

A detailed report summarizing the study trip of The White Theatre in Norway (September 2016)

The White Theatre

White Theatre is an independent theater, established by civil association DRAM art studio, based in Bratislava. It was founded in 1982 by actress and pedagogue Nina Zemanová, who's directing it artistically till this day. Its existence launched many career of many artists, now a professionals – actors, directors, screenwriters and dramaturges. It has dozens of successful productions in its history, under his header was created several educational projects, among others, "The School on Wheels".

About The School on Wheels

The School on Wheels is a long-time project of White Theatre, which aims to further knowledge of famous dramatic works, and playwright through straight experience – participants of The School on Wheels are deputed to tours directly to places where the authors have lived and worked, where their masterpieces were originated. They have the opportunity to soak up the atmosphere of the places, to visit many museums and monuments associated with the selected theme, to meet many established artists and experts, to gain new knowledge and skills and to understand the reality in which the authors have created.

But this ain't the only purpose of the project – in addition to the impact it has on the tour participants, it aims to transmit the acquired knowledge to spectators who come to see the productions of The White Theatre later on. New procedures, or information is during the rehearsals incorporated into upcoming productions, making their impact significantly bigger for a wide audience.

The study trip to Norway (09/11/2016 – 09/18/2016)

In 2016, thanks to financial support from grants from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants Fund and public funds of Fond na podporu umenia, White Theatre managed to organise a study trip to Norway, focused on the famous dramatist Henrik Ibsen. Its aim was to familiarize participants with Ibsen's extensive work and life, the Norwegian performing arts, culture and nature, together with the activities of the Slovak Embassy in Oslo and also bring Slovak top drama formation to Slovaks living in Norway.

In support of bilateral activities between the Slovak Republic and Norway, the partnership between the White Theatre and Norway Grusomhetens Teater, based in Oslo, has arisen. For this purpose, the members of The White Theatre participated in workshops and lectures with active artists from Grusomhetens Theatre, and played in Gallery Bygdøy allé their performance Before the cock shall not crow by Slovak playwright Ivan Bukovčan.

Component part of the trip was meeting with Slovak Ambassador in Oslo Frantisek Kasicky, who greeted members of The White Theatre at the Slovak Embassy and presented them the Norwegian realities, projects supporting the activities of Slovaks living in Norway and the bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

The study trip agenda

09/11/2016 – departure from Slovakia; journey through the Czech Republic, Germany, ferry Germany – Denmark

09/12/2016 – Copenhagen city tour (Royal Theatre, Nyhavn, birthplace of H. Ch. Andersen, Opera House, Radhuspladsen, Amalienborg, The Little Mermaid monument, Kastion Bastellet, Churchillparken, Frederikskirche, Statue of Bishop Absalon, beach Kastrop); transit the bridge Øresundsbroen, journey through Sweden, Norway, in the evening arrival to Oslo

09/13/2016 – a trip to Lillehammer (fjord, Olympic town); Oslo evening city tour (Akershus Fortress, Operahuset, harbor, Karl Johans Gate)

09/14/2016 – a trip to Skien (H. Ibsen's birthplace tour, city tour – Skien Kirke, Ibsenparken, Henrik Ibsens gate), performance of The White Theatre – Before the cock shall not crow at Gallery attended Bygdøy allé, participated by Slovak Ambassador Frantisek Kasicky, visiting vernissage Slovak Cartoons 2016

09/15/2016 – workshop with partner – theater Grusomhetens Teater (led by actor Brendan McCall and director Lars Øyno), H. Ibsen's Museum in Oslo (tour with the director of the museum), evening performance of the German theatre company Markus & Markus Peer Gynt (at the festival of Henrik Ibsen)

09/16/2016 – visit of the Slovak Embassy in Oslo (meeting with Ambassador F. Kasicky), open rehearsal of Grusomhetens Teater's play, called Svanhild, visit Operahuset, Frogner's and Vigeland's Sculpture Park, evening performance at the Oslo Opera, called War Requiem, Cultural night)

09/17/2016 – morning departure from Oslo

09/18/2016 – return to Slovakia

The main parts of study program and establishment of bilateral activities:

1. Visit of Henrik Ibsen's museum in Skien

In Henrik Ibsen's museum in Skien, the participants of the study trip have acquainted further with Ibsen's personal life. They have learned more about his family, place in which he grew up, the milestones which most influenced his work.

