

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Vaclav Havel Library Foundation
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**Rehearsal for Truth
Theater Festival Honoring Vaclav Havel
Announces its 2018 Season
25 – 29 September**

“What matters is not whether a play is light-hearted or serious, but—be it comedic or otherwise—whether it speaks to people about their problems, how it speaks to them, what impact it has on them. . . We wish only to put on plays that meet certain standards of urgency, that are intellectually penetrating, complex, challenging, and powerful.”

--Vaclav Havel, “The Kind of Theater We Want to Do,” from a letter to Alfred Radok, August 4, 1963

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation (VHLF), together with the Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA), will partner with Czech, Hungarian, Polish, and Slovak performing arts and cultural institutions to host the second year of a unique festival presenting the best in contemporary Central European theater. Artistic Director of the Festival, Pavla Niklova explains her vision, “While paying homage to Vaclav Havel’s legacy as a playwright, dissident, and political thinker, the selected performances will address current political and social trends in Central Europe and offer New York audiences a rare opportunity to experience the artistic and cultural atmosphere of the region.”

The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have worked together consistently in the performing arts for almost thirty years. The result of their collaboration has been an outpouring of outstanding dramatic works that pose important questions about immigration, European identity, reconciliation with fascist and communist pasts, and a host of other essential issues. The region’s

unusual creative energy deserves to be promoted and acknowledged internationally, especially as it has resulted in—to borrow Havel’s words—theatrical productions that are at once urgent, intellectually penetrating, complex, challenging, and powerful.

The 2018 **REHEARSAL FOR TRUTH** festival will present four performances in the original languages with English supertitles, followed by talk-backs with the artists and after parties hosted by the countries cultural institutes and consulates general in NYC. There will also be two staged readings, one panel discussion and a Gala event in honor of **The Honorable Madeleine Albright**. These events will take place at The Bohemian National Hall (321 East 73rd Street). All **REHEARSAL FOR TRUTH** productions are **free to the public except the Gala Event**. The festival is supported by The Bohemian Benevolent & Literary Association, NYC Cultural Affairs and New York City Council Member Ben Kallos.

Overview:

September 25, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

NIGHT BEFORE THE FUNERAL/ POHREB AZ ZITRA (Stage Reading)

Presented by: Untitled Theater #61

Playwright: Natalie Kocab Translated by: Alex Zucker Director: Edward Einhorn

September 26, 2018, 5 p.m.

The Power of the Powerless in China (Panel Discussion)

With Andrew Nathan - Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, *Disturbing the Peace Award*, for a *Courageous Writer at Risk* winner, Liao Yiwu and fellow nominee, Liu Xia. Translator: Wen Huang
Moderated by Carl Gershman, President of the National Endowment for Democracy.

September 26, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

PROTEST / DEBT

Presented by: Svanda Theater, Prague, Czech Republic

Playwrights: Vaclav Havel and Marek Hejduk. Director: Daniel Hrbek

PROTEST translated by Jan Novak DEBT: translated by Alex Zucker

Cast: Robert Jaskow, Tomas Pavelka, Jacob Erfteimeijer, Tomas Korenek

Supported by City of Prague, Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic,

Consulate General of the Czech Republic in New York, Czech Center New York

and the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the UN.

September 27, 2018, 6 p.m.

Reality Czech Gala Event will mark the hundredth anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia. The Honorable Madeleine Albright will be the evening's most esteemed honoree. The hosts for the evening will be two-time Tony Award winning actress Christine Ebersole and Czech puppeteer - Vit Horejs.

The *Disturbing the Peace Award, for a Courageous Writer at Risk 2018* will be presented to Chinese author - Liao Yiwu at the event.

Open to the Public

September 28, 2018, 6 p.m.

PANKRAC 45 (Stage Reading)

Presented by: The New School for Drama

Playwright: Martina Kinska Translated by Barbara Day Director: Stephen

Brown-Fried

September 28, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

EVE OF RETIREMENT/ PRED ODCHODOM NA ODPOCINOK

Presented by: Astorka Korzo '90 Theatre

Playwright: Thomas Bernhard Director: Juraj Nvota

Cast: Peter Simun, Zuzana Kronerova, Marta Sladeckova

Supported using public funding by Slovak Arts Council, Bratislava Self-Governing Region and the Slovak Consulate General in New York

September 29, 2018, 12 p.m. & 3 p.m.

