

Books in English now available

Never Let Me Go. Kazuo Ishiguro. Faber and Faber Limited, 2005 (first edition).

One of the most acclaimed novels of recent years portrays the lives of a group of students growing up in a darkly skewed version of contemporary England. Kathy, 31, attempts to come to terms with her childhood, her years at the Hailsham School, and with the fate that has always awaited her and her closest friends in the wider world. The author of *The Remains of the Day*, *When We Were Orphans* and *Nocturnes*, Ishiguro received an OBE for services to literature in 1995 and was made a French Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. In this novel, described by critics as a "tour de force" and a "meditation on morality and lost innocence", he returns to his best tradition and expresses a sense of the fragility of life.

Oxford English Grammar Course: Advanced, with answers. Michael Swan, Catherine Walter. Oxford University Press, 2011.

This grammar practice book, complete with CD for practising pronunciation, is meant for advanced learners, to help improve their grammar in sentences and outside them, and for grasping the basics of stylistics, British and American English, and more.

Slovak Cookbook. Pavlína Berziová, Jiří Eichner, Karina Havlů, Ladislav Nodl. Slovart, 2010.

Slovak cuisine, although challenged by foreign competitors, maintains its attraction and interest for both locals and people from abroad. Delicacies like roast goose with potato pancakes, vegetable-based lečo, halušky (potato gnocchi served with bryndza, sauerkraut or other items), and dumplings filled with fruit, as well as some home-made specialties are photographed and described in clear recipes that are easy to follow.

EU English. Anna Trebits and Márta Fischer. Klett, 2010.

This textbook represents a guide to English as used in EU documents, with its specific vocabulary, style and multilingual context. It includes an audio CD, English EU terminology and is meant for intermediate-level learners of English.

Kamasutra. Vatsyayana. Oxford World's Classics, 2002.

The oldest extant Hindu textbook of erotic love, *Kamasutra* is about the wider art of living – and lov-

ing (from finding a partner, maintaining power in marriage, committing adultery, to the more direct usage of positions in sexual intercourse). It was composed in Sanskrit some time in the third century AD; here it is presented in an entirely new translation in clear, sexually frank English by Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, complete with translated excerpts from the earliest and most famous (13th century) Sanskrit commentary and from a 20th century Hindi commentary.



The Collaborator. Mirza Waheed. Viking (Penguin Books), 2011.

This work of fiction describes an all-too-real war in Kashmir. Four teenage boys who used to spend their afternoons playing cricket or singing Bollywood ballads have disappeared one by one to cross into Pakistan to join the rebel movement against the Indian army. Only one of their friends, the son of the headman, is left behind. The village families begin to think it is time to flee, but the headman will not allow his family to leave. His son is seemingly forced, by an Indian army captain, to collaborate and go into the valley to count the corpses – fearing that he will discover one of his friends lying among the dead. This compelling, humane novel introduces readers to Kashmir in the early 1990s, focusing on the poignant and unpredictable hero at its heart.

Oxford Phrasal Verbs. Dictionary for Learners of English. Oxford University Press, 2006.

In the form of a dictionary, this book contains synonym notes explaining phrasal verbs and one-word verbs with similar meanings to help users find the right choice. The key symbol also helps distinguish which phrasal verbs to learn first and offers thousands of new idioms, phrasal verbs, and examples.

This column is a selection by The Slovak Spectator of English-language books recently released in Slovakia; it does not represent an endorsement of any of the books selected. The column is prepared in cooperation with the Oxford Bookshop Bratislava.

The 20th Divadelná Nitra

BY ZUZANA VILIKOVSKÁ
Spectator staff

THE DIVADELNÁ Nitra theatre festival has grown – in the 20 years of its existence – from a small local show of theatre stagings and ensembles into a large international event. Over the years it has hosted 37 Slovak and 143 foreign theatres from 30 countries (28 European, including Slovakia, plus Israel and the USA).

As it prepared to mark its jubilee the festival was selected from among 674 bidders to become one of 18 recipients of a 3-year grant from the European Commission's European Festivals sub-programme. "This is a big honour, but also a big responsibility," the festival's founder and head, Darina Kárová, said.

This year's anniversary has led the organisers to take a look back at what has been achieved to date. This year's motto is (Don't) Tell Your Secret, which is also included in the motifs of performances of the main festival programme.

"This year, artists from 10 countries will come to Nitra to pose to us disquieting questions about our identity and conscience: who we are, how do we come to terms with our past, with guilt, betrayal, death, what future we do have, and how do we care for memory?" Kárová said.



Weissenstein, by Divadlo Komédie of Prague. Photo: K. Polívková

The motif of memories and personal secrets is also reflected in this year's visual expression of festival materials – home-made bottled fruits, vegetables, mushrooms and jams.

Divadelná Nitra is a rare chance for foreign-language speakers to enjoy Slovak drama, as all festival performances have English subtitles or voiceovers. The four domestic productions were carefully chosen to represent the different facets of current Slovak theatre: *Buggers and Suckers*, by Bratislava's Divadlo SKRAT, brings a specific, minimalist style and fragmentary structure; *Kubo* (re-make) by Jozef Holý, staged by the Slovak Chamber Theatre in Martin, is a classic Slovak piece which has previ-

ously witnessed two iconic stagings; it comes with an innovative view and shows the otherwise funny outsider Kubo as a meditative focus of vulgarity and stylisation of the outside world. The last two shows are *The Graduate* (yes, Terry Johnson's famous classic) by the Karol Spišák Old Theatre in Nitra returns to the stage, skilfully bypassing period clichés and freely developing the original idea, while *Kitchen* by Arnold Wesker, as interpreted by the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra, offers a realistic drama from the last century, full of characters of various fates, nationalities, and temperaments.

