



**The Presentation of V4 Theatre  
at the DIVADELNÁ NITRA 2009  
International Theatre Festival**

**Forward : memory**



f i n a l

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a s s e s s m e n t



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based on assessment reports of the staff and dramaturgical boards members

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### ●●● basic information

● ***The Divadelná Nitra International Festival 2009*** took place from 25 September to 30 September 2009. It was the 18<sup>th</sup> year of this event, which is the biggest international theatre showcase and one of the most important cultural events in Slovakia.

The Festival's **subtitle** was ● ***Forward : memory***. The need to accentuate the **memory** as one of the most absent elements of social as well as individual conscience was provoked by the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events of November 1989. This very event inspired the development of a unique project within the accompanying programme named *Nitra 89 – The Memory of the Region*, and the renewed Open Festival Forum Programme brought a discussion entitled *Chance 89* – they together created a thematic section called *Theme 89*. The central theme, *Forward: memory*, was dealt with in the festival productions. Among the dominating European stagecraft, especially from the V4 countries, there was also a traditional showcase of progressive European films presented as well as interesting projects of non-formal education entitled *A Tulip for You* and *How to Deal with Theatre*, presentation of new formats of regional activities and other programme lines.

**The 18<sup>th</sup> year of the festival ● confirmed the reputation of being the quality, well-organized, inspiring and hugely visited event. The total number of spectators was over 24 000, which was higher than in 2008.**

The festival kept its ● ***excellent position*** within the international context, although the number of individual guests – observers from abroad – was, comparing with the previous years, a bit lower, and the international projects, in which the Association took part in the previous years, were only terminating in 2009. On the other side, there was a new own production developed entitled *DONAOU DRAMA* as well as the project *Nitra 89 – The Memory of the Region* and the related activities (including the launching of the independent website).

● ***The offer*** of productions in the main programme can be evaluated as interesting and diversified, the cooperation with cultural institutes and embassies of the V4 countries was eventful and profitable, the accompanying events were attractive, the projects made for the Open Festival Forum were unique and the educational programme for children and students turned to be highly beneficial.

● **The cooperation with the partners** was executed on a standard level, the festival was well-organized, its PR and media promotion were thoroughly maintained, the visit rate was high and the atmosphere pleasurable.

The festival fulfilled its ● **discovery mission** to present new names, new tendencies and new spaces – from 14 works of the main and OFF programme there were 11 ensembles and 11 directors introduced for the first time, Estonia appeared in the festival for the first time, among standard spaces, ensembles gave their performances at the airport, in a bar or a gym.

The dramaturgy of the festival had a ● **contemporary character** – there was a dominance of contemporary texts and original concepts; there were also countless classical texts which were characteristic by an inventive approach of their producers, who were mainly of the middle generation. The productions oscillated between various genres and kinds: drama, contemporary dance, physical, visual and musical theatre, para-documentary theatre with a discussion, reality cabaret, stage readings. ● **The themes** were based on festival's subtitle: the view to the dusty mirror of the past, expansion of the memory of individuals as well as society, diversity of cultural traces and influences, relation to arts, residua of a totalitarian regime and the possibilities of freedom, issues of betrayal, guilt, fear and forgiveness.

During six days the festival ● **presented** on its main stages and in site specific spaces, and within its main and OFF programmes, 14 theatres and ensembles from 10 countries – Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Romania, Estonia and Slovakia. The V4 countries were represented by seven productions. Regrettably, no work of Polish theatre was presented, Poland was represented only by a film (Andrzej Jakimowski – *Tricks*, 2007).

The productions considered to be ● **the most interesting and of best quality** were *How to Explain Pictures to a Hare* (Estonia), *Phaedra Fitness* (Hungary), *Beer Tourist* (Netherlands) and *Origine* (Belgium), the discovery was the production named *Six Degress* (Italy). The questionable ones (also because the execution on the spot) were *The Travelling Troupe Šopalović* (Serbia), *The Sickness of Family M.* (Romania) and *Eurovision* (Portugal). With this year's lower number of "top" titles, the proportion of the questionable productions within the total rating of the festival was more significant. Slovakia was represented by productions *Anna Karenina* (SND), *The Cherry Orchard* (DAB Nitra), *The Woman Before* (Žilina City Theatre) and *Hexen* (Debris Company). Despite the fact that the result of returning of festival's own production, this time as project *DONADRAMA*, did not reach expected reaction of the audience, the mere fact of activating the cooperation between local environment and foreign dramaturgy can be considered only positive.

● **The accompanying programme** offered many established as well as new events – the most attractive ones were *The White Night* with highly visited *Lantern Parade*, *Theatre Fair*, *Festival for Children* and *A Tulip for You*, *The World of Children's Plays* and others. The cooperation with schools and organized visit of school children was heart-warming. It was manifested in standard activities as well as new projects such as the presentation of creative works entitled *Young Theatre in Nitra*, a participation in the *Installation 89* project, or the visit rate of the exhibition entitled *The Museum of Illusions*, a part of the project *Nitra 89 – The Memory of the Region*.