2. Introduction of the play While the cock shall not crow

In order to expand awareness of Slovak culture, The White Theatre introduced their play While the cock shall not crow to audience in Oslo. It was rendered rather unconventional way, known as scene reading, which allows the spectators to experience deeper emotional impression and understanding of the play. The event

was associated with the opening of the exhibition Slovak Cartoons in gallery Bygdøy allé, which was intended to Slovaks living in Norway and the Norwegian cultural community interested in the Slovak art. Thanks to this event, actors of The White Theatre have presented part of their activities and the production of The White theater to Norwegian public.

3. Workshop with actor of Grusomhetens Teater Brendan McCall

The content of the workshop was to familiarize participants with the basic acting techniques that actors Grusomhetens Teater use in their daily practice – gradually releasing the whole body, warming up, mutual cooperation and perception costars, the ability of non-verbal communication, improvisation and physical expression on stage. Quite inspiring was also the discussion with Brendan McCall – about his personal artistic experiences, and opinions about the work of Henrik Ibsen.

4. Workshop with the founder and director of Grusomhetens Teater Lars Øyno

The content of the workshop was to extend the perception of one's body, the use of physical abilities, improving voice and physical abilities, working with fellow actors, basics of physical theater. Also familiarizing with the activities of Grusomhetens Teater, its history and activities of its founder, Lars Øyno, through an open discussion.

5. Visit of Henrik Ibsen's Museum in Oslo

Detailed acquaintance with the work of Ibsen, specific impulses that led him to write his plays, visit of his apartment in Oslo, where he spent the last 11 years of his life, lecture about his late activities and works. The tour and lecture was led by the founder and director of the Museum – Erik Henning Edvardsen.

6. Attendance an performance of Peer Gynt

Peer Gynt was performance presented by the German theater company Markus&Markus at The International Festival of Henrik Ibsen, which takes place in Oslo every two years. Members of The White Theatre had the opportunity to watch performance in the building of the Norwegian National Theatre. In addition, it was presentation of one of the most important Ibsen's plays, comprising a plurality of fragments of Norwegian mythology, it was also demonstration of the direction of modern German theater.

7. Meeting with Ambassador F. Kasicky

Members of White Theatre had an opportunity to meet with Slovak Ambassador Frantisek Kasaicky, who, directly at the Slovak Embassy in Oslo, presented them his activities as well as the activities of the Embassy. At the time he also devoted a Commemorative sheet to coucillor of the theatre for representation of Slovak culture by performance of While the cock shall not crow, in Norway.

In support of Slovak theater culture, he informed the leadership of theatre with other cooperation possibilities, which the thatre can use in a future to represent Slovakian art abroad.

8. Open rehearsal of the play Svanhild, lecture on Theatre of Cruelty

Grusomhetens Theatre prepared for the members of The White Theatre an open rehearsal of its play Svanhild, which is adaptation of Ibsen's play that has never been finished (the theater was currently preparing for its presentation on a tour in Japan). During the rehearsal, there was also a meeting with Professor Jon Nygaard from The University of Oslo, who lectures the Ibsenology at its field.

The meeting included a lecture called Theatre of Cruelty, which is a special form of theater, which Grusomhetens Theatre provides under the direction of Lars Øyno.

Leadership of The White theatre suggested the possibility of preparing production of some of the Ibsen's plays with Grusomhetens Teater and the theaters have agreed on future communication in this order.

