

THEATRONE

ISB FESTIVAL

EMOTIONAL TRACES OF THE FESTIVAL
THE 16th EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE
WORLD BRNO FESTIVAL 2025

Theatrocene is a multimedia festival newsletter, whose content is created by the students of the Theatre Studies Department of the Masaryk University in Brno. The editorial team is complemented with students of theatrical fields at universities all over Czechia (DAMU in Prague, the Palackého University in Olomouc, the Silesian University in Opava). Secondary school students involved in the INSIDE DSB project participated in the recording of Be DSB podcasts and co-wrote one text. This year, the festival atmosphere was continuously reflected by female and male students on the online platform *Critical Theatrum*, whose content comprised reviews, short essays, reflections, interviews, and audio and video formats. Social media posts (Instagram, Facebook) constituted an integral part of shared content.

The publication *Theatrocene 2025*, which contains articles, photographs as well as audiovisual content, is a selection of the aforementioned reflections on the festival.

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Editors-in-chief: Martina Kostolná, Iva Mikulová.

Editorial staff: Jana Cindlerová, Barbara Gregorová, Jan Jiřík, Eliška Kubartová.

Authors of texts: Petronela Brotková, Barbora Dynybylová, Petr Felix, Gabriela Havigerová, Aneta Klepáčová, Martina Kostolná, Klára Kubešová, Zuzana Macourková, Iva Mikulová, Natálie Mlejnková, Clara Pretterebner, Alena Punčochářová, Tereza Tichá, Bartłomiej Wieczorek, and Adriana Závacká.

Student proofreaders: Klára Kubešová, Adriana Závacká.

Web publication: Gabriela Havigerová.

Be DSB (podcasts): Milan Hábl, Tereza Pašková, Lea Valentová.

Social media content: a teamwork coordinated by Natálie Mlejnková.

Proofreading: Jana Cindlerová.

English translation and language editing: Michaela Melechovská.

Editorial production: Martina Mužátková.

Graphic design: Denisa Kuimcidis.

Photographs: Ivo Dvořák, Marek Olbrzymek, Jakub Joch, Bára Bachanová, Klára Prchalová a Adéla Vosičková.



**Reveal full content of
Theatrocene 2025**





12 festival
days

60 performances

44 productions

42 side
events

3 productions
as a theatrical
excursion

10 400 attendees

19 festival
stages

Foreign theatre
companies from

5 countries: Lithuania,
Poland, Slovakia,
Austria, and Germany



CO-PRODUCTION

The TWB 2025 Staging Incubator

Within the 3rd edition of our Staging Incubator we supported the creation of five productions that have broadened the scope of our this year's programme!



Letí Theatre: The Last One
Out Turns Off the Lights



Aldente Theatre: (ID)ENTITY



Ufftenživot: Daddy Can't Go On!



20 - 21 May, 2025

International co-production project

INSIDE AS WELL AS OUTSIDE

Text Martina Kostolná

In the beginning there was light, then symmetry, then sometime later the human being. A creature in its own quantum state, attempting to understand reality and its own mortality. However, the more accurately a person gets to know the primary plane from the physical point of view, the less accurate the secondary plane becomes. This is the basis of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, of consolidating our lives in which time is the primary parameter of determination. Past, present and future planes as we are used to; a continuous flow. However, according to quantum physics, time is a parameter, not an operator; it isn't subject to quantum laws. It's like a cat inside a box, alive and dead at the same time — paradoxical. And what if all of us are part of this famous thought box? The co-production *Quanta*, this year's highlight of the Theatre World Brno festival, presented the audience with an alternative, split-time reality, split our consciousness like Otto Hahn into basic atomic elements, and liberated the world from the Newtonian conviction that everything has a clear cause and effect.

REVIEWS

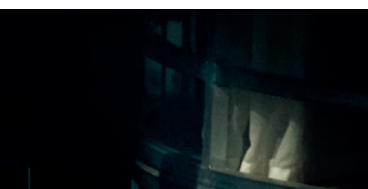




In his works, director **Łukasz Twarkowski** standardly intertwines film and theatre principles, thus creating a new, hybrid reality that relies not only on live actor activity or live cinema, but also on something beyond these two planes. This new, audience-immersive universe then tests all of the recipient's senses and exposes them to loud music and sensuality to such an extent that it transforms an intangible experience into a physical one. In the case of *Quanta*, the sounds of static discharge provide a framework for a plot involving the alternative realities of the hotel world and its inhabitants. As if we were looking into the core of an electrical device or diode. This creates a new theatre "intergalaxy" detached from the real world which explains human emotions by means of superposition, both actual and kindly metaphorical. Twarkowski uses quantum physics as an inspirational probe, a metaphor for human experience. He talks about the splitting of human identity and its causality, while everything takes place in absolute accordance with the principles and foundations of the quantum order of the universe. Everything is a variable, a possible alternative of a seemingly known story. The characters become part of their own trivial, human plot, as well as the plot of the entire universe. Both of these existential processes are built against each other so that in the end, one problem doesn't exceed the other. In essence, an unhappy love between two lost persons has the same emotional value as a wave-particle duality. In practice, quantum physics is more philosophy than natural science, and *Quanta* offers more questions than answers.

The Alpine hotel functions as a time loop, a black hole stuck in 1938, from which there is no single way out. Twarkowski, as if inspired by Kubrick's insanity in the film *The Shining*, offers a similarly cyclical and metaphysical atmosphere of space that has never been and never will be anyone's home, where no one remains longer than necessary. The hotel space automatically problematises the basic principles of quantum physics. The rooms act as energy levels, places that can be occupied or vacant. The guests come and go similarly to particles in the universe. These exchanges function as transitions between states, quantum leaps, or, in other words, interaction with the outer world. The hotel is a constantly changing and unpredictable space — as are human lives and as is quantum physics. We don't know whether someone occupies a random room until we measure it ourselves. "A reality is set at the moment of observation," and yet: "we are closer to some inhabitants of the hotel than we are aware of." At this peculiar site, reality's walls gradually become thinner and merge into one another. We are witnesses to phone calls from one reality to another; alternative dialogues and situations that never happened; the broadcasting of an online vlog from the future whose ambition is to resolve the disappearance of the Italian physicist Majorana whose body is yet to be found. And where better to look for a lost thing than in the place where you last saw it?

The production starts "at the very beginning" (as its name suggests), namely with the Big Bang, the creation of the universe and elementary particles using white flashes. Subsequently we are taken out of the depths of the entire universe into the microworld of the mutuality of a couple, persons A(lice) and B(ob), who are dancing together. The dance reflects the ancient creation of a human being, human need, and the essence of mutuality. Bob's question of whether he and Alice are in the hotel alone is answered in both the affirmative and the negative. As the story takes place on parallel planes of reality, all dialogues and expressions of love happen at the same time and in the



same place, only in other realms of the universe. All characters therefore co-exist in their own boxes, each intertwined with the past and the future, without having any idea about their predetermination. They follow determined patterns without having any notion of them. The only moment when all of the realities intersect is during the introductory “molecular dance” or when watching the movement of Uranus in the sky. As you can hear in the play, “Looking at the sky is looking into the past.” When we focus our consciousness on the sky, all of the stars in it have been dead for centuries. Watching the night sky is something that connects generations, and, in this case, humans and their realities. We have all watched the same Moon for centuries while trying to understand its makeup and our own, with the desire to verbalise what is real and what is not. The recipient is given sufficient clues to understand the story by the characters themselves, who explain to each other the basic philosophical (or quantum?) principles of existence. This offers a new lens through which to view oneself and one’s world. Many lines change slightly throughout the plot. They are repeated and change their starting points as well as the sequence of events. This enhances the inconsistency of realities; a kind of “butterfly effect” is set into motion. A weapon which in one reality shoots and kills a person doesn’t have to exist in another, let alone take someone’s life in a game of Russian roulette. Everything is just constants and variables of the story of the humankind, a consideration of the possibility of whether Heisenberg could tendentiously make such a primitive error in his calculations while constructing the atom bomb. And whether there ever was any Heisenberg.

