

theatre.sk Theatre Festivals

The tradition of theatre festivals in Slovakia dates back to 1923 when the first year of Theatre Competition was held. It was a nationwide showcase of amateur theatres under the auspices of Matica slovenská, but its establishment and operation had significant influence over the development of the spectator community and its demands on the theatre. In the 1950s this showcase underwent multiple organizational changes, and from 1967 it has been known as Scenic Harvest. In 2020, the 98th year of this oldest festival of non-professional theatres in Europe will be held in Martin.

Theatre festivals and showcases offer their audiences an opportunity to see a variety of theatre techniques and forms concentrated in a small space. The audiences can compare different interpretations and glances at theatre, society, man and his problems. While the domestic festivals and showcases bridge the differences between the regions, international festivals help discover and understand other cultures.

Festivals have been hugely important for the development of the Slovak professional theatre culture. Even though many festivals arose from ideological motivations, they still supported the development of theatre culture and positively stimulated the quality of artistic creation. The festivals helped many theatres and companies to go beyond the limits of psychological realism and escape the dramatic stereotypes on the way to modern theatre approaches. These assumptions still apply to opinion-forming festivals today, regardless of whether the plays are selected by the festival directors or are nominated by the theatre. Participation in festivals with critical selection helps the theatres stabilize their internal environment and find their place on the theatre market. Opinion-forming festivals become an important ingredient in the development and stabilization of theatre culture in Slovakia.

The oldest showcases of professional theatres on the territory of Czechoslovakia included **Theatrical Harvest** (1948 – 1961) and **Theatre Festival and Seminar Karlovy Vary** (1959 – 1962 and 1967). The specific feature of Theatrical Harvest was that the jury travelled around the country to select performances that then competed for the highest prizes during the showcase in Prague.

The showcases in Karlovy Vary had a theme – each year was dedicated to a different form of theatre art or a directly to a particular theatre (in 1961 to the Theatre Company of the Slovak National Theatre, and in 1967 to musical entertainment theatres).



Plakat / Archivum Institutu Teatralnego



Zvolen Castle Plays (1973) is the oldest open-air festival in Slovakia that blended opera with dramatic theatre. This summer the Zvolen Castle courtyard will be the site of its 47th year, now only dedicated to dramatic theatre.

www.djgt.sk/festival-zamocke-hry-zvolenskej/
Poster Svetozár Mydlo/Theatre Institute Museum



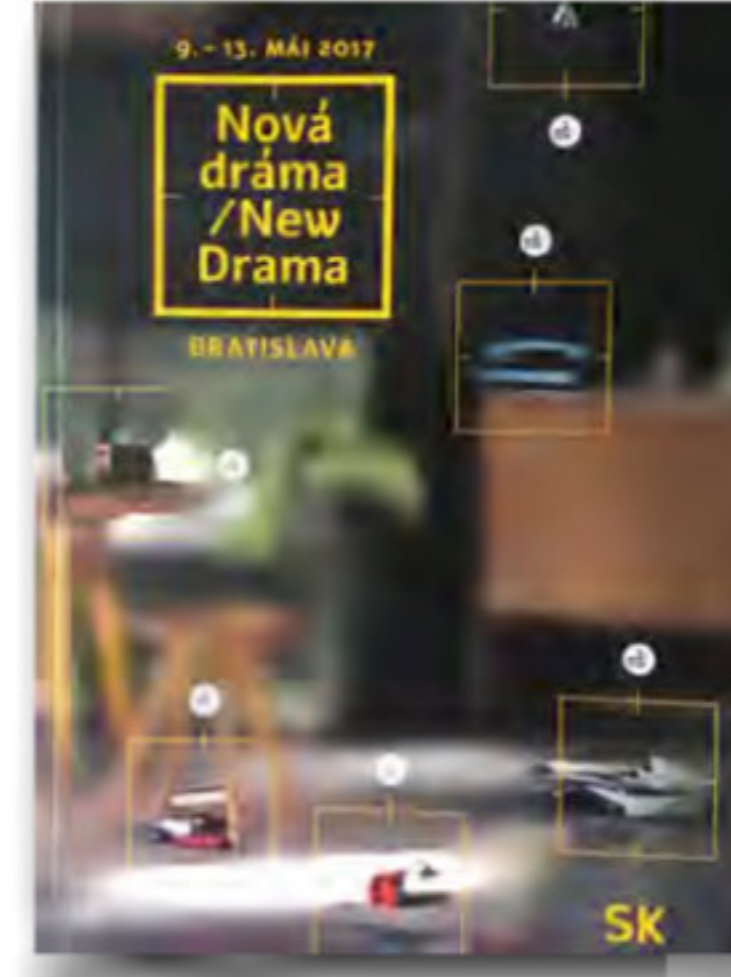
Theatrical Nitra (1992) is known specifically as an international festival primarily dedicated to dramatic works. However, often times it includes other theatre forms (dance, physical or opera theatre, performance forms). In recent years the literary direction of the festival has been trying to declare themes for individual years and to foster international projects.

