



The first International Festival of Participatory Theatre and Audience Development

Puppet Theatre at the Crossroads in Banská Bystrica, 2023
Press Release

A summary from December (*Growing with Theatre 4*)

„Drama is not a literary genre, as it is often presented in schools – it is an on-stage practice.“

(Anne Ubersfeld)

The fourth and final part of EDUFEST took place on October 13 and 14, 2023. It featured sixteen artists and two lecturers who led educational workshops. One hundred and eighteen audience members attended the performances, 40 took part in the workshops, and fifteen professionals from the fields of Arts and Education took part in discussions. The grand finale of the festival was an international colloquium, which was attended by thirteen online participants and 31 attendees who came in person.

December's itinerary offered two performances for university students and those who work and live with them. The performances focused on the perception of theatre through all senses (Ukrainian play *Sixth Sense*, dir. Kateryna Lukianenko) and the telling of more and less known fates of characters from European history through letters (*Europe in Correspondence*, dir. Marián Pecko).

Once again, we did not only stay inside the theatre, but ventured out into the classroom. This time, it was the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica – one of only two arts-focused universities in Slovakia. We visited with Kateryna Lukianenko's workshop titled *Inclusion and Theatre* and a performance of *Sixth Sense*.

The aim of the festival – to highlight possibilities of informal education through theatre – was also realized thanks to two extraordinary workshops. The participants in *Inclusion and Theatre* were able to experience what it means to perceive the world without sight, and how important



it is to be able to rely on one's partner (participation is also one of the aims of EDUFEST). The *Gender-aware Theatre in Theatrical Practice* workshop with lector Iveta Škripková offered an introduction to the issue of gender-aware theatre, discussed gender and role stereotypes in interpreting material for the stage, explained the concept of gender-aware theatre, and much more.

The rich itinerary was once again enhanced by the exhibition *King Ubu in the Graphic Novel* – a comic-style reimagining by students of the famous play, which was part of the Theatre Institute project *Classics in the Graphic Novel*; as well as by our *Coffee Hour* discussion.

The grand finale of the festival was an international colloquium titled *Education Through Theatre*. The programme was split into three parts. First, our guests from abroad (Czech Republic, Great Britain, Ukraine) introduced innovative methods of collaboration between schools, theatres and the public based on experience and participation. In the second part, we examined the situation in Slovakia in light of these presentations, and in the final part we discussed the state of informal education in Slovakia one year after the *2022 Initiative*, which was the result of workshopping that took place during the *Bábkarská Bystrica 2022* festival. The colloquium was attended by esteemed Arts and Education professionals, such as former Slovak Minister of Culture Silvia Hroncová, Slovak Arts Council director Róbert Špoták, director of the Culture Department of the Banská Bystrica Self-governing Region Peter Černek, Banská Bystrica Self-governing Region MP Viera Dubačová, dramatist, writer and principal of Dezider Kardoš Arts School in Bánovce nad Bebravou and member of the National Institute of Youth Education chapter in Trenčín Silvester Lavrík, and many others.

The Puppet Theatre at the Crossroads is intensely aware of the necessity to build connections between culture and schooling. Its aim is not to supplant the educational process, or clumsily point out its mistakes, but to offer an alternative to formal education and show that theatre belongs in schools too. We will continue our educational activities and communication with schools after the festival's conclusion.

The November part of EDUFEST, as well as the festival as a whole, was successful, and we are pleased that our audiences left happy.



Cultural literacy is one of the key skills defined by the European Union. The aim of our work is to strengthen the key skills that will help students find personal fulfilment, participate in society, and find work. It is possible to strengthen cultural literacy as part of formal education (e.g. at school) as well as through informal education (e.g. cultural institutions).

EDUFEST was realized in collaboration with various theatres and educational groups, such as DOX Prague, EduDrama Bratislava, The Theatre Institute in Bratislava, Kunsthalle Prague, Post Bellum, the Central Slovak Gallery in Banská Bystrica, the Academy of the Arts, various elementary and high schools in Banská Bystrica, and more.

Over the course of the festival, we prepared four episodes of a video diary titled *EDUMINUTES* and five podcast episodes with esteemed lecturers. We were invited to speak about EDUFEST on radio seven times, as well as four times on television. Two articles were written about the festival in print and nine in online magazines and portals. We strove to expand our audiences by communicating with them through discussions and questionnaires. After the November part of EDUFEST, we led a class directly at the Andrej Sládkovič high school in Banská Bystrica, where the students filled out a questionnaire related to the workshop and performance put on for them as part of EDUFEST. We also assessed their general relationship to school and education, and discussed their opinions.

The full EDUFEST itinerary in numbers:

- 15 performances for a wide spectrum of audiences, from toddlers to adults
- 705 audience members attended our performances
- 225 Arts and Education professionals attended our workshops
- 12 attendees came to our November presentation of comics titled *Classics in the Graphic Novel*
- 31 experts in the fields of Arts and Education attended our international colloquium in person, and a further 13 attended online
- 94 audience members attended our discussions

The final product of the festival will be an almanac from the international colloquium as well as an edited recording of it on YouTube.



Medzinárodný festival participatívneho divadla a rozvoja publika

1. ročník 2023

Zážitkové semináre. Tvorivé ateliéry. Divadelné predstavenia.

Dva dni v každom mesiaci

SEPTEMBER NOVEMBER
OKTÓBER DECEMBER

Výnimoční lektori a výnimočné lektorky. Skvelé divadlá.

This project was supported by the Slovak Arts Council.

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The former Slovak Minister of Culture, Silvia Hroncová, was parton of the festival.

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