



Theatre Conference JAMU 2023

BALANCING CONFLICTS/ CONFLICTUAL BALANCE

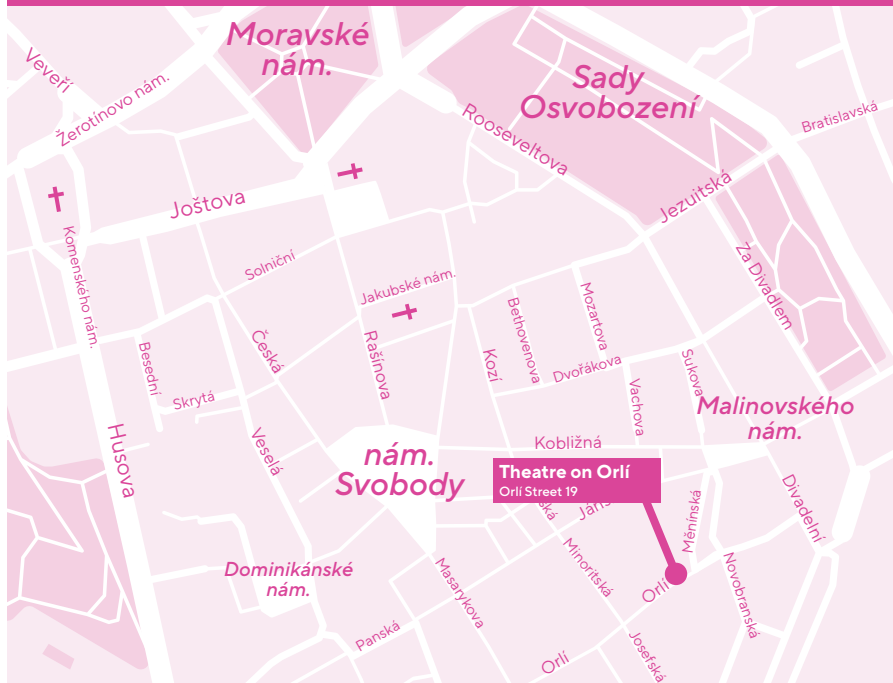
9–10 NOVEMBER 2023

A black and white photograph of a group of people in a dark room. A bright light source in the upper center creates a starburst effect. Several people have their hands raised in the air. A large, semi-transparent pink arrow points downwards from the top right towards the bottom left, crossing over the text. The floor is covered with scattered papers.

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

WHERE TO FIND US?

Venue: Theatre on Orlí (Orlí Street 19)



BALANCING CONFLICTS/ CONFLICTUAL BALANCE



This year's International Theatre Conference organized by the Theatre Faculty of Janáček Academy of Performing Arts is held for the 12th time. After two years of exploring the frontiers of the theatre and beyond, we return closer to the centre of performing arts, aiming to identify and explore various layers of the word CONFLICT in the world of contemporary theatre and audio-visual creation (because both segments of the arts are inherent to the Theatre Faculty).

From our perspective, conflict is not always a purely negative phenomenon. We are interested in what role it plays in the contemporary performing arts and art as such. When is the conflict a mere necessity or a draining burden and when does it mean an opportunity to move on? At the conference, we will explore our subject of interest from different angles and at various levels.

An intimate insight into creative work of an artist focused on the theme of a productive conflict (with oneself) will open our two-day gathering. Then we will look at our topic from more institutional point of view. What frictional surfaces arise when creators from outside collaborate with a public institution, namely the Czech Television? What is the position of an individual theatre-maker or performer in an institutionalised theatre company compared to uncertain independent work? And what have the sensitive and ethically problematic cases in Polish theatre institutions resulted in? Not only these questions will be raised within the first day of the conference which we close with a very specific point of view – how the war conflict in Ukraine translates into artwork and what unexpected issues it opens.

