’re not like everybody else... You’re not going and that’s my final word.

LUIZA You’re not going to tell me what to do

VERONIKA Veronika!

VERONIKA Mum, please, things are chang- ing... The world’s not going to be run by peo- ple who can’t even tell you what happened to dad. (Cries.)

LUIZA Mum, please, things are chang- ing... The world’s not going to be run by peo- ple who can’t even tell you what happened to dad. (Cries.)

VERONIKA Mum, please, things are chang- ing... The world’s not going to be run by peo- people who can’t even tell you what happened to dad. (Cries.)
Scene 18

News piece.

JOURNALIST Today, the Nation’s Memory Institute opened the secret files of the State Security to the public. It all takes to fill out an application form and meet a few basic requirements, and anyone can learn the names of those who collaborated with the State Security, as well as those who were persecuted. One Klement O., a high-position employee of the Ministry of Interior, was allegedly an agent of the State Security. Although his original file was lost, the name Klement O. appeared in the list of State Security collaborators.

INTERIOR MINISTER A lot of people who work at the ministry were employed there in the past, too. Most of them have reached retirement age, including Klement O. If your reputation is corroded, we are confluent, of course, draw consequences. JOURNALIST We will follow this case as it evolves.

Scene 19

Turn of the millennium. An office at the Ministry of Interior.

VERONIKA is holding her father’s file.

KLEMENT Just a shred of paper.

VERONIKA You know what this is? KLEMENT It’s my father’s file.

VERONIKA You know what this is? KLEMENT It’s my father’s file.

VERONIKA It’s my father’s file.

KLEMENT I haven’t done it, someone else would have. But that someone would never have sacrificed himself like I did for you. I loved your mother, Veronika. I did. And I respected you with love, my own daughter. Please understand that if it hadn’t been for me…

VERONIKA I’ve heard this song, Klement. You kept singing it all my life. If you’d loved my mother, why did you allow that the person she loved, the person who was your best friend…

KLEMENT I saved his life back then. He could’ve ended up in front of a firing squad.

VERONIKA You know who killed him, you bastard. How could you…?

Scene 20

JACOBY, 1956. Solitary confinement – the so-called lockdown room at the prison camp.

KLEMENT (to the wardens) Is he there? WARDEN Careful… KLEMENT Hi, Jozef… JOZEF wants to get up, but cannot. KLEMENT My offer holds. You stop doing all this… It’s about you. JOZEF How is my family? KLEMENT It’s taken care of, no worries. JOZEF And my daughter, does she know I’m alive? LUGA wrote me this letter that… KLEMENT Of course, she knows about you… It’s just that we have to be careful. We don’t want to hurt them. Your escape complicated the whole thing. JOZEF I’ve never seen my daughter. KLEMENT Is that why you tried to escape? JOZEF She’s my daughter. But you’ll never…

KLEMENT Just like you won’t understand that you can’t change things. You keep fighting. I want to help you. JOZEF Klement, how can you help me? KLEMENT You’ve been spoiled. I just need you to stop causing trouble. It doesn’t benefit anyone… It loses all of your family, that is.

JOZEF Us… You stole my wife and now you’re stealing my family? My child?! KLEMENT Don’t talk like you’re Josef. JOZEF I won’t allow that. Never. KLEMENT My offer holds. You stop doing all nonsense and I’ll try to get you out of here. (Offers his hand to shake. No reaction. He at least touches Jozef’s hand.) Goodbye comrade. I mean… bye…

JOZEF Klement… (Stares.)

Scene 21

Turn of the millennium. An office at the Ministry of Interior.

JOURNALIST Klement O. is your Klement.

VERONIKA What else do you want to call the truth? We buried her, Klement, and you, her killer.

KLEMENT That’s a bit too much.

VERONIKA Do you think that the grey hair could have cleaned up after himself like that. VERONIKA He had to be very high up if he could clean up after himself like that. JOURNALIST How did you get hold of your father’s file? VERONIKA It wasn’t easy. It was found as far as Prague. The actual file was destroyed, but the content was preserved on film rolls.

JOURNALIST Microfiche.

VERONIKA That’s right, somebody made a backup. I guess Klement didn’t reckon with that. Or maybe he just forgot.

