



Václav Havel
LIBRARY FOUNDATION

BBLA | BOHEMIAN BENEVOLENT
& LITERARY ASSOCIATION

PRESS RELEASE

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Vaclav Havel Library Foundation, www.vhlf.org

Contact: Katerina Kyselica, Communications Manager

212 988 1733

communications@vhlf.org

The Travesty of Truth, the 2019 Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival

Experience engaging contemporary performances from Central Europe addressing political circumstances and social trends

(New York, NY—August 10, 2019)—The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation (VHLF) and Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA) are pleased to present the third edition of the Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival. Through five international performances and four special events, the festival examines different nuances of truth. The program runs from September 24 until October 7 at Manhattan’s Bohemian National Hall and offers a notable occasion for adventure of the mind and conduits for shared encounters.

The 2019 Rehearsal for Truth program, based on the concept of “The Travesty of Truth,” encourages participants to enter a dialogue on pressing matters that pervade our post-truth era.

“The time when boundary is blurred between truth and lie, theater holds the power to re-establish relationships between participants through a common engagement and common experience of truth,” states Pavla Niklova, Director of the Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival.

While some scheduled shows consider the matters of historical memory, cultural traditions or manipulation of facts (*Truth* (Poland), *Audience* (Czech Republic), *Hungarian Acacia* (Hungary)), others delve into the more intimate realm by raising questions of privacy and personal boundaries in relationships (*Watch Now* (Slovakia), *Woman Alone* (Romania)).

VHLF and BBLA have partnered with Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Slovak and Romanian performing arts and cultural institutions to host the 2019 Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival—a showcase of exemplars from contemporary European theater. While paying homage to Vaclav Havel’s legacy as a playwright, dissident and political thinker, the selected performances address current sociopolitical trends in Central Europe, offering New York audiences a unique opportunity to witness the region’s theatrical zeitgeist.

“I was probably attracted to theater (among other things) because, of all the artistic disciplines, it has the greatest potential to be a social phenomenon in the true sense.” --Vaclav Havel, *Letters to Olga*, 1983

The 2019 Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival takes place at Manhattan’s historic Bohemian National Hall. All shows are featured in their original languages with English supertitles. Each is followed by a talkback with the performers along with an afterparty hosted by the countries’ cultural institutions and consulates general in New York. Special events include a month-long exhibition showcasing Vaclav Havel’s playwright trajectory, a live virtuoso performance by orchestra Gypsy Devils and a vibrant panel discussion. The 2019 Gala celebrates the 30th anniversary of the 1989 Velvet Revolution that brought freedom to Central and Eastern European countries. It honors Ambassador Craig Stapleton and Mrs. Dorothy Stapleton and presents the Disturbing the Peace Award to a Courageous Writer at Risk.

All Rehearsal for Truth productions are free to the public except the Gala. Online registration through Eventbrite is required: www.rehearsalfortruth.eventbrite.com.

For the first time, two plays from the Rehearsal for Truth program will debut at the Jersey City Theater Center. The Slovak dance performance *Watch Now* will be featured on September 26, followed by the Polish play *Truth* on September 27. To find out further information, visit www.jctcenter.org. In addition, Vaclav Havel’s play *Audience* will be featured at Davis Performing Arts Center in Washington, D.C., on October 2, and at Chopin Theatre in Chicago on October 6, and Romanian play *Woman Alone* will be presented on September 27 at the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York as part of their Romanian-American Studio Theater series.

FESTIVAL OVERVIEW

Tuesday, September 24, 7:30 pm

***Woman Alone* / Romania / play, talkback, afterparty**

Playwrights: Dario Fo, Franca Rame

Directed by: Daniel Grigore-Simion

Cast: Andreea Bibiri

Presented by: Romanian Cultural Institute, Art Theatre Bucharest

Woman Alone unveils the story of Maria and the elements of her domestic life that entrap her. Will Maria, an embodiment of physically, verbally or non-verbally abused women, find the courage to escape?

