**Press Release| 10. 10. 2019**

**International Conference Theatre and Freedom focuses on independent theatre after 1989**

**To mark the 30th anniversary of the political changes in central and eastern Europe, the Arts and Theatre Institute will hold an international conference, *Theatre and Freedom: Transformation in the Paradigm of Independent European Theatre Culture after 1989* from 23-24 October 2019*.* The conference will focus on the position of independent theatre after 1989, which will be considered within the frame of theatre studies, as well as from socio-cultural perspectives. Experts from the Visegrád countries, Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and the Baltic states will attend the conference in Prague. A western European perspective will be provided by delegates from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In addition to talks confronting the evolution of independent theatre culture, the conference will feature discussion blocks addressing the future of independent European theatre as a second pillar of theatre culture. The conference is part of the accompanying programme of the Palm Off Festival and a meeting of the European Network for Information Centres for Performing Arts (ENICPA). The language of the conference is English. More information is available via** [**www.idu.cz**](http://www.idu.cz/)**.**

The thirtieth anniversary of the political changes in central and eastern Europe provides an opportunity to look back at the social and aesthetic ideals and programmes of the 1990s. The conference will consider the development of independent theatre scenes in the central and eastern European context not only at the artistic level, but also as parts of emancipating civil societies.

“Theatre scholars from twelve countries of the former Eastern Bloc will present at the conference and we have divided these contributions into three blocks. Speakers are leading experts, who have researched this theme in their countries for a long time. For example, Joanna Ostrowska, of Poznan University, is coming from Poland; she is the author of an extensive monograph on the Living Theatre, as well as a number of publications about independent Polish theatre after 1989. From Romania, it will be Iulia Popovici, who initiated a collectively-authored monograph on the shape of theatre cultures in the former Eastern Bloc at the turn of the millennium, published under the auspices of the Sibiu International Festival. Theatre scholar Tania Arcimovič’s contribution will address evolution in Belorussian theatre culture before and after the political changes in the then-USSR,” says one of the conference moderators, Jan Jiřík, of the Academy of Performing Arts (AMU), speaking on behalf of the organisers.

The aim of the conference is to position the development of independent theatre in post-socialist countries within the broader context of European theatre culture. “Because direct contact with the independent scene was extremely limited for Eastern Bloc theatre artists during the existence of the Iron Curtain, we have also invited guests from Western Europe, particularly from Germany, where independent theatre is closely associated with the political currents of the 1960s and 1970s, especially the so-called New Left. Individuals with a deep knowledge of the development of independent theatre in Germany and the former GDR have accepted invitations to attend: Professor Henning Fülle, who has published an extensive monograph on this theme, mapping the development of independent theatre in Germany from 1960 to 2010, and Carena Schlewitt, current artistic director of the European Centre for Contemporary Art in Hellerau who has extensive curatorial experience linking the Western and Eastern European theatre scenes,” says Martina Pecková Černá, head of the Arts and Theatre Institute’s International Collaboration Department. These contributions will be complimented by perspectives on the meaning of “independence” in the fields of theatre and dance from guests from a number of countries, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, which were significant sources of inspiration for the Czech independent scene after the borders opened in 1989. The programme also includes a discussion on the ethical principles and significance of the work of independent theatre work by the faculty, graduates and students of the Department of Alternative and Puppet Theatre at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of the Performing Arts (DAMU), as well as a panel discussion addressing the artistic and social roles of independent scenic art, in which Ulrike Kruner, president of the European Association of Independent Performing Arts, will participate. The final part of the conference will feature roundtable discussions around the definition of the term “independent theatre.”

The conference coincides with a meeting of the European Network of Information Centres for Performing Arts (ENICPA) in Prague and is part of the Arts and Theatre Institute’s research project Independent Czech Theatre After 1989. This research focuses on the development of Czech theatre in new social and political conditions, specifically in the context of the transformation and decentralisation of the country’s theatre network and the emergence of new approaches to cultural policy. The conference partners are the Department of Alternative and Puppet Theatre (DAMU) and the Czech Association of Independent Theatre. The conference will take place in English. Interpretation will be provided for discussion blocks.

