

The PCU **INDEPENDENT**



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NOVEMBER

UPCOMING EVENTS - REVIEWS - STUDENT LIFE - COMICS - RECS

PRAGUECITY
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STUDENT COUNCIL



Illustration by Anastasiia Pavlova

"I WON..."

Around her was swirling fervently a depraved dance in which many took part, though fewer endured until its very end. Their steps were spontaneous, sometimes missing rhythm, their movements were abrupt and risky — both resolute and fearful. And Karislava — the youngest queen Favientar had ever had — led this dancing legion of death. She cut through air, shields, armor, flesh, and anything that posed a threat with her steel sword, warmed by a scarlet cloak. Her shadows followed her steps as they feasted on the backs of their victims. Karislava was like a skilled reaper, her enemies — the harvest she had to gather at any cost. She hadn't intended to kill them — those to her right, or to her left, or the one whose corpse she had to step over, or the one whose blood was splattered over her obsidian-black helmet... She'd long lost count of them, perhaps an hour or two ago, or maybe it had been three, or even four. Did it at all matter? Each one received what was destined to them sooner or later. "They're retreating!", the shout of Alezander Igriresitte rang out above the clash of metal. Karislava became even more frenzied, she roared commands, reforming her soldiers, and skillfully keeping the flames in their hearts alight. Alezander, her second-in-command, fought beside her as their legion pushed back the Ukradorian army of rebels. He remained by her side after the battle was won also, as they walked through the Eley valley, now blanked with bodies like an old, dirty shroud. The last rays of the day caressed the faces of the living, as if they could understand the sorrow wrapped around their hearts and minds, or as if they could feel the quilt threatening to consume them alive and sooth them.

"So many of our soldiers," Alezander's voice, hoarse from the

battle, sounded unusually loud against the silence. Karislava couldn't stand the eerie quietness that whistled too sharply in her ears.

"I've seen enough," Karislava said in a trembling voice, clearing her throat. The thought of how many families she would have to send messengers with tragic news made her sick to her core. At the end every misfortune brings some good, she tries to encourage herself. "Let's return to the camp. The bridge is secured, now it's up to their king Fauras to ambush their rebellion within his kingdom" she said, turning her back to the sun.

"Slava... do you believe the marriage between you and their prince will stop them rebelling against us and their crown anymore?" Alexander asked.

"I do," she simply answered. Hope, love and war — the most dangerous combination in the world.

By the time they reached the camp, the Moon had settled comfortably among the night's shadows, gazing at them in silence. That night, She hosted many new guests and awaited more to arrive. The shadows whispered to their mistress Karislava, reassuring her that the Moon would look after her soldiers. But that didn't stop the invisible hand gripping her heart in its cold, relentless clutch from continuing its torment.

The survivors feasted throughout the camp. The end of the war seemed near — the coming marriage between Karislava and prince Laertes of Ukrador, and the bridge over the Dren River fortified, Favientar had secured a certain victory against Ukradorian rebels against the crown. But Karislava had no intention of celebrating an yet unaccomplished triumph, so she withdrew to her tent. If her soldiers needed to feast,

let them; she would not stop them, but she simply couldn't bring herself to celebrate with them.

"You're early," Laertes's honeyed voice caressed her senses. "I expected you to linger a bit longer. Sasha is just starting on the wine," he said, rising from her bed — or rather, theirs. Karislava, taking weak steps, moved toward him, and when he opened his arms for an embrace, she didn't hesitate to share her warmth with him.

"I'm exhausted. These days I haven't had a single moment to rest," she whispered against his chest, and he placed a gentle kiss on her brow, wrapping his arms around her tighter. His shadows wrapped around her torso like silk, glad she was here, alive and safe with them. Hers responded just as joyfully.

Laertes was not a warrior like her; he was a cunning and shrewd diplomat, his passion was politics. He was quiet and loved solitude, while she was loud and loved attention. They were the only ones in the world gifted with the ability to bend the shadows and darkness to their will. Together, they fit like two parts of one soul. As a tandem, they would be great rulers; people spoke of them, eagerly awaiting their wedding to stop the civil war in Ukrador that was affecting Favientar too. The prince gently held her chin, making her look at him.

Karislava compiled, meeting his eyes like gray quartz, and it was as if the grip on her heart eased a little. Her fiancé stroked her dawn-colored hair, attempting to calm the knot of nerves within her. Karislava closed her eyes and tried to release her unnecessary thoughts, as Laertes lowered his forehead to hers. She cupped his face with her hands, and they shared a brief kiss. And then another, and another, and more. A slight smile crept across Karislava's lips, grateful for every second spent with him. She gently stroked his pale cheek and played with a lock of his raven-black hair, which fell in light curls over his cheekbones.

"I still can't believe it," she whispered against his lips.

"Believe what?"

"That we won the battle. That peace and the end of this war are near truly..." she said. A quiet chuckle escaped Laertes's throat. He ran his fingers through her hair again and, after a brief silence, said:

"My love, it pains me dearly to say this, but I have to tell you..." Laertes smiled playfully, tilting his head. Karislava raised an eyebrow, puzzled. "That you're mistaken," his gaze traced every part of her face, abiding her eyes, and his shadows entwined with hers.

