

CLOSING OF THE 72ND FESTIVAL

Another challenging, but successful Festival season

Dubrovnik, 25 August 2021 – The Dubrovnik Summer Festival brings to a close yet another successful Festival season, despite ongoing challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, holding over 47 Festival days – from 10 July to 25 August – 76 drama, music, dance, folklore and other programmes at 16 open-air and site-specific locations in Dubrovnik as was concluded in today’s press conference ahead of the formal closing, which was held in the Marin Držić Theatre. The Croatian Minister of Culture and Media Nina Obuljen Koržinek, City of Dubrovnik Mayor Mato Franković, Dubrovnik-neretva County Prefect Nikola Dobroslavić and the Dubrovnik Summer Festival leadership: Executive Director Ivana Medo Bogdanović and Artistic Director Dora Ruždjak Podolski spoke at the press conference.

Before the formal closing, a grand final concert is set for **tonight 25 August at 10 p.m. in front of the Cathedral** announced maestro Ivan Repušić, conducting the **Croatian Radio and Television Orchestra**, and soprano **Diana Damrau** and bass **Nicolas Testé**. Addressing the audience, Diana Damrau pointed out how happy she is as it was always her dream to visit Dubrovnik and get to know such a beautiful city in which her and her family feel so wonderful. She added how lovely it is to be joined at the opera gala by a promising young talent, the tenor **Roko Radovan**, who will show off his skill and voice tonight.

Minister of Culture and Media **Nina Obuljen Koržinek** thanked the Festival’s Artistic Director and her Assistants, as well as the whole Festival production team, congratulating everyone for another successful edition of the Festival and adding that it is “a great pleasure to be able to conclude that the artists’ contributions have been in every way on par with those of the greatest Festival seasons”.

Joining the congratulations were **Mayor Franković** and **County Prefect Dobroslavić** while Artistic Director Ruždjak-Podolski thanked everyone who is a part of the Festival, pointing out the tangible camaraderie of the whole team.

– Listening to all the speakers, it seems that this edition of the Festival is some sort of a miracle but it is nothing of the sort because, owing to our unity, the Festival managed to make a unique, special and above all quality programme in accordance with all epidemiological measures. Last year was a landmark one, as a great challenge to which we rose up together with the city itself, and with support from all the structures without which an event like this would not be possible – said **Dora Ruždjak Podolski**, adding that the City of Dubrovnik, its citizens and everyone at the Festival work toward the same goal, with the help of the whole community. That goal is the successful promoting of culture and showing the whole nation how art and culture are key as they shape societal identity.

First premiere drama title of the summer was put on at the very start of the Festival in July – the play *Besides Oneself*, an original project by **Nataša Rajković**, **Ivan Penović** and the **play’s cast**

produced as part of the *Port of Dreamers* project which is co-financed by the European Union Creative Europe fund in which the Dubrovnik Summer Festival is a leading partner. *Besides Oneself* dealt with migrations as an inevitable, continuous social process. The first part of the play was directed by Ivan Penović and performed at Lazareti while the second part found its stage at Komarda, as directed by Nataša Rajković. The end of August on the other hand brought the second drama premiere, *Lion House* based on the eponymous **Ivan Salečić** novel which was adapted for stage by **Marijana Fumić** and directed by **Aida Bukvić**. Polished and committed performances by the star-studded **Festival Drama Ensemble** – which gathered the biggest names of the local acting scene as well as young, though to the Dubrovnik audiences by now well-known talents – impressed critics and audiences on the playground under Minčeta Fort. The brilliant adaptation by Fumić was especially praised by the critics who also highlighted the fact that the temporal and spatial particularities were overcome successfully in the nostalgic fresco of Dubrovnik that was the musical direction of Aida Bukvić which relied on the lovely yet dramaturgically functional music done by Maro Market.