www.nitrafest.sk
Festival Catalogue/Theatre Institute Archive



In 2001, the **Summer Shakespearean Festivities** came to Bratislava for the first time, to the courtyard of the Academy of Performing Arts. In 2005, this originally Czech project picked up a Slovak partner. From the initiative of Marián Zedníkovič, this year saw the premiere of the Slovak production of *The Merchant of Venice*. The festival expanded its spectrum of open air summer events not only in Bratislava and Prague, but also within the regions in both countries.

www.wshakespeare.sk
Festival Poster using the photo of Pavel Mára/Theatre Institute Museum



The Theatre Institute has been organizing festival **New Drama** (2005) in Bratislava. It focuses on the presentation of Slovak plays of new and modern dramatic texts of domestic and international origin. An appealing and attractive part of the festival are the announcement of the results of the competition for the best dramatic text Drama, foreign playwright – patron of the festival, or Focus highlighting the dramatic works of a selected country.

www.novadrama.sk
Festival Catalogue Martin Mistrík/Theatre Institute Archive

Crystallization of Theatrical Nitra as an international festival created a vacuum in Slovakia for the presentation of the works of Slovak theatres. This void was filled by the festival **Touches and Bonds** (2005) in Martin that took its name from the legendary Martin play of director Roman Polák. As part of a side show it creates room for the presentation of school plays, street theatre and plays intended for children.

www.dotykyaspojenia.sk
Poster Ján Novosedliak/Theatre Institute Museum



The **Festival of Central European Theatres** (2006) has been bringing interesting theatre productions from Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to Košice audiences. It is indirectly tied to the theatre showcases and festivals dedicated to the works of the Visegrád Four countries.

www.kosicefest.eu
Festival Poster / Theatre Institute Museum



Eurokontext (2014 – preliminary year) is one of the youngest festivals in Slovakia. At the same time, it is a festival of multiple genres – years of dramatic theatre alternate with years focusing on opera and dance theatre. The festival sponsored by the Slovak National Theatre takes place in Bratislava. Since its establishment this festival creates room for the presentation and confrontation of the Slovak and international works.

www.eurokontext.sk
Promotional festival material/Theatre Institute Archive



Puppeteers' Bystrica (1974) is the oldest festival of puppet theatres in Slovakia. It is a festival with international participation and an exceptionally flexible literary direction that is sensitive to any changes in the social and theatre environment. The festival takes place on two levels – works for children and works for adults, and in recent years thanks to the Banská Bystrica Tour project it has expanded to multiple cities and towns within the region. Other interesting puppet theatre festivals include **Puppets' Žilina** (2009) dedicated exclusively to the presentation of domestic works, and the festival of performance art schools focusing on puppet plays in the Visegrád Four countries in Nitra **Meeting – Stretnutie – Setkání – Spotkanie – Találgozás** (2000).

www.bdnr.sk, www.sdn.sk
Poster Ján Novosedliak/Theatre Institute Museum



Bratislava in Movement is the oldest dance festival in Slovakia. From the beginning it was created as an international dance festival devoted to contemporary dance. In addition to the works of international dancers the festival also presents the creations of Slovak dancers working both at home and abroad. An interesting project was the festival Four Days of Dance for You, today Creative Days for You, which is open to the broader dance community and contributes to the building of a strong professional dance base.

www.abp.sk, www.studiotanca.sk/festivaly/html/Festival
Poster/Theatre Institute Museum



Nu Dance Fest (2006) is an international festival of contemporary dance that highlights the creations of Slovak choreographers. The goal of the festival is to introduce the latest trends in contemporary dance and physical theatre, multi-genre performances and high quality conceptual works with their own opinions. Original festivals of new theatre and dance also include **KioSK**, which takes place in mid-summer in the cultural centre Žilina-Záriečie Station.

www.nudancefest.sk, www.kioskfestival.sk
Festival Poster/Nu Dance Fest Archive