The Theatrical Whisperer

Naše Divadlo Calgary Ltd.

June 2025 • Summer edition, number 2

Theatre that unites – Celebrating our first anniversary, launching a new website, and unveiling another big theatrical adventure.!

Calgary, AB – It's been a year since Naše Divadlo was founded, and we've had an incredible journey. From the premiere of a cult play to a birthday celebration, a prestigious meeting with the artistic director, and the launch of our official website – the theatrical heart of Slovaks and Czechs in Calgary beats stronger than ever before.

What will you find in this issue?

- CBAC Dinner in Honor of Our Artistic Director Mgr. František Vaněček
- Celebrating the First Anniversary of Naše Divadlo
- Launch of Our New Official Website We're online!
- Interview with Our Technical Director Martin Lacko Exclusive details about what goes on behind the scenes of our productions.
- Our Star/Double Feature: Dagmar Rakušan & Petr Zizler
- We're Preparing a New Theatre Production.

And all this and much more!

Don't miss out on more exciting updates in this issue.





Editor: Natália Vaněčková

Graphics, translation, design, and lots of coffee: The Naše Divadlo Calgary team

CBAC Dinner Event with František Vaněček: On the Theatrical Journey, Naše Divadlo, and the Challenges on Stage



Calgary, AB – March 17, 2025 – The Czech Business Association of Canada hosted a special evening at Toscana Grill with Mgr. František Vaněček, the artistic director of Naše Divadlo, which became an inspiring gathering of culture and community. František is a graduate of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, and his theatrical career includes work at prestigious venues such as the National Theatre and Nová Scéna. He has also gained international experience in Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands. After returning to Slovakia, he worked in professional theatre in Spišská Nová Ves and then spent over 15 years leading the amateur troupe Divadlo A DOSŤ in Púchov, where he fostered a living tradition of community theatre and various cultural events. With decades of experience, he now brings his wealth of knowledge to Calgary.





During the dinner, František spoke not only about his journey through theatre but also about his vision for the future of Naše Divadlo – from creating a dedicated space to the upcoming productions. The evening also served as an opportunity to introduce the theatre's second season, which promises even more creativity, collaboration, and joy in theatrical arts. However, František's vision extends beyond the theatre itself – it is a vision for the entire community. He envisions a space where Czech and Slovak culture in Calgary comes together, connects, and grows – across generations and organizations.

He emphasized that culture is stronger when it is created together – as a community. Such gatherings confirm that collaboration between organizations holds deep significance. By combining passion, experience, and shared values, we can build a vibrant cultural space that we will all be proud of. Together, we are stronger.

Long live, Naše Divadlo!

Okotoks, AB - On Saturday, April 26th, a special gathering took place in the cozy space of Red Rock Pizza in Okotoks - a Czechoslovak meetup combined with the celebration of the first anniversary of Naše Divadlo. The atmosphere was warm, friendly, and filled with joy as we came together again - as a community. There was no shortage of birthday cake, sparkling wine, and of course, the traditional "Živió!" which everyone sang with enthusiasm. The turnout was fantastic – old friends and new acquaintances gathered, all united by a love for culture, language, and good food. And speaking of food - the pizza was exceptional! If you haven't tried the Smokey Slovak from the Red Rock Pizza menu, you absolutely must. In addition to the pizza, we were delighted by a special menu featuring aromatic goulash, juniper schnapps, and other Slovak and Czech delicacies that evoked the taste of home.















This celebration was not just a reminder of the successful first year of Naše Divadlo, but also proof that, as a community, we can create unforgettable moments. We thank everyone who came to celebrate with us – and we look forward to more gatherings filled with laughter, music, flavors, and shared joy.

From the Stage to the Backstage: Meet Martin Lacko, Our Multifaceted Technical Director, Actor, Musician, and Singer

A look at the technical roots, the many artistic hats worn, and a passion for theater that ties it all together. Martin is one of the most vibrant and versatile personalities behind the success of Naše Divadlo. In this interview, he shares how he transitioned from the guitar stage to the theater boards and what it means for him to build a cultural community in Calgary.

