

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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'REHEARSAL FOR TRUTH'

The Best of Central European Theater in Honor of Vaclav Havel

Bohemian National Hall

321 East 73rd Street, New York, NY, 10021

September 27 – October 1, 2017



Under the auspices of Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President, and Daniel Herman, Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic, ***Rehearsal for Truth*** is a unique festival presenting the best in Central European theater.

2017 marks the inaugural year of “Rehearsal for Truth” - a Theater Festival in Honor of Vaclav Havel.

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation (VHLF) and Bohemian Benevolent & Literary Association (BBLA) will partner with Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak performing arts institutions to highlight Havel’s legacy as a playwright through live performances, panel discussions, exhibitions and an award ceremony. It will also seek to establish exchanges between U.S. and Central European theater professionals. The festival will reflect not only Havel’s contribution to twentieth-century theater but also his belief in the potential of Central European cultural traditions to enrich human existence in the modern age.

“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

We have tapped into the existing Central European theater network to bring the region’s distinctive contemporary cultural perspective to New York stages. The selection of the four productions was guided by recommendations from Theater Institutes in each country.

Over 25 partners have joined forces with the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation and BBLA to launch this festival in 2017. The festival was also made possible by grants from **The Rockefeller Brothers Fund and funded in part by a grant from the NYC & Company Foundation.**

The festival consists of four theater productions: **KORESPONDENCE V+W / V+W: LETTERS (Czech Republic), OTTHON / HOME (Hungary), NÁVŠTEVA EXPERTOV/ THE EXPERTS VISITING (Slovakia), and INTRO (Poland).**

There will also be two panel discussions. *Theatre and the Political: Dramaturgy, Ideology, and Injustice* moderated by Hana Worthen, Assistant Professor, Theatre and Performance Studies, Barnard College, Columbia University. The second panel discussion is ***No Strings Attached? Pros and Cons of Private and Government Support for the Arts*** moderated by Frank Hentschker, Executive Director at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at the CUNY Graduate Center.

The presentation of the ***Disturbing the Peace - Award for a Courageous Writer at Risk*** by Ian Buruma will take place during the festival as well as the launch of ***Havel Conversations*** (oral histories). All of the events are free to the public.

With its tradition of presenting Czech and Slovak culture for more than one hundred years, Bohemian National Hall is the perfect place to establish this new and energizing annual event.

Festival Program

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, Bohemian National Hall

5 pm: Panel Discussion: ***Theatre and the Political: Dramaturgy, Ideology, and Injustice***

Moderated by:

Hana Worthen, Assistant Professor, Theatre and Performance Studies,
Barnard College, Columbia University

Panelists:

- Martina Pecková Černá, Head of International Cooperation Department, Arts and Theatre Institute in Prague
- Zuzana Uličianska, Public Relations Department, Theatre Institute in Bratislava, playwright, journalist
- Thomas Kriegsmann, President, Arktype, New York

Venue: Multifunctional Space (3rd Floor), Bohemian National Hall

To Book FREE Tickets: <http://bit.ly/RFTPanel>

6:30 pm: Panel Discussion: *No Strings Attached? Pros and Cons of Private and Government Support for the Arts*

Moderated by:

Frank Hentschker, Executive Director at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at the CUNY Graduate Center

Panelists:

- Attila Szabó, Deputy Director, Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute of the Petőfi Literary Museum
- Agata Adamiecka-Sitek, Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, writer, researcher
- Tea Alagić, Head of the MFA Directing Department at The New School for Drama

Venue: Multifunctional Space (3rd Floor), Bohemian National Hall

To Book FREE Tickets: <http://bit.ly/RFTPanel2>

8 pm: Budapest, Hungary

dollardaddy's Presents:

OTTHON/HOME

Directed by Tamás Ördög

Krisztina Urbanovits as Elise

Máté Dezső Georgita as Fredrik

Emőke Kiss-Végh as Gerda

Tamás Ördög as Axel

The show will be performed in Hungarian with English subtitles

Please note the production contains partial nudity.