More information: <https://www.vhlf.org/theater/rehearsal-for-truth-2019-woman-alone-romania/>

Wednesday, September 25, 7:30 pm
***Watch Now* / Slovakia / play, talkback, afterparty**
Conceived and directed by: Lucia Holinova
Choreographers: Daniel Racek, Lucia Holinova
Performers: Barbora Janakova, Daniel Racek,
Music: Vlado Holina
Vocals: Sandra Tordova
Presented by: RESERVA

Captivating dance performance that delves into the present-day issues of identity and loss of privacy. Accompanied by live music, *Watch Now* follows a couple undergoing a difficult time in their relationship.

More information: <https://www.vhlf.org/theater/rehearsal-for-truth-2019-watch-now-slovakia/>

Saturday, September 28, 6:00 pm
***Hungarian Acacia* / Hungary / presentation of performance projects, discussion**
Conceived and directed by: Kristof Kelemen, Bence Gyorgy Palinkas

Engaging, behind-the-scenes glimpse at *Hungarian Acacia* and other performance projects conceived to address the public discourse in Hungary in a satirical way.

More information: <https://www.vhlf.org/theater/rehearsal-for-truth-2019-hungarian-acacia-hungary/>

Saturday, September 28, 7:30 pm
***Truth* / Poland / play, talkback, afterparty**
Conceived and directed by: Piotr Borowski
Cast: Gianna Benvenuto, Magda Czarny, Michal Lorent
Presented by: Studium Teatralne, Polish Cultural Institute

Truth exposes a lack thereof: an existence fraught with the absence of the sacred, devoid of any mystery, purpose or metaphysical worth. While the main character of *Truth* is not present, the scene is preoccupied with striving for knowledge and new creation, as well as by aggression, survival instinct and usurpation that claims a monopoly on truth.

More information: <https://www.vhlf.org/theater/rehearsal-for-truth-2019-truth-poland/>

Friday, October 4, 7:30 pm
***Audience* / Czech Republic / play, talkback, afterparty**
Playwright: Vaclav Havel
Directed by: Jakub Spalek
Cast: Jan Potmesil, Jakub Spalek
Presented by: Kaspar Theatre in Celetna, Czech Center New York

Audience centers on a meeting between brewery manager Sladek and employee Vanek. While the manager is clearly opening too many beers and inducing binge drinking, it is less clear what he wants from Vanek.

More information: <https://www.vhlf.org/theater/rehearsal-for-truth-2019-audience-czech-republic/>

SPECIAL EVENTS

Thursday, September 26, 6:00 pm
30 Years of Freedom Gala / benefit night

Benefit gala celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution leading to the independence of Czechoslovakia and other Central and Eastern European countries, with guests of honor Ambassador Craig Stapleton and Mrs. Dorothy Stapleton along with presentation of the annual Disturbing the Peace Award to a Courageous Writer at Risk.

More information: <https://www.vhlf.org/events/gala-celebrating-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-velvet-revolution/>

Friday, September 27, 7:30 pm

Gypsy Devils / concert

Live virtuoso performance by legendary orchestra Gypsy Devils. This talented ensemble of Romani musicians from Slovakia plays original arrangements by combining classical pieces with genres such as jazz, ethno, flamenco and Gypsy.

More information: <https://www.vhlf.org/theater/rehearsal-for-truth-2019-gypsy-devils-slovakia/>

Monday, October 7, 6:00 pm

In Conversation: Havel in America / moderated discussion

Pavla Niklova, Director of the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation, has invited participants from the oral history collection *Havel Conversations* and authors of the new book *Havel v Americe* (Havel in America)—featuring interviews from the project—to share their experiences. The event will also honor the achievements of Ambassador William Luers, Director of the Iran Project and Adjunct Professor at Columbia University, on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

More information: <https://www.vhlf.org/theater/rehearsal-for-truth-2019-in-conversation-havel-in-america-moderated-discussion/>

September 5 – October 20

Vaclav Havel – Citizen and Dramatist / exhibition

Presented by: Czech Center New York

Graphic panel exhibition *Vaclav Havel – Citizen and Dramatist* showcases Vaclav Havel's playwright trajectory through printed stills of his theatrical works from the early 1960s up to now, and photographs and documents providing insight into Havel's life. Short excerpts from Havel's interviews will be read by Untitled Theater Company #61 at the opening on September 5.