Martin, how did your journey to theater begin and what drew you to it the most? What was it like starting from scratch in a completely new environment and building a theater community in Calgary?

To be honest, I never originally planned to step onto the stage. I thought I'd mostly be helping with technical support—maybe contribute a little music, record something here or there. But then you all convinced me, including the director, and somehow it just happened.

The stage was never completely foreign to me, though—I danced as a kid, and in my teens I started playing guitar. I've played in several bands, both in Slovakia and here in Canada, so I've definitely had my share of time in the spotlight. Even though I entered a completely new environment, it didn't feel entirely unfamiliar. I realized theater has a lot in common with playing in a band—you have to remember lyrics or lines, whether it's for a song or a script. And most importantly—there's a ton of fun involved.

The one and only, Martin Lacko Image credit: Dáša Ozaniaková, Naše Divadlo Calgary

2) What moment from the early days of founding Naše Divadlo will you never forget? Do you have an unforgettable experience or anecdote?

I'll probably never forget our first meeting with the director (František Vaněček), when we first came together and started developing the idea of creating a theater for the Czech and Slovak community in Calgary. That was the moment when I met Ferko — we realized we had a lot in common, a shared passion for culture, and a desire to build something new. As for an anecdote — I remember brainstorming names for the theater. We wanted something simple and understandable for both communities, so I just spontaneously said: Naše Divadlo. Everyone immediately knew that was it. It sounds the same in both Slovak and Czech, and perfectly captures the idea of solidarity, which is the foundation of our theater.

3) Your work at Naše Divadlo also includes set building. What is your approach to creating the scenes, and how do you collaborate with the director to make sure the set aligns with their vision?

It kind of just happened — I work in construction, have a bunch of tools, and we had a garage where Ferko and I put everything together. We came up with most of the ideas together — if I wasn't sure about something, I'd ask. And if something didn't feel right... well, I'd end up doing it my way. [laughs] The director said I could admit that! But seriously — everything works because of trust, open communication, and the fact that we genuinely enjoy it. Ferko often leaves me space when it comes to technical aspects because he knows I'm experienced in that area — and I appreciate that he always listens and we work together to find solutions.

4) In Nebe na Zemi (Heaven on Earth), you played a carpenter. What was the experience like, stepping onto the stage for our first performance and becoming a part of this premiere?

As I mentioned earlier, the feelings were very similar to those I had when I performed with the band. I really enjoy that feeling — it's no longer nervousness, more like a healthy adrenaline rush and a sense of responsibility. You know you have your role and that everything must fall into place for it to make sense. In theatre, just like in a band, every person matters — if someone forgets their line or loses continuity, the whole scene falls apart. And as the carpenter in Nebe na Zemi, I had a great time. I got scolded, was beaten with a rolling pin, and probably fell in love about twelve times. [laughs] It was great, and above all — so much fun!



4

The Theatrical Whisperer

5) In the upcoming project, you have a larger acting role that also involves a lot of singing. How are you preparing for this challenge, and what can we expect from you – not only as an actor but also as a singer on stage?

Well, what to expect... this time I'll put the guitar aside, but the instrument won't escape me-I'll have a shovel as a gravedigger. The preparation is in full swing - I'm learning the lines, listening to the music we recorded, and trying to get everything under my skin. It's going to be a challenge, but I'm looking forward to it.

6) What can you tell us about the upcoming production? What new challenges, ideas, or surprises can we expect from this performance?

Hmm, what can I tell you? Well, we have beautiful fencing swords – like the three musketeers... but we have four! [laughs] There will be two musketeer women and two musketeer men, so the balance will be there. I'm really looking forward to those swords — although I won't be fencing this time. But I'll be singing a lot – along with the second gravedigger! It will definitely be fun because it's a comedy full of music, energy, and unexpected moments. I believe the audience will enjoy it just as much as we have during the preparations.