The second day of the conference will be focused on presentations of our invited guests. We will explore in detail several unique artistic projects which reveal many layers of the object under our examination. Katriina Dūka will speak about a cross disciplinary piece titled *In The Name of Love*. Þóranna Dögg Björnsdóttir and Antonín Šilar will put the topic of this year's conference in the context of cultural and historical conflicts depicted in the theatrical adaptation of the novel *Moonstone*. Our gathering will be closed with a presentation of a very special performance, *Prompt Dancer*, which was created for the conference itself and which seeks to understand the implications of using AI tools in performing arts and especially in dance. Then, the authors' collective António Baía Reis, Sára Solmošiová and Petr Vašků will reflect on their collaborative approach to the project and will be looking for an answer to the question how does this process goes beyond mediatized discourses, both utopian and dystopian, about AI taking over creative processes and the need for artists to rescue the humanity in creativity.

Looking forward to many inspiring meetings and fruitful discussion!

Hana Průchová
The Conference Board

SPEAKERS



ÞÓRANNA DÖGG BJÖRNSDÓTTIR

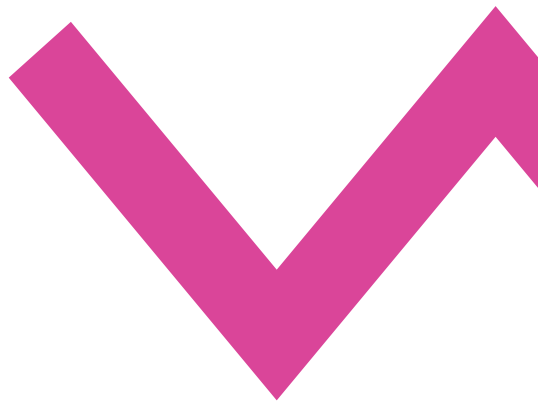
The Moonstone

Þóranna Dögg Björnsdóttir, composer, and Antonín Šilar, scenic designer, will give a talk about their collaboration and contribution to Studio Hrdinů's theatrical adaptation of the novel *Moonstone* by the contemporary Icelandic author Sjón, an interdisciplinary project led by an international team of Czech and Icelandic creatives and experts directed by Kamila Polívková.

The story, set in Iceland in 1918, evolves around Máni Steinn and Sóla, two queer rebels, who do not fit into the society that attracts them as much as it disapproves of them. The protagonist of the novel and the production are captivated by the world of silent film. Máni Steinn escapes into it and perceives a world around him to which he does not belong as if he were a character in a film. He yearns to live a life in a cinematic form, similar to the members of the cosplay subculture. Therefore, the production takes on the characteristics of a silent movie theatre experience, complete with all its associated elements. It combines live music, film, and text subtitles, all of which then extend into the surrealistic subconscious world of Máni Steinn. The creative

process was distinctive in its duration and the integral co-creation of all its components. The story of "The Boy Who Didn't Exist" also unfolds against the backdrop of nature's conflict with humanity. On a quiet isolated island a volcano is erupting and the Spanish flu virus is sweeping across the world.

In their presentation Þóranna and Antonín will put the topic of this year's conference in the context of the cultural and historical conflicts depicted in *The Moonstone*.



BIO

***Pórunna Dögg Björnsdóttir** (born 1976) is an artist based in Reykjavík, Iceland. Björnsdóttir's works are focused on the act of listening, representing themes such as an intuitive medium and knowledge – knowing and being allowing sounds to ignite myriad images and associations which give rise to various outcomes in form, time and space. Her work has built upon the interplay of film and live music performances and takes on the form of sculpture, performance and soundwork. Her subject-matters are varied but often revolve around human nature and a person's worldview, how it shapes and progresses. Through a multidisciplinary approach her practice often places the viewer or the audience in the centre of the work. Pórunna has exhibited her work widely and performed at numerous concerts and art festivals in Iceland as well as abroad.*

