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**Press Release dated 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**The International Theatre World Brno Festival 2025**

**The Theatre World Brno Festival Invites You to Its 16<sup>th</sup> Year**

From 17<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> May, Brno is going to once again become the capital of far more than just the Czech theatre world. For already the sixteenth consecutive year, the Theatre World Brno international festival will offer its attendees more than seventy performances and other events that can't usually be seen in Brno. In the first festival days, festival goers will be invited to visit the foyer of the Janáček Theatre, which will open its doors to the general public for the occasion, hosting the *Festival Open House*. At this central meeting point, visitors will find all-day theatrical programmes for both children and adults, or just enjoy having a rest while admiring the venue which is ordinarily accessible only on performance days. The introductory programme will culminate with the *Ark* project by the NTB Ballet ensemble, a dance performance thematises our planet Earth as a symbol of the ark of humanity. One of the biggest and best ranked of domestic theatre festivals will also bring to Brno a unique selection of foreign productions from Poland, Austria, Slovakia, and Germany as well as Czechia's best theatre shows. Packed with grand drama, chamber projects, dance performances, site-specific productions, shows for children, and a wide scope of side events, this set of more than ten days is, as usual, co-organised by almost all Brno-based theatres: the National Theatre Brno, the Brno City Theatre, the Goose on a String Theatre, the Polárka Theatre, the Radost Theatre in association with the art scenes of the Theatre Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts – Studio Marta and the Orlí Street Theatre. Additionally, this year's festival is accompanied with a campaign titled 'Festival and History Again', whose connecting threads include portraits of eight actors from the participating theatres and graphic design by the Prague R. V. N. Studio. It thereby follows the theme of the festival's major highlight – the production *Quanta*.

**TWB Festival First Night of the International Project *Quanta* and Foreign Theatre Showcase**

The *Festival Open House* at the Janáček Theatre will be followed by the major highlight of the TWB festival, the performance *Quanta*, which TWB coproduced. *"Together with the whole implementation team and the festival dramaturgic board we set, year after year, a goal of pushing our festival closer and closer to Europe's festival elite. Following current staging trends while partaking, together with other entities, in a project that none of them could economically afford on its own – such was our next aim we wished for the festival. And we are pleased to have reached that aim with the Quanta project by Łukasz Twarkowski, a staging celebrity whose production The Employees was a great success when presented at the Brno Exhibition Centre last year,"* remarks Martin Glaser, TWB festival director and director of the National Theatre Brno. Brought forth at the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, the *Quanta* project involved, besides TWB, the following coproducing partners: Poland's Divine Comedy International Theatre Festival, the Greek arts foundation Onassis Stegi, and the

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Belgian cultural centre deSingel. The play, featuring a fictitious gathering, at a Swiss hotel, of the most renowned interwar physicians, chemists and philosophers, offers the audience a breathtaking and resourceful multimedia experience, augmented with the imposingness of the Janáček Theatre's stage. It is quantum physics that becomes not only the audience's guide through the story full of twists and turns on the backdrop of the interwar political situation and the life paths of the main protagonists, but also the very mover of individual scenes of the performance. Abounding with live projections and captivating music, *Quanta* will premiere on 20<sup>th</sup> May at 7 p.m. and re-run on 21<sup>st</sup> May at 6 p.m. Prior to these performances, the daily *Deník N* will record a live podcast about the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the expansion of quantum physics; the recording will take place at the Reduta Theatre on 20<sup>th</sup> May.

Two more significant productions to be programmed by the TWB festival result from cooperation. The first one, titled *When the Snow Melts*, is a dramatic contemporary story about a Polish family staged by the Warsaw Rozmaitości Theatre. It will be presented in cooperation with the Polish Adam Mickiewicz Institute at the Reduta Theatre on 27<sup>th</sup> May. The second one, which bears the title *On the River*, was coproduced by the Slovak National Theatre and the Schauspielhaus in Vienna. It relates a heartbreaking story of a doctor, an architect and a writer who all long for freedom, must cope with their personal hardships as well as with the adversities of the period of the 1950s to 1980s. The production starring Richard Stanek will be hosted by the Drama Stage of the Brno City Theatre on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> May on 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.