7) Naše Divadlo is an important part of the Czech-Slovak community in Calgary. How do you see the role of theater in strengthening our cultural identity here in Canada, and what does it mean to you to be a part of this community through theater?

I think it's very significant – even when I lived in Vancouver, although I wasn't involved in theater there, I had a band and we often played at various Czech-Slovak events. It's beautiful to bring people, communities, and organizations together that keep our roots alive here in Canada.



Since many of us have left family and friends in Europe, it's beautiful to build new friendships through activities like these. Meeting new people, sharing culture, laughter, and memories — that's what it's all about when you live far from home.

8) Throughout your journey with Naše Divadlo, you've faced many challenges as well as successes. What are your biggest ambitions for the future in theater? Where would you like to see the theater headed?

The vision is big! We hope that in the future, we'll be able to stage two to three productions a year — so it's not just one play per year. This first year was more of a trial run, to see if there would even be interest... and it turns out the interest is huge. So now we're planning to launch an official theater season, with two to three premieres each year.

And another big dream is to have our own space — a kind of Czech-Slovak cultural center where not only we as theatermakers could gather, but also other organizations from our community. A place we could truly call "home." And not just for us — but for future generations too. We already have youth involved in the theater, and it would be amazing to create a space where they can grow, create, and feel at home. It would be a fantastic thing for the whole community!

Thank you, Martin, for sharing your perspective, energy, and love for theatre with us. Whether he's on stage, behind the scenes, or wielding a hammer, his work is an invaluable part of what makes Naše Divadlo what it is. We're grateful to have him on our team and excited for everything we'll create together in the future.

Launch of Our Official Website

On April 9, we were thrilled to launch our new official website! This exciting step allows us to better connect with our audience, share news about upcoming productions, and provide easy access to information about our shows and events.

Visit us at www.nasedivadlocalgary.com and follow us on Instagram @nasedivadlocalgary or Facebook Naše Divadlo (Calgary) for the latest updates and behind-the-scenes fun!





Our Star - Double Feature!



It is with great joy that we introduce two unforgettable personalities who are unwavering pillars of Our Theatre – Petr Zizler and Dagmar Rakušan. These exceptional individuals have been with us from the very beginning of

our journey and have since become an inseparable part of our theater family, enriching our work with their talent and energy.

Petr Zizler - a stage newcomer and an actor at heart

Our Peto is a beautiful example that it's never too late to discover a new passion—and to blossom in it. Although he had no prior acting experience, he stepped onto the stage with humility, openness, and a natural sense of humor that immediately won the hearts of the audience.

Thanks to his intelligence, attentive perception, and willingness to learn and grow, he has become not only a great acting partner but also a beloved member of our ensemble.

This year, he returns in a "marital duet" alongside his colleague Dagmar. Their shared energy is exceptional—lively, entertaining, and touching—and we're already looking forward to the audience's reactions.





During your first season, you discovered a hidden talent for acting. How do you feel as an actor in Our Theatre, and what has surprised you the most on this journey?

In May 2024, I attended a Czech-Slovak meetup for the first time, and the topic of possible theater came up. I asked what exactly a director does. As time went on during rehearsals, I realized that the director actually does everything, and the others just help.

I enjoy being in the theater—I immerse myself in the Czechoslovak era, speak Czech, and really love going to rehearsals. And when it's over, I'm back in a different world. Memorizing lines is harder than I originally thought.

You are beginning your second season in Our Theatre. What are you most looking forward to? What challenges and opportunities do you expect this time?

A new season means a new play and new scripts. It all starts again, and during rehearsals, the actors find their roles — and everything gradually develops. Each rehearsal brings new progress. In the end, the theater comes to life.

"When Peto improvises, the theater comes alive!"

zler (right) with Lucia Prchlíkova, Heaven on Earth 2025

If you could give advice to someone who wants to get involved in theater but has no experience, what would you say to them?