Festival audiences had the opportunity to enjoy three reprise plays from previous Festival editions. First, *Mara and Kata*, a hit play which sold out right from the start, was directed by **Saša Božić** and performed by **Doris Šarić Kukuljica** and **Nataša Dangubić**. Marin Držić's *Grižula* was directed by **Saša Božić** and **Petra Hraščanec**, and performed by the **Festival Drama Ensemble** and the Zagreb Academy of Dramatic Art students in the Gradac Park. Also sold out was the hit premiere title from the anniversary 70th Dubrovnik Summer Festival, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* directed by **Paolo Magelli** and with performances by the **Festival Drama Ensemble**. This Festival season also hosted guest plays among which is the poignant Slovenian play *Celebration*, part of the EU *Port of Dreamers* project, based on an **Ivor Martinić** text and directed by **Jan Krmelj**. This **Slovenian National Theatre Maribor** production presented on stage the difficult yet touching life story of an Iranian immigrant, **Navid Fadaee Nazer**. Part of the same EU project was the Serbian play *Under the Same Roof* directed by **Ivana Janošev** and co-produced by the **Kulturanova Association** and the **Hungarian minority Novi Sad Theatre – Újvidéki Színház**, which was an adaptation of the eponymous book by **Amir Baitar** and **Henning Sußebach**. Traditionally a part of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival drama programme, the **Lero Student Theatre** put on their most recent production *South Wind* by author and director **Davor Mojaš**. Meanwhile, for the youngest audiences **Theater Poco Loco** held performances of their interactive fairy tale to go *Little Red Riding Hood, Wolf and Grandma* in which each of the beloved children's characters tells their side of the story and when they finally meet in the woods, played by the Island of Lokrum, they must figure out what is the truth. Children and their parents too were absolutely delighted by the production, with tickets being high in demand for all performances.

This summer's music programme hosted not only top national soloists and ensembles but also renowned international musicians. First, on 12 July in front of the St. Blaise's Church the percussion ensemble **Percussion Club**, whose members are **Ivana Kuljerić Bilić**, **Nikola Krbanyevitch**, **Francesco Mazzoleni** and **Luis Camacho Montealegre**, had their first performance together. Opening the Festival concert season in the Rector's Palace were the **Croatian Radio and Television Choir** under the baton of **Tomislav Fačini** and **Darija Auguštan**, **Martina Gojčeta Silić**, **Stjepan Franetović** and **Robert Kolar** as soloists who delighted the audience with an amazing performance of Boris Papandopulo's *Croatian Mass*. The next day saw the acclaimed young piano virtuoso **Lovre Marušić** hold a concert also at the Rector's Palace and impressing the

audience with his performance. Next, the famed jazz musicians **Richard Bona** and **Alfredo Rodríguez Trio** took to the stage in front of the Cathedral in a jovial mood, performing alongside the **Croatian Radio and Television Jazz Orchestra** conducted by **Miron Hauser**. Continuing the music programme of the 72nd Festival was the **final concert of Petrit Çeku's guitar masterclass participants** in the Bunić-Kaboga Summer Villa. The Rector's Palace atrium was where the esteemed and charismatic angelic-voiced Russian soprano Julia Lezhneva performed with the **La Voce Strumentale** under the baton of violinist **Dmitry Sinkovski**, a performance described by critics as an exceptional two-hour chamber music evening during which Lezhneva's magical voice rang through every corner of the Rector's Palace. The **Dubrovnik Symphony Orchestra String Chamber Ensemble** performed under the baton of **Ivan Hut** alongside the brilliant violinist **Eva Šulić** whose amazing performance couldn't be slowed down even by a broken string and who, just a few days later, performed once more at the 72nd Festival, this time with **kvARTet**. Joining her in the aforementioned chamber ensemble are violinists **Dana Kahrman**, **Šimun Končić** and cellist **Pavle Zajcev**. One of the currently most in-demand tenors in the world is **Lawrence Brownlee** who held a concert in the Rector's Palace, accompanied by **Vesna Podrug Kossjanenko** on piano. The bel canto star wowed the Festival audience with an ease of singing indicative of a true master of his art, his especially lyrical and fastidious performance of technically challenging runs and the way he embodied every note of the repertoire with his body and gestures. The unique musical concept **Dubrovnik on a Rock of Music** gathered the best Dubrovnik musicians, with soloists of the evening being **Lovro Merčep**, **Marija Grazio** and **Dubravka Šeparović Mušović**, once again at the 72nd Festival, holding another great concert as the one they did the previous Festival season. A Festival favourite, pianist **Martina Filjak** was joined in concert at the Rector's Palace by the exceptional German hornist **Felix Klier** and one of the leading Ukrainian violinists **Andrej Bielov**. The **Dubrovnik Symphony Orchestra** under the baton of the Brazilian conductor **Eduardo Strausser** performed in front of the Cathedral alongside pianist **Goran Filipec**, a master Liszt interpreter. Their spectacular concert was a real musical extravaganza despite the windy conditions. **Marta Schwaiger**, **Dani Bošnjak**, **Šimun Matišić**, **Stjepan Vuger** and **Alan Bošnjak** make up the one-of-a-kind **Harlequin Art Collective**, an ensemble of peculiar instrument choice which they showcased in a concert in the Bunić-Kaboga Summer Villa where they performed a challenging Bach and Messiaen repertoire. Rounding off the Festival concert season at Rector's Palace was the artful guitarist **Petrit Çeku**.

