

# **VHLF & DAMU announce a contest for the students of drama and performance studies**

**Vaclav Havel Library Foundation together with the Theatre Faculty  
of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU)**

**announce a contest for students of drama and performance studies**  
for the best mini-drama inspired by the quote  
from the play **The Memorandum** written by Vaclav Havel

In scene twelve, the main character, Gross, exclaims **“We’re living in a strange, complex epoch. As Hamlet says, ‘our time is out of joint.’ Just think, we’re reaching for the moon and yet it’s increasingly hard for us to reach ourselves; we’re able to split the atom, but unable to prevent the splitting of our personality; we build superb communications between the continents, and yet communications between man and man is increasingly difficult. In other words...we are irresistibly falling apart, more and more profoundly alienated from the world, from others, from ourselves...”**

In *The Memorandum*, a new language, designed with the apparent goal of streamlining communication, actually makes it harder for people to understand one another. The theme of alienation brought on by technologies designed to enhance communication echoes throughout the play.

**Deadline: May 15, 2020**

**Vaclav Havel** (1936-2011) was a playwright, political dissident, and the former president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. He became well-known as a dramatist in the 1960s when his plays *The Garden Party* and *The Memorandum* were seen on world theatre stages. In the 1970s, he was one of the authors of *Charter 77* – a manifesto calling for the Czechoslovak government to adhere to the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Agreement. In 1989, he became the leader of the two-month long Velvet Revolution, which culminated in his ascension to the Presidency of the re-established democratic Czechoslovakia.

## **Award**

A two-week residency in Prague with classes at different DAMU departments; visits to Prague theatres; a round-trip air ticket to Prague and accommodation. The schedule at DAMU will be prepared individually according to the winner’s study focus and interests. Date: November 2020 (around November 17th, the 31st anniversary of the Velvet Revolution).

**DAMU** is a modern, university-level school of the performing arts. It offers artistic personalities who have a broad cultural perspective and intense desire for profound learning the opportunity to integrate theatrical knowledge and skill with artistic experiment. DAMU is a highly selective school, providing professional education in all branches of theatre creation: acting, directing, dramaturgy, scenography, theory and criticism, theatre management, authorial creation, and drama in education in the fields of regular and alternative theatre, performance studies and puppetry.

### **Contest Rules**

The contest is open to undergraduate students of Drama, Dramatic Writing and Slavic studies who submit an original mini-drama, a one-act play, that has not been published and will not be published before the announcement of the contest results. The contest is anonymous.

Undergraduate students of other fields are welcome to apply as well. Plays should be sent in pdf format without the author's name on the script to [info@vhlf.org](mailto:info@vhlf.org). The subject line should be "The Memorandum". Authors should submit a separate sheet with all contact information.

**The winner will be announced in June 2020.**

### **Evaluation Criteria**

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation together with the Dean of DAMU will name the jury. The jury will evaluate the creativity, thought-provoking story, understanding of the quote and the original way of applying it to current society as well as other common criteria such as clear structure and organization of the play and its effect on the audience.

### **Feedback from Past Winners**

2019 contest winner Ellis Stump says, "...delving deep into the world of Vaclav Havel and his canons of didactic theatre, sociology, and political activism, both individually and with DAMU, fulfilled precisely the educational experience I needed and revealed a niche community I always loved but never knew existed. The generous, life-changing residency and recognition redefined my professional trajectory, internal development, and artistic inspiration."