***Antonín Šilar** (born 1986) is a graduate of stage design from the Prague KALD DAMU. He is generally engaged in stage and production design. He has been exploring the interpenetration of various forms of theatre and film for a long time. He is fascinated with the stage "twisted reality", with its reflection of the subconscious and states of mind. He participated in projects in Finland, USA, Japan, Iceland, and the Berlin HAU Theatre. Šilar gained experiences as a stage designer at the National Theatre in Prague, the Slovak National Theatre, the National Theatre in Mannheim, the Studio Hrdinů and the HaDivadlo – together with directors such as Petra Tejnorová, Kamila Polívková, Ivan Buraj, and Jiří Havelka, among many others. He is the co-director of the Czech-Austrian experimental movie *Menandros & Thais*, which won the Association of Directors and Screenwriters Award, and the theatre production *Gorgó* at the Prague X10 Theatre.*

ZUZANA ČERNÁ

Certainty vs. Uncertainty in the Life of Theatre Groups/ Institutions: Desirable Degree, Adaptation Strategies and Options of Dosing

The Increased Difficulty of Decision-making

Since the first years of study at conservatories and theatre faculties, the actors face many questions that can greatly influence their entire future career. "Is a long-term engagement in an institution my path, or should I rather become a 'freelancer'? Where do I see the greatest potential for artistic creative freedom? How do I compare myself to the numerous distinctive individuals in this field? Does my position within the student collective reflect what I will experience in a professional ensemble? Should I focus on building relationships within my class, or rather on my personal development?" But is this individual development possible without the development of the collective as a whole? And can these questions even be answered unequivocally?

In the European context, the institutional theatre life operates on various levels, ranging from fluctuating independent creative groups to specifically hierarchical ensembles – such as the Comédie-Française in Paris. In the Czech environment, particularly after the changes in the 1990s, we have had the opportunity to explore postmodern theatre and post-dramatic situations. This, however, results, in some respects, in lack of ensemble environment due to the abundance of these possibilities. This ranges from new ways for actors to establish themselves as "freelancers", through numerous one-time and other projects, to a decrease in,¹ which, as described by Professor Jan Císař, is the foundation of dramatic productions and provides the opportunity for continuous ensemble development and its direction.

1 Referring to the Czech term „dramatičnost“ as the opposite of epos.

“It is not about what we like or dislike, what productions we prefer and accept or reject, which artistic trend we sympathise with, because we consider it to be the theatre of

the present and potentially of the future, and which we perceive as a path leading to a dead end, if not directly to hell. The meaning lies elsewhere.”²

2 Císař, J. „Ansámblové herectví včera a dnes, 2. Dnes“. *Disk, časopis pro studium dramatického umění*, 03/2003, online. Available from: https://edicedisk.amu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Disk_3.pdf.

BIO

Study programme: Dramatic Arts

Branch of study: Scenic Art and Theory of Scenic Art

Date of study beginning: Sep. 2020

*After two years at Charles University, I graduated in Acting of Dramatic Theatre (Academy of Performing Arts in Prague). During the studies I played in the Kolowrat Theatre where, under the guidance of Štěpán Pácl, I acted Katerina in the adaptation of Bergman’s short story *From the Life of Puppets*, or *Nastěnka* in Dostoevsky’s *White Nights*. I joined the ensemble of the National Theatre Brno in 2019 acting *Hanička* in *The Lantern* (A. Jirásek), and since then I have played almost twenty other characters – among them *Alena* in *The Owners of the Keys* (M. Kundera), student *Aneta Tesařová* in *The Feminist* (M. Šindelka), or *Klarisa* in the comedy *The Liar* (P. Corneille).*

PIOTR DOBROWOLSKI

Ethical Turn.

Discursive Clash and Backlash in Polish Theatre Practice

The presentation refers to the symptoms and reception of the ethical turn in Polish theatre. It describes the discussions around it and reveals the disputes it has triggered, starting from the local response to the accusations against Belgian Jan Fabre in September 2018. In the following years the Polish theatre and theatre schools were facing a sequence of callouts, revealing a scale of inappropriate practices in the institutions. The presentation focuses on the performances and dramatic texts that deal with the topic of ethics in theatre. Artistic work as well as media publications create a specific discourse on violence in Polish theatre. Progressive artists take up the topic and write texts for theatre or produce performances that question the widespread master/director system (Agnieszka Jakimiak's *Nosexnosolo*, inspired by the case of Jan Fabre), expose the abuses committed by theater schools' teachers (*Aktorki, czyli przepraszam, że dotykam* [Actresses or I'm Sorry to Touch You] by Michal Telega, at the Krakow Theatre Academy students' experiences), draw attention to the invisible work in