"What do you mean?" she asked, still confused. His eyes finally met hers like rose quartz. He wetted his lips before smiling again, though the smile didn't reach his eyes.

"I won..." he whispered against her lips.

Karislava had no time to react as the first scream rose above the reveling crowd. Nor did she have time to respond when the dagger pierced her chest, close to her heart, when his shadows suffocated hers. Only a gasp escaped her lips, her

eyes threatened to pop out of their sockets in shock, and her beautiful young face twisted in pain.

"L-Laro?" she uttered shakily. Karislava grabbed his shoulders, feeling her legs give away, seeking his support, as she always had. But Laertes simply folded his arms behind his back, his face hardened, and in his gray eyes, in which Karislava had always found comfort, now burned cold, hostile flames. He didn't catch her as she fell to her knees before him.

Laertes might not have been a warrior, but he knew where to strike when necessary and even worse — he was not afraid of the common folk's wrath. He had wounded her fatally; Karislava had no chance. Her remaining moments could be counted on one hand. She laid on her back, struggling for air. Each breath was more difficult than the last, more suffocating. She could have killed him instantly with her shadows, but they had dissolved into the air. Laertes clicked his tongue, knowing she would never raise a hand against him, even in this moment.

"Weakness," he hissed through gritted teeth. "You and your foolish heart, woven from honor!... Fight me!" he didn't know why he shouted the latter, losing his composure.

The camp, which moments before had echoed with joyful songs, now rang with another tune. It was similar to the one Karislava's dancing legion had performed, but much more brutal — the song of betrayal.

"W-why—?"

Karislava tried to speak, tears streamed down her face, a trickle of blood flowing from her mouth.

"Hush," Laertes, calm again, knelt beside her, his shadows winding around him like silken snakes, hissing at her. He wiped away her tears with the back of his hand, devoid of any tenderness. In his gaze, she saw a different person, though he was the very man to whom she had entrusted the deepest corners of her soul and was ready to hand over her kingdom.

Karislava was soaked in blood. This time, it wasn't her enemy's, but her own. She was dying, yet in her final moments, she thought of Alezander a few meters away, of her brother Aresei and his wife with their little son, safe in the capital, of everyone she loved. What would happen to them? Had Alezander escaped the slaughter? Had the massacre reached those in the other war camps, in the capital? Laertes wasn't foolish enough to strike only here. Karislava was drowning in sobs, in her desperate gasps for breath, in her own blood. And yet, not once did the thought of striking Laertes's heart with her shadows cross her mind. Weakness, weakness, weakness — his words rang in her ears like funeral bells. "King Fauras sends his greetings... You can rest now."

Laertes's honeyed voice pierced her senses. He placed an icy kiss on her forehead, which felt as if death itself had bestowed it upon her.

Anyone can betray anyone, Alezander had once warned her, but she had been too young to heed his words.

And now the Moon awaited her.

