

The Theatrical Whisperer

Naše Divadlo Calgary Ltd.

March 2025 • Spring edition, number 1

Unforgettable Debut of 'Heaven on Earth' in Calgary – Czech-Slovak Theatre Reaps Success

NAŠE DIVADLO CALGARY LTD. DELIGHTS THE AUDIENCE WITH A SUCCESSFUL DEBUT AND SUBSEQUENT RE-RUN

Calgary, AB – Calgary experienced an exceptional theater evening full of laughter, music, and an unforgettable atmosphere. Naše Divadlo, the first Czech-Slovak theater non-profit company in the city, debuted with the iconic comedy *Heaven on Earth* by the legendary Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich. Under the direction of František Vaněček, the performance brought incredible energy to the stage, precise comedy, and timeless humor that immediately won over the audience. The crowd responded enthusiastically, and the final standing ovation confirmed that Calgary had witnessed an extraordinary artistic achievement. But what exactly made this performance so unique?

(Read more on page 2)

What is The Theatrical Whisperer?

It is the quarterly newsletter of Naše Divadlo Calgary Ltd, a non-profit organization dedicated to building a vibrant and sustainable theater ensemble that celebrates the rich cultural heritage of the Czech and Slovak communities. Every three months, we bring you behind-the-scenes news, interviews, insights into upcoming performances, and exclusive information about our upcoming events. Our mission is to innovate and foster community engagement through inclusive theater, where tradition meets modern storytelling.

What can you expect? Let's take a look!

"On the Spot" – An exclusive interview with an actor, director, or member of our creative team

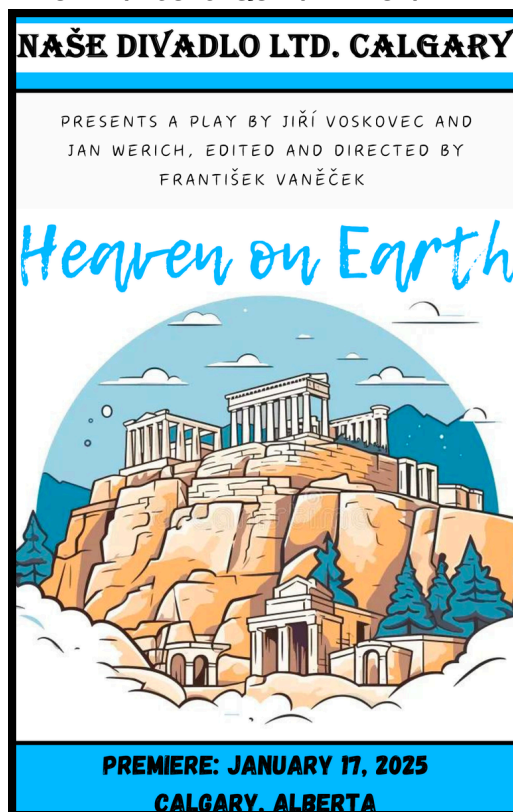
"What's Ahead?" – A sneak peek at upcoming events

"Our Star" – A spotlight on one of our team members

"Theater Archive" – Memories of beloved productions

"Actor's Pearls" – Fun moments, mixed-up lines, and funny stories

... and even more behind-the-scenes tidbits from our theater!



INVITATION TO OUR REGULAR MONTHLY

Czech & Slovak

meet-up

AGENDA: A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SEE OUR CZ&SK FRIENDS & FIND NEW FRIENDS

NEW LOCATION: **SUGAR RUSH BAKE SHOP** (www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556142935948)

ADDRESS: 2133 33 AVE SW, CALGARY, AB T2T 1Z7

DATE: FEB 22, 2025, SATURDAY

TIME: 3 – 6 PM

AUDIENCE: ALL CZ&SK FRIENDS & FAMILIES (INCLUDING KIDS)

YOUR HOSTS: ERIKA HOLDERER (604 367 2594) & MARTIN LACKO (778 821 2456)

The Whisperer Recommends

Upcoming Events

Febuár 22 (3:00PM–5:00PM) Czech a Slovak Meet Up v Sugar Rush Bake Shop, come for a chat.