Fabien Lédé’s scenography evokes the feeling of human loneliness in the universe. The Art Nouveau building of the Alpine hotel “on wheels”, standing in the middle of the stage, is rearranged and rotated, offering new perspectives on reality and the twisting thereof. Each new view of the quantity of a human problem automatically moves it and (de)composes it into a new plane of understanding. This means that when the stage moves for the first time, the initial causality of the problem disappears and a new, alternative form arises. By dismantling the “hotel box”, a kind of principle of mirror symmetry is put into practice, resulting in some objects behaving differently in the mirror than in space. Questions are raised as to what this means for the functioning not only of the infinite universe above us, but also of our internal universe. These two expanding areas aren’t that different in the end. The hotel in the galactic void is defined only by darkness and there are LED screen dividers around its perimeter. This allows the actors to leave their reality of the 1930s, to leave their own Schrödinger’s box, and to view themselves from another perspective. The moments when the characters step out onto the hotel balcony thus imply the entrance of the individ-

ual into the black nothingness of the universe. The story of a group of physicists therefore takes place inside as well as outside one reality, one hotel. They are simultaneously alive and dead, guests inhabiting hotel corridors, cats put to sleep in a box. Shortly before the end of the first part of the production, the dialogues of the actors are projected in black and white onto three moving screens that after some time evoke the aesthetics of analogue film negatives. They create another, well-known reality – a parallel to our common existence – in the plane of developed colour photos. The characters come out in front of them, look at themselves, find answers through another, less accurate reality, and mutually look at the sky.

Even though the principle of uncertainty when applied to human existence can carry negative connotations, due to its depressing duality and the inability of control, from another point of view it can guarantee hope. There is tremendous value in the unpredictability of the world not being locked only in one room. Something like the eternally live and dead cat in Schrödinger’s box, like Quanta in its entire beautiful intangibility. Sometimes there is no fixed answer to a simple question. Sometimes a look into the past is just a new variation on the future. Quantum to quantum, beginning to end. Something like a quantum intertwining, like love: two particles can be intertwined even though they are at the opposing ends of the universe. When you change the state of the first one, the other immediately knows that something has happened to its affiliate. They are dancing together. Like the first and last people in the entire universe. Devoted, in multiple states at once.

Lithuanian National Drama Theatre - Quanta. Directed by: Lukasz Twarkowski, dramaturgy: Joanna Bednarczyk, scenography: Fabien Lédé, costumes: Svenja Gassen, video designer: Jakub Lech, music: Lubomir Grzelak, lighting: Eugenijus Sabaliauskas, choreography: Paweł Sakowicz, assistant director: Barté Liagaitė, assistant costume designer: Pijus Dulskis, assistant dramaturgist: Simona Jurkuvėnaitė, production: Vidas Bizunevičius, Kamilė Žičkytė, Lukrecija Gužauskaitė. Cast: Marius Čižauskas, Algirdas Dainavičius, Airida Gintautaitė, Martynas Nedzinskas, Gediminas Rimeika, Rytis Saladžius, Rasa Samuolytė, Nelė Savičenko, Vainius Sodeika, Rimantė Valiukaitė, Arūnas Vozbutas, Aistė Zobotkaitė. Review of the performances within the framework of the DSB on May 20 and 21, 2025.

The author is a student in the Department of Theatre Studies at Masaryk University in Brno.

Produced by: Lithuanian National Drama Theatre
Co-produced by: Onassis Culture, Athens (Greece), DE SINGEL (Belgium), International Theatre Festival “Divine Comedy” (Poland), National Theatre Brno (Czech Republic), Adam Mickiewicz Institute (Poland)



INTERVIEW

ŁUKASZ TWARKOWSKI

Lukasz Twarkowski: *But when we think about our emotions, they are more like Schrödinger's cat. We contain contradictions. Life itself is one enormous contradiction that we live through.*

With director Lukasz Twarkowski about the thin limits of reality, why we should teach children more about quantum physics, and about detective journey to find the answer to the state of Schoedinger's cat.

The immersive production Quanta, which explores alternate realities and quantum physics, dominated this year of TWB. What was your primary inspiration and how did the idea come to life?

It's funny because the inspiration was a book. In the beginning, we were considering something that doesn't happen to me often — staging a book. Somehow, I believe that quantum physics had already been "in the air" for a long time. Even when we started working on this production, imagining what kind of scenes could visually represent quantum physics, we realized that many of our previous performances already included what we might call "quantum scenes." So, it was hard to find new ways to build it up because we had already been doing it — without knowing how representative it was of the quantum physics world or its imagery. The book that inspired me so much at the beginning was *When We Cease to Understand the World* by Benjamin Labatut. It was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2021. It's a very strange novel composed of several short stories — one about Heisenberg, another about Schrödinger, and others about mathematicians, including a French mathematician from the 1980s. They all try to dig into this strange zone where our understanding ends. Labatut loves paradoxes and explores concepts that are difficult to express, because they push beyond where the brain or conventional understanding can go. And yet — there is still something. There is still something to discover beyond our current grasp of the world. We even tried to get the rights to the book, but luckily we didn't get them — Benjamin Labatut had already sold the rights to Hollywood, and they couldn't be given to any theater until the movie is released. Given our hybrid, cinematic style of theater, I knew that even after the movie's release, we wouldn't be able to use it meaningfully. So I thought: we didn't want to stage the whole book anyway, we only wanted to use it freely as inspiration. I said, „Let's do it on our own — from scratch.”

And what have you conjured up from scratch?

Then I came up with the idea of a trilogy. Quanta is the first part. We're already rehearsing Oracle, the second part, which is part of what we're calling the Science Trilogy. I wanted the structure of the trilogy to reflect the times we're living in. That's why Quanta is set in 1938 — just before World War II. It mirrors the feeling many of us share today, this sense that something

great and horrible is coming, and the fear we live with every day. Originally, I really wanted to work on this duo — the double portrait of Werner Heisenberg and Erwin Schrödinger. But during production, our costume designer Fenja Gassen confronted me and said we couldn't create a performance about Schrödinger while staying silent about his pedophilia cases. I went back to all the books and biographies I'd read, and realized I had been blind. I didn't want to consider it. I was avoiding the topic. Once you include a case like that, such a heavy taboo, it takes up a lot of space in the narrative. We decided to exclude Schrödinger from the performance. At first, we put him in a room, saying he was there — dead or alive, nobody knew. Eventually, he vanished completely. Meanwhile, we discovered Ettore Majorana, a physicist I didn't know before. It was one of the biggest revelations — he fit so well. We had been searching for a real person who had disappeared in 1938, and Majorana's story was perfect. He really did disappear that year. It's a crazy story. He was one of the leading quantum physicists.

He met Heisenberg in 1931, then shut himself in a room, burned all his notes. Most likely, he knew what was coming — the atomic bomb, nuclear weapons — and wanted no part in it. He is considered a symbol of fear or rejection of what science had uncovered. There are several theories and legends about his fate. He sent two suicide notes, then disappeared on a ship from Naples to Palermo. He asked his family not to mourn for more than three days. But then, a few days later, he sent another letter saying he was alive. After that — he vanished.

