

# SUMMARY

The choreographer Ondrej Šoth has greatly contributed towards development and promotion of contemporary dance in Slovakia, both on a regional level and in a wider international context. To attest his achievements, he has been awarded the Best Production Award at this year's Dosky Awards for *The Wedding after Figaro* (Mozart). In a profile interview by Zuzana Mistríková, Ondrej Šoth recalls his professional beginnings, his work and stay in Prague and Bratislava, and he also shares his thoughts on ballet as a dramatic genre and talks about his efforts to build the dance repertoire at the State Theatre Košice and his future projects.

The review section takes a critical look at the latest premieres throughout Slovakia. Rudo Leška highly praises the direction of the opera *Madama Butterfly*. "Despite few reservations towards the concept, which was somewhat lacking in conciseness (especially in comparison to the recent production of *Onegin*), I must say that Konwitschny remains the guru of Slovak theatre. He is hugely respected for clear articulation of artistic ideas and his intense work with opera singers/actors on their roles. He leads the actors to individual characterisation, showing them the way to shed the familiar and corny gestures and posing".

*Hamlet*, the eternal hero, has recently returned to the Slovak stage twice at once. Nevertheless, one of the Shakespearean productions, staged at the Slovak National Theatre, has received mixed reviews. "The production's concept is not quite clear and it fails to deliver a powerful message.

The main protagonist, Robert Roth, misses strong and convincing opponents. Despite a prominent cast, the dull acting prevents the three and a half hour long production from delivering dramatic moments, suspense or strong emotions. It reeks of an "A" level student's paper on a strange story of a prince by the name of Hamlet, rather than a mature Shakespearean production."

The theatre theorist Martina Vannayová focuses on the interpretation of H. Müller's *Hamletmaschine* by Slávka Daubnerová. The actor/director has recently been praised for her progressive approach to the genre of monodrama. The Hungarian theatre critic & editor of the theatre magazine *Színház*, Tamás Jászay, reviews the production of *The Brothers Karamazov* directed by Martin Huba at Jókai Theatre. Jászay finds the dramatization problematic and questions Huba's way of directing the actors.

In this issue's review section you will also find reviews of for example *The Maids* by Jean Genet (Theatre a.ha production), and *Once There Was a Village* (J. Palárik Theatre production).

The annual International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra belongs to one of the most excitedly anticipated theatre events in Slovakia. The 16<sup>th</sup> festival's programme of foreign and local productions is reviewed by the dramaturge and director Maja Hriešik and the Czech theatre theorist and critic Petr Christov. Hriešik focuses her polemic analyses at the obvious imbalance between domestic and foreign festival productions as well as the position of Slovak theatre within the contemporary

international context. Her conclusion comes as proper wake-up call. "I am afraid that Slovak theatre can only dream of acting characterised by bold approach, instinctive rawness, accuracy of expression and presence of wit. The decision making and creative atmosphere behind the theatre curtains seems to be driven by the policy of "lesser of the evil". How else to explain the drab selection of domestic production for this year's festival. My question then is "What are the dreams of Slovak Theatre? And does it still dream at all?" According to Saint Augustin, man lives in the present but the present has three dimensions – the present of the past matters, the present of the current matters and the present of future matters. I fear that Slovak theatre lives the past of matters past, the past of current matters and the past of future matters. Therefore it dreams the dreams of the past."

Peter Christov describes the programming of the domestic productions as quite varied, though not always of the highest artistic standard. "Slovak productions seen at the Nitra Festival are, as always, of a nice and varied mix. What they seem to have thematically in common is that at the centre of each of them there is a particular individual (or a group), often mentioned in the plays title (*The Brothers Karamazov*, *Portia Coughlan*, *Dr. Husák*, *Jurgova Hana*) with a particular attitude which can feel really close to home or at other times quite at odds with the real world."

Contemporary Serbian theatre struggles with similar problems to those of their Slovak theatre contemporaries. A prominent Serbian critic and festival selector from Belgrade, Ivan Medenica summarises the situation: insufficient contacts

and information about theatre developments around the world, crises of direction (the reason for which lies in the absence of generation exchange, and in isolation increased by the absence of co-operation with foreign visiting directors). He also mentions the problematic issues of repertoire policy and artistic management of renowned ensembles and theatre companies as well as the rigidity and conservative methods of art education. On the other hand, Medenica praises Serbian contemporary drama, especially authored by female playwrights such as Srbljanovic, Markovic, Pelevic and Bogavac.

In the Found in Translation section, the literary theorist and translator Adam Bžoch introduces a play *Jasir* by Dutch playwright A. Benali.

The Theatre Institute section presents detailed programme and the mission of newly founded platform for theatre research – The Centre of Theatre Research. Ladislav Lajcha writes about three recent exhibitions of prominent Slovak stage designers – Helena Bezáková, Štefan Hudák and František Perger – showed at the Museum of Croatian Culture in Bratislava, East Slovakian Gallery in Košice and Ponitra Museum in Nitra, respectively.