To all newcomers thinking about joining, I have one piece of advice: if you enjoy the Czechoslovak environment, love theater, and understand that everything must come together as a whole, then you will enjoy it.

When Peto forgets his lines during rehearsal, it's not an obstacle – rather an opportunity. He might hesitate for a moment, but then he jumps right back in with a disarming charm and spontaneity that can sometimes enrich the scene even more than anyone expected. His ability to keep the spirit of the scene alive, even when things don't go exactly as planned, is admirable and often brings unexpected moments of joy and laughter.

In his first season, he excelled as Bartolus – convincing, energetic, and full of humor. His acting, timing, and attention to detail show that he approaches theater with both respect and joy – and the audience loves him for it.

The Theatrical Whisperer



Our Star - Double Feature!





"That darn Jupiter's law... Lex Jovi...." Performance of, Nebo na Zemi, Január 2025, in the role of Vittorio Bartolus. From left, Dagmar Rakušan, Michal Ubar, Adriana Hasonová, František Vaněček, and Petr Zizler

Zizler (middle), Janko Jelínek (left) a Janči Špak (right) - Hamlet 5 First Table Read Marec 23 2025 ge Credit: Dáša Ozaniaková. Naše Divadlo Calgary

Peto is not just the one who can make the audience laugh and improvise on stage with elegance.

We are incredibly excited that Peto will take on the role of the king and villain in our upcoming performance! With his talent, charm, and invaluable sense of humor, he is sure to become unforgettable on stage. We are already looking forward to what his new performance will bring – it's guaranteed to be worth it!

Two stars of our stage through the eyes of the director

There are faces that are inseparably part of our ensemble – not only for their talent but also for what they bring to us every day: humor, humanity, energy, and joy in creating.

As beautifully said by our artistic director and director, František Vaněček: "Peťko and Daška are for me two great personalities of our ensemble, without whom I cannot imagine continuing our work at all. Their approach to creation and their wit, their spontaneous reactions, are a great refreshment and like a soothing touch to the soul. I believe that our audience certainly shares this opinion of them. I wish them continued success and that we keep loving them more and more. And may they keep delighting us with their wit and humor."

Theatre Funfacts

Theatrical Tidbits: Historical facts, unusual theater records, and amusing stories from famous productions.

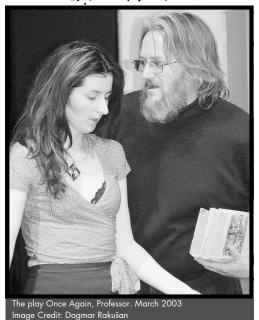
The history of theater is full of unforgettable pairs – not only lovers but also quarrelsome, tragic, or comedic duos. From Shakespeare to contemporary original plays, one thing holds true: when two actors have chemistry, the audience feels it even in the last row. Did you know that in Czechoslovak theater, Dana Medřická and Karel Höger were considered a legendary duo? Their joint performances were full of tension, depth, and subtle humor – but it was never just about acting; it was also about the perfect harmony that arose between two strong personalities. And they say you can't see the sparks!

Here at Our Theatre [Naše Divadlo], we also believe that a good duo is the foundation of a powerful stage – and when two actors in one play can "pass the ball" to each other with humor, passion, and precision, they can become another unforgettable pair.



Our Star - Double Feature!





Dagmar Rakušan – Experiences That Shape an Actor, and a Theatrical Queen at Heart

Our Dáša is an example that theater is not only about talent but also about courage, perseverance, and the willingness to embrace new challenges. Although her journey to the theater began in childhood, her unwavering passion and desire for acting have helped her overcome all the obstacles life has thrown her way. After moving to Canada, where her theater career paused for a while, she returned to her true passion and found a new home in Our Theatre.

Her talent, charm, and ability to light up every scene make her not only a great actress but also a personality who wins the hearts of the audience. This season, Dáša returns to the stage, this time alongside Peto, and their shared moments on stage will bring unforgettable experiences. We already know their dynamic will be irresistible, and the audience can look forward to new theatrical delights.