Giorgio Agamben wrote a whole book about this called *What Is Real*, focusing on Majorana's case. Agamben tries to prove that it was a kind of enormous performance — a gesture that brought quantum physics principles onto the macro scale. Majorana became a symbol of something that exists and doesn't exist at the same time. The question he posed was, "What is real?"

I think it's really interesting, and I love that you included it in the production. Since we mentioned Schrödinger — just a silly question — what do you think happened to Schrödinger's cat? Is it dead or alive?

That's the most beautiful paradox — both in life and in quantum physics. I would say that, in the world we've created, where we try to translate quantum laws into human emotions, we are actually living in that paradox. It's probably difficult for people because we tend to think of ourselves as Newtonian creatures — either dead or alive, existing or not. But when we think about our emotions, they are more like Schrödinger's cat. We contain contradictions. Life itself is one enormous contradiction that we live through.

The concept of wave function collapse — that's what it's called, right? — captures it perfectly. In a quantum state, all possibilities coexist. That leads to



Hugh Everett's theory of multiverses, where every decision point creates a split — and all the potential outcomes exist in parallel universes. Before we choose, every option is possible. That's what I truly believe. We should be teaching quantum physics much more, even to children, because it completely changes how we judge ourselves and how we see the world.

We are not Newtonian objects, where inputs lead to predictable outputs. This connects to the mystery of consciousness — which, by the way, is the theme of our next piece, based on the life of Alan Turing and the question of artificial intelligence. Nobel Prize winner Roger Penrose says he doesn't believe that computers will ever be capable of real intelligence or consciousness — and certainly not through computation alone. Computers operate in a binary system — they calculate, they simulate — but real intelligence, real consciousness, requires something else. It requires randomness. That randomness is the most beautiful aspect of quantum physics. I remember working several years ago in Hanover on a piece called *Once Upon a Time Life*, about biology and genetics. At one point, we hit a wall and became a bit depressed, realizing how deterministic everything seemed. We saw ourselves as biochemical machines, made up of serotonin and dopamine, predictable chemical systems. That kind of determinism is bleak. But quantum physics gives life meaning again — because it introduces uncertainty, unpredictability.

This isn't a matter of lacking the tools to predict — it's simply impossible to predict. Life, at the subatomic level, is ruled by randomness. That randomness makes life feel infinite and unknowable. And these quantum states — where something can be both dead and alive, or up and down at the same time — are incredibly relevant to how we experience human nature, emotions, and our relationship with the world. Another important shift that quantum physics introduces is a focus on relationships, not particles. We can't really say much about particles themselves, but we can measure the relationships between them. A particle doesn't "exist" until it's observed. As Niels Bohr said, we shouldn't be interested in what the electron does when we're not observing it. It's only in the act of observation that it becomes something. This idea of the observer-participant relationship is also very relevant to human interactions.

We often see ourselves as solid, independent beings, but we're constantly changing in response to others. Just now, as I speak with you, I am not the same person I was ten minutes ago. This ongoing transformation — this process of exchange — is at the core of human experience.

Do you see quantum physics as a useful metaphor for exploring human emotions? For example, isn't love itself a kind of quantum phenomenon, metaphorically speaking?

I think I already answered this question earlier, yes. Because that's really the core of it — the biggest insight quantum physics gives us is an extreme paradigm shift. And that's likely why it's still not very popular. We kept asking ourselves during the process: Why didn't the discoveries of quantum physics change our understanding of the world the way Newton's *Principia* did? Once Newton published that work, everything shifted. The world became explainable. We could rationalize it. We began to feel like we had some control, some agency over what happens around us. But that shift didn't happen with quantum physics. Even today, it hasn't entered mainstream understanding. Schools still teach it as something overly complicated — something that doesn't "really apply" to us because we live on the macro scale, while quantum events happen deep in the micro world of particles. I think that's completely false. And in that way, love, emotions — all of it — make much more sense through a quantum lens than a classical one.

How do you direct the actors? Is your approach more theatrical or cinematic or somewhere in between?

LT: It's definitely somewhere in between. But it's true that most of the communication happens through the screen. From the very beginning — even during the first improvisations — we don't watch the actors live. Instead, we work with camera operators, or often the actors themselves become the operators. They all go through an accelerated course in cinematography. They learn to work with cameras, to understand what it means to frame a shot, not just be in front of the camera but behind it as well.

Then we do long, long improvisations — sometimes two or three hours at a time. These are always filmed with two cameras mounted simultaneously. We watch the results as if we're watching a film, from the very beginning. This is incredibly important to me — to immerse them inside this mediated world from the outset. They have to build their performances with the knowledge that they are being filmed constantly, that the medium is the screen. We don't add the screen later, as an afterthought to some "live" theater — it's integrated from the start.

MK: What were the most important technical prerequisites for staging a production like this? Did you need to buy or adapt anything for Janáček Theatre?

LT: No, not here. We brought everything with us — almost everything. Projectors, LED screens, all of our cameras, thermal cameras, infrared cameras. In this process, it was actually our first time working with thermal and infrared vision in a deeper way. We hadn't used them much before, but we've developed them further for the upcoming show.

And it's important for me — the medium is the message. I really believe that. We need to constantly ask ourselves why we are using a particular medium. Why use a camera? If there's ever a way to do it without the camera — then it's probably better to do it without. I think many productions would be much better off without video, simply because in many cases, it's not necessary at all.

MK: Your productions require full multi-sensory engagement from the audience. For you personally, which sense do you consider the most crucial in experiencing your work?

LT: There isn't a single most crucial sense. I find theater to be the most sensual of all the arts — and that's why I love it so much, despite how difficult it is as a medium. Especially in these complex realities we construct, it takes an incredible amount of effort from every person involved. We're talking about more than 40 people who have to work with absolute precision. It's like a symphonic orchestra — if anything is off, the whole experience is compromised. What fascinates me most about theater is its very strange relationship with time. Time is one of the most interesting subjects for me — what it is, how we perceive it — and I believe theater is one of the best mediums to explore it. It deals with the human body, presence, sweat, and lifetime. And when combined with live video, it allows us to create certain time loops that simply wouldn't work in pre-recorded film or video. There's a kind of mystery, even a miracle, that's only possible in the live moment. That same mystery extends to sound and light as well. They are not just illustrative tools in our productions — they are independent protagonists. They build a non-mimetic experience that engages every sense.

Sound, for example, is not just about what you hear. It's what you feel — the bass in your chest, the vibrations in the room. Light too — it's not just about visibility. It transforms space and atmosphere.

This is why I choose theater — because it touches every sense without exception.



25 May, 2025

Co-production

PROMISES, SHOUTS AND BOXES OF CHOCOLATES

Text Zuzana Macourková

The combination of distinctive scenography with pantomime, movement and verbal expression, which is typical for the Brno-based ensemble D'epog, characterized its latest premiere, co-produced with the TWB, Promising the Moon, Promising Episodes. At six o'clock in the morning, the audience and performers filled the architectural space of the empty third floor of the Market Hall on Brno's Zelný trh, whose dimensions and absence of division remind one of the now-demolished Dornych shopping mall, a site used for similar types of performances, for instance by the Terén platform. The mutual mingling and merging of the audience with the actors met the expectations evoked by an abstract that promised the topic of the intangibility — in the case of D'epog, somewhat surprisingly — of romantic interpersonal relationships.