Marec 29 (3:00PM–5:00PM) Czech a Slovak Meet Up v Sugar Rush Bake Shop, come for a chat.

April 27 Our First Birthday!!

"Thunder, Lightning, and Applause! The First Czech and Slovak Theater in Calgary Triumphed with Heaven on Earth!"



Production of *Heaven on Earth*, January 17 2025, Calgary Image credit: @mariavaněčková

Calgary, AB – A historic evening full of laughter, music, and artistic enthusiasm. The first Czech-Slovak theater in Calgary, Naše Divadlo Ltd., debuted with the iconic comedy *Heaven on Earth* by the legendary Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich. Directed by Mgr. František Vaněček, an experienced director and actor with a background in the Slovak National Theatre, this production immediately won over the audience. From the very first minutes of the performance, it was clear that the audience was in for a special night. Bursts of laughter, spontaneous applause, and a final standing ovation confirmed that the theater scene in Calgary had gained a new and unique addition.

So, what made this evening so unforgettable?

Performances That Enthralled the Audience

The cast delivered outstanding performances, with each character showcasing their unique charm and dynamics. The audience laughed, applauded, and reacted enthusiastically to every scene. A key element was the music, which perfectly complemented the atmosphere of the performance and added to its authenticity. The music for the production was composed by the legendary Jaroslav Ježek, the court composer and close collaborator of Voskovec and Werich. His melodies became an inseparable part of the performance, creating the perfect musical framework that captured every mood and motivation of the characters.

The play *Heaven on Earth* is one of the most famous works of Voskovec and Werich. This timeless comedy, first performed in 1936, brings a blend of intelligent humor, music, and satire that remains relevant today. The story unfolds on Mount Olympus and in a small village where the gods decide to intervene in the fate of ordinary mortals. As the wise god Mercury says:

'The name of the village is not important, for people are the same everywhere.'

This idea, conveyed through humor and timeless themes, has been able to resonate with audiences regardless of their language or cultural background.

A Dream of Theater Realized

What began as a bold idea in June 2024 has, in less than a year, transformed into a living theatrical reality. Naše Divadlo Ltd. was born from the desire to unite the Czech and Slovak communities in Calgary through art and humor. The first reading of the script in September 2024 revealed that the troupe was on the verge of something exceptional.

A crucial role in this success was played by director Mgr. František Vaněček. This experienced artist boasts a long career in leading Slovak theaters, including the Slovak National Theater and Nova Scena in Bratislava. In addition to his professional career, he has dedicated much of his time to working with amateur troupes, with the goal of making theater accessible to the widest possible audience. After a 20-year hiatus from the theater world, František decided to take on the challenge of leading Naše Divadlo to its premiere. His talent and experience proved invaluable, and the premiere of *Heaven on Earth* was proof that Czechoslovak theater traditions abroad can truly thrive.

After the final scene, the audience erupted into a long applause and a standing ovation, with enthusiastic reactions continuing even after the performance ended. The atmosphere in the theater was electrifying, and just when it seemed like the evening was coming to a close, the entire cast spontaneously returned to the stage and together once again performed the iconic title song 'Heaven on Earth.' The audience immediately joined in, creating an unforgettable moment of connection between the actors and the viewers.

Both the premiere and the first encore were sold out, proving the immense interest in the production. Based on this fantastic response, the troupe decided to offer a second encore, which will take place soon. If you missed the premiere, now is your unique opportunity!



Editor's Note:

We regret to inform you that the planned re-run for *Nebe na Zemi* on March 29th has been cancelled due to medical reasons affecting one of our cast members, who plays an integral role in this production. We extend our heartfelt wishes for their speedy recovery and good health. In the meantime, the theatre group is now beginning the first stages of their exciting new production, and we look forward to sharing more details soon.

On the Spot: Interview with director, František Vaněček

On returning to theater, the magical fusion of humor and music, and the significance of Czech and Slovak culture abroad.