● **The preparation and execution** of the festival was maintained by 22 staff members and tens of staff collaborators, 6 main organizers, 37 co-organizers and 138 volunteers. The

financial support of the festival was provided by 48 institutions and companies as donors and sponsors. The media promotion was executed by 20 media partners. The main and accompanying programme was participated by 530 guests.

● **The registered** guests of the festival included 105 individual participants from Slovakia (33 of them journalists) and 51 guests from 13 countries – theatre reviewers, directors or managers of festivals and producing houses, with the domination of guests from the V4 countries.

The offered main programme not only spurred ● **the interest of the audience** and media but it also kept the favour of professionals from Slovakia and abroad.

**With 22 performances, the main programme and the Open Festival Forum attracted more than 5000 spectators, the visit rate reached 96%. Despite significantly lower number of events than in 2008 (125 : 100), the visit rate of the accompanying programme in 2009 reached a higher number – it was visited by almost 19000 people.**

● **The media coverage** of the Divadelná Nitra was quite generous in 2009. There were 115 information bulletins broadcasted in the Slovak media, including interviews, reportages etc. (85 of them in print and internet media, 20 on radio stations, 10 on TV stations). The outlook about the reflection in the media abroad will be issued in February 2010. ● **The media promotion** of the Divadelná Nitra in 2009 included 15 advertisements in the print media, 322 TV and 149 radio advertisement clips. Advertisement banners of various sizes were placed at nine different internet portals (together 600 000 impressions). The secondary advertising was executed in the form of ticket competitions in five different media. Despite the restricted amount of finances in 2009, the promotion fulfilled the majority of indicators that are equal to those from 2008. The visit rate of the [www.nitrafest.sk](http://www.nitrafest.sk) was much more higher, given to the decreased “internetization” or the attractiveness of the website.

● **The income sources** ratio used for the execution of the Divadelná Nitra International Festival, represented in %, from the total incomes of the festival in 2009 was following:

- 68,2 % – public sources in Slovakia
- 9,15 % – non-state funds and foundations in Slovakia
- 13,37 % – abroad
- 4,12 % – sponsors and 2 % from tax
- 5,16 % – own incomes (sales etc.)

● **The patronage** over the festival was taken by Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic Marek Mad'arič, Nitra Self-governing Region's President Milan Belica and Mayor of Nitra Jozef Dvonč.

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## ●●● c o n c e p t i o n / d r a m a t u r g y

The Divadelná Nitra International Theatre Festival 2009 continued in the basic conceptual lines and fulfilled ● **the aims and objectives** set in the project for 2009:

- it presented top quality European theatre,
- it focuses especially – like every year – on presenting the V4 theatre cultures,
- it found untraditional, open, innovative and inspiring stage works,
- it brought to the attention new tendencies and new names of creators,

- it offered the eventful accompanying and working programme,
- it provided space for other kinds of art and the presenting of regional cultural activities,
- it carried on in the execution of a non-formal education,
- it became a platform for presenting international projects,
- it introduced new elements in the programme.

Once again, the festival fulfilled ● **its mission**: to present art as an important platform of thinking about man, society, and the world; as a place of discovering values in ourselves and around us; as an opportunity to purify and enrich one's spirit; as an important antipole to the commercial art and culture; as a platform for changing experience and opinions, mainly between artists and theatre creators from the V4 countries.

Every year of the Divadelná Nitra Festival accentuates some socio-political phenomenon, value, and moral category. A component part of this multi-opinion platform is the ambition to give an important message, to forward something, to enforce something in an acute, almost radical manner. In 2009 this ambition concentrated on one statement, a term of internet communication – **forward**. The fact that in 2009 we commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of November 1989 generated even higher interest in a memory. The main theme which developed from this was expressed by ● the subtitle or motto **Forward : memory**. This thematic orientation, present in the majority of productions as well as in the OFF and accompanying programme, was reflected in several lines and elements, including the visual design, media promotion and billboards.

The festival's intention was to turn our view to the past, like many of the characters and authors in the productions, search for the roots and origins, confront the contemporaries with their archetypal heritage, examine the limits of the possible, look for the connections between the past and present. And also to draw attention to the need to deal with the past, uncover the prejudices and sins, cultural, political and social sediments, set the issues concerning responsibility, think about the volume of guilt and innocence, sin and forgiving. In different segments of the programme, the festival looked on how today period re-defines traditional categories of beauty, endurance, courage, love; it dealt with the issues concerning the future – the responsibility towards environment, role of art, meaning of traditions, loneliness of an individual surrounded by the cult of consumerism and barriers of communication.