This year, the Drama Ensemble of the Slovak National Theatre will be represented by two of its productions. The second one, *Drain*, deals with the present-day phenomenon of the emigration of (not only) young and educated people. What such a brain drain means for Slovakia, and the lesson that Czechia can learn from it, will be rendered by starring actors Emília Vášáryová, Emil Horváth, and Gregor Hološka at the Reduta Theatre on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. The varied choice of Slovak theatrical production is not random. By laying stress on Slovak theatre the TWB festival ties in with the special dramaturgic line 'Divadlo je střed/t zájmu' ('Theatre is the centre, and a clash, of interest') within the framework of which a range of pre-show introductory speeches by lecturers, post-show discussions, a special programme run in collaboration with the weekly *Týdeník Respekt* and moderated by Erik Tabery, and a theatrical excursion. Thus, the festival programme comprehensively reflects the most recent happenings in Slovakian culture.

The selection of foreign theatre productions intended for adults will be concluded with *Because the Night*, a performance about legendary American singer Patti Smith created by Theatre Bremen, which is very popular among festivalgoers. *Because the Night* will be shown at the Mahen Theatre two times in a row, on 24<sup>th</sup> May at 6 p.m. and on 25<sup>th</sup> May at 5 p.m.



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Young audiences, too, will be offered the possibility to see foreign productions. One of this year's highlights is the puppet show *Robinson.ka* for children aged 5 and over which was co-created by the Slovak Puppet Theatre Žilina and the acclaimed ODIVO company. The story of a girl who lives in middle of the ocean will be shown at the Orli Street Theatre on 24<sup>th</sup> May. Young adult audiences can look forward to seeing *The Odyssey*, a production by the Bratislava LUDUS Theatre inspired by the famous Homer's epic which one of Germany's most successful contemporary authors, Roland Schimmelpfennig, adapted for youngsters. How did the history student cope with the uneasy task of retelling the story of Odyssey? Young festival goers will be able to get the answer as early as 26<sup>th</sup> May. The foreign programme for children wouldn't be complete without the Norwegian project of the NIE Theatre titled *We Come From Afar*, which is performed both in Czech and English. This intimate performance, during which a yurt is put up right on the Mahen Theatre's stage, allows the audience to look into the lives of Syrian refugees. The performance, which employs the principles of shadow theatre and is accompanied by live music, can be seen on 28<sup>th</sup> May.

### Dance and New Circus at the Festival

The TWB festival section focused on dance and motion artistry, which has long enjoyed great popularity with the audience, offers performances that differ from the genre of classical ballet. This year, the festival will host three productions designed for big festival stages. The first is a joint project of Czechia's renowned dance ensemble DEKKADANCERS and the Czech Philharmonic which have co-created a performance combining dance with spoken word. Inspired by the novella *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, the show features not only performance dancers, but also actors Jiří Lábus and Vilém Udatný. The accompanying music has been composed by Ivan Acher, highly regarded Czech composer of theatre and film music. *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* will be shown on the music stage of the Brno City Theatre on 25<sup>th</sup> May. The second dance performance programmed by the TWB festival is titled *The National Bad habit Collection*. Inspired by Kateřina Šedá's eponymous project, this comedic new circus performance draws up an inventory of the bad habits that we all know so well and live with. It is also on the music stage of the Brno City Theatre that this bad habit inventory will be unveiled to festival attendees on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. The third motion theatre production of this year's edition – the *Fairy Tales* project – was created by the POCKETART collective and coproduced by the Tanec Praha festival. TWB will present it within its 'Echoes of the Little Inventory' section echoing this Prague theatre festival. Featuring eight female performers and live music, the suggestive motion as well as visual show will be hosted by the Mahen Theatre on 27<sup>th</sup> May. "We are glad that we can repeatedly invite top Czech dancers to big stages of the Theatre World Brno festival and that these shows are so popular among audiences. It clearly indicates to us that Czech dance artistry doesn't remain on the periphery of theatregoers' interest but gives rise to modern and remarkable performances that we can put on our festival programme," adds Karel Littera, dramaturge of the TWB festival and the NTB Ballet Company.

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## Festival for Children

As regards the programme for children, the Theatre World Brno festival picks up the threads of its last year's fruitful cooperation with the Theatre Institute and the Arts Institute in organising an international conference of theatre critics which enjoyed worldwide attendance. This year, TWB follows up with this initiative by calling a professional meeting of the organisation ASSITEJ, which serves as an umbrella for European projects in the area of children and young adult theatre. The Czech theatrical output will be represented by productions shown during the TWB festival. Attended by a group of experts the gathering will also provide the occasion for getting to know each other, and for networking.