In the first edition of our On the Spot column, where we bring exclusive behind-the-scenes interviews from the theater, we couldn't have chosen anyone other than František Vaněček—director, actor, playwright, and one of the founders of Naše Divadlo Ltd. Calgary. His work goes beyond directing—he is also a performer, storyteller, and visionary who, together with other members of the theater troupe, has breathed new life into the legendary play *Heaven on Earth*.

How does he perceive this unique project? What is it like to lead the first Czechoslovak theater company in Calgary, to stand on stage while simultaneously shaping the entire production process? Step into the world of theater through the eyes of the man who helps build it from the ground up!

*Naše Divadlo Ltd. brought an unforgettable theatrical experience to Calgary with its debut performance of the iconic comedy *Heaven on Earth* by Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich. Behind this successful production stands the experienced director Mgr. František Vaněček, whose theater background spans from professional stages in Slovakia and abroad to working with amateur ensembles. After twenty years, he returned to directing to bring this legendary piece of Czech and Slovak theater history to life in Calgary. We spoke with František Vaněček about his vision for *Heaven on Earth*, the challenges of staging this timeless comedy, and what theater means to him.*

1. František, what inspired you to bring *Heaven on Earth* to Calgary, and what was your vision for this production?

František: I was inspired by the fact that it was a great challenge—I didn't know exactly what I was getting into or who I would be working with, so I tried to choose something I had previously directed in Slovakia. I knew the cast wouldn't be very large, so it was something that could be adapted and worked with based on what we had. My vision was that this production could really work. And I'm very happy that it turned out so successfully—not only did it resonate with the audience, but also with the actors, who are excited to continue working with me. That truly brings me joy.

2. How did you approach working with actors from both experienced and volunteer backgrounds? What challenges did you face during rehearsals?

František: Working with these people has been fantastic because you can really see that many of them have experience. But the most important attribute in this work is that they want to do it. And when people have the drive, that's more than half the success. So I didn't have to approach things in any particularly special way. Both the actors and the technical team were very engaged and eager to fulfill what I asked of them, often on the first try. The work went very smoothly. I'd even say that they made every rehearsal incredibly easy for me.



František Vaněček (middle) with Martin Lacko and Erika Holderer Image credit: @martinlacko

3. Could you describe the creative process of reinterpreting such a timeless play and how you aimed to make it fresh and appealing to our audience?

František: When reinterpreting this timeless play, I had to adjust certain passages to make them more understandable in today's language while also eliminating elements that were significant for the original era. I aimed to adapt the play slightly to the present day so that it would be engaging for our audience. I believe we succeeded quite well.

4. What was your most memorable moment during the performance, and how did it feel to receive such enthusiastic applause from the audience?

František: The first such moment occurred when the audience reacted to the song that Jupiter sings right in the prologue, portrayed by Jakub Lahuta, Mercury, played by Milada Žezulová, and of course, our carpenter Martin Lacko. Even then, I knew that the performance had caught the audience's attention, and that we would manage to win their focus and success. And of course, the standing ovation – that's something every actor and director hopes for. It was a great honor for us, and we're very happy that the audience was so kind to us. I was extremely satisfied.

5. After twenty years, you returned to theater directing. What was it like to once again be at the helm of a production, and what did it bring you on both a personal and professional level?

František: Those twenty years without theater... well, it wasn't exactly like I was completely away from theater. I really enjoy attending performances in Calgary with my family, so I was still in touch with theater. But when we started this production, it didn't even feel like there had been a twenty-year break between my previous work and now. Essentially, it felt like I had returned just a day after leaving the theater in Púchov. I felt like I was still in theater because even during those twenty years, I never stopped thinking about it, creating ideas, and something related to it was always forming in my mind. So, I think that's what brought me back.

6. Naše Divadlo Ltd. is the first Czech-Slovak theater company in Calgary. What significance do you think such a theater has for our expatriate community abroad?

František: I think it has a huge significance. It's a shame that something like this didn't come about earlier because now we can see how people want to meet, visit, and how much they miss the connection they had back home – whether in the Czech Republic or Slovakia. . And that's exactly what this theater brings – something different, not just for our actors, but also for the audience. It creates a sense of belonging and brings us together here, in Canada.