The main programme productions fulfilled the aim to bring ● **provocative themes and expressive means**. Some of them were successful at local festivals and in Nitra they presented an interesting sample of national creation (*The Sickness of Family M.*, *The Travelling Troupe Šopalović*, *Eurovision*), some of them were presented at prestigious European forums (*Origine*, *Six Degrees*, *The Sickness of Family M.*, *How to Explain Pictures...*). At the Divadelná Nitra, they contributed to an interesting ● **discursus** concerning the forms of interpretations of classical texts, possibilities of untraditional theatre spaces, metamorphosis of documentary theatre etc.

As far as ● **the age of plays** is concerned, there dominated contemporary texts and authorial concepts. There were less classical plays presented than in the previous years (2 from 14 productions). Interesting was ● **the representation of countries** – slight prevalence of eastern-European countries (after a long time Serbia and Romania) as well as the presentation of a new country (Estonia). The diverse ● **genre offer**: drama, contemporary dance, physical, visual and musical theatre was enlarged by para-documentary theatre with a discussion, reality cabaret and stage reading.

We were successful to accomplish our objective to present ● **new names of creators** – from 14 directors there were 11 names introduced in Nitra for the first time.

The programme fulfilled its aim to address ● **the main target group** – young people. The proof of this is the visit rate and the composition of the audience. The interesting programme attracted attention of representatives of important theatre festivals in Europe.

One of the pluses of the Divadelná Nitra 2009 was the fact that we carried out the elements of the programme planned in the original project of the festival (OFF programme – a production of a new piece).

One of the minuses is that owing to financial problems (the decrease of financial sources due to the financial crisis), it was impossible to present more financially demanding and therefore top-quality productions. For the same financial reason we did not carry out the conception of the so-called satellites – the expansion of playing places to Trnava and Bratislava.

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## ●●● selection / programming

The selection of productions for the programme was carried out by two dramaturgical boards as the consultative bodies of the director (one for productions from abroad, one for productions from Slovakia) and with the help of 34 consultants – theatre reviewers from more than 20 European countries, with 2 consultants from each V4 country. The boards worked simultaneously when examining the offer and selecting. In future, there is the need to reassess this kind of work, reconstruct both the boards, connect them or fuse them into one, or to create a curator tandem. There is also a call for a clear definition of the role of Slovak productions in the programme, and for the creating of the methods for selecting Slovak works based on this definition (showcase or a targeted selection based on the theme, problem, kind of art), the need to free the selection from the DOSKY Awards, to focus to interesting works as far as the theme, director's courage and originality is concerned, and to initiate the development of new projects.

In 2009 ● **the board for foreign theatre** examined tips from consultants, offers from theatres and their own suggestions in a total number of 200 productions. The three members of the board (Romana Maliti, Martina Vannayová and Ján Šimko) were accompanied this year by a new member (Maja Hriešik). There was a satisfaction with a good cooperation and communication within the line, creative approach towards dramaturgy, professionalism of the members and their being well oriented in the field, diversity of suggestions for programme solutions. In future, the selection should be finished earlier, the monitoring of productions has to be extended as well as the number of consultants from abroad.

As for ● **the board for Slovak theatre**, its role is quite difficult – despite the focused and conceptual work as well as many trips around Slovakia until the very last stage of the selection, there has not been found a production which would have been outstanding, or would give the whole selection a conceptual basis. Such works were offered only in the last premieres at the end of the season. The board examined premieres from 2008/2009 season in all Slovak theatres by the form of eliminating rounds, with the same members as in the previous year (Vladislava Fekete, Michaela Mojžišová, Oleg Dlouhý, Géza Hizsnyan).

During the time of selecting, all of the members used ● **standard methods** (visits of productions and festivals, written records and recommendations, information from specialized press and the Internet, video-records of the productions, personal consultations etc.). Another method which proved to be good was the method of electronic registration and online system of offers from theatres from abroad. The work continued also after the selection stage – by writing the texts for the programme brochure and festival's catalogue as well as preparing and leading of discussion after performances within a festival's section (*Breakfast with...*).

Among the main programme, the festival's programme in 2009 included ● **the OFF programme** – Open Festival Forum – which was not taking place in 2008. Within this programme the Divadelná Nitra Association presented two works – *DONAUDRAMA* and *Chance 89*.

The fulfilling of the conception of ● **satellite performances** (e.g. those festival performances presented in other Slovak cities) has become a problem in recent years – it did not take place in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

● **The programming** for concrete days was influenced by the schedule requirements of theatres; the problem was mostly with the scheduling of the Estonian productions due to the technical demands and duration of the performance. The majority of the theatres agreed to build their stage in an extremely short time, during one night. There have been increasing programming complications with Slovak ensembles which have many guest performers and therefore require similar scheduling conditions from the festival like theatres from abroad. As for the opening performance, *Origine* was quite suitable, the closing of the festival took place unexpectedly two times, once at the big stage and then in the DAB Studio.