SCALE 1:5 (Walking Tour Performance)

Presented by: HOPPart, Budapest, Hungary

Director: Tamas Herczeg

Cast: Tamas Herczeg, Magdolna Kiss Diana, Kata Szilagyi, Zoltan Friendenthal,
Tama Kereszteny

Supported by Placcc Festival and in-situ

September 29, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

CEZARY GOES TO WAR/CEZARY IDZIE NA WOJNE

Presented by: Komuna Warszawa, Warsaw, Poland

Playwright: Justyna Wąsik Conceived and directed by: Cezary Tomaszewski

Cast: Michael Dembinski, Weronkina Krowka, Oskar Malinowski, Szymon
Dobosik, Lukasz Stawarczyk

Supported by Theatre Institute in Warsaw, Culture.pl and Polish Cultural Institute
New York

September 24 – November 5, 2018

Czech and Slovak New York – Exhibition by Martin Nekola

A review of the many locations in the city with connections to Czech history and
to the Czech spirit.

August 21 – October 5, 2018

August 21, 1968

Commemoration of the 50 years since the end of Prague Spring and the invasion
of Czechoslovakia

Tickets to all of the events are available on Eventbrite.

NIGHT BEFORE THE FUNERAL/ POHREB AZ ZITRA (Stage Reading)

Tuesday, September 25, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

Presented by Untitled Theater Company No. 61 and Svanda Theatre

Playwright: Natalie Kocab

Translated by: Alex Zucker

Director: Edward Einhorn

Cast: Michael Bertolini, Tad, D'Agostino, Timur Kocak, Ann Moller, Alyson Leigh Rosenfeld, Sandy York

Night Before the Funeral is a new Czech play, originally produced in 2017 by the Svanda Theatre in Prague under the direction of Daniel Hrbek. A death in the family brings everybody home, but a brief peace is broken by family squabbles, politics, and life crises. The mother's new Iranian boyfriend and a spectacular public breakdown just increase the tensions. An examination of life, in all its complexity, in the modern Czech Republic.

Untitled Theater Company #61 is a Theater of Ideas: scientific, political, philosophical, and above all theatrical. Their shows mix tragedy and comedy in a manner inspired by classic absurdism, while often incorporating music, technology, and physical theater. Early defining events include their Havel Festival and Ionesco Festival, in which they produced their full works (with the participation and attendance of President Havel and with Ionesco's daughter, Marie-France, respectively). They have received Critics Picks for their work from The New York Times, Time Out, and The Village Voice.

The Svanda Theatre in Smichov is a free cultural space on the left bank of the Vltava River. They aim to create dialogue with the audience through novel dramaturgy and formulation of distinct attitudes through politically and artistically clean-cut theatre productions.

Book free tickets on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rehearsal-for-truth-festival-night-before-the-funeralpohreb-az-zitra-tickets-47958260448>

THE POWER OF THE POWERLESS IN CHINA (Panel Discussion)

Wednesday, September 26, 5 p.m.

The winner of the 2018 *Disturbing the Peace, Award for a Courageous Writer at Risk* is Chinese author, reporter, musician and poet – **Liao Yiwu** (aka Lao Wei). As a vocal critic of China’s Communist regime, he spent four years in prison after publicly reciting his poem “Massacre” in memory of the victims of the Tiananmen Square military on June 4, 1989. He currently lives in Germany, under asylum but will be attending the award ceremony at The Bohemian National Hall in New York on **September 27, 2018**.

In his books *The Corpse Walker* and *God is Red*, Liao Yiwu recounts the stunning life stories of ordinary men and women who live at the margins of Chinese society – Christian believers as well as oddballs and outcasts who have been battered by life and state repression yet who have managed to retain their irrepressible personality, invincible spirit, and innate human dignity. These stories raise the inevitable question that Vaclav Havel persistently posed as an underground playwright: Can a totalitarian state prevail against the human spirit it tries so hard to stifle? Liao Yiwu will be joined in this discussion by Liu Xia, an artist herself and the widow of Nobel Laureate and Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo; and by Professor Andrew Nathan, a leading China specialist and human rights advocate. The discussion will be moderated by Carl Gershman, the President of the National Endowment for Democracy.