7. The music of Jaroslav Ježek is an integral part of this play. How did you work with the musical aspect of the production, and what do you think his melodies bring to the overall experience?

František: Let's be honest, without Ježek, there would be no Voskovec and Werich, and without Jaroslav Ježek's music, those productions wouldn't have the charm they do. His music is very catchy, simply soothing. Just imagine a little five-year-old girl walking past you, singing a melody from Nebe na Zemi—that girl is the daughter of two valuable members of our team.

8. What would you say to the audience members who have already enjoyed Nebe na Zemi, as well as those who are about to attend the next performance?

František: The answer is very simple: Please come. You won't regret it.



We thank František Vaněček for his time. If you haven't had the chance to see Nebe na Zemi yet, don't despair! Editor's note: the second re-run for Nebe na Zemi was cancelled due to medical reasons of a cast member. At this time, Naše Divadlo is preparing their next project.



Production Heaven on Earth , Január 17 2025 in Calgary Image credit: @martinlacko

We are looking for new talents.

The Czech-Slovak theater Naše Divadlo Ltd. in Calgary is looking for enthusiasts who want to become part of our team. We offer the opportunity to get involved in theater production not only as an actor but also behind the scenes – from costumes and set design to technical and organizational support.

If you're interested in helping with production, event organization, or other activities, get in touch with us. Previous experience doesn't matter; what's important is the willingness to collaborate and contribute to the creation of unique performances. Interested individuals can contact us via email at nasedivadlo.ca@gmail.com.



Our Star:

Adriana Hasonová



For our first star, we couldn't choose anyone other than our fantastic Adriana Hasonová! In the role of the churchwarden Scipia Calaber, she brings an unforgettable energy and humor to the production, completely owning the character and giving it a new dimension. Originally Scipio, the iconic role of Jiří Voskovec, is transformed in her performance into a charismatic and irresistibly funny Scipia, who immediately wins over the audience.

Alongside director František Vaněček, who plays the high priest Horatius Darda – a character originally portrayed by Jan Werich himself in the original production – Hasonová creates an unforgettable dynamic. Her acting talent, precise timing of lines, and natural ability to draw the audience into the story prove that she can confidently tackle even the biggest acting challenges.

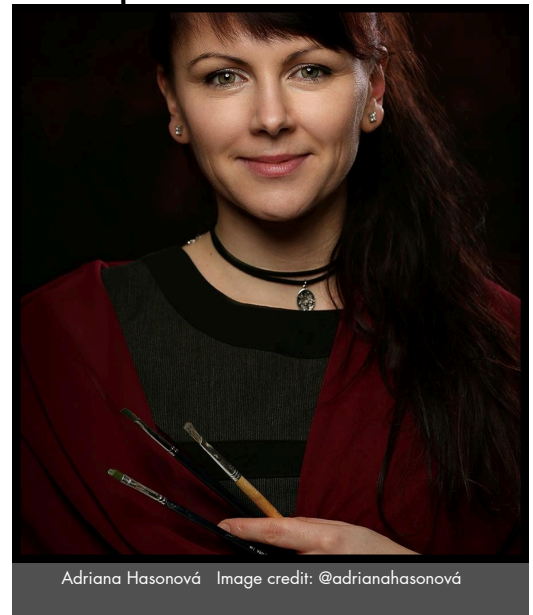
About Adriana in her own words.

"I come from Stupava, Slovakia, and I have been fascinated by art and creativity since I was a child. My father played the guitar, my mother arranged flowers, and my grandmother, with whom I spent my childhood, was a seamstress and also painted. My artistic journey began at the Elementary Art School, where I focused on visual arts and the literary-dramatic department.

Later, I studied fashion design at the Clothing School in Bratislava and then therapeutic pedagogy at Comenius University. Since 2003, I was a member of the historical fencing group Ursus, where I was involved not only in fencing and theater but also in fire shows, set design, and costume creation – until my move to Canada in 2014.