The productions which were presented in smaller halls were put in the programme more times (*Eurovision*, *Phaedra Fitness*, the *Beer Tourist* was presented thrice instead of twice for the great success), the risk was taken with double presenting of performances in big halls (*Six Degrees*, *Hexen*) and mainly in night hours, which in a city like Nitra lowers the possibility of the full house.

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## ●●● main programme – productions

There were 12 ensembles ● **presented** in the main programme with the same number of productions, 8 of them were from abroad and 4 from Slovakia. Comparing with 2008, this year there was one less of productions from abroad and one more from productions from Slovakia, whereas the total number in 2009 was the same as in 2008 (the final numbers speak about 14 productions from 10 countries, including Slovakia, together with the OFF programme; the number of productions comparing with previous years is therefore considered standard).

From 12 productions there were 6 of them played twice (*Eurovision*, *Phaedra Fitness*, *Six Degrees*, *How to Explain...*) and one was played even thrice (*Beer Tourist*).

There were 20 production ● **presented** in the main programme (2 production from the overall number of 22 were productions in the OFF programme).

The selection of productions was based on the idea to create conditions for presenting theatre cultures of the V4 countries and their comparing with other theatre cultures from Europe; the theme/subtitle of the festival was also taken consideration of. There were 8 countries **•presented** from abroad (only one country less than in 2007 and 2008, total numbers include a country in the OFF programme, the Czech Republic, as the ninth one): Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and Italy. A new country presented at the festival was Estonia. A serious fact was the absence of Poland (problems with finances and scheduling), the Czech Republic presented an interesting production within the OFF programme (which was compensated by the fact that in 2008 there were 2 productions presented from this country), the scheduling and financing reasons were behind the absence of productions from Russia and Germany.

Considering the audience's interest and professional level, the most important productions were *Origine*, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, *Six Degrees*, *Phaedra Fitness*, *Beer Tourist*. The success of some productions (*Beer Tourist* and *How to Explain...*) can be the reason of their future invitations to international festivals.

Slovak productions were successful mainly among the broad public, chiefly *Anna Karenina*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Woman Before* and *Hexen*. All of the selected works chosen for the Divadelná Nitra scored in Dosky's categories, some of them caught the interest of festival's observers from abroad.

*Origine* became the quality peak from the productions from abroad, the courageous *Beer Tourist* was noticed mainly among young people and the media, some people liked the visual and physical *Six Degrees*. Specific in the genre and thematically topical was Hungarian *Phaedra Fitness* which interestingly used the site specific, the *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* presented original form and current theme, and many theatre lovers considered it the most progressive production of the festival. The attraction for Slovak audience was the production of *Anna Karenina*, *Hexen* resonated in the international context.

Although considered as an intense work, the factors in presenting production *The Travelling Troupe Šopolavić* were problematic owing to an insufficient preparation of improvisations from the side of the ensemble and the subtitling problems from the side of the festival. The *Sickness of Family M.*, built mainly on a visually approached space which dominated in it, appeared to be unoriginal, even conventional as far as the interpretation level is considered.

**•The representation of kinds and genres** in the main programme was significant – drama, contemporary dance, physical, visual and musical theatre, para-documentary theatre with a discussion, reality cabaret and stage reading.

The personalities which attracted most of the attention of the audience were the soloists from the *Origine* and *Beer Tourist*, Eszter Csákányi from *Phaedra Fitness* or Estonian director Tiit Ojasoo, and, of course, the stars of the Slovak National Theatre and Žilina City Theatre. The minuses were the absence of directors S. L. Cherkaoui and Radu Afrim, who, surprisingly, belongs to the Divadelná Nitra group on Facebook.

Every year the Divadelná Nitra makes effort to enrich its programme by **• interesting places of presentation** – this year it was the airport (*The Sickness of Family M.*), a gym (*Phaedra Fitness*) and a night bar (*Beer Tourist*). The *How To Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* was presented together with the audience on the big stage of the DAB.

The programme varied and offered exclusively private themes as well as socio-political issues, it dealt with human relationships as well as associations with traditions, culture and art.

**The main programme brought information about interesting works and tendencies of European theatre, within an international context it presented selected productions from Slovakia, it showed various themes and styles of directing. As for the qualitative side, it was well-balanced, dramaturgically profiled, bringing diverse genres and kinds of productions.**

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### ●●● Open Festival Forum – OFF programme

A positive fact is the return of the Open Festival Forum to the programme of the Divadelná Nitra 2009, and that was with two productions.

One of them, *Chance 89* (the part of the *Theme 89* during the DN), was developed in a collaboration with the Archa Theatre from Prague. The second production was a new work – stage reading of texts which were developed in a project called *DONAUDRAMA*.