*"When selecting children's performances for the festival programme our primary objective is to propose a wide choice for all ages, because that's the only way to bring these diverse groups the best in terms of topics and staging so as to offer all of them, the youngest as well as the older children, breathtaking theatrical experiences,"* remarks Jiří Hajdyla, artistic director of the Polárka Theatre. *The Red Balloon*, a show for the youngest audience, will be presented by the traditional children's theatre from Liberec, the Naive Theatre. Can a little boy save his friend – a red balloon – from the pitfalls of others? To get the answer, child audiences are invited to the cellar studio of the Goose on a String Theatre on 24<sup>th</sup> May. What will not be missing either at the festival is one of Czechia's most popular theatres, Minor, whose production *Little Hamlet* will be hosted by the Polárka Theatre on 24<sup>th</sup> May. Young theatregoers can also look forward to an adaptation of the literary classic *The Pilot and the Little Prince* put on stage by the Ostrava Puppet Theatre. Children are welcome to join the two protagonists on their adventure of discovery, which starts at the Orlí Street Theatre on 25<sup>th</sup> May.

## Festival Co-productions

*"For already the sixth year in a row, the festival pursues what we call the 'Staging incubator'. It is a project within the framework of which we make it possible for Czech independent theatre companies to implement, with our participation, projects that are beyond the institutional potential of these entities and that couldn't otherwise be put into practice. In the past six years we lent support to sixteen projects of different genres all of which had their festival premiere at our festival. It will be the same this year as we, together with these partner companies, have prepared several interesting novelties,"* says Barbara Gregorová, chief dramaturge of the festival, explaining its coproduction activities. The most important co-production project of this year, which the TWB festival has created in cooperation with Divadlo Letí, is the immersive performance **The Last One Out Turns Off the Lights**, which the festival will showcase at Káznice, Brno's former jailhouse. The production is the fruit of a two-year workshop held under the patronage of the *Fabulamundi – Playwriting Europe* network. Six playwrights and three stage directors – Emma Žežulová, Ctibor Němec and Jan Froňek – unveil their original vision of the preparations for the end of the world and allow the audience to

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experience them firsthand. The performance will be on twice a day from 19th to 22nd May. Within the scope of its co-production projects the TWB festival thinks also about child audiences. That is why this year's programme includes several plays for children, one of them being **Daddy Can't Go On!** put on by Jiří Šimek and Sára Arnstein from the Ufftenživot company. Another co-production is the project **Mountains, Valleys, Episodes** by the experimental theatre D'epog. Festival audiences will have the chance to experience this theatre performance in unusual daytimes: on 25<sup>th</sup> May at 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. in the market hall on Brno's Cabbage Market. The third co-production project intended for this year's edition, *A World Round the Corner* by Prague's Studio Hrdinů, will be on stage at the Goose on a String Theatre on 28<sup>th</sup> May. The last festival co-production involves the work-in-progress project *(ID)ENTITY* by Brno's Aldente company, which specialises in inclusion of persons with Down syndrome through creative work. Festival attendees are welcome peek into their creation in the cellar studio of the Goose on a String Theatre on 27<sup>th</sup> May.

### Domestic Productions

Bringing the best of the Czech theatrical production to Brno as every year is the cornerstone of the 2025 TWB festival programme scheduling. The Slováké Theatre from Uherské Hradiště will present a play tailor-made for its drama ensemble titled *As We have Got This Far*. Featuring the theatre's prominent actresses Pavla Hejčmanová, Jitka Hlaváčová, and Petra Staňková, this performance will be hosted by the Drama stage of the Brno City Theatre on 25<sup>th</sup> May. The Moravian-Silesian Theatre will participate with their classical ancient tragedy *Medea* about love misadventures of the mythical royal daughter. Spectacularly staged by Jakub Šmíd, the production can be seen at the Mahen Theatre on 26<sup>th</sup> May. Another production put on in Ostrava that makes part of the festival programme is Friedrich Schiller's drama *Mary, Queen of Scots* updated by British stage director and prose writer Robert Icke. Starring Magdalena Holcová and Alexandra Palatinusová under the direction of Jan Holec, art director of the Petr Bezruč Theatre, it will be presented at the Drama stage of the Brno City Theatre on 26<sup>th</sup> May.