About Dagmar in her own wordsi

I was born in Uherské Hradiště but lived with my family in Kroměříž until I was 30 years old. Although my parents were not involved in the arts, I was the exception and have had a close connection to theatre since childhood. My mother enrolled me in the drama club at the local Elementary Art School, and from first grade, my passion for theatre never left me.

At 16, I found the courage to join the Theatre Ensemble in Kroměříž. Even though it was an amateur group, it achieved great success at a professional level. In 1993, I stood on the stage for the first time in a role that meant the world to me — I played a can-can dancer in the play Limonádový Joe, a performance I fondly remember. By 2003, I had appeared in eight plays for adults, two fairy tales, and several times portrayed a fairy-tale character at a local fairy-tale forest event. My last performance before a significant change was Ještě jednou, pane profesore by Antonín Procházka, which premiered on March 4, 2003. We went on to perform it 45 times. For me, it was one of the most successful productions I have ever been part of.

In 2003, I was approached by an acting group in Kostelany that was looking for actors for a western theatre. From then on, I performed professionally in a Western Town, where in 2004 I became the cultural manager and leader of the acting group. Unfortunately, my successful career there was short-lived, as my husband received a job offer in Canada, and we moved overseas in 2006.

The beginning in a new country was very challenging. Not knowing the language and being unable to act in theatre sometimes brought me down. What kept me going was the thought that one day I would again be part of a great theatre and be able to make people laugh when they needed it most.

Opportunities were slow to come, so I expressed my creativity at my first job at Tim Hortons, where I worked as an assistant manager. I began collecting colorful tea and coffee wrappers, sewing them onto clothing to create outfits for Christmas parties. I managed to put on a fantastic show, which surprised my boss who asked me, "Where did you come from?" I suppose he was taken aback by my Moravian spirit.

My idea caught on, and before every Christmas party, all employees collected wrappers so I could make new outfits. My boss even mentioned this at Head Office, and in 2014 I was invited to prepare a fashion show for the 50th anniversary of Tim Hortons at a trade fair in Toronto.

Yes, I stayed busy, but I still missed being part of a great play that could bring laughter to a whole audience. Until 2020, I lived in Ontario, where unfortunately there was no opportunity for me to act, as rehearsals at the Czech theatre were too far to commute regularly.

In December 2020, we moved to Alberta, and in June 2024, by pure chance, I found myself at the right place at the right time where new history began to be made. That's how I found Naše Divadlo (Our Theatre).

And of course, three questions for Dagmar - answered with heart and soul



Our Star - Double Feature!



What is it like to be an original member of Naše Divadlo, and how did you experience your first season?

It's an amazing feeling to be part of something new, and especially to meet people who love theatre as much as I do and want to talk about it and hear about everyone's experiences. And those who have never acted before, on the other hand, share their fears and anxieties, but also their desire to try something new.

What are you most looking forward to in the upcoming project at Naše Divadlo?

What I'm most looking forward to is that little "lie" every actor has to pull out when they forget their lines. It's amazing when an actor is backstage, rehearsing their role, wanting to perform it perfectly and not even admitting to themselves that they might forget a word. And then the moment comes — they're on stage, waiting for their fellow actor to give them the cue, but suddenly there's silence. The actor feels like at least ten minutes have passed. They look at the other actors, at the audience, and now they realize it's not the colleague, but they themselves who forgot the line. And they feel that pressure telling them, "Don't admit it, don't even think about it."

Then suddenly, they come out with a gem that nobody expected. The situation is saved, the audience laughs, the actor feels immense relief, and only their fellow actors stare at their back as they walk away triumphantly. That's what I'm looking forward to. Sometimes, when an actor is in trouble, they invent such a great turn of phrase that it ends up being used instead of the original text from then on.

If you had to describe Naše Divadlo in one word, what would it be and why?

