

The Flora Theatre Festival Invites to Seventy Events Under the Motto Freedom

Ticket sale starts on Tuesday 9 April

Olomouc, 4 April 2024 | **In mid-May, renowned theatre personalities and companies from eleven countries will come to Olomouc. The university city is going to host one of the most important Central European festivals – the 27th Flora Theatre Festival. The seventy events featured in the non-competitive showcase are framed by the motto FREEDOM.**

Twelve days with an exclusive prologue

The organizing association Flora Theatre Festival traditionally does not advertise “the best of the best” from Czech or foreign theatre. The organizers’ dramaturgical choice is always based on the annual motto and the effort to present works that communicate with it in an inspiring way, polemicize, emphasize it or revive it in fresh contexts. The twelve-day main programme of the 27th Flora will present a genre-diverse portfolio of twenty-four productions, complemented by a wide range of accompanying activities.

“We are thrilled to welcome the top ensemble Schauspielhaus Bochum back to Olomouc after two years as part of the opening ceremony and to invite you to the exceptional piece *The New Life*, which opened the 59th edition of the Berliner Theatertreffen. The unrestrained interpretation of Dante’s text, backed by virtuosic performances and wonderful music, is the work of one of Europe’s most original and influential contemporary directors – Christopher Rüping,” says Dominika Široká, one of festival’s dramaturges, about the ceremonial opening.

Reflexion of the war

The festival motto is emotionally exposed by two Polish-Ukrainian projects by choreographer Maciej Kuźmiński. *Every Minute Motherland*, on which Kuźmiński collaborated with a team of Ukrainian dancers, is an evocative reaction to the criminal Russian aggression, while Daria Koval’s solo *Resistance Movement* (awarded at the Gdańsk Dance Festival 2023) is an authentic testimony of a woman directly affected by the war.

The war plays a pivotal role in the diptych of Divadlo X10 *All Quiet on the Western Front / Green Corridors*. The polyphony of pressing timeless themes was brought on the stage of the Czech Theatre of the Year by director Dušan D. Pařízek, who in his adaptation of Remarque’s legendary novel reflects the senseless suffering of soldiers in the World War I, and in the first domestic staging of the text by contemporary Ukrainian author Natalya Vorozhbyt, he views the war conflict through the painful personal experience of Ukrainian female refugees.

Women fighting and not giving in

Unruly female heroines are the protagonists of a significant part of the festival’s productions. An unequal battle with the rigid system will be fought by the lawyer Tessa played by Marie Štípková

in the courtroom drama **Prima Facie** staged by director Lucie Ferenzová and Švandovo divadlo, while the charismatic Iris Kristeková will fight for her independence in the stand-up **Iris** directed by Miřenka řechová.

The motto of the 27th Flora is explicitly underlined by the new production of the Moravské divadlo's drama ensemble and its director Roman Vencl, whose musical **Ela!** will portray the life story of the famous car racer and Olomouc native Eliřka Junková, the acclaimed **Anomalie** by Slovak choreographer Eva Urbanová with an extraordinary physical performance of French dancer Agathe Tarillon, and the "theatrical pseudo-documentary" by actress Milada Vyhnálková and director Silvia Vollmann – **Masaryk(ová)**, produced by Divadlo na cucky.

The status and freedom of women in different cultural and socio-historical contexts is explored by Austrian-based Hungarian Anna Biczók and a trio of dancers from three countries in the choreography **Delicate**, which was nominated for the Rudolf Laban Prize for the best Hungarian dance work of last year.

A political statement, postulating freedom as a basic condition for a dignified life, is expressed in the authorial testimony of Iranian theatre artist and filmmaker Sahar Rezaei, who lets the revolutionary slogan of her compatriots, "Woman, life, freedom!", ring out in the 27th Flora's appealing final performance **Happy Birthday**.

Freedom as a premise of a meaningful existence

Freedom is the central theme of all the selected productions. It is radically accentuated by director Michal Hába in both of his festival contributions – **Peer Gynt** performed by the ensemble of řinoherní studio Ústí nad Labem and **Woyzeck** in a wild "remix" by Lachende Bestien; it permeates Lagarce's intimate confession **It's Only the End of the World** in a sensitive reproduction by HaDivadlo's artistic director Ivan Buraj; it oscillates through the fascinating world of the scenic message **Arriving** by Vzlet from Vrřovice – under the empathetic direction and dramaturgy of Alřběta Nováková and Eliřka Říhová; it is until his "last breath" the unquestionable foundation of the life attitude of Alfred Hirsch – the hero of the production **Fredy** by Jan Nebeský, Miloslav König and Masopust; it is fatally reflected in the opera debut **Ad Matrem** (Moravské divadlo Olomouc) by the creative tandem Petr Erbes – Boris Jedinák.