Upon entering the premises of the Market Hall, the three performers (Zdeněk Polák, Janet Prokešová and Zuzana Smutková) are already there, together with a DJ (with his back to the audience). Visual excitement comes first from scenographer Jan Matýšek's costumes, the bulkiness of which, especially at the beginning of the performance, gives the impression of scenery that comes to life. Things are continuously de-semanticized and new meanings are found through interaction with living bodies. The same thing is also happening to the performers: At the very beginning of the performance, Ms Prokešová is dressed, as if formally, in a long, flowing "Baroque" dress whose crinoline resembles a tent in which the performer is enclosed and from which only the upper part of her body peaks out. Her new, extended, paradoxical body creates new possibilities for Ms Prokešová, whose movement within the space is determined by the width of the tent-like structure which allows her to pass comfortably between two adjacent columns. The dress is also fitted with a train — an outer layer of the tent — that Ms Prokešová elegantly loses while running. With this and her lips made up into the shape of a heart, she resembles the character of Snow White. The others also have new bodies, with Ms Smutková being the most transformed, into a new, hybrid being. Her costume resembles that of an archetypal witch or forest demon sitting in a tobacconist's stand full of cigarettes and Hubba Bubba, like in a modern gingerbread house. Her brown costume with fringe neither limits her movement nor significantly expands her physical abilities; however, long claws attached to the tobacconist's stand enable her, for instance, to remotely stroke Mr Polák, who becomes taller than normal in the performance. He welcomes the audience in a picnic-style "Honza" outfit (with an element of naïveté) with a pair of baskets attached to his legs. They slow him down and make his movements more cumbersome, but his airy silver raincoat and blue, fitted overalls balance out this impression. In his hand he carries a third picnic basket in which a loudspeaker plays well-known love songs in an endless loop.

The performance isn't a mere fashion show of fairy-tale characters, though. The love-song playlist serves as an analogy to the events on stage that drive the performance towards a mockery of the stereotypes related to the idea of a romantic heterosexual relationship. Songs by Depeche Mode or Marek Ztracený are occasionally interrupted by recorded comments by the director and leading personality of D'epog, **Lucie Repašská**, as dramaturgical postscripts to the selection of the songs and their significance. However, these are lost in the open space and her words, perhaps symbolically, have no effect. The mood of the songs also sets the mood in the "auditorium" and changes the dynamic of the performed relationships, which aren't presented in a linear way, as in the continuous story of a love triangle, but instead in collages.

After the initial sequence where the performers gradually shed their scenographic costumes, a series of situations is set off that includes a makeover in the form of a blonde wig with bangs through which the character of Ms Smutková treats her broken heart, and Mr Polák's melancholic tattooing of an orange. The poeticality of the D'epog ensemble, which is often based on movement and vocal expressiveness, underlines the fickleness of interpersonal encounters. It describes them as volatile and emotional, only occasionally changing into a harmonic or calmer form. The performance, similarly to commitments to others, is all-encompassing and, in a way, immersive. The performers often confine their actions to various corners of the room where, in relative loneliness, they press themselves against a glass wall or draw a bubble bath for their feet, yet we also see moments of connection, for instance in a collective dance. The same applies to the scenography, which also keeps flowing and changing, and there is also an "in-love" corner with heart-shaped balloons in which a tractor tyre appears during the performance. This is where the performers plant a shrub as a symbol of building a mutual relationship, only for it to be subsequently destroyed in one of its manic phases. The moments of expression and the inability of people to keep promises, which gradually becomes one of the key themes of the performance, threaten to almost deafen the audience with their intensity, compared to the tenderer sections such as slow dancing or cuddling together on a blanket.

After an hour and a half, the sweaty and exhausted performers, following a final, five-minute tremor, sit down among discarded rings and candy from a box of chocolates. After an overload of emotions, creative pantomime and shouting, "only faith remains", as Marek Ztracený sings; his songs are rendered as shouts by Ms Smutková. After Polák's question at 7:30 in the morning pertaining "to breakfast", the actor changes into a tuxedo without pants or shirt and brings in a pig's head on a silver tray, accompanied by the soundtrack of a French chanson. All three performers start their day together by drinking boxed wine, directing forced smiles at the audience.

D'epog — Promising the Moon, Promising Episodes. Directed by Lucia Repašská, lecturer co-operation: Matyáš Dlab, costumes: Jan Matýšek, assistant director: Vojtěch Honig. Cast: Zdeněk Polák, Janet Prokešová, Zuzana Smutková. Review of the performance within the framework of the TWB on May 25, 2025.

The author is a student of Theatre and Performance Studies at Palacký University Olomouc.



THE (IN)VISIBLE BOND BETWEEN YOU AND ME, BETWEEN THEN AND NOW

Text Klára Kubešová

O?lando, Wandervogel, By the River. Each of these productions, presented as part of this year's **Theatre World Brno Festival**, opens up the topic of sexual and gender identity in a different historical context, while each of them uses a distinct way to relate to the present — either explicitly or merely implicitly by speaking to the contemporary audience in a world where the subject of queer^[1] persons' rights is still highly topical. Nowadays, we can still notice strong homophobic rhetoric in the public space, even from the mouths of many political leaders — including those in the Czech Republic and Slovakia whose citizens are primarily targeted by the Brno-based festival. At the same time, some countries have seen more or less successful attempts to dismantle the previously gained rights of the queer community, and so there is not only stagnation in their development but, in some cases, a return to the status quo of the past. The thematisation of historical facts naturally provokes tension between the past and present, in which understanding can be found in relation to today.

So how much and how does the past speak to us in these productions? What do the stories, themes and characters that they depict mean and can mean today? The production *O?lando*, shown in **Studio Marta**, is an adaptation of British writer **Virginia Woolf's** famed novel *Orlando* and a collection of short stories *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* by the American author **David Foster Wallace**. The story of Orlando is interspersed with scenes from Wallace's book in which specific manifestations of misogyny are depicted, becoming a broader statement. While Woolf in her portrayal of Orlando's gender reassignment, inspired by her then-girlfriend and lover Vita Sackville-West, points out to the status of women and men, gender fluidity (using today's terms), and the related fluidity of sexuality, Wallace strives to criticise modern masculinity and chauvinism through metafictional procedures. The combination of their works into a single adaptation offers broader possibilities for thematising sexual and gender identity, as well as the stereotypes that go hand in hand with their perceptions.

The staging concept of the team composed by **Jan Doležel**, **Justina Grecová** and **Jana Vaverková** could be described as an attempt at a kind of (post) postmodern experiment that is not constrained by theatrical or generally narrative procedures. This is also reflected in the selection of lyrics that the production adapts. While Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is a pioneering novel of modernity, the metamodernist Wallace moves in his works beyond the boundaries postmodernity, which itself becomes his theme and a space for self-definition. Some tension can thus be found between the two texts, which are also linked to the themes addressed in both books. But unfortunately, this dynamics has virtually entirely disappeared from the adaptation which remains only disparate. The disunity of the stage procedures as well as the thematic vagueness of the production are also reflected in the character of the narrator (**Kanwar Šulc**), who exists on the stage as a kind of superfluous relic of the literality of the adapted prose, which has not been sufficiently formally edited. His character does not find any justification in the staging concept and acts more as a means of connecting the various parts of the production, yet it fails to do so. The fragmentary nature of the production, which also manifests itself through the use of projections and live cinema on stage, can be seen to some extent as a staging intention, given that the staging team refers to the principles of deconstruction and postmodernity. Regardless of that, however, it is an end in itself and remains separated from the main meaning-making layer. So not only does the staging not speak thematically to the present, it doesn't really speak at all. The subject remains buried under the flood of scenic and visual means. Moreover, the staging not only does not answer the questions evoked in the synopsis of the play, it doesn't essentially open them up — despite the fact that they can certainly be found in the adapted texts.