theatre (*Kwestia techniki* [The Case of Technique] by Michal Buszewicz, presenting technical workers of The National Old Theatre in Krakow), point out the fatigue of the theatres' administration employees (*Zmęczone* [Tired] play by Daria Sobik), and analyze the "fortunate" and "unfortunate" reactions of the alleged perpetrators of violence (*Instytucje i backlash* [Institutions and Backlash] performance by Agnieszka Jakimiak and Agata Adameicka-Sitek).

In the autumn of 2020, members of The Polish Society for Theatre Research (PTBT) started the PTBT Ethics Group. At that time, we were hoping that pointing and naming inappropriate practices as well as developing a language that could enable us – artists, theoreticians, critics and journalists – to describe them in the media, academic texts and meta-theatrical statements would become a trigger for a change. Today it seems that the ethical discourse in Poland is divided into two strands: in addition to corrective actions, the practice of backlash appears. The backlash, also seen in the theatre practice,

supports the existing hierarchies and ironically depicts the call for a change. As a result, a division between the progressive, inclusive, non-hierarchical theatre and the patriarchal, hierarchical, director's authoritative theatre deepens. Can this conflict be constructive? Does it serve the theatre as an institution

of culture? Does it strengthen its employees? Does it make the audience more thoughtful? Does it inspire us to search for new methods of artistic work or freeze both sides of the dispute in the positions they hold?

BIO

Piotr Dobrowolski (dr. hab., prof. UAM) is an academic researcher and teacher at the Department of Polish and Classical Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, editor of the quarterly "Czas Kultury" [The Time of Culture] and the online magazine "czaskultury.pl", contributor to several academic and cultural magazines, associate – as an author and expert – of the The Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, a juror in the Gdynia Drama Award committee (Gdynska Nagroda Dramaturgiczna) and a member of the Polish Society for Theatre Research (PTBT). He is the author of three books (the last one being Theatre and Politics. Political Discourses in Contemporary Polish Drama, 2019) and research papers, and the co-author of academic monographies, theatre and literature critic, essayist and translator.

KATRĪNA DŪKA

Performing Queerness in Hostile Geographies: A Case Study of the Performance *In the Name of Love*