JOURNALIST I should have thought of that. But why didn’t you report it? It’s a crime against humanity. He could be tried for that. VERONIKA Why didn’t you report it? Maybe you should ask directly why I didn’t turn him in. I almost did. I had this strange feeling and a feeling of fear, of the prosecutor’s office. I suddenly imagined that Klement stood just like that, fifty years ago. And he went in. And I was supposed to do the same to him that I did to my father?

JOURNALIST But you can’t compare. VERONIKA Do you think that the grey hair of those who had the power to decide and whom I told my story is not stained by the blood of innocent people… I found his name only in the basic list of personnel. JOURNALIST KLEMENT O’s decision, as it aspires to clear the reputation of the Ministry. He continues to collaborate with the State Security.

INTERIOR MINISTER We think highly of Klement O’s decision, as it aspires to clear the Ministry’s name. At the same time, it proves that our employees – even in case of the slightest suspicion – can react and take measures against themselves with appropriate consequences.

JOURNALIST The minister conceded that if the information is not confirmed, the Ministry may re-hire Klement O.

Scene 22

At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov.

JOURNALIST Klement O. is your Klement.

VERONIKA That’s right.

JOURNALIST Those were my first news reports… I found his name only in the basic list in which it was impossible to find out what post he held in State Security.

VERONIKA He had to be very high up if he could clean up after himself like that. JOURNALIST So how did you get hold of your father’s file? VERONIKA It wasn’t easy. It was found as far as Prague. The actual file was destroyed, but the content was preserved on film rolls.

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Scene 23

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JOURNALIST The minister conceded that if the information is not confirmed, the Ministry may re-hire Klement O.

Scene 24

At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov.

JOURNALIST Klement O. is your Klement.

VERONIKA That’s right.

JOURNALIST Those were my first news reports… I found his name only in the basic list in which it was impossible to find out what post he held in State Security.

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JOURNALIST The minister conceded that if the information is not confirmed, the Ministry may re-hire Klement O.

Scene 25

At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov.

JOURNALIST Klement O. is your Klement.

VERONIKA That’s right.
the same as all those neighbours, enemies, and even cowardly friends who informed on other people? They’re also responsible for the deaths of millions of Jews, or the millions that fell victim to the red hell. Including my father.

JOURNALIST You mean Klement or Jozef now? Veronika gives this a thought.

Scene 24
KLEMENT Veronika?
KLEMENT If you want, you can call me dad.
VERONIKA Yes, but mum said...
KLEMENT It’s going to be our secret. You can call me dad when we’re alone. And when we’re all together, I’m going to be uncle Klement again. We don’t want mum to get upset.
VERONIKA A secret?
KLEMENT People have secrets, you know. And secrets are there not to be given away. We’ll have a secret like that.
VERONIKA All right, uncle Klement.
KLEMENT Daddy, Veronika...
KLEMENT People have secrets, you know. That’s why I told myself that I’ll try to start out of myself. That I’m not going to do what Klement did. And believe me, it wasn’t an easy decision to make, to overcome the hatred I felt. Each of us has to win our own judgement, first with our conscience and then the judgement before God. Klement, too. That’s why I came here to look for the place where my father had lived. I at least wanted to touch the places he touched when he lived.

JOURNALIST But you can’t leave it like this...
VERONIKA Do you want to do it?
JOURNALIST I’m just doing my job.
VERONIKA The young warden was also just doing his job.

Scene 25
YOUNG WARDEN Freeze! Stop… (a machine gun fires)

Jozef is standing at the barred wire which encircles the prison camp. He starts to turn around slowly.

YOUNG WARDEN Don’t turn around… Hands behind your head! (Comes up to Jozef, searches him.)

JOZEF How old are you?
YOUNG WARDEN Shut up… You wanted to get away… (The only thing he finds in Jozef’s pocket is a picture of little Veronika. He throws it away.)

JOZEF I didn’t want to escape, I was just trying to catch a glimpse of freedom… You got a family?
YOUNG WARDEN I told you to be quiet… (He is pointing his machine gun at Jozef.)

JOZEF Give me that picture back.

Scene 26
YOUNG WARDEN Can’t talk to you. Jozef has never seen her, please in God’s name, let me keep at least the picture.
The young warden hesitates. He does not respond.

JOZEF (turning around slowly) Have you lost anyone yet?
YOUNG WARDEN I’m new here… And don’t turn around. Till the others come.

JOZEF Don’t worry, I’ll just pick up the picture.

YOUNG WARDEN I’m telling you don’t turn around. Jozef keeps one hand behind his head and reaches with the other one to pick up the picture.