The results of the study tour

Thanks to the realisation of the study trip to Norway it was allowed:

To its direct participants – to acquire a wide knowledge of Henrik Ibsen's life and work, to get know scrutinizingly the realities of Norwegian history, society and culture, meet new theatrical forms, understand the difference between theater poetics of several nations, establish contacts with professional Norwegian artists, and experts in the field of theater, specifically in Henrik Ibsen, become familiar with the remits of the Slovak Embassy in Oslo.

To White Theatre leadership – to establish bilateral cooperation with Grusomhetens Teater (with the possibility of joint staging plays in the future), with Slovak Ambassador Frantisek Kasicky, get acquainted with other possibilities for cooperation in the future, to present work and activities of the White Theatre as well as Slovak culture in Norway.

To spectators of the play Wild duck in The White theatre – deeper experience the atmosphere and the genius locci of the Norwegian landscape, to get know closer and to understand personality of Henrik Ibsen, through the inclusion of knowledge of actors performing in Wild Duck.

Participants of lecture on Study trip in The White Theatre – vicariously to get know all the experiences and knowledge of participants of the study trip, the work of Henrik Ibsen, the basis of the culture of Norwegian society.

Application of the results of the study trip in practice

Actors of The White Theatre are applying acquired knowledge and skills in their acting performs in productions of The White Theatre – starting with new knowledge about Henrik Ibsen and Norwegian culture, ending with new acting techniques, acquired in workshops at Grusomhetens Teater.

Lecturers incorporate new techniques of acting and directing in their acting courses which they lead in The White Theatre. They use new procedures they've learned thanks to artists from Norway.

Managment of The White Theatre prepares new projects in which The White Theatre will continue its representation on the international stage. It uses the knowledge and contacts gained from the study trip in Norway.

Expectations for the future

1. White Theatre plans in the future to revisit Norway in order to present his work.
2. Within the framework of bilateral activities The White Theatre's planning to establish cooperation with Grusomhetens Theatre; future arrangement envisages additional workshops and lectures – as part of the Grusomhetens Theatre, as well as The White Theatre, in aim to wide international awareness of the culture of Norwegian and Slovak nation.
3. There's also possibility in the future for direct collaboration between Grusomhetens Teater and The White Theatre, which would include training and placing joint theater productions.
4. Following the experience gained during the study trip in Norway White, theatre plans to continue in the representation of Slovak theater and culture abroad.

The results of the bilateral activities between Slovak Norway

Thanks to the study trip, took in the framework of international cooperation, it was enabled to members of The White Theatre and to members of Grusomhetens Teater to establish contacts and transfer information and experiences in the field of art. Norwegian artists, as well as Norwegian public have gained awareness of the current Slovak production, also activities that are developed by Slovak artists in order to promote awareness about their native culture as well as general information about the Slovak nation. Likewise, however, Slovak participants obtained these information about Norwegian culture and society as well.

There was an intercultural meeting point of two different nations, which, due to the project handed over valuable knowledge and processes they're using in their daily practice.

The leadership of both participating theaters also agreed on further cooperation, they're already actively planning next projects, which aims will be international theatrical activities, as even combining different ethnicities, cooperation between artists for the purpose of mediation of quality theatrical experience to a wide audience.

Thanks to support from the Slovak Embassy in the Oslo, theater management got informed of the new possibilities of presentation of Slovak art in the international arena. It's current planning new tours that will refill the performing plays of The White theater abroad.

Through discussions and lectures there was suggestive exchange of information concerning the participating nations such as the nature and substance of art or lesser known history of Henrik Ibsen – his work and personal life.

Within workshops participants had the opportunity to search for the differences, compares the similarities in the work of artists in Slovakia and Norway.

In general, there was a profound knowledge between two different countries which are both using its own specific theatrical directions, themes and ways of expression. Benefits for project participants was mainly the opportunity to discover their common direction, which can be used for the benefit of bringing new kinds of art to a wide audience.