Family. I don't think I could find a better word. Theatre is not just about artistic expression on stage — it's everything that connects us before the premiere. What the members experience in every rehearsal. The joys of success, worries about family, work, or how to fix a broken car. Simply everything they keep inside and don't want to say in front of colleagues at work or neighbors.

But at Naše Divadlo, the atmosphere is completely different. Each of us knows that as soon as we cross the threshold of the rehearsal room, we feel entirely different. Whatever topic someone brings up, there is always someone ready to listen or help. I know I can say something silly and no one will judge me for it. Naše Divadlo is truly our second family, and I'm incredibly happy to be a part of it.

"Dagmar isn't afraid to portray strong female characters in all their forms — from fiery and witty to majestic and unforgettable. On stage, she is simply captivating, and her performance in every role always surprises and enchants us!"



The play Nebe na Zemi, Naše Divadlo, January 2025, in the role of Catastrofa Image Credit: Erika Holderer



The play Limonádový Joe, April 1994 Image Credit:Dagmar Rakušan



The play Trojčlenka, in the role of an undercover detective, March 2002. Image Credit:Dagmar Rakušan

Dagmar is not only an experienced actress with unmistakable charisma — she is also the soul of the ensemble, bringing humor, empathy, and a huge heart to every rehearsal and performance. We are grateful to have her as part of our theatre family and eagerly await the new queen — or surprise — she will bring to the stage next time.

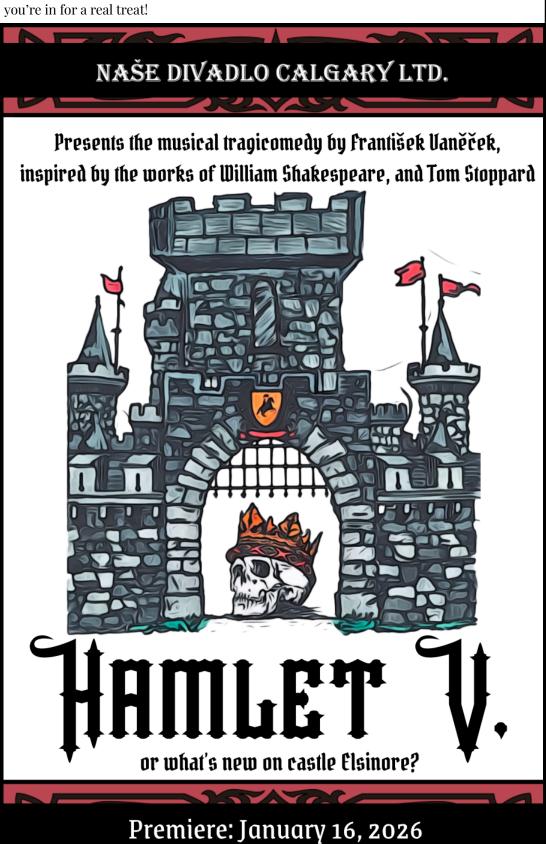
Behind the Scenes

First words, first laughs, first sparks!

On March 23, we gathered for the very first time around the script of our new project – and right from the first read-through, the room lit up with laughter, surprise, and the first sparks of creative inspiration.

Naše Divadlo is coming to life once again, and we're all diving in with passion, creativity, and joy to bring you something truly special.

We're at the start of a brand-new journey – and if the first rehearsal was any indication, vou're in for a real treat!



Introducing...

To be or not to be... ... so far, no one has messed up that line. Yet.

But rehearsals are in full swing: actors are sweating, costumes are being sewn, skulls are being polished, and ghosts are practicing their entrances.

