



Václav Havel
LIBRARY FOUNDATION

BBĽA | BOHEMIAN BENEVOLENT
& LITERARY ASSOCIATION

PRESS RELEASE

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Bridging the Worlds: 2022 Spring Stage Readings

Experience engaging stage readings of contemporary plays by Central European playwrights addressing political circumstances and social trends. Dedicated to the people of Ukraine fighting for their independence.

(New York, NY—March 28, 2022)—The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation and Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association are pleased to present the fourth spring edition of the Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival. From April 4 to April 25, the festival honoring playwright and human rights activist Vaclav Havel will offer stage readings of contemporary plays by award-winning European playwrights from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, and Romania.

Each festival's spring edition is a unique opportunity for a truly intercultural and multigenerational exploration of Central European present-day trends and the not-so-distant, turbulent past. The state of affairs currently unfolding in the region—the Russian invasion of Ukraine—only amplifies the need for a closer examination of human nature as well as a search for peace and a place to belong.

During five evenings, a number of riveting stories will be told: of families separated, and people imprisoned and disappeared without a trace (*Juliet*, Hungary); of socially excluded women attempting to defend their social space (*Waif T's Private War*, Slovakia); of a young generation

searching for a perfect happiness in a fake world of lifestyle magazines (*Love, Bitches*, Czech Republic).

The Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival takes a critical look at humanity while also offering a dose of the surreal and absurd to help us assess our place in the world. We invite audiences on an eerie yet comical journey across galaxies—only to land in a “Planet America” and attempt make sense of it (*Exile Is My Home*, Romania). Audience members will also have an opportunity to consider the spiritual condition of today’s society with nameless protagonists of no specific gender, race, or age (*Kicking Down the Quilt*, Poland).

The 2022 spring edition presents works by award-winning playwrights already known to US audiences, such as Hungarian Andras Visky, artistic director at the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj in Romania, and Romanian-born American Domnica Radulescu, the Edwin A. Morris Professor of Comparative Literature at Washington and Lee University. For the first time at the festival, readings of works by Polish Rafal Dziemidok (who appeared in New York City with the Dada von Bzdulow Theatre), Czech Petr Kolecko (who excels in constructing unlikely situations with dark humor to create hyperbole), and Slovak Ursula Kovalyk (who is known for her artistic collaborations with homeless and disabled people) will be performed.

Pavla Niklova, Festival Director, said: “We are really excited to work again with our international community of performers and directors. It is their incredible talents and multicultural experiences that allow us to connect the New York City audience with Central European literature and theater. At this very moment, people in Central and Eastern Europe find themselves in difficult times due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We hope that by presenting these Central European plays, we can bridge our worlds, wishing for empathy, tolerance, and peace.”

All Spring Stage Readings are followed by talkbacks. The festival is free to the public. Online registration through Eventbrite is required. Dedicated to the people of Ukraine fighting for their independence, the festival’s suggested donation (\$10) will be used to support Ukrainian refugees. Proof of vaccination and wearing of a face mask during the event is required.

The 2022 Spring Stage Readings festival takes place at Manhattan’s Bohemian National Hall. Festival website: www.rehearsalfortruth.org.

FESTIVAL OVERVIEW

Monday, April 4, 7:00 p.m.

***Kicking Down the Quilt* / Poland / stage reading, talkback**

Playwright: Rafal Dziemidok

Director: Dmitri Barcomi

Cast: Amy Coleman, Aleksandr Krapivkin, DeVante Lewis, David Mandelbaum, Demetrius Stewart, Weronika Wozniak

Conceived as a dialogue for theater, *Kicking Down the Quilt* deals with the spiritual condition of our hyper-contemporary society. The protagonists of this story have no

specific gender, race, names, or age. They are democratically elected representatives of intimacy.

Monday, April 11, 7:00 p.m.

Exile Is My Home / Romania / stage reading, talkback

Playwright: Domnica Radulescu

Director: Rachel Tamarin

Cast: Steph Marie Alvarez, Jessica Carmona, Alexandra Gomez, Talia Segal, Ken LaBoy Vasquez, Selina Hernandez

Choreographer: Amy Frey

Composer/Actor: Joshua Murphy

Carnavalesque, grotesquely comic, savagely sad, and breathtaking in their imaginative scope. Excerpts from four plays—*Exile Is My Home*, *The Town with Very Nice People*, *House in a Boat with Food and No God*, *Crossings: A Play of Immigrant Voices*—will be read on stage.