In Vancouver, I discovered the Czech-Slovak theater Za rohom, which not only opened the doors to theater for me but also brought my life partner into my life. I had the opportunity to create costumes for the play Animal Farm and exhibit my paintings at the theater in Port Moody. My great friend Marika (MarikArts) also involved me in various visual art projects.

Art, for me, is also therapy, which is why I work with children in art therapy. When we moved to Calgary, I hoped to continue creating in some way. Therefore, I was incredibly pleased that Naše Divadlo was created, and that I had the opportunity to be on stage again and meet wonderful, talented people. However, the greatest joy for me is that I can experience all of this together with my children, who are a part of it."



Adriana Hasonová Image credit: @adrianahasonová



Adriana Hasonová in action Image credit: @adrianahasonová

**"Not Scipio, but Scipia
– strong female
characters on stage are
important, and
Adriana shows us that
even in the greatest
roles, female energy
can be unstoppable!"**

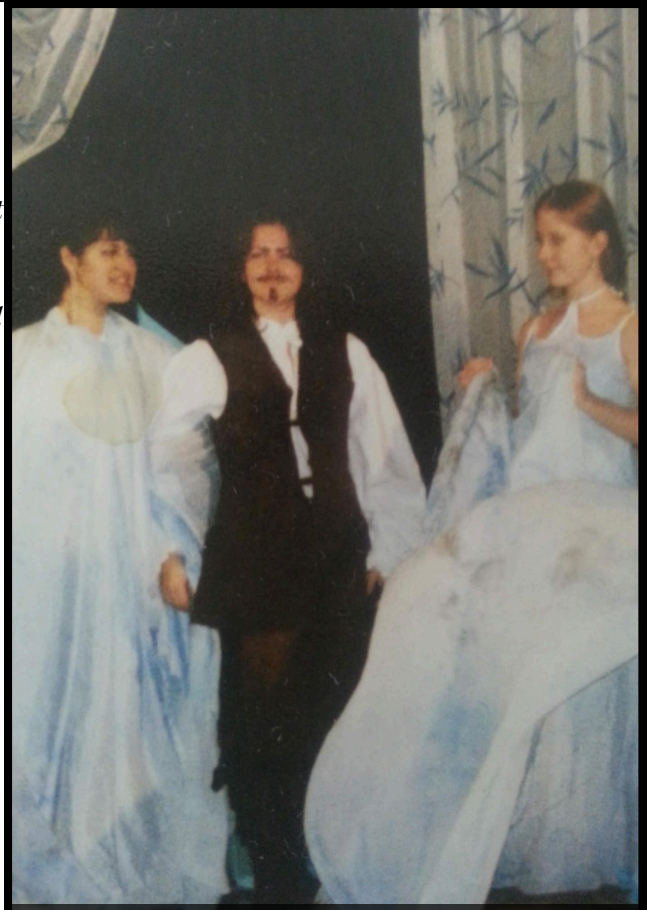
"Adriana, your character Scipia Calaber is full of humor and charm. What moment from creating this character has touched you the most and why?"

"The character of Scipia was definitely a challenge for me because it was originally a male role, so it took me a little longer to get into it. For me, it was an amazing experience to play the 'loud woman' who wants to control everything and boss everyone around, since in real life, I'm quite the opposite. (Well, I don't know what my husband would add to that)."

But what has [😊]probably touched me the most is our theater group. When you feel at home with your family during rehearsals and outside of them, it's priceless." - Adriana Hasonová

"From the loud and confident Scipia to one of the pillars of our theater, Adriana proves that talent is not just about the role – it's about making every moment unforgettable!"

Adriana Hasonová, part of our ensemble – a talented actress, artist, and a person full of enthusiasm. Her creativity and passion for art enrich every performance she participates in, whether on stage or behind the scenes. We are incredibly happy that she is a part of Naše Divadlo, and we look forward to every future opportunity where we can once again create something exceptional together. She is an exceptional artist, whose talent and enthusiasm make our performances unforgettable experiences, and we can't wait to see what else she will bring!