The production *Wandervogel* staged by Jan Mock, too, was inspired by a novel, in particular **The Devil's Wall** by Mark Cornwall, served as inspiration for the production *Wandervogel*, in which stage director **Jan**

Mock brings together documentary and physical theatre. It tells the story of a real person, Heinz Rutha (enacted by **Philippe Schenker**, who is also a kind of stage guide — a “story coach”), a Sudeten German who was instrumental in forming an elite youth group, the Männerbund, in the aftermath of the First World War. Later, this group was to play a key role in establishing the self-governing Sudeten-German state. The production is based on authentic historical documents as well as on testimonies of the performers themselves (**Tomáš Janyška, Matěj Šumbera, Arseniy Mikhaylov** and **Václav Němec**). Two narrative layers intertwine on the stage — one is historical and depicts the life of Rutha; the second is contemporary and reflects the particular relationships and sexual experiences of the performers as well as broader social phenomena. When Schenker enacts Rutha, the youth coach in the interwar Sudetenland, he also refers to the contemporary concept of toxic masculinity and promotes its principles, through which he speaks strongly to today’s audience. The thematisation of the performers’ experience set in parallel with the life of Rutha and the one of his charges (who are just slightly younger than the four actors and whose experiences become essential), creates a tension between the past and present perception of the phenomena and the concepts evoked in the play. The production itself explicitly offers the historical story as a space for learning from the past and this lesson is intended to prevent the repetition of previously committed mistakes. Rutha’s life not only becomes an on-stage image of history, but in some of its aspects it also takes on a model form and can thus be related to our time.

Rutha’s homosexuality, which is made evident throughout the entire performance, appears in the excerpts from his First World War diaries cited from its beginning onwards. Rutha is, in some measure, aware of the nature of his sexuality, but is unable to accept it as such. Instead, he anchors his behaviour in the concept of homosociality and in the heritage of the ancient Greece and Plato, whose approach is thematised by means of read excerpts from his *Phaedrus* — a fictional dialogue between Socrates and the youth Phaedrus, in which both love and beauty of bodies are discussed. Rutha projects a similar attitude onto his relationships with his charges. Their statements will subsequently serve to accuse Rutha of pederasty and homosexuality. Rutha denies these allegations to the end, arguing that his approach to raising young men is based on the Ancient Greek ideal. Ultimately, he commits suicide before his sentence is passed. The staging ends with Schenker’s slightly alibistic gossip that Rutha did everything out of love, that he was a good man. But was he?

What also protrudes from the production in relation to the present — besides the theme of criminalisation of homosexuality or denial of one’s own sexuality in fear of condemnation (in both social and legal terms) — is the issue of power abuse which, in Rutha’s case, seems to have occurred. It is impossible to avoid the imaginary parallel with repeated instances of power abuse at universities and, to some extent, high school environments. In the long run, this phenomenon persists as a recurring and unresolved problem, yet in the performance it is either virtually unreflected or reflected inappropriately. So it seems that if we want to find a parallel to it on today’s Czech stages, we have no choice but to turn to the play about a long forgotten Sudeten German who died a century ago, even though Rutha’s primary wrongdoing consisted in his sexuality, and that most of present-day abuses of a position of power, often linked to sexual violence, are committed by men (male educators) against women (female students).

Just as in *Wandervogel*, the motive of fear of revealing one’s own sexuality also appears in the performance *By the River* coproduced by the Slovak National Theatre and Schauspielhaus Wien under Christiane Pohle’s direction. Unlike in *Wandervogel*, however, the sexuality of the main characters,

O?lando



Wandervogel



By the River



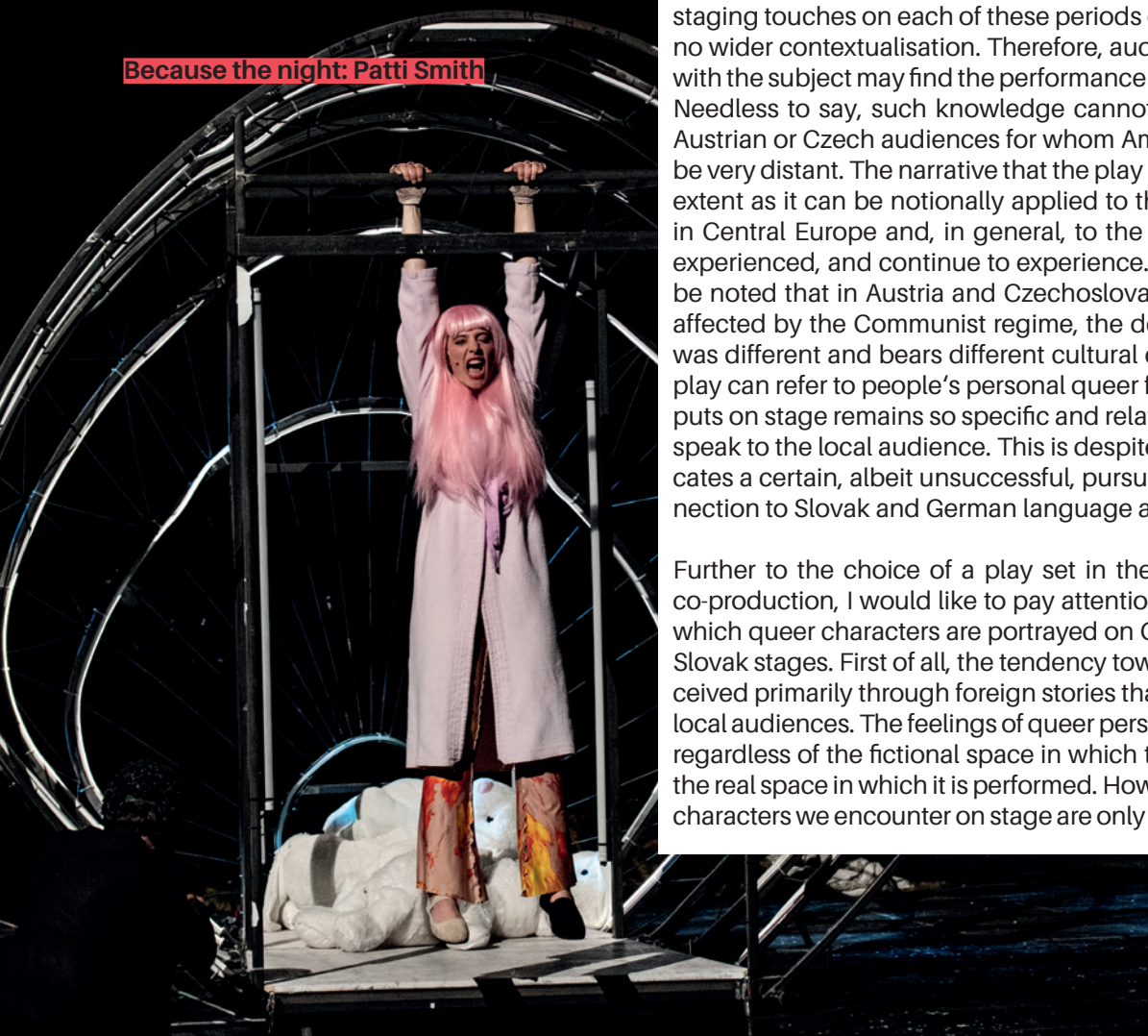
Christopher and Dan, does not lead to punishment, but to finding each other beyond the primary gratification of desire that the anonymity of the obscurity of the Hudson River offers. Together, at least for a while, they find their longed-for freedom that they soon lose because of the incipient AIDS epidemic. Instead of freedom they have to face statements about their own guilt, partly based on the theories of Wilhelm Reich, an Austro-American doctor. The concept of sexual liberation that Reich advocated was restrained by his own heteronormative view of the world excluding homosexuality, which he considered as a disease caused by sexual repression.