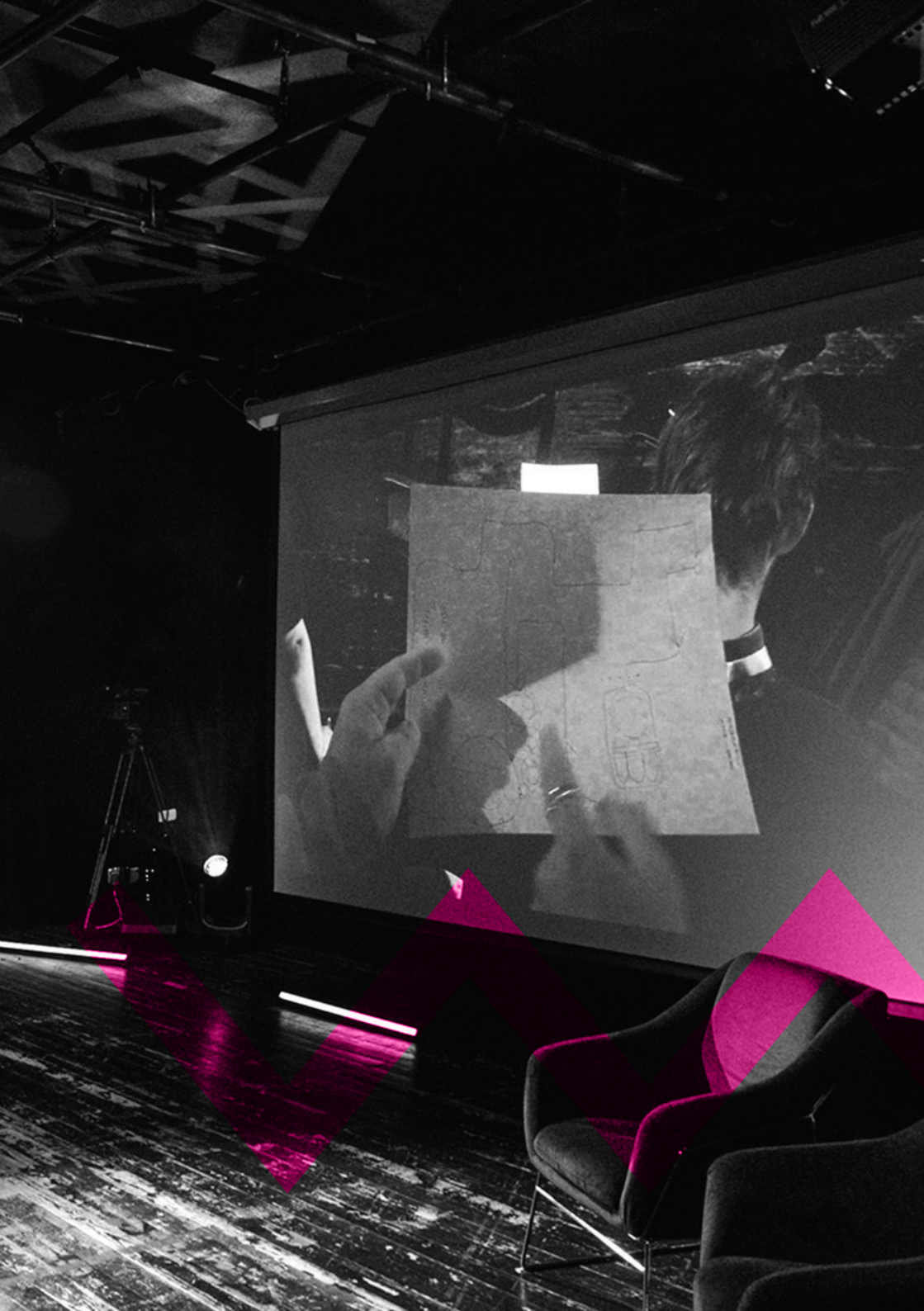
In 2021, together with my partner in art and life Barbara Lehtna and eight queer people from Riga, we created a cross-disciplinary piece titled *In the Name of Love*. We were working in the framework of ethical co-creation with communities supported by the BePart platform. In the process, we were asked to use the first draft of a protocol that the platform was developing, so we had to come up with a completely new way of working both amongst ourselves, with our co-creators and the institutions presenting and financing the project. The project resulted in a walking-and-visiting performance where audience members arrived in three different locations around the area of the diminishing Vidzeme market in Rīga (the empty market square, a half-empty pavilion inside,

and an apartment in a block house that oversees the market). In each place they experienced a tableau vivant with an image of either a single person or couple, and a plaque with a QR code that led to an audio recording of the people in the images describing themselves.

During the most recent presentation at the festival, we re-created a scene with a queer couple and their two-year-old daughter (they were pregnant in the original piece), and we also had a little discussion with them reflecting on their experience and the broader topic of working with marginalised communities in theatre contexts in a country where LGBT+ rights are among the least respected ones in the EU.

BIO

Katrīna Dūka is an emerging performer and researcher from Latvia, working at the intersection of performance practices, feminist new materialism, and queerness in the post-Soviet environment. She obtained her Master's degree in Performance Practices from ArtEZ University of the Arts in the Netherlands (2022), where she conducted research on drag queens and broken gender technologies. Katrīna works collectively and engages in practices with local communities and non-professionals, exploring themes of collective identity and finding new ways of being together. Her works as a co-author were presented at the International Festival of Contemporary Theatre "Homo Novus" (LV) and on independent stages in Latvia and Estonia.