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation will also be bringing *Disturbing the Peace Award, for a Courageous Writer at Risk* nominee, **Liu Xia** to NYC to join winner, Liao Yiwu at the Gala Event award ceremony and panel discussion. After substantial pressure from German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the international community, Liu Xia was finally given her freedom to leave China. She arrived in Berlin on July 10, three days before the anniversary of the death of her husband, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo, who had been under unofficial and illegal house arrest for eight years. Although never charged with a crime, Liu Xia lost her freedom due to her husband's 11-year prison sentence for drafting a petition calling for democracy and human rights in China.

The two Courageous Writers at Risk, along with Andrew Nathan - Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, will be part of a panel discussion moderated by Carl Gershman, President of the National Endowment for Democracy, during ***The Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival***, in honor of Vaclav Havel, at The Bohemian National Hall.

Translator: Wen Huang

Book free tickets on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rehearsal-for-truth-the-power-of-the-powerless-in-china-panel-discussion-tickets-49071199278>

PROTEST / DEBT

Wednesday, September 26, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

Presented by: Svanda Theater, Prague, Czech Republic

Playwrights: Vaclav Havel and Marek Hejduk

PROTEST translated by Jan Novak DEBT: translated by Alex Zucker

Director: Daniel Hrbek

Cast: Robert Jaskow, Tomas Pavelka, Jacob Erftemeijer, Tomas Korenek

Supported by City of Prague, Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic,

Consulate General of the Czech Republic in New York, Czech Center New York and the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the UN.

Thirty-three years separate two one-act plays that are connected by absurd humor and the characters of Vanek and Stanek. What happens when two writers meet—one who is not allowed to write and the other who writes whatever he wants? What if the first one has a surprising proposal for the second one? And what if the two of them meet years later when they can write freely but it is not working? Vaclav Havel's dialogue confronts the dramatic attempts of a debuting author. To sign or not to sign? To act or just to talk? Did the elites fail or did we? Protest? Debt!

Svanda Theatre is one of the oldest drama theatres in Prague. It's focused on contemporary plays and also on the bold adaptation of classics. Besides its own repertoire Svanda Theatre also offers a wide range of supporting events such as concerts, talk shows, independent theatre group productions, stage readings and also the best of Czech regional theatre work. It was also awarded the prestigious Alfred Radok' award for its dramaturgy.

Book free tickets on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rehearsal-for-truth-protest-rest-free-tickets-47699743216>

REALITY CZECH GALA EVENT

September 27, 2018, 6 p.m.

The Gala Event will mark the hundredth anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia. The Honorable Madeleine Albright will be the evening's most esteemed honoree.

The Reality Czech Gala Event will honor Secretary Albright for her unparalleled contribution to the return of the Czechs and Slovaks to the democratic societies

of the world. The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation will also present their annual *Disturbing the Peace Award, for a Courageous Writer at Risk* to Liao Yiwu- an individual who has fought for freedom of expression and other rights in an exemplary, inspiring manner.

The evening's program will reflect Vaclav Havel's dedication to human rights, theater, and cultural diplomacy. The esteemed hosts for the evening will be two-time Tony Award winning actress Christine Ebersole and Czech puppeteer - Vit Horejs.

At the Reality Czech Gala Event there will be also short excerpts from shows performed by Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Polish theatre companies, which are part of the *Rehearsal for Truth* Theater Festival. The evening will also feature music by the renowned Czech singer Iva Bittova and the Slovak dulcimer band Pajtasi. The Czech restaurant Bohemian Spirit will add to the authentic Czech and Slovak ambiance of the evening.

The Reality Czech: BBLA & VHLF Gala Event is open to the public and tickets are still available on Eventbrite.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/reality-czech-bbla-vhlf-2018-gala-tickets-47191382696?aff=es2>

PANKRÁC '45 (Stage Reading)

Friday, September 28, 2018, 6 p.m.

Presented by: The New School for Drama & Svanda Theater

Playwright: Martina Kinská

Translated by Barbara Day

Director: Stephen Brown-Fried

Czechoslovak history is not fully mapped in all of its conflicts during the period immediately after the war; for a long time, no one spoke about the dark moments (such as the lynching and expulsion of German residents regardless of their actual guilt). The same applies to the rapid onset of subsequent anti-Semitism. It was a mere three years before the Communist Party definitively seized power. Monitoring, censorship, artificial processes, and death sentences once again became part of the daily order.