Here, the themes of punishment and the German language area are reminiscent of the character of Rutha. Nevertheless, while Rutha would probably have served out the sentence pronounced by the court if not for his suicide, in Dan's case legislation no longer requires penalisation. But the then homophobic rhetoric considers that punishment comes in the form of AIDS anyway. In these narratives, which blame the ill persons for the illness they contracted, AIDS is often understood as the God's punishment for sins — whether for homosexuality, promiscuity, or both. This line of homophobic rhetoric, erroneously defended by Christian values, is still present in our society today, even among political leaders. The Bible, which has always inevitably been, and still is, subject to interpretation, is used in them as an argument for personal bigotry, which does not originate in faith but in personal limitations.

The production *By the River* presents a multi-perspective picture of the situation of queer persons in Western society (especially in the US) in the second half of the 20th century — from their placement in concentration camps to criminalisation of homosexuality in the 1950s and the heyday of New York ballrooms (a safe space in which they could manifest themselves) to the AIDS epidemic. Unfortunately, the staging touches on each of these periods only marginally and there is no wider contextualisation. Therefore, audiences who are not familiar with the subject may find the performance partially incomprehensible. Needless to say, such knowledge cannot be expected from Slovak, Austrian or Czech audiences for whom American milieu can naturally be very distant. The narrative that the play unfolds is universal to some extent as it can be notionally applied to the history of queer persons in Central Europe and, in general, to the feelings that queer people experienced, and continue to experience. At the same time, it should be noted that in Austria and Czechoslovakia, the latter of which was affected by the Communist regime, the development of queer rights was different and bears different cultural connotations. Although the play can refer to people's personal queer feelings, the narrative that it puts on stage remains so specific and relatively distant that it may not speak to the local audience. This is despite a plurilingualism that indicates a certain, albeit unsuccessful, pursuit of universality, and a connection to Slovak and German language areas.

Further to the choice of a play set in the USA for a Slovak-Austrian co-production, I would like to pay attention to the issue of contexts in which queer characters are portrayed on Czech and, by extension, on Slovak stages. First of all, the tendency towards this theme can be perceived primarily through foreign stories that are less culturally close to local audiences. The feelings of queer persons are essentially universal regardless of the fictional space in which the staging takes place and the real space in which it is performed. However, the fact that the queer characters we encounter on stage are only exceptionally Czech (or Slo-

Because the night: Patti Smith



vak) naturally restrains the opportunity to identify with these characters, and their stories inevitably remain all the more distant to the local audience (whether queer or not). The second layer is the limitation of the very representation of specific queer persons' identities — if queer characters appear on Czech stages, they are above all gay men, and so even from this point of view it is impossible to talk about an all-embracing representation.

Theatre is thus part of a general, patriarchal mindset influenced by stereotyping in the media, which almost exclusively pick up gay cisgender men as representatives of the queer community, thus creating a distorted picture of reality. In addition, it still remains a fact (although this does not apply to the productions I mention in this text) that even the restrained representation of queer persons we can encounter on Czech stages is often highly inaccurate and in many cases distinctly homophobic or transphobic. The productions *O?lando*, *Wandervogel*, and *By the River*, in various contexts and historical frames, depict the revelation of an individual's gender or sexual identity — that is what we would nowadays most likely describe as a voluntary or forced coming out. Whether it is further thematised or remains only a single moment in a sequence of events, together these productions constitute a kind of mosaic of the historical status of queer persons.

In these plays, "coming out" serves as a means of depicting the social and political constraints queer people faced at any given time, and thus opens the question about the impact that outright communication about one's own sexuality or gender has had on individuals. In this sense, the production of *Because the Night* by **Theater Bremen**, in which the stage director **Anne Sophie Domenz** charts the life of Patti Smith and touches on her relationship with Robert Mapplethorpe, described in the memoir *Just Kids*, can also fall into this type of productions. Patti and Roberto shared a strong bond that was not broken by Roberto's coming out after which their relationship became more of a friendship, but he still retained the same meaning on the emotional level. The depiction of his coming out on a primarily personal level, framed by their relationship, makes room for a demonstration of fundamental humanness for which the nature of an individual's sexuality remains irrelevant.

The bond between Patti and Roberto preserved its strength neither because of Roberto's sexuality nor in spite of it — although it naturally played a role in

their relationship, it wasn't important at its core and as it didn't change who they were as humans. This notion can generally be applied to social (as well as theatrical) discourses about sexual and gender identity in which the hateful tendencies that were previously present here recur over and over again. As if we went on forgetting that no matter whom we love, we all still aren't but humans.

Studio Marta — Virginia Woolf, David Foster Wallace: O?lando. Translation: Kateřina Hliská, Martin Pokorný; adaptation: Justina Grecová, Jana Vaverková, Jan Doležel, Samuel Špilar; direction and dramaturgy: Justina Grecová, Jana Vaverková, Jan Doležel; stage set: Lucie Herzog, Jana Mlatečková; costume co-designer: Nina Peschlová; audiovisual direction: Samuel Špilar; cast: Markéta Bohadlová, Josef Kostka, Kanwar Šulc, Andrea Tesařová, Vojtěch Obdržálek, Terezie Holubová, Kateřina Humhalová, Michal Busta, Anna Červeňová, Martin Leiský, Kateřina Mizeráková, and Šimona Horynová. Review of the repeat performance of April 16, 2025.

Jan Mocek — Wandervogel. Concept, stage design and direction: Jan Mocek; music: Matouš Hekela; sound and light design: Ondřej Růžička; production: Taňa Švehlová, SixHousesz.s.; drama collaboration: Sodja Lotker; movement collaboration: Jaro Viňarský; created in collaboration; cast: Tomáš Janypka, Philipp Schenker, Matěj Šumbera, Arseniy Mikhaylov, and Václav Némec. Review of the repeat performance within the TWB festival on May 27, 2025.

Schauspielhaus Wien, Slovak National Theatre — Mazlum Nergiz: By the River. Directed by Christiane Pohle; dramaturgy: Mário Drgoňa; stage set and costumes: Charlotte Pistorius; music: Lens Kühleitner; cast: Jakub Rybárik, Richard Stanke, Maximilian Thienen, Iris Becher, Sofia Díaz Ferrer, and Kaspar Locher. Written from the rerun of May 24, 2025, which was part of the Theatre World Brno festival.

Theatre Bremen — Because the Night: Patti Smith. Directed by Anne Sophie Domenz; stage set: Romy Camerun, MaartjeTeussink; sound: MaartjeTeussink; dramaturgy: Jan Grosfeld; lighting: Daniel Thaden; cast: Levin Hofmann, Shirin Eissa, Jorid Lukaczik, Romy Camerun, Christin Neddens, Oliver Spanuth, and Lea Baciulis. Review of the repeat performance within the TWB festival on May 25, 2025.