MATĚJ NYTRA

Coming to Closeness / Близькість. Performativity of Documentary Auteur Theatre Sharing

The experience of working with protagonists from Ukrainian regions leading to the creation of an intertextual documentary performance, accompanied by associated events, cannot be suppressed by the passage of time, especially if the source of this creation has not been fully explored yet. Encounters with personal texts, testimonies, and imaginations,

written by people untrained in creative practice, required a particular type of sensitivity and fragility. Getting close to the human scar also meant adopting an identity, or its signs, in creative empathy. This is a reflection on the personal process of adaptation at the time of war and an analysis of one of the tendencies in contemporary auteur theatre.

BIO

Graduate from the JAMU Theatre Faculty (2017) in theatre dramaturgy. Ph.D. studies since 2018, collaboration with the department of scenography. Graduate from FF MUNI (2015): Film Theory and History and AV Culture. Chief dramaturg of HaDivadlo (CED): 2016–2023. Collaboration on film and documentary projects, editorial and journalistic practice, activist contacts.



IRYNA SEREBRIAKOVA

Split and Silenced: Crisis of Male Identity in the Context of the War in Ukraine

The presentation is based on an analysis of several dozens of Ukrainian texts for theatre created after February 2022 with some trends being explored in it. It is focused mainly on documentary texts because, after the beginning of the invasion, as an immediate response, many documentary texts were created. They are very often autobiographical, focusing on these events and on the authors' identity in the context of the war.

In the modern Ukrainian drama, among plays about the war, there are many female voices. It influences the content of the plays, because war creates gender-specific experience. Most Ukrainian are not allowed to cross the border and leave the country. As a result, a woman can write a text about life of a refugee, an immigrant, but at the same time most men cannot write such texts just because they cannot go abroad. It is just one example of gender-specific experience that is reflected in our drama.

This trend opens a discussion about who is legitimate to talk. We are already having this discussion in the Ukrainian community.

- Is it ethical to create a play about Ukraine if the author left Ukraine because of the war, especially if the author is a man?
- Is it morally right to create a play about Bucha if the authors were not in Bucha?
- Is it ethical for Ukrainians to talk about Ukraine and its problems if they live abroad?

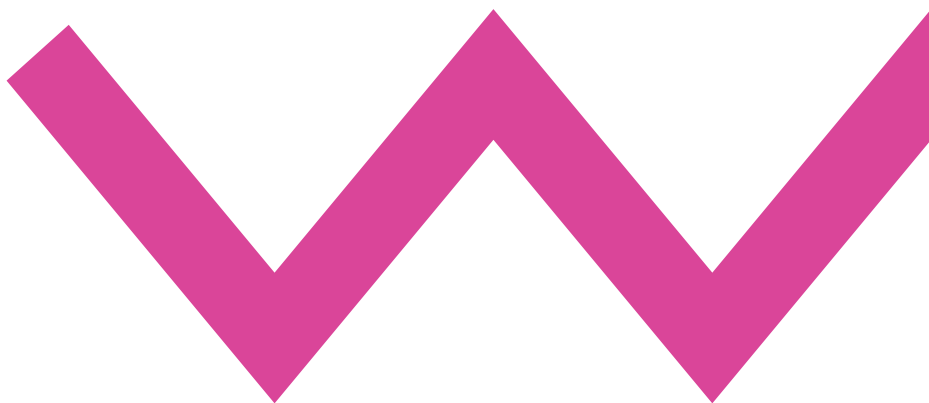
Can male experience be described by female authors?

These questions remain open.

What is more, due to the current political situation and social tensions, it is difficult for men to publicly word all dimensions of their experience in Ukraine now. As the country is at war, there is a request for resilience, heroism, bravery, and self-sacrifice. If the man does not fit the image of a hero, a knight, a brave soldier, if his predominant condition is stress, fear, depression, and exhaustion, such narrative, both in art and in public life, might provoke a very traumatic reaction.