YOUNG WARDEN Don’t do that!!!
The machine gun fires. Jozef drops to the ground. Another warden enters running in. He feels Jozef’s pulse.

YOUNG WARDEN I’ve never killed anyone.

COMMANDER There you go, it’s first time.

YOUNG WARDEN He just wanted the picture…

COMMANDER He wanted to escape. And tried to hit you with a rock. I saw it. That’s how it happened.

YOUNG WARDEN But he…
COMMANDER I saw it and you shut up now. You killed him in self-defense and what’s more while he was trying to get away. I’ll recommend you to be honoured.

YOUNG WARDEN But…
COMMANDER And promoted, of course.

Scene 27
At the turn of the millennium, deep in the mountains around Jachymov. Veronika is standing in the spot where her father died. The final scenes are taking place around her. Including the punchline of her own story.

News report – the present day.

The young warden is being honoured. 1960.

COMMANDER He is the author of music and lyrics for more than hundred of folk songs. Several times he was nominated for the award of the Slovak Radio. The young warden is being honoured. 1960. Who did not hesitate to risk his life for the service and protection of the socialist system. Therefore, we are honouring him with the highest military decoration – a medal for heroism. At the same time, we hereby promote him to the rank of a corporal and grant him an exceptional leave for the period of three weeks. May his deed serve as an example for others.

THE END

Peter Janků (1974) graduated from the Faculty of Humanités at the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica and the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, Faculty of Drama and Puppet Theatre. He got his PhD degree at the Institute of Literary and Artistic Communication of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. He worked as an editor at the Television Maríkova and TAS, and currently works at the Slovak Television as a producer and editor. As a designer, he worked with the theaters in the Czech and Slovak Republics. He is the author of music and lyrics for more than hundred of folk songs. Several times he was nominated for the award of the Slovak Radio. However, this is the first prosecution of its kind, which might – at least symbolically – close this painful chapter of our modern history.

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The Theatre Institute

The Theatre Institute (1961) is a modern European institution under the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and its mission is to provide Slovak and international public with complete information services regarding theatre. The priority of the Theatre Institute is its scientific and research activities consisting of research of Slovak drama covering the time from establishing the first permanent professional stage in 1920 until present; it also takes part in other research works, co-operates with its partner institutions in various research activities concerning theatre culture in Slovakia and abroad, it takes part in organizing scientific symposiums, seminars, colloquia and other forms of presentation of their research activities. It also monitors, examines and assesses Slovak dramatic production. Another of the priorities of the Theatre Institute is its documentation activity – a systematic collecting, editing, preserving and exhibition of its collections. The Institute’s function today is to provide services related to its special status of the Public Specialized Archive (from 2002) and the Museum of the Theatre Institute (from 2006). Another important function performed by the Theatre Institute is the information and promotion activity and systematic informing of the public about its own activities and other events taking part in Slovakia or abroad. It also provides information regarding Slovak theatre or theatre in other countries; it prepares various statistics on theatre and analyses of cultural policies. The Theatre Institute also performs activities which lead to organizing of cultural and educational events – independently or within a co-operation – using for this purpose its own multi-media space – The Studio 12. It also organizes the Nová dráma/ New Drama Festival and the Dráma competition for the best Slovak play. By joining the network of international and non-governmental institutions (ITI, ENICPA, IETM, SIBMAS, Culture Action Europe, FIRT, AICT) the Institute has improved its services designed for Slovak theatres, theatre professionals and the general public. By the continual, concentrated and professional work of its employees the Theatre Institute, in the context of Slovak theatrical and cultural consciousness, plays a role of the equal partner as well as being an inspiring element towards Slovak theatre. The modern and constantly updated website, www.theatre.sk, offers information on the activities, projects and work of the Theatre Institute as well as the most integrated view on theatre culture in Slovakia and is written in the Slovak and English language. The department of Theatre Documentation and Informatics collects and systematically edits documentary and historical materials concerning the Slovak professional theatre from its establishing in 1920 until present days. The department of Research and Editing focuses on the research of contemporary Slovak and international theatre and publishing of theatrical literature. The department of Public Relations provides a complete agenda of public relations of the Theatre Institute as well as consulting and exhibition activities. The department of Projecting and Marketing coordinates particular leading projects and activities of the Studio 12 and provides public relations and marketing. From 2005 the Theatre Institute has been performing activities connected with the agenda of the Culture Contact Point. www.ccp.sk