Adriana Hasonová (middle) in the role of prince during high school years
Image credit: @adrianahasonová



Costumes for Animal Farm, created by Adriana Hasonová Image credit: @adrianahasonová

Theatre Funfacts

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

Interesting Fact: The first woman to direct a play on Broadway was Anna Cora Mowatt, who in 1845 premiered her play Fashion at the Park Theatre in New York. She was not only a prominent playwright and actress but also a pioneer for women in the theater world at a time when women rarely held creative leadership positions.



At Rehearsal

Our Amazing Men in Female Roles

Sometimes, moments happen on stage that are so unforgettable, we just have to share them. One such moment occurred when our actors, our men, had to temporarily take on female roles when our ladies couldn't make it to rehearsal. And although it started as an unplanned improvisation, it quickly became one of the funniest and most amazing moments in our rehearsals!

They fully immersed themselves in their roles – from extravagant gestures to surprisingly accurate portrayals of female characters that had us all laughing. The energy they poured into every movement and word was overwhelming, and even though it was all in good humor, each of us was amazed at how much talent and creativity they were able to express. This moment in our rehearsals will surely stay with us, and we'll smile every time we think about how theater can also be about fun, improvisation, and unexpected surprises.

Theater Archive – Memories of Favorite Moments

Memory: Our First Premiere

Our very first performance – it was a test of nerves, energy, and unforgettable adrenaline. When we stepped onto the stage, our hearts were racing, and every movement was tinged with uncertainty. But despite all the tension and fear, we pulled it off. When the curtain rose and the lights shone, we felt like we were in the right place. And that moment – the first applause from the audience – was an immeasurable joy that brought us all together. After this premiere, we couldn't wait for the next rehearsal, the next performance, and another dose of that unmistakable theater magic. The adrenaline didn't let us rest, and we knew this was just the beginning of our journey.

What's Coming Next? – You definitely haven't seen anything like this before.



Our next big project is finally here – and this time, it's going to be quite a ride! Get ready for a brilliant comedy full of unexpected twists, sharp humor, and... even sharper swords! The author of this play is our director František Vaněček, who has poured everything into it – from Shakespearean inspirations to original music and songs that will blow you away. Let yourself be surprised by this unique performance, which has already captivated audiences in several forms and is now coming to you in its strongest version. Stay tuned for more information and the announcement of the premiere date!

Thank you to CBAC and the Czech School in Calgary!

Your support and collaboration help us bring quality cultural experiences and continue our theater projects. We are grateful for your trust and friendship!

–Naše Divadlo Ltd. Calgary

Acting Gems

Lost Socks After the Premiere –

After a successful premiere, the actors sighed in relief as they took off their costumes, but immediately, the great sock search began – where did all the socks go? One actress found hers carefully rolled up in her makeup bag, while another actress searched in vain for hers, only to discover that her husband had accidentally put them on. Since then, socks are carefully guarded after each performance!

The High Priest, the Notary, and the Trough – an endless story – If you thought falling from the trough could only be practiced one way, our High Priest Horatio, Notary Bartolus, and churchwarden Scipia would quickly prove you wrong. Each time is different, each time unexpected – but every time with laughter that shakes the entire cast.