- The project entitled ***Chance 89*** was developed at the Archa Theatre and it was a loose continuation of such types of projects the Archa prepared for the commemoration of events taking place in 1968. In this case, it was the commemorating of the events from November 1989 by a structured production formally based on the approaches of documentary theatre – it combines existential drama with visual installation, it uses *drama-in-education* elements and elements of epic theatre etc.

Initiated by playwright Bernhard Studlar and dramaturg Wolfgang Stahl from Austrian *Wiener Wortstaetten* association, ten authors from the Danube river countries met in Austria in autumn 2008 and wrote together nine dramatic texts entitled ● ***DONAUDRAMA***©. The Divadelná Nitra Association initiated the staging of the original texts in a *working-demo* form... The production, developed in cooperation between the Studio 12 and the Divadelná Nitra Association, was provided by generous production conditions (the preparation and translation of scripts, money for the authors, stage possibilities in Bratislava and Nitra, information leaflets, media promotion etc.). In the overall view, the fact that the festival became again a mediator of international cooperation and a place for experimenting of young creators belongs to major positives.

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## **●●● main programme and OFF programme – providing, promotion**

In the field of providing and media promoting of the main programme, the organisers used the well-established methods, with regard to the audience as well as ensembles.

The main programme productions were presented in ● *both Nitra's theatres* (4 stages) and three site specific locations, with changes of the dispositions of stages and auditoriums in studios taking place every time, and two productions were presented on big stages together with the audience.

As for the collecting and ● *distributing of information* about the programme to the participants and broad public, the organizers used methods from the previous years – classical printed information (a programme brochure and catalogue, available also on the website), and on the spot where the visitors had the opportunity to see records of the productions, read translated texts or reviews.

One of the ways of promoting values was the simultaneous ● *translating* of productions by subtitles or interpreting through headphones into two languages – Slovak and English. This helps not only to distribute values of productions to visitors but also to increase the number of foreign as well as local visitors to the festival.

An excellent “format” is a discussion matinee entitled ● *Breakfast with...*, a pleasant and self-confident event and an interesting and inspiring occasion with a good atmosphere.

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## **●●● accompanying programme**

The preparation and carrying out of the accompanying programme of the Divadelná Nitra International Theatre Festival 2009 was executed within the intentions of ● **the objectives** of some previous years. The well-established programme sections were carried out (*Theatre Fair, Festival for Children, White Night*) as well as the elements developed only recently as an original contribution of the staff members and collaborators or co-organizers (*A Tulip for You, The World of Children's Plays, ZZ, Poetry on the Street*), and there were also a brand new ways of presentation (*Young Theatre in Nitra*); within the programme an independent project was executed commemorating the events from t November 1989: *Nitra 89 – The Memory of the Region*.

**The accompanying programme of the DN 2009 was interesting, one of the most interesting ones in recent years, with high-quality and various events. As for the scheduling, it was very well planned. An important step to its better arrangement was its reduction – there were intentionally less events. The success of the programme was in an interesting offer, good organization and last but not least, nice weather.**

**In 2009 there were 100 events taking place in the accompanying programme, visited by almost 19 000 people, which is the highest number in the history of the festival.**

*The outline of the visit rate of the accompanying programme in total and in sections.*

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
approx. 10 400	approx. 10 000	approx. 13 800	approx. 17 300	approx. 18 995
			the number of visitors of the Theatre Fair	approx. 8 850
			the number of the visitors of the White Night	approx. 2 777
			the number of the visitors of the Festival for Children	approx. 7 251
				the number of the visitors of the Theatre Fair
				the number of the visitors of the White Night
				the number of the visitors of the Festival for Children
				the number of the visitors of the Museum of Illusion
				approx. 4 957
				approx. 4 618
				approx. 4 839
				3 062

The long-time ● **collaboration with schools** functions perfectly, i.e. as organized visits to the events which are designed for nursery, elementary and grammar schools.

From the programming point of view, the ● **Theatre Fair** was well-organized – the stress was put on street performances, not on concerts which were not as often than in previous years year, and the visitors highly approved this. The conception of the fair for 2010 is to be extended by new elements and a character, and become an appendix of the contract with the City of Nitra.

The programme of the ● **White Night** in 2009 was compiled more appropriately – there were less events, there were longer breaks between them designed for transport and for the visitors to have time to see exhibitions. The variety of the events of the White Night presents the attractive added value for the visitors who can be easily informed about the character of cultural institutions in Nitra and their activities.

A new format of the accompanying programme of the DN 2009 was a presentation evening of young theatre professionals (students) entitled ● **Young Theatre in Nitra**. This event created a space for people to see interesting activities developed during the year in young theatre in Nitra. It is also a place where Nitra's theatres of young people and students could meet and know each other. The event had positive reactions and those partaking expressed their interest in carrying on in this idea and present the work by young people in Nitra every year.