"A distinctive contribution to the festival's leitmotif will be made by Salzburg's Hungry Sharks, who will be presented for the first time in the Czech Republic. Their performance **Béton Brut**, in which the world of architecture and urban dance intersect, ingeniously comments on the connection between concrete brutalism and the pillar of hip-hop culture – breakdancing. The witty production is a potential audience hit of Flora," comments Jitka Pavliřová, the festival's dance section dramaturge, on the genre and thematic range of the festival programme.

Western promises

Thanks to Flora, the unique Moldovan artistic platform teatru-spălătorie and the Nationaltheater Mannheim will also be presented for the first time in the Czech Republic.

The genre-crossing "theatre concert" **Symphony of Progress** by Nicoleta Esinencu, the artistic director of the Chiřinău theatre-spălătorie, was co-produced with HAU Hebbel am Ufer Berlin

and attracted extraordinary attention at respected political theatre festivals. Through real-life episodes, it points out the flipside of the phenomenon of open Europe and the discrimination faced by people seeking a better life west of their homes.

The Mannheim **Juices** is an adaptation of a metaphorical text by Ewe Benbenek, which has just been invited to the Mülheimer Theatertage, the most important showcase of productions of German-language texts. The successful title, which uncovers the taboo working conditions of immigrant women in Germany, bears (on a stage programmatically mapping the Eastern European theatrical perspective) a distinct Czech imprint. It has been directed by Kamila Polívková – in collaboration with the artist and set designer Antonín Šilar.

Together with dramaturge Viktorie Knotková, Polívková is also responsible for the activities of the Brno Centre for Experimental Theatre, which are part of the accompanying programme of the 27th Flora. At the end of the festival, its motto will be accentuated by discussions with the participation of female personalities of German-language theatre – the artistic director of Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin, Shermin Langhoff, and the programme director of the Radar Ost festival, Birgit Lengers, Theater Dortmund's intendant and director Julia Wissert, and Schauspielhaus Zürich's creative producer and head dramaturge Katinka Deecke (as well as Lenka Havlíková, Sodja Lotker, Nicoleta Esinencu and other representatives of the Central and Eastern European theatre scene).

Premieres, FloraLab, concerts, discussions

Two premieres will take place in the first half of the Flora Theatre Festival. The first will be offered by the Moravské divadlo's ballet ensemble in cooperation with the newly operating stage Central of the Olomouc Museum of Art. The combined evening *Freedom in Motion* consists of the titles **WHITEflag day** by Italian choreographer Roberta Ferrara and **Inventing Freedom** by dancer and choreographer Štěpán Pechar. The second premiere, presented by Divadlo na cucky, will be an original production by Slovak director Šimon Spišák called **Tragedians**. Both new productions will be performed twice during Flora.

For the sixth time, the Flora Theatre Festival will also include the FloraLab educational programme for several dozen students of theatre-related arts and art-research disciplines from Czech and Slovak universities (DAMU and FF UK Prague, JAMU and FF MU Brno, FF UP Olomouc, and VŠMU Bratislava).

Not only the child audience will be addressed by Jazmína Piktorová and Sabina Bočková with their playful, poetic and interaction-provoking performance **Microworlds**, which has currently been included in the prestigious selection of this year's international dance platform Aerowaves.

Flora will also invite you to a variety of musical productions in the festival tent – among the magnets of the concert programme will be the performance of the duo *PAST* or the German-Austrian fusion of composers of theatre and film music Alexander Vičar and Dominik Giesriegl, *noise control barrier*.

The Flora Theatre Festival highlights artistic and theatrical trends representing reflections on fundamental social phenomena and allows its visitors to come into close contact with exceptional

creators and artists. Through discussions, presentations and workshops, it mediates their dialogue with the audience – about staging principles, motivational sources and civic attitudes.

“We believe that Flora’s leitmotif will resonate across all scenes and its ethos will be heard in both official discussions and during hundreds of informal meetings. We are building a multi-genre platform of interdisciplinary encounters open to the general public with a non-conformist atmosphere of sharing, and we look forward to having an open and exceptionally free conversation about the crucial issues of our time,” Petr Nerušil, the festival’s chief dramaturge and director, invites to Olomouc in May.

(Co)author of this year’s festival graphics “Freedom” is artist Jiří Sedlák.

Ticket sale starts on 9 April at 12 p.m.;
more information at www.divadelniflora.cz.

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The general media partner of the festival is Czech Television, the main media partner is the weekly magazine Respekt.

The 27th Flora Theatre Festival is held under the auspices of the Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic, Martin Baxa, and the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Prague, Andreas Künne.