**International Conference Theatre and Freedom: 23-24.10.2019, Prague**

**Studiu Hrdinů**, 23.10. 9:00–15:00 a 24.10. 9:30–17:30, Dukelských hrdinů 47, 170 00 Prague – Holešovice

**Divadlo DISK**, 23.10. 15:30–17:30, Karlova 26, 116 65 Prague – Staré Město

**Free to attend, following registration in advance**[via this link](https://form.jotformeu.com/92603802358356).

Facebook event: [www.facebook.com/events/365682584335224](http://www.facebook.com/events/365682584335224)

**Program:**

**23. 10. 2019**

Block 1 - Studio Hrdinů

**9:00** Welcome

**9:15 – 10:30** A Quadrologue Between East and West

**Speakers:** Martina Pecková Černá (Arts and Theatre Institute, CR), Jan Jiřík (Academy of Performing Arts, CR), Carena Schlewitt (HELLERAU – European Centre for the Arts, Germany), Henning Fülle (Berlin University of the Arts, Germany)

**Moderator:** Alice Koubová (Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Sciences, CR)

**10:45 – 12:15** The Roots of Independent Theatre in Western Europe

**Speakers:** Christine Standfest (ImpulsTanz - Vienna International Dance Festival, Austria), Jaïr Stranders (Amsterdam University of the Arts, the Netherlands)

**Moderators:** Martina Pecková Černá

**13:15 – 14:45** Independent Theatre in Central Europe after 1989

**Speakers:** Marek Godovič (Theatre Institute, Slovakia), Dáša Čiripová (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia), Joanna Ostrowska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland), Tamás Jászay (University of Szeged, Hungary)

**Moderator:** Jan Jiřík

Block II - DISK Theatre

**15:30 – 17:30** Panel Discussion in Collaboration with the Department of Alternative and Puppet Theatre, Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU)

(In)dependence, Legitimacy and Ethical Principles in Alternative Theatre

**Speakers:** Tomáš Žižka, Marek Bečka, Ondřej Cihlář, Tereza Volánková, Boris Jedinák, Jiří Šimek and other students and graduates of KALD DAMU

**Moderators:** Marcela Magdová and Ewan McLaren

In Czech, interpretation provided.

**24. 10. 2019**

Block III - Studio Hrdinů

**9:30 – 11:15** Independent Theatre After 1989 in Southeastern Europe

**Speakers:** Višnja Kačić Rogošić (University of Zagreb, Croatia), Barbara Orel (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia), Kamelia Nikolova (National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts, Sofia & Institute of Art Studies, Bulgaria), Iulia Popovici (Observator cultural magazine, Romania)

**Moderator:** Jan Jiřík

**11:30 – 13:15** Independent Theatre After 1989 in Eastern Europe

Martynas Petrikas (Vilnius University, Lithuania), Zane Kreicberga (Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia), Madli Pesti (Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Estonia), Iryna Chuzhynova (Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, Ukraine), Tania Arcimovič (Independent, Belarus)

**Moderators:** Martina Pecková Černá and Marcela Magdová

Block IV - Studio Hrdinů

**14:30 – 17:30** Panel Discussion and Roundtable in Collaboration with the Czech Association of Independent Theatre on the Future and Definition of Independent European Theatre

– **The Future of Independent Theatre** – lobbying, collaboration with the political sphere and the second pilar of culture

Panel Discussion

**Speakers:** Ulrike Kuner (IG Kultur / European Association of Independent Performing Arts, Austria), Axel Tangerding (Bundesverband Freie Darstellende Künste / European Association of Independent Performing Arts, Germany), Jan Žůrek (Czech Association of Independent Theatre, CR)

**Moderator:** Martina Pecková Černá

– **The Definition of Independent Theatre**

All conference participants are invited to take part in roundtable discussions around the definition and means of identifying “independent theatre”.

**Moderators:** Luboš Louženský, Petr Prokop, Eva Žáková, Martina Pecková Černá

Roundtables will be held in Czech or English at the discretion of the participants.

Final summaries of the discussions will be translated.

**Main Organiser:** Arts and Theatre Institute

**Co-Organisers:** ENICPA - The European Network of Information Centres for the Performing Arts ([www.enicpa.info)](http://www.enicpa.info)), Palm Off Fest, International Meeting of Central European Theatre ([www.palmofffest.cz)](http://www.palmofffest.cz)), The Department of Alternative and Puppet Theatre, DAMU, Czech Association of Independent Theatre, z. s. ([www.andcr.cz)](http://www.andcr.cz)), PACE.V4 (Performing Arts Central Europe - Visegrád Countries Focus)

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