Monday, April 18, 7:00 p.m.

Love, Bitches / Czech Republic / stage reading, talkback

Playwright: Petr Kolečko

Director: Edward Einhorn

Cast: Craig Anderson, JaneAnne Halter, Ian J Hayes, Ethan Horgan, Delia Kempf, Rivera Reese, Allison Elaine, Dana Watkins

Composer/Music accompaniment: Adam Bernstein

Translated by: Edward Einhorn with assistance of Katerina Lu

A play about young people who live in a fake world of lifestyle magazines and TV shows. Overwhelmed by images of perfect happiness and true love, they can no longer actually recognize perfect happiness and true love.

Thursday, April 21, 7:00 p.m.

Juliet / Hungary / stage reading, talkback

Playwright: Andras Visky

Director: Michael Sexton

A work of both real life and poetry: a powerful story of a woman arrested and banished with her seven children to the Romanian wilderness under the communist regime of the 1950s.

Monday, April 25, 7:00 p.m.

Waif T's Private War / Slovakia / stage reading, talkback

Playwright: Ursula Kovalyk

Director: Alexandra Aron

Cast: Monique Vukovic, Marjorie Conn

Translated by: Lucia Faltin

The harsh reality of the future tears two socially excluded women from their sweet dreams of the past when they find out that a development project is slated to destroy their lovely park. Will they win their private war?

WHERE

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

PARKING

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

ABOUT THE 2022 SPRING STAGE READINGS

The 2022 Spring Stage Readings: Bridging the Worlds is organized by the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation and the Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association in partnership with the Polish Cultural Institute New York, Untitled Theater Company #61, Consulate General of the Czech Republic in New York, GOH Productions, and Romanian Cultural Institute. The festival is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Spring Stage Readings is part of the Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival honoring the playwright and human rights activist Vaclav Havel. The 2022 edition has been conceived in consultation with Attila Szabo, Deputy Director, Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute; Martina Peckova-Cerna, Head, International Cooperation Department, Arts and Theatre Institute, Prague; Tomek Smolarski, Performing Arts Programming, Polish Cultural Institute New York; Raluca Cimpoiasu, Program Manager, Romanian Cultural Institute; Vladislava Fekete, Director, Theatre Institute in Bratislava; and Andrea Domeova, Head of the Centre for Editorial Activities, Theatre Institute in Bratislava.

REHEARSAL FOR TRUTH THEATER FESTIVAL

Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival is organized each year in New York City by VHLF and BBLA, in partnership with Czech, Hungarian, Polish, and Slovak performing arts organizations and cultural institutes. The series of events highlight the legacy of Vaclav Havel as a playwright through live performances, panel discussions, exhibitions, and a ceremony for the Disturbing the Peace Award to a Courageous Writer at Risk. One key objective is to establish exchanges between American and Central European theater professionals. The festival reflects Havel's contribution to 20th-century theater as well as his belief in the potential of Central European cultural traditions to enrich human existence in the modern age. The festival is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Vaclav Havel Library Foundation (VHLF)

Vaclav Havel Library Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in the United States in 2012 to honor, preserve and build upon the legacy of playwright, dissident and former President

of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel. VHLF creates an effective, cutting-edge interactive platform to promote worldwide awareness of Havel's crucial contributions to the democratic transition in Central Europe as well as to apply his philosophies to ongoing debates concerning the evolution towards a global community.

Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA)

Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association is a nonprofit organization established in 1891 in New York City as an umbrella entity for almost 80 Czech and Slovak immigrant organizations. The mission of BBLA is to preserve and support Czech and Slovak culture in New York City. BBLA's members include the American Fund for Czech and Slovak Leadership Studies, Association of Free Czechoslovak Sportsmen, Czech and Slovak Solidarity Council, Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America, Dvorak American Heritage Association and Sokol New York, and three associate organizations: the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, Society for the History of Czechoslovak Jews, and Vaclav Havel Library Foundation.

Vaclav Havel (1936-2011)

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

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