

Introductory Words by **Vladislava Fekete**, Director of the Theatre Institute and director of the Nová drama / New Drama Festival

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The Nová drama /New Drama Festival was established at a time when Europe was “shaken up” by the wave of new drama, when nearly every country that did not have its own festival of contemporary drama immediately sought ways to have one. Several years prior to the establishment of the festival, the Theatre Institute supported new drama through a competition for best drama written in Slovak known as “Drama” (since its first year in 2000 the competition has successfully continued until today). The Institute’s multimedia space Studio 12 was used to nurture the spirit and essence of new drama – premiering new productions, holding lectures, organizing conferences, doing stage readings. In parallel, a print edition of New Drama was started and the concentric circles seemed to require the largest, all-embracing circle to surround them all – a drama festival. The essence of Nová drama /New Drama is not just to present existing productions in the main competition programme, but also to stimulate creative writing (through the above-mentioned Drama competition). For example, the creative writing workshops run by the Theatre Institute throughout the year in collaboration with Slovak theatres resulted in stage reading sessions. The festival’s image is completed by lectures and workshops held by international experts in new drama and performance art (Hans-Thies Lehmann, Aleks Sierz, Árpád Schilling, Aleksandra Jovičević, Viliam Dočolomanský, Justina Jaworska), playwrights (Gianina Cărbunariu, Maxim Kurochkin, Olya Mukhina, Yelena Isayeva, Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczuk, Dušan Jovanović, Jibbe Willems, Goran Stefanovski, Dea Loher, Ivan Vyrypajev), as well as by theme exhibitions (set design and new drama, costume art, theatre photography).

Audiences reacted positively when in 2007 the festival programme was extended by a special section called “Focus” which was designed to present European theatre cultures with which Slovakia might cooperate in the future (Romania, Russia, Serbia, Finland, Slovenia, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina). The Focus section offers a truly focused view of international theatre which allows to compare global theatre making with contemporary Slovak drama and theatre, creates space for discussion and provides the audiences with a taste of international theatre. Usually, Focus is made up of one/two productions, lectures, stage readings of contemporary plays, interviews with playwrights, an exhibition.

One of the advantages of Nová drama / New Drama is the fact that its essence is the phenomenon of current drama which keeps changing and thus never allows the festival to stagnate and be inactive. Thanks to this, Nová drama / New Drama is different every year. To program it anew forces the organizers to listen carefully, to follow European trends and to harmonize them with Slovak particularities. The aim is to model a festival that will always surprise and, perhaps most of all, confirm the meaningfulness of presenting and promoting new Slovak drama.

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