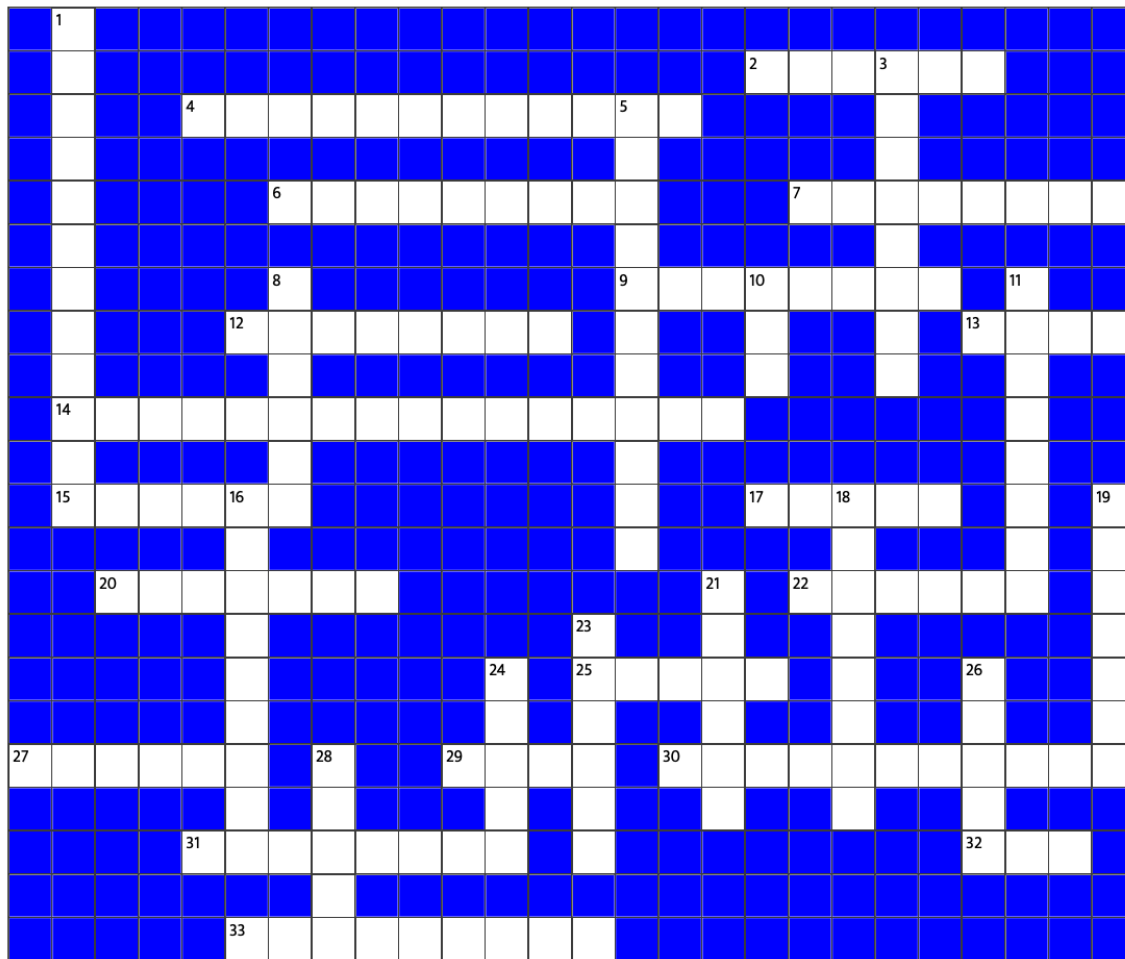
Why is an actor always the best at improvisation?

Because they know that the only thing they can do is play it through to the end – and the audience considers it art!

Bartolus, is paying! – This line has become so popular that the actors use it all the time. Whether it's for coffee, props, or membership fees – just say "Bartolus, is paying!" and everyone knows who it concerns!

Six Pairs of Flannel Underwear – a line everyone in the ensemble knows! – When our amazing Lucie Prchliková, as Amaranta, slaps her jealous husband Vittorio (the fabulous improviser Petr Žizler) with this memorable line, they have their work cut out backstage to keep a straight face.

Without the Technical Team, It Wouldn't Work – "Where would we be without the technical lightning and magic? Without them, it just wouldn't work on stage!"



Across

- 2** capital city of England
4 playwright
6 a long, continuous speech by a single character, usually in theatre, that expresses the character's inner feelings or thoughts
7 the first performance of a play in front of an audience
9 a lighter musical-theatrical genre combining singing, spoken word, and dance
12 renowned Japanese playwright, novelist, and essayist, known for works such as The Makioka Sisters and The Key
13 An object used on stage, such as a cup, sword, or book
14 A theatrical adaptation of the novel of the same name by Ľubomír Feldek, which explores love, conflict, and the fates of characters in the historical context of Slovakia
15 the text of a theatrical play according to which the performance is performed
17 short name for improvised theatre, where actors perform without a script
20 a theatrical genre that ends unhappily, often with the death of the main character
22 a theatrical work that aims to entertain audience and depicts humorous situations
25 considered the father of modern realistic drama, known for works such as A Doll's House and Hedda Gabler
27 Japanese form of theater with singing, dancing, and elaborate makeup
29 A crucial prop in both ancient and contemporary theater, which changes the actor's appearance
30 one of the most famous playwrights of all time, known for his iconic plays such as Hamlet, Macbeth, and Romeo and Juliet.
31 The heroine of the Greek tragedy by Sophocles who defied the law
32 traditional Japanese theater with masks, very slow movements, and music
33 the feeling of emotional purification that a viewer experiences during a dramatic performance