The new ● **forms of cooperation** and presentation of the festival in 2009 became the offers of shopping and entertaining centres Mlyny and Centro. On its opening, the Mlyny offered to the festival an opportunity to present events for children and promotion in its catalogue exchanging for a distribution of promotion materials about this centre. Centro (most probably as a reaction to a new competitor on the market) offered to the festival the opportunity to held an exhibition of photographs from productions of the previous year, all paid by the Centro.

The accompanying programme of the DN 2009 was professionally organised, it introduced many new elements, and it outclassed the qualitative and quantitative parameters from 2008. The ongoing questions concerning the high number of events, their connection with the main programme and responsibility for their selection are to be dealt with in 2010.

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### ●●● i n b e t w e e n / f i l m a n d N i t r a 8 9

Between the main and accompanying programme lies the ● *film.eu* - a showcase of European films corresponding by their idea and untraditional creative methods with theatrical performances presented in the main programme of the festival. The UKF Film Club presented 5 films for adults and one for children (within the *Festival for Children*). Regarding the visit rate entry (a decrease in 2009), the means of its increase are being considered as well as the idea of its remaining a part of the Divadelná Nitra Festival.

The year 2009 became more difficult for the Divadelná Nitra due to the execution of a complexly structured and unusual project entitled ● *Nitra 89 – The Memory of the Region*, prepared as a contribution of the festival, or the Association, to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of November 1989. The project consisted of three parts, each of them having own management, time schedule of preparations and execution as well as own content. However, all the parts of the project focused on the period around and during the time of the festival, i.e. September – October, with the final stage of it taking place in November.

The exhibition entitled *The Museum of Illusions* was held from 18 September until 11 October, a remake of the *Nitrianska verejnosť* 1/2009 newspaper was issued on 25 September and the third part of the project, *Installation 89*, began the first day of the festival (the exhibits were displayed during the whole festival). Instead of the second issue of the newspaper, the Association launched a unique website [www.nitra89.sk](http://www.nitra89.sk), where it published important materials from the exhibition, its photo- and video-documentation, and forum of visitors and link to a dictionary of terms from before 1989.

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### ●●● e d u c a t i o n a l p r o g r a m m e

For the second time in a row the festival carried on with the project ● *A Tulip for You*, established in 2008, which became an all-year-round activity. It gave the *Festival for Children*, one of the sections of the accompanying programme, a new dimension – it integrated visually impaired and blind children from two towns, brought them an experience from artistic creation as well as their own creation, enabled them to travel to a different town and provided basis for further cooperation. One of the positives of the project is the fact that it was an original idea of the staff members, it was professionally prepared and successfully executed, and comparing with 2008, had even better financial support (it attracted attention of 6 foundations) by which it became, more or less, independent. In 2009 there were (among the financial side) other quality progress – the group of two schools (Primary Boarding School for the Visually Impaired and Blind from Bratislava and Primary School of Count Pribina from Žilina) was enlarged by a third one – Primary School of St. Francis of Assisi from Bratislava,

and in the Primary Boarding School a club called *A Tulip for You* was opened providing activities in workshops. The Divadelná Nitra Association and the Primary Boarding School sign an agreement on cooperation.

In 2009 another project of the Divadelná Nitra, ● ***How to Understand Theatre***, was carried on. It was the second year of this project within the long-term programme of informal education of the Association. During the festival, already a fifth series of activities with a fifth production took place. The lecturers were outstanding; the conditions provided by the Andrej Bagar Theatre were satisfactory.

The interest of students was high, problems occurred in the second half of the project as it collided with other events which counted with the same target group, or which were intended to be visited by this target group (the programme of the last day of the festival).

The reactions to the projects only supported the Divadelná Nitra Association's aim to carry on in such activities in the future and bring an added value in form of practical theatre workshops.

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## ●●● working programme

Whereas in 2008 there was a high number of working events organized or co-organized by the Divadelná Nitra Association, in 2009 there were significantly less of such events, either due to new roles of the association in executing new projects (*Nitra 89* etc.) or due to the finished work on several projects (Mobile Lab, IETM Bratislava 2009).

To complete the issue, there is a need to say that the Divadelná Nitra Association was in the time between the festivals focusing on the execution of the ● ***IETM Bratislava 2009***, which took place in collaboration with various organizations in April 2009. This project was also a test of the organizational skills on the highest international level; to Slovak theatres it gave a rare opportunity to present themselves within an international context. Nevertheless, it quite exhausted the majority of the team members who prepare the festival.

### ● ***Breakfast with...***,

An integral part of the working programme are the traditional discussions about the presented main programme productions, entitled *Breakfast with...* As in the previous years, in 2009 they belonged to the most interesting and most visited events at the festival (*more in The Main Programme – providing, promoting*).