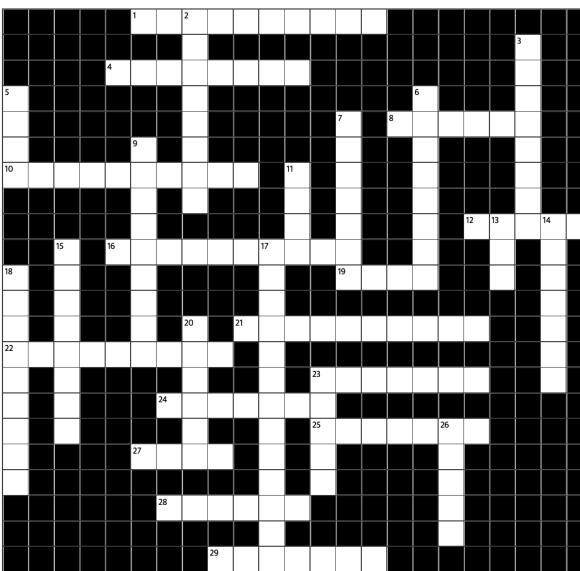
The clash of fencing swords rings out, songs are being sung, gold is being counted, and... we're all excited to see how it all comes together in perfect chaos.

"Get ready for an unforgettable ride where tragicomedy meets music – Hamlet 5 or What's New at Elsinore premieres on stage January 16, 2026!"



Whisperer's Puzzles





Across

- 1 Stage crew member responsible for equipment and technical setup
- **4** The person in the theater who helps actors remember their lines during a performance, often hidden from the audience's view.
- 8 Existentialist who locked characters in a room
- 10 The area where the audience sits to watch the performance.
- 12 Broad, silly humor that often involves mistaken identities
- 16 The person who writes the script or dialogue for a play.
- 19 Broadway's top prize named after an Antoinette
- **21** The architectural frame or arch that separates the stage from the audience, often referred to as the "picture frame" of the theater.
- 22 Greek "goat song," origin of the word "tragedy"
- 23 Russian playwright of The Cherry Orchard and Uncle Vanya
- **24** British counterpart to the Tony
- 25 Samuel Beckett play about final moments
- 27 Shakespeare's famous title, "The ___ of Avon"
- **28** In Ancient Greek theatre, she is the Muse of comedy and idyllic poetry, often depicted with a comic mask.
- 29 A character from The Lord of the Rings who has been adapted into many plays

Down

- 2 Improvised masked comedy from Renaissance Italy
- **3** The person who directs the actors and oversees the artistic vision of the play.
- **5** A female singer or actress, often renowned for her talent and commanding presence on stage or in performance.
- 6 Slovak playwright known for Statky-zmätky and Ženský zákon
- 7 Samuel who made absurdity a stage staple
- **9** When one talks to themselves on stage
- 11 Where actors wait just offstage
- 13 A major division within a play or theatrical performance, often consisting of multiple scenes and marking a significant part of the storyline.
- 14 The overall set of values, traditions, and arts that shape a society over time
- **15** The moment a character first appears on stage, beginning their role in the scene.
- 17 Unscripted performance often used in theater
- **18** Silent theatrical storytelling
- **20** Arthur who dramatized the American Dream's collapse
- 23 A tragic king of Thebes who appears in Sophocles' Antigone, known for his rigid enforcement of state laws over family loyalty.
- 26 A central character in a famous Ancient Greek tragedy by Euripides, known for her powerful and vengeful role as a sorceress and betrayed

wife

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Theater around the world

Did you know that in ancient Greece, theater originated as part of religious celebrations dedicated to the god Dionysus?

During these celebrations, dramatic competitions were held, which became the foundation for the creation of tragedies and comedies. The first playwrights, like Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, created works that are still performed today. What's more, actors at that time wore masks depicting various emotions, allowing the audience to better empathize with the characters. Ancient Greek theater thus became the foundation of the entire Western theatrical tradition, influencing all subsequent generations of theater makers.

The next edition is just around the corner! In September, we will focus on women in theater – their work, strength, and inspiration. You can look forward to interviews, photo reports, and fun trivia that you won't want to miss!

Follow us!

Don't miss any news and exclusive behind-the-scenes looks at the preparations of our performances. Follow us on:

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👍 Facebook: Naše Divadlo (Calgary)