BIO

*Iryna Serebriakova is a Ukrainian scriptwriter, writer and playwright. Her dramedy *Tinderland* won the “Transmission.UA: drama on the move” contest co-organized by the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute (2021). Her other theatre plays were performed in Timișoara, Kyiv, Narva, Almaty, Paris, Istanbul, Helsinki, New Delhi, Berlin, and Prague. Her collection of short stories for children and adults is going to be published in Sweden in Swedish translation. Her collection of short stories about the Latvian town of Pāvilosta is being translated to Latvian. Over twenty fiction and non-fiction books were published in her translations from French and English to Ukrainian and Russian.*



MARKĚTA SÁRA VALNOHOVÁ

Screamwriters / Can Screenwriters Scream Only on Paper?

What kind of pressure is an individual wishing to work as a scriptwriter with a public institution, namely Czech Television, subject to? What kind of conflicts will inevitably arise and why does this happen? Screenwriting practice is about pushing boundaries – both personal and those that determine the demands of the work. But what if there are limits that must be crossed according to the institution and the creator feels the opposite? “When cinnamon is crushed, it smells the best.” “Diamonds are made under

pressure.” I explore this issue from the position of someone who works for Czech Television, and I also prepare my students for this practice. Together, we reflect on what expectations we think are linked with the internship and what lessons we take from that, and whether it is possible to set our own boundaries and make sure that no one crosses them – not even us. We also reflect on whether there is any way to get prepared for conflict situations, or whether it is simply necessary to live them out.

BIO

*Markéta Sára Valnohová (*1988) graduated in Combined Art Studies from Masaryk University and later in Radio and TV Dramaturgy and Scriptwriting from the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU), where she is currently completing her PhD studies. Since 2015, she has been cooperating with Czech Television as a freelance dramaturge and screenwriter for documentary series, feature-length solitaire films and children's shows. At JAMU, she teaches subjects related to scriptwriting, dramaturgy, and television, and in addition to theory, she also shares her experience in actual projects with her students. In her dissertation, she draws on her direct screenwriting experience with Czech Television and international co-productions, analysing the creative, screenwriting, and dramaturgical limits.*

SILVIA VYVIJAL DIVÉKY

Productive Conflict in Creative Process

We often find ourselves at an impasse when working with audiovisual material. The whole post-production process seems a little daunting and time-consuming. If we decide to invest time in editing a video, we want to see it. Or... we could look at this matter from a different perspective. In my work, I use video to reflect on different

things that happen in my life – sometimes it is a reflection on what I have encountered, sometimes it's just testing the material I have gathered for a documentary. In all reflections I use the method of productive conflict which helps me to jumpstart the process and very often leads to places I would not have explored otherwise.

BIO

*Silvia Vyvijal Divéky is a PhD student at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno. Aside from documentary-making, she explores narrative methods not only in video, but also in writing. Her documentary films *Dying Blue* and *The Tower of Sherpa* were at the beginning of her artistic research journey, where she looked for new ways of capturing culture. Currently, she is working on a documentary series about ultra-runners, where she explores how being part of the community affects her documentary skills and how distance vs. proximity to the subject matter brings different elements to the films. In the past year, she has been looking into the format of self-portrait in audiovisual work.*

SPECIAL PROJECT

Created by ANTÓNIO BAÍA REIS, SÁRA SOLMOŠIOVÁ AND PETR VAŠKŮ

Prompt Dancer

Prompt Dancer steps into the realms of artificial intelligence and human creativity, culminating in a live dance choreographed entirely by AI. This performance aims to explore the interaction between AI and dance, delving beyond hyped public discourses around AI and art to understand if a machine can capture the intricacies of the choreographer/dancer creative process, typically characterized by a reciprocal exchange of energies between humans. Can AI, devoid of human emotions and experiential nuances, truly encapsulate the depth and complexity of a dancer's performance? And can it provide meaningful guidance for a dancer to learn and perform a unique choreography? In this experiment, AI takes on the role of the choreographer, providing instructions, while the dancer becomes an interpreter and executor of these instructions, unable to question or interact with AI to refine the final output. During the performance, the audience will be immersed as robotic voice echoes on stage, reproducing an AI-generated choreography and guiding the dancer step-by-step into

learning and performing the dance without prior rehearsal. This raw process will uncover and dissect the experimental process of machines acting as dance choreographers and the potential for a dancer's creativity to flourish within the constraints of algorithmic guidelines. Through this exploration, *Prompt Dancer* seeks to understand the implications of using AI tools in performing arts and in dance in particular. Humans prompt machines, machines prompt humans, and humans create what? What does this all reveal about the uses of AI tools within performing arts? How does this process go beyond medialized discourses, both utopian and dystopian, about AI taking over creative processes and the need for artists to rescue the humanity in creativity?