### ● ***Dosky and other***

The table with the main programme and European film showcase (a part of the programme brochure) mentions also the ● ***presenting of the Dosky Award 2009*** and the ceremony in a form of a production made for this occasion. For the first time, the Dosky Awards ceremony was broadcasted by the Slovak Television, but one week after the ceremony.

## ●●● organization

Among 22 members of the staff and dozens of their co-operators, the ● *preparation and execution* of the festival was maintained by 6 main organizers, 37 co-organizers and 138 volunteers. The financial and in-kind support was provided by 48 institutions and companies as sponsors and patrons. There were 20 media partners who provided the media promotion. There were 530 people presented in the main and accompanying programme

The main organizer of the Divadelná Nitra International Theatre Festival is a non-state organization, legally a civic association – The Divadelná Nitra Association with a voted chairman, vice-chairman and director, who is also the director of the festival. Other ● *main organizers* are the Bratislava Theatre Institute, Andrej Bagar Theatre, Nitra Old Theatre, City of Nitra, and from 2008 the Nitra Self-governing Region.

Each subject ● *taking part in the preparation and execution* of the Divadelná Nitra Festival 2009 is included in the lists named The Festival Prepared By, which are issued in propagation materials (catalogue of the DN 2009) and on the website. The listed groups have their organization platforms which act in the forms of bodies of the Divadelná Nitra. The core is represented by the staff (in 2009 it was 22 people) and its individual executive co-operators of various professions (visual artists, photographers, translators etc. – approx. 50 people), then it is the organization team of representatives of the main organizers and co-organizers (43 subjects), dramaturgical boards (9 people) and the body of consultants (35 people).

According to a long-term examination of entries, it is evident that the contribution of ● *the co-organizers* to festival's execution has increased in recent years, not only quantitatively (from 24 in 2005 to 36 in 2009) but also qualitatively.

The ● *staff* was enlarged by new people, its work was professional on all levels. The leaving of some people to other posts and arrival of the new ones for 2010 creates the need of bigger staff changes and reorganization of the scope of work. The working conditions are to be changed radically – mainly in the technical field of the Association.

Generally good was considered the collaboration with the team of co-operators – including the visual designer, translators, interpreters, photographers as well as service organizations. There were new names and companies found (catering cocktail organizer, for example), the new people in the video-documentation department is one of the positive factors.

Traditionally positive side of the festival is a high number of ● *volunteers* which cooperate with the festival.

The volunteers, as a part of a target group, became valuable spectators of performances and accompanying events, not to mention the fact that they contributed to the creation of festival's priceless image and atmosphere.

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## ●●● editing / promotion

Regarding the ● **information and promotion materials**, the Divadelná Nitra International Festival used the experience of the previous years.

The new ● **visual design** of the Divadelná Nitra Festival 2009 articulated the main idea and its motto, it was usable in all forms of printed materials as well as advertisements. As for its visual side, it was of high quality and it was considered positive from the side of users. There was a significant change of the catalogue, that is the change of the A4 format for A5 as well as the change of a printing house, which led to financial savings with the same, or even better quality of print.

Among the editors and staff members, there were also guarantees of some events and members of dramaturgical boards who ● **cooperated** on the preparation of information materials. The number of materials, or the changes of the circulation, were based on experience from the previous years and the aims of this year.

The challenge for 2010 is a unification of the accompanying programme promotion in a form of an independent poster as well as the execution of a new system of holders of billboards.

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## ●●● P R / m e d i a   p r o m o t i o n

Comparing with 2008, the overall volume of the ● **media campaign** decreased due to increasing prices of advertisement space. The number of TV ads decreased by 45 ads. Among the higher price of advertisement space, there was another reason of the decrease, and that was our failure to agree upon the collaboration with the CETV. As for radio ads, in 2008 there were 170 ads broadcasted, in 2009 it was only 149 – a decrease by 21 ads.

In 2009 the Divadelná Nitra International Festival had together 22 media partners. Other media promotion was executed by dozens of journalists and theatre reviewers among the collaborators or participants.

Based on the entries of a ● **monitoring**, the Divadelná Nitra noted from June to the end of October 2009 altogether **115 mentions** (85 in printed media and websites, 20 on radio, 10 on TV) The overview about the reflections from abroad, which are executed by foreign guests of the festival, is to be issued in February 2010.

The media ● **presentation** of the Divadelná Nitra in 2009 continued in the set tendency from 2008. It used well-established ways of communication. As in 2008, there was one press conference held in Bratislava and one in the region. The Divadelná Nitra presented itself to the public pro-actively, mainly through **press news and the Newsletter** which was issued monthly from April, and in 2009 it was distributed to approximately 2 300 e-mail addresses. There were 8 issues published until the end of October, bringing information on the main, accompanying and educational programme as well as on the preparation of the festival. The collaboration with the media was standard and of a high quality. The positive fact is the increase of the ● **presence** of the DN in the regional media and the collaboration with them (Radio MAX, MY - Nitra Newspaper) as well as the space provided by the Slovak Radio. Moreover, there were more internet portals which mentioned the festival more often.