Set during the “national cleansing,” encompasses the atmosphere of hostility and loss of morale. The script evaluates guilt, the blindness of vengeance, responsibility for one’s actions, and remembering.

Svanda Theatre is one of the oldest drama theatres in Prague. It’s focused on contemporary plays and also on the bold adaptation of classics. Besides its own repertoire Svanda Theatre also offers a wide range of supporting events such as concerts, talk shows, independent theatre group productions, stage readings and also the best of Czech regional theatre work. It was also awarded the prestigious Alfred Radok’ award for its dramaturgy.

EVE OF RETIREMENT/ PRED ODCHODOM NA ODPOCINOK

Friday, September 28, 2018, 7:30 p.m.

Presented by: Astorka Korzo’90 Theatre

Playwright: Thomas Bernhard

Director: Juraj Nvota

Cast: Peter Simun, Zuzana Kronerova, Marta Sladeckova

Supported using public funding by Slovak Arts Council, Bratislava Self-Governing Region and the Slovak Consulate General in New York

Eve of Retirement represents not only an artistic masterpiece but also a political and social catharsis for the Slovak nation, whose government collaborated with the Nazi regime during the so-called Slovak state (1939–1945). The production may be characterized as metaphorical realism showing this “evil” and its historical recurrence. Playwright Thomas Bernhard is one of the most important German-language authors of the postwar era, he pushes his contempt for Austria as a nest of unregenerate Nazis and anti-Semites to an outrageous extreme in the play.

The production was awarded Grand Prix as Best Production at the New Drama Festival of Contemporary Slovak and World Drama 2006 organized by The Theatre Institute in Bratislava.

The Astorka Korzo'90 Theater from Bratislava is a company committed to pioneering dramaturgical and directorial works related to modern world classics. They have been one of the leading theatres in Slovakia following the legendary On Korzo Theatre that was closed for political reasons in the early 1970s.

Book free tickets on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rehearsal-for-truth-eve-of-retirement-pred-odchodom-na-odpocinok-free-tickets-47700211617>

SCALE 1:5

Saturday, September 29, 2018

12 p.m. & 3 p.m.

Presented by: HOPPart, Budapest, Hungary

Director: Tamas Herczeg

Cast: Tamas Herczeg, Magdolna Kiss Diana, Kata Szilagyi, Zoltan Friendenthal, Tama Kereszteny

Supported by Placcc Festival and in-situ

The Hungarian company HoPPart will bring the alternative musical show **SCALE 1:5** to the streets of New York by using a portable sound system and headphones to take the audience for a walk around Yorkville and the Bohemian National Hall neighborhood. The players will follow the traces of the Czech, German, and Hungarian communities that formerly inhabited this part of the Upper East Side. *Scale 1:5* has been adapted and performed in Budapest, Prague, Kosice, Marseille, Graz, and Brussels.

The members of HOPPart represent an alternative musical style. Each member of the company is professional actor, singer and multi-instrumentalist musician. While creating a theatre piece, they do everything themselves: collective writing and directing, working on the musical arrangement, singing and accompanying themselves on musical instruments.

Book free tickets on Eventbrite:

12 p.m. show: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rehearsal-for-truth-scale-15-12pm-show-tickets-48942695921>

3 p.m. show: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rehearsal-for-truth-scale-15-free-tickets-47699921750>

CEZARY GOES TO WAR/ CEZARY IDZIE NA WOJNE

Saturday, September 29, 2018

7:30 p.m.

Presented by: Komuna Warszawa, Warsaw, Poland

Conceived and directed by: Cezary Tomaszewski,

Playwright: Justyna Wąsik

Music by: Claude Debussy, Georg Friedrich Handel, Stanislaw Moniuszko, Dimitr Szostakowicz

Cast: Michael Dembinski, Weronkina Krowka, Oskar Malinowski, Szymon Dobosik, Lukasz Stawarczyk
Supported by Theatre Institute in Warsaw, Culture.pl and Polish Cultural Institute New York

The play deconstructs military ethos and pride to make the audience aware of their toxic dimensions and oppressiveness. The play draws on the author's personal experience of having to appear before an army conscription committee. This memory serves as the vehicle for a funny, witty, and spot-on critique of nationalistic war discourses, which resonates with particular force in modern-day Poland. Using elements of Moniuszko's and Szostakiewicz's musical compositions and Nijinsky's ballet *Afternoon of a Faun*, the director engages the audience in a series of subversive identity games that not only undermine gender norms but also turn the military ethos on its head.