Small drama studio stages, too, have their place in the festival programme. Prague's NoD theatre will present their production *Scammers Attack* directed by Janek Lesák. The play is woven from authentic stories in which it is not you but your money that interests the person who contacts you by phone or online, or who knocks on your door. It will be hosted by the Orlí Street theatre on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. The popular ensemble Geisslers Hofcomodianten return to the festival with their new production *Simply Simplicius, or My Goodness!* based on Hanse Jakoba Christoffela von Grimmelshausen's book fittingly subtitled "Forrest Gump Against the Backdrop of Thirty Years' War". Festivalgoers can meet him at the Marta Studio on 25<sup>th</sup> May.

### Brno Theatres Showcase

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For the organising Brno-based theatres, the TWB festival represents an extraordinary opportunity to present, in a comprehensive manner, their work to visitors from outside Brno. The main organiser, the National Theatre Brno, will showcase its production *Patriots* with Tomáš Šulaj and Viktor Kuzník in the lead roles. Directed by Jakub Šmíd it has lately found strong resonance with both audiences and critics. The festival will bring it to the Mahen Theatre on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Two days later, on 24<sup>th</sup> May, the Reduta Theatre will be the venue for the play titled *A Love Hotelkeeper* starring Vladimír Krátký and Bedřich Výtisk under Štěpán Pácl's direction. The Brno City Theatre's festival programme comprises the most recent productions, such as *The Father*, a play based on the eponymous film starring Anthon Hopkins and staged by Petr Gazdík. It will be shown on the Drama stage on 27<sup>th</sup> May. As regards the music scene, the TWB festival programme will follow in cinematographic footsteps: on 28<sup>th</sup> May, the Brno City Theatre's bigger stage will host the legendary musical *Jackal Years* directed by Stanislav Slovák.

The Goose on a String Theatre has included two of its latest stage feats in its 2025 showcase. The first, *Someday Our Kids Will Thank Us*, is based on the eponymous novel by Petr Šesták and stars Dominik Telekim under the direction of Martin Modrý, a successful representative of young Czech stage directors. It will be presented on the theatre's small stage 'provázek.sál' on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Its cellar stage 'provázek.sklep' will be the venue, on 26<sup>th</sup> May, for the second project titled *From the Sexual Life of Our People* and directed by Daniela Špinar. The children's theatre Polárka has also chosen a staging by Špinar for its festival showcase. On 20<sup>th</sup> May, its small stage will host *Love From TikTok*. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May, Polárka's big stage will be the venue for the performance *The First Time* directed by Štěpán Gajdoš. The premiere of the Radost Theatre's brand new project – an adaptation of the literary classic *The Animal Farm* – is scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> May. It will be followed, on 28<sup>th</sup> May, by the performance *1950: Horakova ON AIR* about the dark period of Czechia's modern history. The Theatre Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts invites festival audiences to Studio Marta where it will premiere its most recent production *O?lando*, and to the Orlí Street Theatre for the premiere of the musical titled *A Family Institution (Fun Home)*. Within the framework of its Brno theatres showcase the TWB festival has been putting increasing emphasis on Brno's independent theatres; that is the reason why the programme of its 2025 edition includes the performance *France Kafka Is Alive: A Feast* by Divadlo 3+kk, which will be presented at the Káznice venue on 25<sup>th</sup> May.

### Theatrical Excursions

This year, the Theatre World Brno festival has introduced an extraordinary new element into its programme – Theatrical Excursions. Three performances, followed by a range of side events, will be hosted by "the most domestic of houses." As early as 7<sup>th</sup> May, the festival will take theatre fans to the New Stage of the National Theatre in Prague which will present the performance *Wernisch* starring David Prachař and Saša Rašilov. On 31<sup>st</sup> May, festival goers will have the opportunity to be taken to Bratislava's Slovak National Theatre to see the acclaimed production titled *The Dog on the*

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*Road*, after which they will be invited for a guided tour of the backstage of the theatre's New Stage. The last of this year's excursions will lead festival audiences to the iconic open-air revolving auditorium in Český Krumlov, which will host *Sense and Sensibility* by the South-Bohemian Theatre. The price of the ticket for each of these three excursions comprises admission to the very performance, a round trip ensured by public transport, and the possibility of side events at the venue.

The festival dates are approaching and ticket sale has already started. Tickets for all performances can be purchased online from the festival website or booked at the National Theatre Brno's Customer Centre and at booking offices of our partner theatres.

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