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Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences

Společnost pro vědy a umění (SVU)

New York Chapter

**BBLA** BOHEMIAN BENEVOLENT & LITERARY ASSOCIATION



Image by Ilona Kohlová

# The 6-Minute Challenge, #18

April 9, 2025  
Bohemian National Hall  
Manhattan

*The Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences (SVU), New York Chapter, is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization promoting Czech and Slovak intellectual history and heritage through cultural events with the support of the Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA).*

Design by [czechmatters](http://czechmatters.com)

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**Produced by Suzanna Halsey**  
**Moderated by Christopher Harwood**

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**PRESENTERS** *(in order of appearance)*

**Mojmír Zálešák**

**Petra Gupta Valentová**

**Lenka Mašková**

**Kris Příhodová**

**Josef Scharfen**

**Michal Kaplan**

**Irena Canová**

**Jan Cina**

**Lenka Lichtenberg**

**Q&A**

**Wine Social**

Please hold your questions until the Q&A, after the last presentation.

The event will be recorded and later posted on our YouTube Channel.

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*The SVU 6-MINUTE CHALLENGE is a series conceived in 2015 by Suzanna Halsey for SVU New York. Czech and Slovak artists, professionals, scholars, students and scientists are challenged to present their talent, the subject of their work, project, research or studies in a short presentation limited to six minutes.*



**Lenka Lichtenberg** is a Czech-Canadian musician, composer, and producer who relocated to Toronto after spending her early years as a notable child star in her native Prague. Her latest project is *Thieves of Dreams*, based on notebooks written by her grandmother while she was imprisoned in the Theresienstadt concentration camp during World War II. In 2023, the album won Canada's top music prize, the JUNO Award for Global Music Album of the Year. Her 2024 album *Feel With Blood: Echoes of*

*Theresienstadt* further explores and expands this source material in English. Lenka tours internationally. Since 2023, she has performed in Copenhagen, Montreal, Prague, Madrid, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Edinburgh Fringe, Theresienstadt, Taipei, Sydney, Tokyo, and Washington, D.C. Lenka brought her solo show *The Secret Poetess of Terezin* to Calgary's National Music Centre, Ottawa's National Arts Centre, and now to New York on April 10 as part of the United Solo Festival. (150)

*Interests and hobbies:* living on a farm in Eastern Ontario with her husband and two lovable rescue dogs, yoga, growing vegetables, and leading services at the reconstructionist Congregation Darchei Noam in Toronto

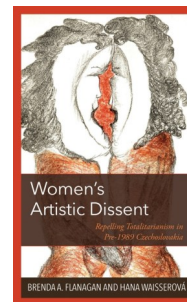
*Contact:* lenkalichtenberg.com

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*Special thanks to*

*Jiří Mirovský, Věra Dvořák, Daniela Vančurová and Katarína Vizina*

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**Upcoming**

**Wednesday April 23 at 7 pm**

**WOMEN'S ARTISTIC DISSENT:**

**Repelling Totalitarianism in Pre-1989 Czechoslovakia**

Book presentation

by **Brenda A. Flanagan** and **Hana Waisserová**



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**Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II**

**MAY 5**

7pm

**Can We Learn From History?**

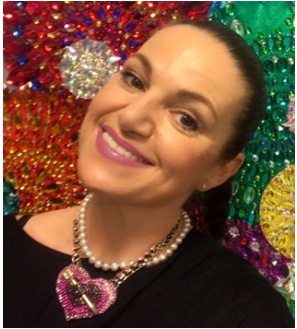
Igor Lukes, PhD, Boston University

**MAY 22**

5:30pm **Lidice Memorial**, Eduard Stehlik, PhD

7pm **Personal Memories**, Julie Urbišová

The Memory of Nation's oral history project



**Irena Canova** is a costume designer, dancer, and former cosmetic dental technician who has been living in New York for thirty years. Born in Istanbul, she grew up in Prague. Her life journey first brought her to the Czech Embassy in Manhattan and later to an eminent dental laboratory. Always passionate about dance, Irena became involved with the international ballroom dance world, and in 2008, she won the US Adult Amateur Latin Ballroom Championships. It was at this time she started creating costumes for the dance and burlesque communities. Canova Studio is now recognized worldwide. She is

