



17th Joakimfest International Theatre Festival

Harmony of Diversity

Thanks to fascinating enthusiasm, creative ideas, enviable persistence and undoubted organizational skills of the previous curators, of the Princely Serbian Theatre as the host, but also of numerous collaborators, the Joakimfest International Theatre Festival has, over the past two decades, established itself as one of the most important and interesting festivals, not only in Serbia, but also in the region. The decision that Kragujevac should hold an event of curiously devised configuration, naturally adds to the fact that the city has a long and successful tradition of theatrical art. The international character of the festival provided an opportunity to introduce the professional but also the widest theatrical audience to the current artistic events in the countries of the region, specific thematically and conceptual, genre, stylistic and aesthetic characteristics in the plays featured in previous selections. Fortunately, two full years of the pandemic did not have a great negative effect on firm commitment of Kragujevac to preserve and further develop Joakimfest.

Thinking about the plays that had applied for the 17th edition of the festival, I was not too insistent on a particular concept, or a common denominator, resulting in a selection the motto of which might be: "Harmony of Diversity." Keeping in mind, above all, the artistic quality of selected works, I also tried to ignore, to a realistic degree, my personal preferences and ensure that the audience faces a variety of theatrical expressions and aesthetics, inventive directorial methods and striking thespian achievements. What is certainly common to all selected plays is that each of them rests on the dramatically unparalleled contemporary stories, which deeply concern us, without needless "excursions" into the banal sphere of daily politics. When it comes to genre, it ranges from juicy comedy, to harrowing melodrama and black humor to cathartic contemporary tragedy.

For the 17th Joakimfest International Festival, I propose the following performances:

1. Quicksand, based on the elements of Ottó Tolnai's and Pál Petrik's works, directed by Kinga Mezei, National Theatre in Subotica, Novem Theatre Association and Regional Creative Studio, Kanjiža.

Starting with Ottó Tolnai's imaginative and unusual poetic universe and the unique artistic creations of the painter and set designer Pál Petrik, Kinga Mezei and the entire author team, through a mesmerizing nonverbal-visual sensation, question the complex relationship between literature, painting and theatre. Fitting the most minute stage details clinically precise with the motifs of daily life in the Vojvodina plains with all its diverse inhabitants, *Quicksand* opens a wide range of associative-metaphorical landscapes, creating a play of sophisticated, intelligent and expressive poetry.

2. Yugoslavia, My Homeland, Theater Koper (Teatro Capodistria), Slovenia, Theatre Prijedor, Republic of Srpska – Bosnia and Herzegovina and the “Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung” Foundation, based on Goran Vojnović's novel *Yugoslavia, My Fatherland*, dramatized by Ivan Velisavljević and Aleksandar Novaković, directed by Marko Misirača.

Still fresh memories of the bloody and tragic breakup of Yugoslavia permeate through a mixture of nostalgic and critically directed narrative in the excellent novel by Goran Vojnović, whose stage realization focuses on the story of a family's fate in the murky war times and gloomy postwar times and on the eternal search for identity. The son of a former YPA officer, a child from a mixed Serbian-Slovenian marriage, embarks on an Odyssey-like adventure, wanting to find his father who has been placed on the list of war crimes suspects, inevitably facing his own repressed ego and Scylla and Charybdis of the post-Yugoslav heritage during these endless wanderings. Unpretentious directing, excellent acting, cautionary catharsis and layering of ideas are the main characteristics of this play.

3. The Assembly, based on the drama *Family Assembly* by Cristina Clemente, adapted by Ivana Stjepanović, directed by Ivan Plazibat, Jazavac City Theatre, Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska – Bosnia and Herzegovina.

By adapting the text of the contemporary Spanish writer Cristina Clemente to the mentality and socio-political circumstances of this region, with the wholehearted help of the actor's ensemble, Ivan Plazibat and Ivana Stjepanović created a witty play, with recognizable situations and characters from our daily lives. After Branko, the head of a four-member family, resigns as president of the family council, a power struggle begins, with absurd and highly comical episodes and situations created by Branko's wife, Žana and children Ana and Nemanja, revealing almost grotesque outlines of real political confrontations, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the wider region. The whole picture of life in the former state is inevitably complemented by the emergence of a foreign factor – Ana's German boyfriend Max, who largely influences the final outcome of the family elections.

4. My name is Goran Stefanovski, author adaptation by Branislava Ilić, directed by Branislav Mićunović, Drama Theater Skopje, North Macedonia.

Author adaptation of Branislava Ilić, which includes seven texts by one of the most important Yugoslav and Macedonian playwrights, Goran Stefanovski, is not just skillful editing of scenes from *Black Hole*, *Long Play*, *Sarajevo*, *Casabalkan*, *Hotel Europa*, *Euroalien* and *Odysseus*. She manages to further focus on the question of the search for identity and fate of contemporary expats, who, through no fault of their own, found themselves in the winds of tumultuous and turbulent historical events of the late 20th and early 21st century. With supreme direction, Branislav Mićunović builds stage and stylistic unity, not letting the “seams” stitching the fragments of the aforementioned dramas of Goran Stefanovski to be seen or felt. Important components of this artistically valuable performance are great actors of the Drama Theatre, emotional music by Vlatko Stefanovski and effective set design by Aleksandar Denić.

5. Consent, Nina Raine, directed by Nebojša Bradić, Atelje 212 Belgrade.

The first Serbian performance of the melodramatic, darkly humorous, intimate and skillfully written text by the contemporary English author Nina Raine in Atelje 212 was undoubtedly one of the major events of the past theatrical season. Based on carefully thought out and unobtrusive directorial decisions of Nebojša Bradić, the intriguing story of young people, two married couples and two single people who would go on to become partners, intertwining

their personal and professional aspects of life, complicated relationships, issues of law and justice, since they are lawyers working on a rape case, have given room to actors to outperform one another.

At the suggestion of the organizers of the Princely-Serbian Theatre festival and to honor the winners, Performance Art Theatre Nikšić will do a performance of the play *Boing – Boing*, directed by Rastislav Čopić.

Novi Sad, Jun 30th, 2022

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