Down

- 1** Ancient Greek Dramatist
3 The person who is responsible for the artistic vision and execution of a theatrical production
5 the decorations on stage that create the atmosphere of the performance
8 the famous tragedy by William Shakespeare with the iconic line "To be, or not to be"
10 a play by Karel Čapek that became famous for introducing the term "robot"
11 famous theater district in New York
16 A play by George Bernard Shaw that explores social differences through the characters of Eliza and Professor Higgins
18 a person in the theater who helps actors remember their lines
19 French playwright known for comedies such as The Miser and Tartuffe
21 Playwright and poet, known for developing "epic theater" and works such as Mother Courage and Her Children
23 Originally a book and later a musical, it tells the story of the relationship between two characters from The Wizard of Oz
24 The place where actors perform their show
26 an ancient Greek building that was used for performances and concerts, today this term is also used to describe modern theatres and cinemas
28 a West African storyteller, musician, and actor all in one

X F O R W P R K E Z O R T A E T T R S G E G
T R A G I C O M E D Y H M D L P G E F K S W
M R N Y C D W F T E Z Q G A E F B M W X T U
Q F K E N W R X G D B W Y U Y I Y D M B A C
A I U F D T F F F A D O K T P W Q P F J T R
I B T P B R C G M V K I A G X C E M X F U I
O H C G W T A C O E B N H W C C G R D Q E T
W G J M G R E G I X I X N V S E M S I X Y I
J L T A I K V R T Z Z L H E E V K I I C J C
B O I S H K B S A N H U Z M T O F I N O H I
M R C K A F P K N C A N Q A D K E R O P Q S
H R K S Z O I Q J K H V B C E S R F I M X M
H G E Y R M U F I J D E A B S O A Y T P P Q
Y G T P K J X I Q Z L L J E I V E P A Y A Y
K V H U B A M H K L S X V T G N P K L V N B
J N K Y P F J X I E E U F H N Y S L S K T T
G P O H D U L V C L A O Q L E G E A N Y O B
D S W T G E E G G E Q L X C R U K C A H M H
O O W Z Y D G G V C O A F P J Y A I R G I N
W O P I U K J A S W O Z Z Q N W H S T T M I
Z L B A P D V O R X B Q G R Z B S U Q G E C
W L V R I L E I D T Q A V N L F W M L R Z M

MACBETH
TANIZAKI
VOSKOVEC
WERICH
AVANTGARDE
FADO
CRITICISM
MASK
MUSICAL
PANTOMIME
TRANSLATION
PROPS
SET DESIGNER
SHAKESPEARE
STATUE
TEATRO
TRAGICOMEDY
TRAGEDY
VAUDEVILLE
TICKET



scene from Yukio Ninagawa's Hamlet Image credit: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

Theater around the world

Did you know that William Shakespeare became a cultural hero in Japan as early as the 19th century? His works were adapted into Japanese theatrical forms like Kabuki and Noh, and his name was adapted into a Japanese version – "Sao" or in Katakana as "シェイクスピア" (Sheikusupia). In this way, Shakespeare's works made their way into the heart of Japanese culture, leaving an indelible mark!

**"Thank you for supporting Naše Divadlo
– we look forward to seeing you at our
upcoming performances!"**

**"Follow us on social media to get
updates, exclusive content, and more!"**

**You can find us on facebook:
Naše Divadlo (Calgary)**



NAŠE DIVADLO LTD. CALGARY