known for her elaborate designs with rhinestones inspired by her Czech and Turkish heritage. Her work has been seen in Bloomingdale's, the Fosse/Verdon TV miniseries, the Hustler movie, and RuPaul's Drag Race. She works with theaters, celebrities, stylists, and dancers. Some of her famous clients include Usher, Meghan Trainor, Cardi B, Floyd Mayweather, and lately Charlotte Flair, the US wrestling champion; also Company XIV theater and La Jolla Playhouse.

*Interests and hobbies:* vintage fashion, Pomeranians, swimming, hiking, and dancing

*Contact:* canovairena@gmail.com, www.canovastudio.com, IG:Canova\_studio



**Jan Cina** is a Prague-based actor, singer, dancer and performer. He studied at the Prague Conservatory and received his MA in Alternative and Puppet Theater from the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU). He started performing as a child in theatre, TV, and movies. He is well-known for his roles, such as Little Prince, the devil Bonifác, young actor Stanislav Láník in the Czech TV miniseries "The Actor," and a young drug dealer or Lukáš in "Pustina," an HBO Europe miniseries. Jan was nominated twice for the Czech Lion film award and once

for the Czech theatre Thalia Awards for the musical *Malý princ*. He is the winner of the 2016 *Your Face Sounds Familiar* TV show and the Czech *Dancing with the Stars 2021* competition. He volunteers with *Dobré víly dětem* ('Good Fairies for Children'), working with children from foster care. Jan is queer and half Roma, after his father, and proud to be different, seeking to find the inspirational differences in everyone.

*Interests and hobbies:* traveling, art, sleeping, and rituals in general

*Contact:* cinafanybox@gmail.com, IG: jancina\_cz



**Mojmír Zálešák**, a 20-year-old student from Prague, is deeply passionate about economics, investing, and stock markets. He graduated from the prestigious Nový PORG high school in Prague, spent the summer at Harvard University, where he passed exams in macroeconomics and intellectual property rights, and is currently studying at NYU Stern School. He serves as the President of ECONET – a community of over 220 finance and economics enthusiasts

focusing on increasing today's youth's financial literacy. With his high school classmates, he won bronze in a prestigious competition organized by the American Wharton School. He participates in the management of the Next-Gen investment fund from J&T, where he manages over \$13 million. A squash champion, he also worked as an advisor at Sportegy Futures, helping young athletes access world-class education. In 2024, the Czech Forbes magazine included Mojmir in its 30 under 30 list as the new face of the youngest generation of investors.

*Interests and hobbies:* squash, calisthenics, video games, watching film series, and collecting fragrances

*Contact:* mz3955@stern.nyu.edu



**Petra (Gupta) Valentová** is a Czech-born, New York-based artist from Pardubice. She holds MFAs from the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and Hunter College, CUNY, NY, and a PhD from UMPRUM, Prague. Her interdisciplinary work spans textiles, sculpture, neon, installations, and conceptual art, exploring identity, culture, and memory. She collaborates with Czech blueprint (*modrotisk*) workshops and Indian textile artisans, blending traditional block printing with contemporary art. Various designers, including the

Czech company Tonak, have implemented her block-printed fabrics in their products. She has been collaborating with Czech artist František Matoušek, applying *modrotisk* to denim. Petra's work is featured in international collections, including the Czech National Gallery. In 2023, she received the Gold Crystal Heart award from CCNY for promoting Czech culture in the U.S. She works at the Anita Shapolsky Gallery, NY, co-curates exhibitions at *The Hudson Hangar* during Upstate Art Weekend, and hosts Czech artists at her residency, *Gray Nivas*, in Ulster County.

