NYU SKIRBALL ANNOUNCES CANCELLATION OF KAKFA’s “THE TRIAL” DUE TO POLISH CENSORSHIP

NYU Skirball, The Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, PEN America & CUNY’s Segal Center
to present
Marathon Reading of Novel & Panel on Global Artists-at-Risk in Response on March 8

New York, January 13, 2020 - Jay Wegman, Director of NYU Skirball, has announced the cancellation of Polish director Krystjan Lupa’s The Trial, based on the Franz Kafka novel, due to the withdrawal of financial support from the Adam Mickiewicz Institute (IAM), the international exchange program of the Polish Cultural Ministry. The production was scheduled for March 7 and 8, 2020. “Kafka’s The Trial is the story of political corruption, government censorship, and socialmalevolence—a story that mirrors our current global realities,” said Wegman. “Sadly, and ironically, the Polish government has pulled its funding in an attempt to silence Krystjan Lupa, making this North American premiere impossible.”

In its place, NYU Skirball will join with The Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, PEN America, and CUNY’s Segal Center to present a marathon reading of Kafka’s novel on March 8 at 3 pm. The reading will be preceded at 1 pm by a panel discussion with Mr. Lupa and others on the global escalation of artists-at-risk.

The Trial was one of the most keenly anticipated theater works in Poland in recent years, controversial even before it opened. Lupa had selected Kafka’s novel as a source partly for its implicit reflection on illiberalism. NYU Skirball’s presentation has been planned for over a year, with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute pledging financial support to subsidize travel and hotel costs for the 46-member company. However, the grant was rescinded in December. Barbara Schabowska, IAM’s recently appointed Director, would not release the funds.

Krystjan Lupa is one of the most significant theatrical directors working on the international stage. An essential artistic link between Polish modernism (especially the visually-orientated master director Tadeusz Kantor) and contemporary “postdramatic” theater, his work freely mixes sources, integrates video, and improvised elements.

In a statement written in response to NYU Skirball’s cancelation, Mr. Lupa writes: “The declaration of Minister Gliński (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland) is clear: Artists who do not sympathize with the current leadership’s cultural policy, who criticize its values, decisions and actions will be treated as enemies of Poland and will not be supported by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in any form.”

The March 8 panel and reading will be free, but reservations are recommended. Further information on panel participants and marathon readers will be posted on the NYU Skirball website at www.nyuskirball.org or by calling NYU Skirball is located at 566 LaGuardia Place at Washington Square, New York, New York 10012.

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