BIO

António Baía Reis is an interdisciplinary university professor, researcher, and artist with an unwavering passion for extended reality (XR) and interactive media, along with their boundless potential to connect with broader society. He holds a BA in International Relations, a Professional Acting Diploma, an MA in Communication Sciences, and a practice-based PhD in Digital Media. The latter was completed in collaboration with the University of Porto and Stanford University, focusing on XR, creative processes, and social change. With a diverse artistic background spanning professional acting, music, and multimedia art for over ten years, he has been developing a creative and research portfolio at the intersection of digital media, VR, performance, experimental music and film, and art installations. Having prior experience in digital media and the arts and cultural industry, including executive-level positions such as his role as Academic Executive Director at the Los Angeles-based company Umayá, where he was involved in multidisciplinary teams collaborating with brands such as Loewe, Nvidia, AMC, Orange, Vodafone, Telefonica, and MasterChef, Reis regularly shares his knowledge in XR, digital media, communication, arts, and their interconnected fields across various sectors. Currently, he is an Invited Assistant Professor at both Universidad Complutense de Madrid and NOVA University of Lisbon, where he shares his expertise in digital and emerging media at the postgraduate level. He also leads research on emerging media and communication as an integrated PhD researcher of the Innovation on Digital Media research lab at Universidad Carlos III in Madrid. As the Course Director for the “Live Performance in the Metaverse” course at the Multiverse Institute for Arts & Technology (MIAT) in Milan, he mentors students in designing and executing live performances using VR and other innovative technologies. Additionally, he is the founder, stage director, and VR actor of La Cuarta Pared VR, a pioneering virtual reality theatre collective based in Madrid that explores live acting and performance in virtual realms. Recent awards and special achievements include receiving a MSCA Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship in 2021 for his groundbreaking project aimed at enhancing science communication through immersive media arts. As a published author in leading scientific journals and the Director and Editor-in-Chief of the academic journal *Cinema & Territory*, as well as a member of the editorial board of the Q1 journal *Media Practice and Education*, Reis continues to contribute to scholarly discourse.

Petr Vašků is a dedicated scholar and filmmaker, specializing in television and radio scriptwriting and dramaturgy. Having pursued his academic journey at JAMU, he is currently engaged in the PhD programme, developing his expertise in this dynamic field. Through the lens of auteur documentary film making, Vašků meticulously examines the confluence of experimental and fine arts techniques, with a keen emphasis on seamlessly integrating material and corporeal elements to evoke an unparalleled sense of presence and authenticity.

Sára Solmošiová is currently in the fourth year of her studies at Faculty of Architecture, Brno University of Technology. Step by step, she is discovering the complexity that architecture can offer spicing up the exploration process by experiments. She spent some time in practice and a year abroad. She prefers writing by hand on pieces of paper and doing hand craft rather than using technology tools. Recently, she has fallen for the theatre world. Her ideal day is without connection to social media. She loves to be in company of her dog.



Theatre Conference JAMU 2023

BALANCING CONFLICTS/ CONFLICTUAL BALANCE

9–10 NOVEMBER 2023

Book of Abstracts

Editors: Monika Šimková, Hana Průchová, Naďa Satková

Graphic Design and Typography: Jan Pohořelický

Photos: Zuzana Chludilová, Tereza Ondryášová, Vojtěch Šoula

English Proofreading: Radek Šimek



Follow us on

 @df_jamu

 @conferencebrno

J A U
J A M
J A M U

Theatre Faculty / Janáček Academy
of Performing Arts