The author is a student in the Department of Theatre Studies, Faculty of Arts, in Masaryk University.

¹ Although the queer designation refers primarily to the present and recent past, and formerly took on a negative meaning in English, in this text I use it as a comprehensive designation for people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender — that is, synonymous with the LGBTQ+ community. However, I am also aware of the connotations that the queer label may carry beyond that meaning. I also do so in the knowledge that the characters dealt with in the productions (many of whom are inspired by real persons) would probably not use this term to define their own identity.



A Reflection on the Debates and a Workshop Held within the Visible Dramaturgy Programme

LOOKING FOR NEW FORMS OF CO-OPERATION

Text Iva Mikulová

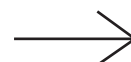
Encounters and meetings are an inseparable part of every theatre festival. After all, several theatre festivals are named this way (e.g. Brno's Setkání/Encounter or Zlín's Encounter). Encounters of all kinds: not only of the audience with actors and actresses, encounters in the foyers of theatres and in theatre halls, but also behind the scenes. One of these programmes out of the public eye during this year's Theatre World Brno Festival was a three-day meeting in panel discussions, workshops and meetings called **Visible Dramaturgy**. The diverse and rich programme, which included, for example, the founding meeting of the **Association of Theatre Dramaturges, CED Talks** on collective leadership and a lecturers' laboratory, took place from Thursday 22 May to Saturday 24 May 2025 and hosted experts from numerous European countries. I did not actively participate in this programme due to other festival commitments, but as an observer and spectator I spent the first day in the Mozart Hall attending a panel discussion with the representatives of international co-production projects, and a debate on the perspectives of international collaborations during theatre festivals. Now I get back to both these events with a short reflection summarising the most important themes and ideas that emerged during the course of the debates.

The two morning sessions, held in English, were moderated by dramaturge Marta Ljubková, who welcomed the representatives of three festival co-produc-

tion projects. These were the productions *Quanta* (Theatre World Brno Festival, Czech Republic; Onassis Culture, Athens, Greece; DE SINGEL, Belgium; International Theatre Festival Divine Comedy, Poland; Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Poland), *By the River* (co-produced by Schauspielhaus Wien and Slovak National Theatre), and the Czech co-production *The Last One Out Turns Off the Lights* by Divadlo Letí (Theatre World Brno and Fabula Mundi). The difference in the size of the individual productions and the number of actors involved naturally offered different perspectives as well as insights into this type of productions, but at the same time the representatives of these productions found common themes and pointed out to similar difficulties. The discussion itself was preceded by an introductory speech by Martin Glaser, Director of the National Theatre Brno, who summarised the basic data about this year's festival for the approximately two dozen participants. He was followed by Professor Pavel Drábek (Janáček Academy of Performing Arts and Faculty of Arts, Charles University), who presented a short excursion into the history of theatre festivals and their social and political significance. In the past, festivals played an important role in terms of cultural diplomacy or (re)presentation of aristocratic power. Last but not least, they have always been a key node of cultural exchanges, and — as the following discussion revealed — they continue to play this role to this day.

What may also be part of these cultural exchanges is the sharing of one's own experience in creating various co-production projects. The participants agreed that the undeniable advantage of festivals is the creation of conditions not only for encounters but also for sharing ideas and thoughts, as well as for creating new projects. Thanks to last year's TWB, which hosted Łukasz Twarowski's production *The Employees*, the National Theatre Brno became a co-production partner of this year's *Quanta*. Mário Drgoňa's encounter with Mazlum Nergiz at Wiener Festwochen was in turn behind the creation of the co-production *By the River*. Regardless of the size of the projects, the speakers agreed on a two-year time limit as the minimum necessary for such collaboration. Difficulties in its realisation can occur mainly due to the administrative burden of such projects, or during the technical transfer and adaptation of stage technology in particular theatres where the productions are re-run. The three stagings mentioned above differed in the way they were realised: the production *Quanta*, which involved several co-production partners, was prepared in one institution and subsequently toured in all partner theatres; the production *By the River* engaged actors from both the participating institutions; the project *The Last One Out Turns Off the Lights* engaged actors on an open call basis. In spite of this diversity, all the stage works were related not only by their language of communication other than the 'internal' one (i.e. English), but above all by their quest for a cultural language that would preserve the intelligibility of the production even after its transfer and adaptation to another cultural landscape. In this way, *Quanta*, for example, opened up a universally understandable theme popularising science and quantum physics through human fates set in a hotel in 1938. However, the originators were also aware of potential communication and cultural dissonances. Mário Drgoňa, dramaturge of the Slovak National Theatre, mentioned his experience from Austrian presentations of the multilingual (German, Slovak, Spanish and English) production *By the River*, where he encountered certain reluctance on the part of the audience to read German-language subtitles. This way of making a foreign language production more easily intelligible does not seem to have become a natural enough medium of understanding, at least outside of festival venues. Hendrik Storme, Art Director of the Belgian arts centre DE SINGEL, affirmed this trend of favouring national languages and invited the artists not to give yield to it, advocating instead multilingual and culturally varied Europe.

In the second part of the programme, entitled *Perspectives of International Co-operation within the Festival*, the representatives of several European festivals shared their views on the current artistic directions of theatre festivals and their dramaturgical composition. They also tried to identify the transformations of their work in post-Covid times. The representatives of Polish festivals opened the topic of political censorship and





maliciousness of the right-oriented political leadership of their country. Taking into account the experience of Hungary or Romania, a change of the festival founder appeared to be a possible way to maintain an independent and artistically high quality programme. In fact, smaller local authorities can — unlike the state — maintain their liberal integrity and thus support freedom of artistic expression. In the evaluation of the audience across the different Central European festivals, the participants agreed that they observed a more open and active approach. This was affected by the passive and audience-poor Covid years when it was impossible to visit theatres. Not only in relation to the increasing costs of staging, the creative teams identified the prevailing trend of large festival co-productions that gradually make tours of all major European theatre festivals (such as Wiener Festwochen or Avignon). Although these festivals have been losing their programme uniqueness, their dramaturgically non-elitist approach contributes to ecological sustainability of the productions and helps reduce the costs of participating institutions. At the same time, the economic pressure forces festival boards to reassess their formats and possibly look for other solutions (e.g. the aforementioned co-productions or cuts in the number

of festival days). Despite the divergent opinions of the participants, there was a consensus on the common tasks of the individual festivals and their dramaturges: on the one hand, to bring well-known and proven 'stage direction aces' to the audience, and on the other hand, to continue to identify new talents and emerging artists for whom festivals are an opportunity to build their artistic reputation. For, as was said in the conclusion, festival boards are accountable towards their audiences and ought to be more concerned with artistic balance and accessibility to a wide audience than with the exclusivity of their programme.

Both the highly inspiring meetings explored the possibilities of collaboration between different artistic entities. Their overwhelming positive aspect resided in the desire of those present to find new formats and ways in which artists can bring new and inspiring projects to the audience despite the worsening economic conditions, chronically underfunded culture and administrative burden. Projects that not only impress in terms of size, but also in terms of thematic complexity and clarity, and that promote the cultural diversity of European countries. Promoting this diversity, sharing knowledge, thoughts and ideas from dif-



ferent cultures and artistic backgrounds can lead to stimulating and challenging projects that can leave a cultural footprint across Europe.