The **Lindo Folklore Ensemble** held their traditional Festival performances twice this year, in front of the Cathedral to the delight of the large foreign and local audience. The dance programme of the 72nd Festival was marked by two productions – one was the dance play ***Together*** co-produced by the 21:21 Arts Organisation and the Pan-Adria Network, directed by **Petra Hraščanec** in collaboration with the six dancers **Viktorija Bubalo**, **Ema Crnić**, **Lara Frgačić**, **Tessa Ljubić**, **Ariana Prpić** and **Una Štalcar Furač** and the other a powerful and passionate dance-theatre-music monodrama ***Lulu*** for which the choreographer and director **Staša Zurovac** was inspired by the works of Frank Wedekind. *Lulu* was performed by the wonderful dancer **Andressa Miyazato** and violinist **Alexander Balanescu**.

Two art exhibitions were put up as part of the Festival: for the whole duration of the Festival the group exhibition in Sponza Palace ***Fortune Teller*** by **Selma Hafizović**, **Jagoda Buić**, **Iva Laterza**, **Dubravka Lošić**, **Rebecca Ribichini** and **Tanya Small** was open. Meanwhile, the exhibition ***Without Compromise*** – costume designer **Ika Škomrlj Ajki** by authors **Ivana Bakal** and **Martina**

Petranović at Lazareti was organised by ULUPUH (Croatian Association of Artists of Applied Arts) and the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, with the help of Dubrovačka baština (Dubrovnik Heritage). Croatia's year of reading was celebrated at the Festival too, with the special event ***The Mediterranean as It Once Was***, a reading of contemporary Croatian prose focusing on Mediterranean themes, and numerous book presentations – ***Volume five of Miho Demović's A Comprehensive History of Dubrovnik Music***, ***Thirteenth Island*** collection of stories by the Croatian press luminary, author and screenplay writer **Vedran Benić**, **Ivana Lovrić Jović's** debut novel ***See How Lokrum Washes its Teeth*** and the ***Port of Dreamers*** project final publication edited by **Benjamin Virc**. Moreover, a conversation with acclaimed writer and poet **Ivana Bodrožić** was held as part of the Festival, moderated by her agent and editor **Diana Matulić**. The traditional cooperation of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival and **Pula Film Festival** continued this summer too, with the triple Pula award winner ***A Blue Flower*** (Grand Golden Arena for best Croatian feature, Golden Arena for best director and Golden Arena for best actress in a lead role) being screened at the Jadran open-air cinema where the director **Zrinko Ogresta** greeted the Dubrovnik audience. The educational programmes were not lacking this season in any way as **Petrit Çeku's guitar masterclass**, which included five attendees from Slovenia, Croatia and Kosovo together with three guitar students from Dubrovnik, and **Ivana Kuljerić Bilić's percussion workshop** with an open class were both a success. At the same time, the youngest Festival patrons enjoyed **Evan Shinner's Musical play for children** with **Igor Jurinić** as their narrator and translator, **Ivana Đula's Theatre-Music Workshop for Children: From Story To Play** and the interactive workshop of the well-known Croatian author and teacher **Sanja Polak** who took the little bookworms on a **wondrous Journey through the world of Paulina P.**

– We planned this Festival season with utmost financial caution due to the times of crisis during which we cannot foresee which pandemic measures will be put in place next. Considering that the measures for culture events, which are low-risk events, have been relaxed, contrary to our expectations, the tickets sales rose to 820, 000 kuna which is 60% more than last year. Despite economic uncertainty, our partners remained with us and I once again on this occasion thank them all publically, most of all Mastercard, Caboga Stiftung, Euroherc, HEP, OTP Bank and Adriatic Luxury Hotels. We are now also seeing great tourism rates through July and August which contributed to a lovelier Festival atmosphere so we can freely say that all of our concerts were high in demand. The drama programme was mostly sold out before the Festival opened which confirms the locals' great interest in our plays. With the traditional support of the sponsors, Ministry of Culture, City of Dubrovnik, Dubrovnik-neretva county and Creative Europe the 72nd Festival's budget was 8,2 million kuna in total, of which over 35% was obtained from the market. I think these are business results of which we should be more than proud – said Executive Director **Ivana Medo Bogdanović**.

The Dubrovnik Summer Festival –the centre of Croatian and global spirit and culture, a place of creation and not just a place of visit, a place of community, ideas and new artistic expressions, is traditionally supported this year by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, the City of Dubrovnik, the Dubrovnik-neretva county and numerous other sponsors and benefactors who helped bring this most prestigious cultural event in Croatia to fruition.

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