Talk back after the show introduced by Attila Szabó, Deputy Director, Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute

Venue: BNH Ballroom

Afterparty reception at BNH Ballroom Bar

To Book FREE Tickets: <http://bit.ly/OTTHONHOME>

The second show of the trilogy loosely based on a Strindberg play (The Pelican) presented by a small group of young theatre makers usually performing in a small, very sterile environment like a rehearsal room or ballet room. A very intimate and intensive experience, very much based on the art of the actor, of a rarely produced drama about familial politics and economic inequality that resonates in the same way as when the play was first staged in 1907.

Review:

“So there we are sitting in a gym-like, neon-lit rehearsal room around the players, whose authenticity is almost scary, while they present the fighting couple, the cunning relative, the secret lover, the abandoned child or the pushy exterminator, and all we can do is peep and giggle, every one of us touched, piqued and tricked in different moments. This show really hits the nail on the head.” **Andrea Stuber, critic**

“The customary bubble around the actor dissipates, the performer becomes approachable, the spectator emancipated. They stand on equal grounds.”

(www.index.hu, a leading Hungarian news and cultural site)

Information about the Family

Trilogy: <http://dollardaddys.tumblr.com/familytrilogy>

Trailer: <https://youtu.be/D9fAyU6Oy0A>



Emőke Kiss-Végh as Gerda and Tamás Ördög as Axel_photo by Csenge Ligetvári

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

6:30 pm: Patron Reception for VIP guests and artists, Bohemian Spirit Restaurant

8 pm: **Disturbing the Peace** – Award for a Courageous Writer at Risk presented by Ian Buruma

Venue: BNH Ballroom

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation's Disturbing the Peace Award recognizes writers who share Havel's passionate commitment to human rights and have suffered unjust persecution for their beliefs. The award is given each year to a writer of a distinguished work of fiction, literary nonfiction, biography/memoir, drama, or poetry, who is courageous in dissent and has been punished for challenging an oppressive regime. The award, which includes a \$5,000 cash

prize, supports talented individuals who embody Havel's legacy while drawing attention to the many writers worldwide who bravely fight human rights violations.

The shortlisted nominees for 2017 include:

- **Asli Erdogan (Turkey)**, a prize-winning writer, human rights activist, columnist for Ozgur Gundem, a pro-Kurdish newspaper, and former columnist for the newspaper Radikal.
- **Elif Shafak (Turkey)**, an award-winning novelist and the most widely read woman writer in Turkey. She is an advocate of women's rights, minority rights, and freedom of expression.
- **Burhan Sonmez (Turkey)**, originally a lawyer in Istanbul, founder of the social-activist culture organization TAKSAV (Foundation for Social Research, Culture and Art).
- **Liu Xia (China)**, a poet, activist, photographer, and founding member of the Independent Chinese PEN Center.
- **Serhiy Zhadan (Ukraine)**, an internationally known writer, with 12 books of poetry and 7 novels, and winner of more than a dozen literary awards. He has been engaged in politics since Orange Revolution.

8:15 pm: **Prague, Czech Republic**

Theatre on the Balustrade presents:

KORESPONDENCE V+W / V+W: LETTERS

Directed by: Jan Mikulášek

Václav Vašák as Jiří Voskovec

Jiří Vyoralék as Jan Werich

Anežka Kubátová as Zdenička

Talk back after the show introduced by Petr Štědroň, Theater Director, and Dora Viceníková, Artistic Director

The show will be performed in Czech with English subtitles

Venue: BNH Ballroom

Afterparty reception at BNH Ballroom Bar

To Book FREE Tickets: <http://bit.ly/VWLETTERS>

The text of this performance is drawn from the correspondence of Voskovec and Werich, the legendary founders of the Liberated Theatre in Prague, who had to flee fascist Europe and then separated in 1948 after the communist government got into power in Czechoslovakia. Their correspondence is a strong statement of life by two extraordinarily original and artistically mature personalities as they seek to understand a bipolar world full of iron curtains and cold wars.

These letters are priceless evidence of the intellectual and spiritual world of V+W and they are also the top literary work in Jiří Voskovec's postwar period. "The form of abbreviation, short connections, theatrical allusions, plus the private codes and brilliant stylization, unbelievable addressing and signing" – these are the apt words the critics used to describe the correspondence.