Participants of the panel discussion on co-production projects:

Quanta / Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, co-production partners: Theatre World Brno Festival (Czech Republic), Onassis Culture, Athens (Greece), DE SINGEL (Belgium), Divine Comedy International Theatre Festival (Poland), Adam Mickiewicz Institute (Poland) – represented by general director NdB Martin Glaser (National Theatre Brno), director Łukasz Twarkowski (Lithuanian National Drama Theatre), and artistic director Hendrik Storme (DE SINGEL, Belgium)

By the River / a co-production of Schauspielhaus Wien and Slovak National Theatre – represented by dramaturge and artistic director Mazlum Nergiz (Schauspielhaus Wien), dramaturge Mário Drgoňa (Slovak National Theatre, Bratislava)

The Last One Turns Out the Lights / Leti Theatre (Czech Republic), co-production partners: Theatre World Brno Festival (Czech Republic), Fabula Mundi,

Playwriting Europe New Voices (Italy) – represented by artistic director Marie Špalová and finance director Pavla Klouzalová (Czech Republic)

Participants of the debate about the possibilities of international co-operation:

Guests: Renata Derejczyk, Director of the international theatre festival Contact in Toruń, Poland; Artur Ghukasyan, president HIGH FEST International Performing Arts Festival in Yerevan, Armenia; Barbara Gregorová, chief dramaturge of the International Festival Theatre World Brno, Czech Republic; Raluca Rădulescu, theatre journalist, curator, translator in Bucharest, Romania; Martin Satoranský, dramaturge of the REGIONS International Theatre Festival Hradec Králové, Czech Republic; Dorota Semenowicz, Proxy Director of International Cooperation and Development, Stary Teatr Krakow, Poland; Michal Zahálka, dramaturge of Divadlo International Theatre Festival in Pilsen, Czech Republic

The author is an educator at the Department of Theatre Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno.





This programme was conducted with the support of the Arts and Theatre Institute.

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE ASSITEJ VISITORS PROGRAM

Text Natálie Mlejnková

On Friday, 23 May, the Theatre World Brno Festival featured an accompanying programme designed not only for theatre professionals, but also for those interested in theatre lecturing and related activities — both from home and abroad. The **Visitors Programme** was held under the umbrella of ASSITEJ, which since 1965 has been bringing together artists, educators and promoters devoted to theatre for children and youth around the world. Their common aim is to promote intercultural dialogue, exchange of experience and, above all, the development of quality theatre for young audiences at the international level.

The **Lecturers' Lab**, which took place on the Small Stage of Polárka Theatre, provided an inspiring insight into the lecturing and creative education of several institutions. Brno was represented by the IN-SIDE TWB programme of the Brno National Theatre (Radka Macková), the Czech ASSITEJ Centre (Natálie Preslová Strýčková), the activities and selected projects of the Polárka Theatre (Jiří Hajdyla), and diverse lecturing activities of the Goose on a String Theatre (Marie Klemensová). The other institutions included the Drak Theatre (Klára Fidlerová) from Hradec Králové, Archa+ (Martina Filínová) from Prague, and Moving Station – Dramacentrum JOHAN (Olga Pašková and Tereza Vydarená) from Pilsen.

Presented were the following foreign institutions and projects individual artists-educators:

Olena Rosstalna — AmaTea, Ukraine
www.amateateatre.com/en

Shanna Bestock — ACT Contemporary Theatre, the US / www.acttheatre.org

Gianna Formicone, Germany
www.giannaformicone.com

Jeremy Micheal Segal — Youtheatre, Montréal, Canada / <https://www.youtheatre.ca>

Mojca Redjko — StARTbok, Slovenia / www.slg-ce.si

Kjell Moberg — NIE (New International Encounter)
www.nie-theatre.com

The aim of this meeting was to briefly present the activities of the individual institutions as a basis for further conversations, experience sharing or launching co-operation.

Personally, what I found particularly interesting was the **3Place** project (Performing Arts as the Third Place for the Young Audience), whose ambition is to make theatre the third key space in the lives of adolescents — next to home and school. The project focuses on research and development of theatre for teenagers from 13 years who belong to the most omitted groups of audience. 3Place is led by Scenekunstbruket and the associated Kloden Teater (Oslo, Norway), and there is co-operation with the German Junges Ensemble Stuttgart and the Drak Theatre from Hradec Králové. Since the start of the project, three productions have already been staged at the Drak Theatre: *The Road* (2019), *Antigone* (2022), and the recently premiered *Transformation* (2025). Other stimulating projects undoubtedly include the **Platform for Creative Learning through CHANGE** (www.umenim.cz) and the **Festival of Art and Creativity in Education** (FUK), which falls under the former (<http://www.fuk.education>). The members of the organisation strive to make creative approaches an integral part of education. These projects show how to learn and teach through art. The FUK programme also zeroes in on families, professionals and schools.

This was followed by the first workshop with the stage director of the Norwegian NIE Theatre, Kjell Moberg, whose production *We Come from Far Away* is part of this year's Theatre World Brno. We carried out practical exercises and played games that the director usually uses when gathering material in the early stages of the production process. 'Mistakes are good because we forget ourselves.' This was the spirit of the whole workshop. Playfulness manifested itself during the first meeting as a universal language that is inherent to everyone. Even though we knew some of the activities under other names, the principles were clear and allowed us to get involved quickly. This created a naturally relaxed atmosphere. It was in this way that a room for the next part of the programme was casually opened up, offering follow-up weekend workshops by dramaturge and lecturer Petra Jeroma (Geheime Dramaturgische Gesellschaft) as well as joint visits to children's and youth performances within the children's line of Theatre World Brno.

The author is a student in the Department of Theatre Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno.



FESTIVAL TEAM

Theatre World Brno International Festival 2025

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR Martin Glaser

CHIEF DRAMATURGE Barbara Gregorová

DRAMATURGICAL COUNCIL

NATIONAL THEATRE BRNO Jaroslav Jurečka (NTB Drama Theatre), Karel Littera (NTB Ballet)

BRNO CITY THEATRE Miroslav Ondra, Jan Šotkovský

GOOSE ON A STRING THEATRE Jakub Molnár, Veronika Onheiserová

POLÁRKA THEATRE Jiří Hajdyla

RADOST THEATRE Eva Kolomazníková

THEATRE FACULTY JAMU Michal Zetel

PRODUCTION Silvie Zeinerová Sanža

MARKETING AND PR Petr Novák

PRODUCTION OF COPRODUCTIONS, SIDE EVENT PROGRAMME AND INDUSTRY PROGRAMME Andrea Puchalíková

GRAPHIC DESIGN Zuzana Burgrová & Robert V. Novák, R. V. N. Studio

TECHNICAL SUPPORT Michal Jedon a Barbora Kolčavová

FOREIGN GUESTS Zahraniční oddělení NdB / Foreign Relations Department of the National Theatre Brno

SOCIAL NETWORK ADMINISTRATORS Martina Mužátková, Zdeněk Němec, Michal Jedon, Veronika Benešová

SALE Hana Syslová, Veronika Pelcová, Veronika Hráčková

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MAIN FESTIVAL COORDINATOR
National Theatre Brno, public institution
Dvořákova 589/11, 602 00 Brno – město
+420 542 158 120
www.ndbrno.cz

The festival is held under the auspices of the Governor of the South Moravian Region Mgr. Jan Grolich, the Mayor of the City of Brno JUDr. Markéta Vaňková, and the Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic Mgr. Martin Baxa.

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We will see us next year!
The 2026 Theatre World Brno Festival
will take place from 13 to 24 May, 2026.

FESTIVAL