One of the most neglected fields is the ● **reflection** of the festival. It is executed through the reflection in the media, including specialised periodicals. The most important, yet least

numerous, are the final specialised assessments in Slovakia. This is why the festival's challenge for 2010 is to carry on in searching of forms of how to spur Slovak professional public to a more profound and critical reflection.

● **The documentation** of the festival in 2009 was executed according to the plan – video-documents of recorded productions, photographs of productions and documentary photographs, summary DN video-document, audio records of discussions.

### ●●● **visit rate / main programme and OFF programme**

The 18<sup>th</sup> year of the Divadelná Nitra Festival was participated by 14 ensembles which presented together 22 productions (main and OFF programme). The preparation and selling of the tickets for the festival was provided, as every year, by workers of the marketing department of the DAB.

Those interested in the productions were offered 5137 tickets, either ordered via the Internet or bought directly on the spot, which equals the capacity of playing places.

**The visit rate in 2009 reached 96% of the offered places. Another figure according to which we can assess the visit rate and development trends in comparison with the past years are incomes from sales. Without any significant rise of prices, these revenues increased by € 3175 (an increase by 21, 4 %)!**

Regarding the visit rate and incomes, the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the Divadelná Nitra was a success. What helped it was a higher interest of the public and the satisfactory media promotion.

### ●●● **incomes**

**The overview of the proportion and development of the sources of the Divadelná Nitra International Festival in 2006 – 2009 is brought in the table. In absolute numbers, the incomes from 2008 were higher than in 2007 by 7%. The incomes in 2009 were lower by 19% than in 2008, which led to the change of the proportion of each source.**

*The overview of the proportion and development of the financial sources of the DN.*

source	SR	SR	abroad	SR	SR	own
source	public sources	non-state funds	direct and indirect	sponsors	2 % tax	incomes from performances
2006	76,37 %	–	17,64 %	2,41 %		3,58 %
2007	51,89 %	25,06 %	12,23 %	4,86 %	2,49 %	3,47 %
2008	59,61 %	17,54 %	14,85 %	4,50 %		3,50 %
2009	68,2 %	9,15 %	13,37 %	4,12 %		5,16 %

**Despite the stated situation, the Divadelná Nitra Association was successful in fulfilling its planned objectives, execute projects and keep a balanced budget.**

The most important way of incomes of the Divadelná Nitra are ● **public sources**. The biggest one of them is the grant system of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. Not only for the Divadelná Nitra, the state budget is the most important and one of the few relevant sources.

Regardless the decrease of incomes in 2009, the organizers of the festival successfully fulfilled the major part of the conceptual aims, and kept the event on the standard level.

As for the public sources in Slovakia, the positive signal is the systemic change which took place in 2008 – the entry of the ● **Nitra Self-governing Region** with a donation directly from the budget (not only in the form of grants). The volume of this donation was the same in 2009. The Self-governing Region supports the festival also indirectly, by a non-financial form. It is the cooperation of cultural organizations of which it is the founder.

Based on a long-term Contract on Cooperation from 2004, the ● **City of Nitra** includes the Divadelná Nitra in the budget approved by the City Legislative Body, which means a higher possibility of getting the finances as well as other benefits.

An important source of finances are ● **local funds**, which generously supported the Divadelná Nitra Association in particular projects. Extremely positive fact was the increase of donations from funds and foundations from Slovakia for projects such as **How to Understand Theatre, Nitra 89 – The Memory of the Region** and mainly **A Tulip for You**.

The direct and indirect financial sources from ● **abroad** create 15% in average from the whole incomes. The support usually consists of two items:

- Registered financial entries of the partners – the deposits of countries presented at the festival by ensembles in the main programme.
- Direct incomes on the DN account – grants from foreign funds based on applications.

An important part of the fundraising campaign is taking ● **2% from taxes** of physical and legal entities.

Considerably important are own incomes in the form of sales, i.e. the ● **incomes from sales** of the tickets. This source fulfils the role of a direct financial tool (it helps to support activities and expenses which cannot be covered from specific donations, e.g. the working expenses), and it also partially works as an indicator of public interest motivating the inner environment of the festival's management.

The DN budget does not state (in incomes or in expenses) the value of the non-financial, the ● **in kind** contribution of the partners. Nevertheless, the in kind contribution of all the subjects is an important factor for the execution of the event – it significantly unburdens the financial part, and it is a proof of the interest of the collaborating subjects in the event. Among discount of the media space, volunteer work or hiring of spaces, there are also the entries of material or technical nature.

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**Divadelná Nitra Association**

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