*Interests and hobbies:* early morning walks, spending time with her family and friends in upstate NY, connecting with her husband's family & friends in India

*Contact:* petra.valentova@gmail.com, www.petraguptavalentova.com



**Lenka Mašková** is a sculptor based in NY who grew up in Liberec, a city in the North of the Czech Republic. She came to the USA when she was eighteen and completed her education in NY as a graduate of LaGuardia Community College (AS), School of Visual Arts (BFA), and New York Studio School with an MFA in Sculpture. Lenka has previously taught Art at LaGuardia Community College as an adjunct. She currently works for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she handles ancient art (three years in the Egyptian department and five

years in the Greek & Roman department). Her studio work focuses on weaving techniques, using glass beads, basketry, and the bobbin lace process. She regularly participates in exhibitions and is a member of the Brooklyn Lace Guild. She lives in Queens, NY, with her two teenage daughters.

*Interests & hobbies:* knitting, crocheting, sewing, TM meditation, and running

*Contact:* Lenkamaskovaink@gmail.com, IG



**Kristýna "Kris" Příhodová** is a Czech actor and model with a global journey. Born in the small town of Frenštát pod Radhoštěm, she grew up with a Czech father and a Russian mother from Kazakhstan. She earned a chemistry degree from Masaryk University in Brno. Over the past eight years, she has lived in six countries, beginning her modeling career in Singapore, moved through Canada, Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan, Prague, ultimately landing in New York. Unlike most models, she built her career almost entirely freelance, as agencies often overlooked her due to her height. De-

spite this challenge, she secured campaigns for brands like Honda, Klarna, Nespresso, and Puma or opened the show for Elisabetha Franchi, proving that determination beats industry norms. Through modeling, she discovered her passion for acting, leading her to shift from science to the arts. She studied film acting at the New York Film Academy and is now working on bringing her work to film festivals and expanding her presence in the industry.

*Interests and hobbies:* painting, drawing, hiking, traveling, dancing

*Contact:* krisprihodova@gmail.com, IG: @kris\_prihodova



**Josef Scharfen** was born forty years ago in the small town of Trutnov in the foothills of the mountains where Václav Havel worked in a brewery as punishment. He earned his degree in International Relations from Charles University and moved to the United States almost twenty years ago. Since 2020, he and his Czech wife have lived in eastern Pennsylvania together with their son. After selling his first import business, Josef started Hydra Consulting. It helps European companies expand their businesses to the United States by providing

easy-to-understand insights into setting up a company, managing complex tax, accounting, and legal issues, applying for business visas and assisting with anything that is needed for a smooth transition. He also oversees the market operations and business development activities for the global creative agency XLAB Realtime and maintains a consulting capacity for the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations. He enjoys bringing the European and US businesses together.

*Interests and hobbies:* skiing, Texas barbecue

*Contact:* jscharfen@hydra-consulting.net



**Michal Kaplan** is a diplomat and leader in sustainable development. He was born in Pardubice, Eastern Bohemia, and graduated from the University of Economics in Prague. Since 1999, he has worked for the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including his postings to Paris, Brussels, and Geneva. Michal contributed to both Czech Presidencies in the EU in 2009 and 2022. As Head of the CzechAID (2013-2017), Michal helped to fight poverty in the Balkans, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In 2017, Michal launched the Czech SDGs Awards, an advocacy campaign for sustainable development. At the Czech Mission to the UN in Geneva, he liaised with the World Health Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, Michal Kaplan serves as Deputy Consul General at the Czech Consulate General in New York. He promotes business and scientific cooperation between Czechia and Northeastern United States. Michal has frequently published on global issues in his blog titled "Diplomacy is not a zero-sum game."

*Interests and hobbies:* tennis, traveling, seafood, sauna, old maps

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