More information: <http://new-york.czechcentres.cz/program/event-details/exhibition-vaclav-havel-citizen-and-dramatist/>

WHERE

Bohemian National Hall, 321 East 73rd Street (between 2nd & 1st Aves), New York, NY 10021
Subway: Q line - 72nd Street, 6 line – 68th Street Hunter College or 77th Street

PARKING

Discounted parking of \$26 for up to 10 hours for guests of Bohemian National Hall is available at GGMC Parking. Two parking entrances: 307 East 73rd Street and 300 East 74th Street. Present your parking ticket at BNH reception for a validation sticker.

ABOUT THE 2019 REHEARSAL FOR TRUTH THEATER FESTIVAL

The 2019 Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival is organized by the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation (VHLF) and Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA), in partnership with Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Slovak and Romanian performing arts organizations and cultural

institutes. The series of events highlight Vaclav Havel's legacy as a playwright through live performances, panel discussions, exhibitions and a ceremony for the Disturbing the Peace Award to a Courageous Writer at Risk. A key objective is to establish exchanges between U.S. and Central European theater professionals. The festival reflects Havel's contribution to 20th-century theater as well as his belief in the potential of Central European cultural traditions to enrich human existence in the modern age. The program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Vaclav Havel Library Foundation (VHLF)

Vaclav Havel Library Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in the United States in 2012 to honor, preserve and build upon the legacy of playwright, dissident and former President of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel. VHLF creates an effective, cutting-edge interactive platform to promote worldwide awareness of Havel's crucial contributions to the democratic transition in Central Europe as well as to apply his philosophies to ongoing debates concerning the evolution towards a global community.

Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA)

Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association is a nonprofit organization established in 1891 in New York City as an umbrella entity for almost 80 Czech and Slovak immigrant organizations. The mission of BBLA is to preserve and support Czech and Slovak culture in New York City. BBLA's members include 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 and Sokol New York.

Vaclav Havel (1936-2011)

Vaclav Havel was a playwright, essayist, political dissident and, after 1989, president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. His first full-length play performed in public, *The Garden Party* (1963), won him international acclaim. Soon after its premiere came his well-known *The Memorandum* (1965) along with *The Increased Difficulty of Concentration* (1968). In 1968, *The Memorandum* was brought to The Public Theater in New York, which helped to establish Havel's name in the United States. During the repressive period that followed the 1968 Prague Spring, Communist authorities forbade the publication and performance of Havel's works. Havel refused to be silenced and became an outspoken human rights advocate. He manifested his experience of working odd jobs into the so-called "Vanek Trilogy" (named after Ferdinand Vanek, a stand-in for Havel), and the three screenplays circulated in samizdat format throughout Czechoslovakia. Havel's reputation as a leading dissident crystalized in January 1977 with the publication of the *Charter 77*, a Czechoslovak manifesto that called on the government to honor its human rights commitments under the Helsinki Accords. Havel was arrested many times throughout the remainder of Communism for alleged anti-state activities and sentenced to more than four years in prison. His seminal essay, *The Power of the Powerless* (1978), had profound impact on dissident and human rights movements worldwide.

Press contact:

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Social media: #rehearsalfortruth

Facebook and Twitter: @HavelLibrary, Instagram: @havel_library

Link to publicity photographs: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t3o3tpamthdcjyh/AAD2MXkv-0x6Xy_M4PLydMmoa?dl=0

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