***Komuna Warszawa** explores key issues of the contemporary world, ceaselessly seeking new forms and means of expression. Since 2007 Komuna has been an important venue for theatre performances, as well as performance art pieces, lectures, film and video-art screenings, concerts and discussions. Komuna Warszawa has taken part in some of the most prestigious festivals in Poland and the world, performing at such venues as La MaMa in New York City, HAU in Berlin or 104Centquatre in Paris.*

Book free tickets on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rehearsal-for-truth-cezary-goes-to-war-cezary-idzie-na-wojne-free-tickets-47700067185>

September 24 – November 5, 2018

Czech and Slovak New York – Exhibition by Martin Nekola

Multi-Purpose Space BBLA

There were more than 50.000 Czechs and Slovaks living in New York City over the years. In the Fall of 2018, the Czech Republic celebrates the 100th

anniversary of the foundation of the independent state. This Centennial is a great opportunity to review the many locations in the city with connections to Czech history and to the Czech spirit, to remind us of important personalities, organizations and periodicals. That is the focus of the exhibition at the Bohemian National Hall, consisting of twelve panels and dozens of unique photographs and pictures, also accompanied by a printed brochure and the lecture on Monday October 15, given by the author of the exhibition, Martin Nekola.

Organized by BBLA

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

August 21 – October 5, 2018

August 21, 1968

**Commemoration of the 50 years since the end of Prague Spring and the invasion of Czechoslovakia
CCNY Gallery**

An army of soldiers of five Soviet bloc states - the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and the German Democratic Republic - invaded the country with heavy military equipment including tanks. People were horrified and strolled into the streets to protest the occupants.

Through selection of 20 iconic photographs, screening of documentary ***Confusion*** which is based on secret footage that was taken through 1968-69, and an interactive exhibition, Czech Center New York is reflecting on the dramatic events that occurred on August 21, 1968 in Czechoslovakia when an army of soldiers of five Soviet bloc states invaded the country with heavy military equipment including tanks.

The exhibition includes photographs by Vladimír Lammer, Libuše Kyndrová, Dagmar Hochová, Miloň Novotný, Jiří Všeťka, Miroslav Martinovský, Václav

Toužimský, Jaromír Čejka, Bohumil Dobrovolský, Jiří Stivín, Gustav Aulehla, and Jan Reich, among others.

Documentary *Confusion* presents a collection of secret footage captured by two cameramen of the days and months following the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops. It features unrests in the streets of Prague and the 14th convention of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The footage was filmed throughout 1968 and 1969 and hidden afterward, however, the document was finished by Evald Schorm, and released in 1990.

About Vaclav Havel Library Foundation

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in the United States to honor, preserve, and build upon the legacy of playwright, dissident, and former President of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel.

The Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA)

The mission of the Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA), established in 1891, is to preserve the Czech and Slovak culture in New York City as well as to build a cultural and social dialogue between the Czech and Slovak communities and the American public.

Vaclav Havel (1936-2011) was a playwright, essayist, political dissident, and, after 1990, president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. In the 1960s Havel's plays *The Garden Party* and *The Memorandum* were widely performed around the world. But in the climate of political orthodoxy that followed the 1968 uprising in Czechoslovakia, Communist authorities forbade the publication and performance of Havel's works. Havel refused to be silenced and continued to write on behalf of the unjustly oppressed. He became an outspoken human rights advocate and in the 1970s was an author of *Charter 77*, the manifesto of the

Czechoslovak dissident movement, which called on the government to honor its human rights commitments under the Helsinki Accords. During the next two decades Havel was arrested many times for alleged anti-state activities and was sentenced to more than four years in prison. Havel's seminal essay, "The Power of the Powerless," written in 1978, had a profound impact on dissident and human rights movements in Eastern Europe and around the world.

Vaclav Havel Library Foundation

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Link to Publicity Photographs:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/lmhbbbsokjpd0eec/AADjKCpzRPXochKhplJe-UKFa?dl=0>