Reviews:

"This carefully-chosen selection from the correspondence of a creative duo split asunder by fate is directed by Jan Mikulášek with exceptional directorial invention. Jan Kolář, Divadelní noviny

"Mikulášek's inventive work, precise down to the last detail, is not only enjoyed by the generation who had V + W engraved in their hearts, whether from records or Frič's film comedies. The Reduta's latest play is not "just" a historical document, but also a bitter reminder of a bipolar world divided by an iron curtain. In its conclusion, above all, it becomes a raw but exceptional exploration of the bitter ends of two men, whom fate would not allow to be either together or apart."

Luboš Mareček, MF DNES

The production was selected as the "Success of the Month" by the editors of Divadelní noviny.

Info about the show in English:

<http://www.nazabradli.cz/en/repertoire/current/554-v-w-the-letters-korespondence-v-w>

TRAILER: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbw3I5LkvM>



Jiří Vyorálek, Anežka Kubátová, Václav Vašák (photo by KIVA)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

8 pm: Bratislava, Slovakia

Studio 12 presents:

NÁVŠTEVA EXPERTOV/ THE EXPERTS VISITING

Text by: Egon Bondy

Directed by: Ingrid Timková

Robert Roth as Colonel

Daniel Fischer as Lieutenant

Lukáš Pelč and Marta Maťová as Experts

Talk back after the show introduced by Zuzana Uličianska, Theatre Institute in Bratislava

The show will be performed in Slovak with English subtitles

Venue: BNH Ballroom

Afterparty reception at BNH Ballroom Bar

Please note the show contains explicit language.

To Book FREE Tickets: <http://bit.ly/EXPERTSVISTING>

The play written by one of the most outstanding Czechoslovak underground personalities, Egon Bondy, is based on his personal experience from the environment of the secret services. The creators concentrate on suggestive acting bringing the audience into physical contact with a harsh reality. They are asking questions about the borderlines of human “normality”, about the desire to manipulate human freedom and about the limitations that we are willing to surpass for a certain price.

Review:

*The actors perform these roles so monstrously, winning all massacres with huge pleasure, that you start to like them in the end. It is interesting to see, among the current in-house productions of Studio 12, how women-directors interpret violence and deviations. The permanently sold out theatre at all repeat performances of *The Visit of Experts* clearly confirms that audiences like and enjoy representations of hate and terror. **Sandra Polovková**, *Monitoring of Theatres*, 25 July 2015*



Marta Mařová, Daniel Fischer, Lukáš Peř, Robert Roth. Photo: Robert Tappert

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1

7 pm: **Gdańsk, Poland**

The Dada von Bzdülów Theatre presents:

INTRO

Choreography and performance by: Katarzyna Chmielewska,
Katarzyna Ustowska, Leszek Bzdyl, and Piotr Stanek

The show will be performed in Polish with English subtitles

Talk back after the show introduced by Anna Galas-Kosil, Zbigniew
Raszewski Theatre Institute

Venue: BNH Ballroom

Afterparty reception at BNH Ballroom Bar

To Book FREE Tickets: <http://bit.ly/INTRODadaTheater>

"INTRO" by Dada von Bzdülöw Theatre, Anno Domini 2015, draws inspiration, recognition and nervous melancholy from the undying spirit of the Dada movement, which - as its Apostles used to say - was, is and will be. 99 years after the emanation of Dada in Zurich (AD 1916), accompanied by the scent of blood from the trenches of Verdun, national exultation, and the revelations of Fatima - Azazel or whatever he happens to be called by the Talmudists or the Islamists - debuted in Poland. Under the wings of Azazel, Poland has become a thesis, synthesis and antithesis at the same time. Under the authority of Azazel, there's a growing conviction in a Pole that ONE means more than MANY. Dada Theatre, inspired by the spirit of dada, is going to rip the veil off it, and reveal the deadly face of the Angel of Death; it's going to laugh in the face of the Angel of Death. Dada von Bzdülöw Theatre in the play "INTRO", both mockingly and desperately, shouts out: Dada is Polska!!! The shouting and dance of Dada von Bzdülöw Theatre is accompanied by a musical band Nagrobki /Gravestones/.

trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeLBkCrwVYY>



Katarzyna Chmielewska as Zorana Vukmirović Photo by Dominik Werner

Review:

"Intro" with absurd black humour, desecralizing it all, can do more than all reasonable discussions infested with scientific arguments together. A concoction of red and white symbols, sharp sounds of vuvuzelas, explosives, Polish Green-legged chickens, demonic Muslim women, all of that makes us find certain distance that the present reality seems to lack so much. Yet, it is a provocation for provocation, as dictates uninhibited by anything imagination of dadaists.

*Because first and foremost "Intro" is a challenge, faced by all our myths. **Anna Jazgarska, Teatralny.pl***

*"Intro" is not a lightweight performance, easy and enjoyable. It entices with dance attraction and originality in choreographic exploration of expression, but leaves the viewer many a times in a dark alley, where you can't know whether still laugh or already start being serious. It enters into a discussion on national identity, and shows how little space for freedom remains, when xenophobia comes along with total disengagement, mistakenly defined as tolerance. Can "Intro" thus, with its ironic and grotesque message, take a stand in this difficult and uncomfortable social discourse? Further than the wall we cannot go, but the plaster may start chipping off. **Anna Kołodziejaska, Teatralia***

27 SEPTEMBER –OCTOBER 1 DAILY 10 AM -10 PM

HAVEL CONVERSATIONS

The *Havel Conversations* project is an oral history initiative in which artists, activists and politicians reflect upon Vaclav Havel's legacy, and themes close to the late Czech president such as cultural diplomacy and human rights. This collection of interviews with American politicians (such as Henry Kissinger and Madeleine Albright), and artists (such as Suzanne Vega) stresses the work that Havel undertook to foster Czechoslovak-American, and then later, Czech-

American relations. These semi-structured interviews with those who knew Havel personally complement written sources which consider his political decisions from the top down; taken together, the interviews make the case for understanding policymaking as a series of conversations, instead of a paper-trail of memos. The *Havel Conversations* collection consists of video interviews and PDF transcripts, housed in full at Florida International University Libraries and partially available online at <http://www.vhlf.org/havel-in-the-world/havel-conversations/>.

Venue: BNH CINEMA

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.

We complement Vaclav Havel Library in Prague by organizing access to unique materials documenting Havel's accomplishments and activities in North America. We create an effective, cutting-edge interactive platform and bridge to promote worldwide awareness of Havel's crucial contributions not only to the democratic transition in Central Europe, but to ongoing debates about a much larger transition of the global community from the 20th to 21st century.

Through activities relating to issues important to Havel, support of research devoted to themes connected to Havel's legacy as a playwright, and memorials recognizing Havel's influence as a Global Citizen, VHFLF aims to serve as a "living library" focused on advancing the legacy of former President Havel.

The Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA)

The Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA), established in 1891, was founded as an umbrella organization representing approximately eighty Czech and Slovak cultural, educational and athletic community groups and clubs.

With contributions from the newly arrived immigrants, the Bohemian National Hall (Narodni Budova) was built four years later as a gathering place for these organizations in the Yorkville section on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

The original mission of the BBLA was and continues to be to preserve the Czech and Slovak culture in New York City. The current BBLA member organizations are:

- American Fund for Czech and Slovak Leadership Studies
- Association of Free Czechoslovak Sportsmen
- Czech and Slovak Solidarity Council
- Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America
- Dvorak American Heritage Association
- Sokol New York

The current BBLA sister organizations are:

- [Vaclav Havel Library Foundation \(VHLF\)](#)
- [National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library \(NCSML\)](#)
- [Society for the History of Czechoslovak Jews \(SHCSJ\)](#)

We are extremely grateful to our festival partners for making the *Rehearsal for Truth* theater festival, a reality.

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



HUNGARY



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The festival was made possible with the support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. It was funded in part by the NYC & Company Foundation

For high resolution images of production photos click [HERE](#)

For more information, contact:

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