The foreign ensembles range from Poland's Studio Theatre from Warsaw and the Czech Republic's Divadlo

Komédie from Prague as well as a Lithuanian interpretation of Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, the Hungarian National Theatre's *Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria* (Martin Sperr) and *Medea* by Seneca, presented by MTYuZ of Moscow, to Théâtre des Lucioles (Rennes, France), with *Paranoia* by Rafael Spregelburd, *The Deer House* from Jan Lauwers & Needcompany of Brussels, and Tim Etchells & Forced Entertainment with their comic-like *Void Story*.

A host of accompanying events grow every year and this September will commemorate the jubilee with, among other things, a symposium called *Festival as a (Creative) Industry*, the presentation *Parallel Lives / 20th Century*, through *Eyes of the Secret Police*, a retrospective of publications looking at the festival's 20 years, to a photo-exhibition, movie screenings, Czech and Slovak street theatre, and more.

Divadelná Nitra will also award, for the 16th time, the *Dosky / Boards* prizes. These are given out by a jury of Slovak theatre reviewers, theoreticians and journalists for the best performance, director, actor, actress, stage design, costume, music and for *Newcomer of the Year*.

The festival takes place between September 23 and 28 in the town of Nitra. More detailed information can be found in English at www.nitrafest.sk.

National Theatre launches new season

AFTER a dampened season last year, the Slovak National Theatre (SND) promises to offer more than a dozen premieres in its opera, ballet and drama productions, though some of these premieres have been shifted to this season from before the summer break. Altogether 74 productions, including 19 premieres, will make up the repertory offered by the "first Slovak stage" as the SND terms itself.

"The SND will also introduce some novelties, especially discussions with artists, jazz evenings and 'Contemporary Dance Mondays'," the SND's general manager, Ondrej Šoth, told a press conference, adding that the theatre wants to attract both young performers and young audiences while preserving its exclusive position as a national institution.

Television broadcasts involving the theatre's performers as well as backstage information on various offerings start in September on the show *Zo zákulisia* (From the Backstage) on the TA3 news channel. The three SND ensembles are also scheduled to give guest appearances abroad. For instance, the ballet will give 50 performances in 40 Italian towns in late 2011 and early 2012 along with international star guests such as Italian soprano Cecilia Bartolli and Argentinian tenor José Cura, who will be performing the role of Othello.

Premieres of operatic works include Giuseppe Verdi's *Othello* in October, the operetta *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat) by Johann Strauss in late December, Leoš Janáček's *Jenůfa* (Her Stepdaughter/Jej pastorkyňa) in March and Giacomo

Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* next June. The premiere of Slovak Ján Cikker's *Mr Scrooge* will commemorate the composer's 100th anniversary in November; it was last performed in Bratislava in 1963.

While the opera will focus mainly on classics, the ballet company will combine rather traditional pieces with more modern trends in ballet along with experimental dance pieces. The *Little Prince* (Antoine de Saint Exupéry, choreographed by Ondrej Šoth) will debut in mid September; *Odysseus* (Ulysses) to the music of Michael Kocáb and *Pražský výběr*, again choreographed by Ondrej Šoth, will arrive in November; the *Duo* (consisting of two parts – Uwe Scholz's choreography of Schuman's 2nd Symphony and Nacho Duato's *Duende* choreography) will come in March; and the classic fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty* (by P. I. Tchaikovsky, choreographed by Vladimir Malakhov) will open next May.

The plans for this season also include a guest performance by Compagnie Pál Frenák (France/Hungary) which brings avant-garde modern dance entitled 'Twins' and 'InTime' in November and the Contemporary Dance Mondays in the smaller 'Drama studio' that will offer alternative genres and young artists, for example from elledanse, Debris Company, Marta Poláková & Co. and others. Beginning in October every second Monday will offer a contemporary dance piece or performer.

The drama company will offer a host of premieres, from classics like Molière,

A. P. Chekhov and Aristophanes, through a fairy tale of Slovak Pavol Dobšinský, to modern plays by Tracy Letts (US), Peter Quilter (UK), Shelagh Stephenson (Scotland), Anna Yablonska (UK), and Martin McDonagh (IRE). Emil Horváth, the new head of the drama section of the SND – who took his job only in spring 2011 – promised to offer more Slovak plays next season.

Peter Dvorský, who heads the opera section and started last season, told the news conference he would like to end some of the oldest productions currently offered by the SND and begin more flexible, up-to-date and innovative pieces, perhaps in co-production with other stages. Andrii Suhkanov, who replaced Czech choreographer Vlastimil Harapes this spring told the journalists that "in ballet, I would like to bring some more fairy tales, either replacing the old ones or complementing them, some classical choreographies, and then some modern ones for an artistic confrontation".

The 2011-2012 SND season opened on September 10 with a gala concert dedicated to the Visegrad Group's 20th anniversary. It featured guest performers from the other V4 countries: Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. More "opera specials" include a matinée on September 11 dedicated to Elena Kittnarová within the *Kontinuity* cycle, and an evening with Peter Dvorský, who celebrates his 60th birthday this year on September 24, called *E lucevan le stelle*.

By Zuzana Viliková