Lora Kostova

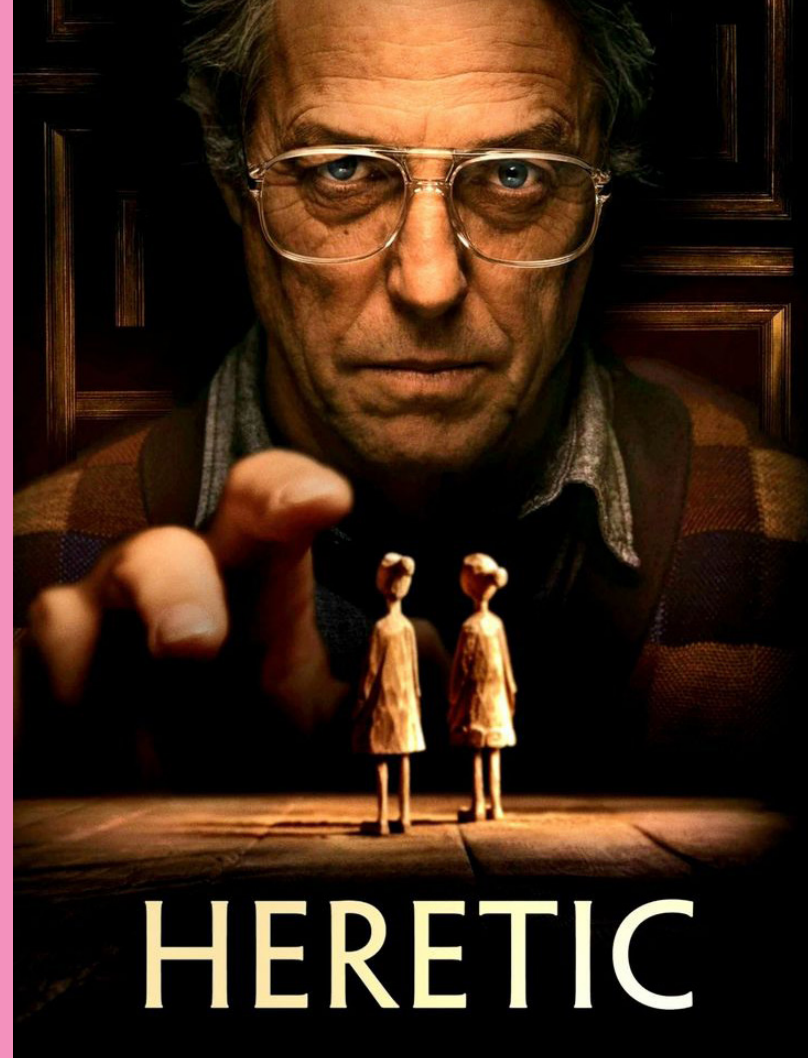
MOVIES AT THE CINEMA

What to see and where

Letterboxd users! Gather up! Today I have a list of films that have been up under the “Popular” section on the website for quite some time and in case you are not aware of the cinemas around Prague - this article will also introduce you to those authentic cinema halls around the city! We will look at three cinemas: Kino Aero, Bio Oko, and Kino Svetožor. These are the ones that offer movie screenings for available prices, original experiences, and sometimes student discounts.

First off, I want to briefly mention “The Substance” once again - this wonderfully disturbing body horror experience from Coralie Fargeat is now having its “last call” to see it on a big screen. So, if you haven’t seen Demi Moore’s and Margaret Qualley’s incredible acting followed by amazing prosthetics job in this movie - make sure you check all of the three mentioned cinemas for the screenings during the week! Ticket price: 140 Kč - 175kč.

Now, let’s get back to the Films and Screenings.



HERETIC

“I SH*T YOU NOT HUGH GRANT SINGS CREEP BY RADIOHEAD AND MEOWS IN THIS”

TOM ON LETTERBOXD

Heretic (2024) - directed by Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, is a psychological horror film that shares the story of two Mormon missionaries who “knock on the wrong door” and encounter Mr. Reed, starring Hugh Grant. The film is an intense exploration of faith and survival that is achieved with the help of Grant’s charming yet menacing acting. “Deadly game of cat-and-mouse”.

The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 8, 2024, and now is being screened at Kino Aero on the 20th and 23rd, as well as at Bio Oko on the 23rd and 26th of November, so make sure you save the date! Ticket price: 160kč - 170kč.



CONCLAVE

“MORE MOVIES NEED TO BE A CROSS BETWEEN 12 ANGRY MEN AND GOSSIP GIRL...”

CINEMAJOE ON LETTERBOXD

Conclave (2024) - directed by Edward Berger, who is known for “All Quiet on the Western Front”, now has created a mystery thriller based on a novel. The film, starring Ralph Fiennes as the main character, explores the secretive process of electing a new pope, hidden scandals and drama behind new candidates, and how that creates intense moral and political dilemmas within the Vatican. The controversy could lead to the downfall of it all.

The film premiered at the Telluride Film Festival on August 30, 2024, and now is being screened at Svetožor on the 20th and 24th of November, so make sure you save the date! Ticket price: 160kč - 175kč



THE APPRENTICE

“WHAT STARTS AS A ROM-COM BETWEEN DONALD TRUMP AND ROY COHN GRADUALLY MORPHS INTO A GENUINE HORROR FILM...”

REECE ON LETTERBOXD

The Apprentice (2024) - directed by Ali Abbasi, is a biographical drama that explores Donald Trump’s early career and his rise in the real estate industry. Starring Sebastian Stan as the leading character, which described as “eager to make his name as a hungry scion of a wealthy family in 1970s New York”, he becomes a protégé under his attorney - Roy Cohn.

The film premiered at the 77th Cannes Film Festival on May 20, 2024, and now is being screened at Svetožor on the 19th and 23rd of November, so make sure you save the date! Ticket price: 175kč.

Aruzhan Serikbayeva

CAFES WORTH VISITING

Hidden away in Prague are small, cozy cafes and restaurants offering guests unique dishes and drinks. Today we will tell you about eight establishments that are worth visiting in Prague: from exquisite desserts and Korean cuisine to Japanese sweets and signature coffee.

CAMP (Center for Architecture and Metropolitan Planning)

CAMP is not only a center for architecture and urban planning, but also a unique place to work and relax in the very center of Prague. Here everyone will find ideal conditions for productive work, meetings and inspiration, as well as a cozy cafe where you can enjoy quality drinks and light snacks. CAMP has long been a point of attraction for creative people: architects, designers, students and freelancers looking for a quiet place to work with a great atmosphere and amenities.

What to try at CAMP:

Coffee and Drinks: The café serves a variety of drinks, from classic espresso and cappuccino to alternative brewing methods. You can also try matcha lattes and seasonal lemonades, which are very refreshing.

Homemade pastries: Fresh pastries are a real hit of the café. They often offer crispy croissants, brownies, carrot cake and syrniki. All this goes well with a cup of coffee or tea.

Healthy snacks: The menu includes sandwiches on whole grain bread with seasonal vegetables and fresh cheeses, light salads and vegan snacks. Such dishes are an ideal choice for those who want a healthy and light snack.

Můj Šálek Kávy

A legend of Prague coffee culture, Můj Šálek Kávy is located in the Karlín district and is one of the first specialized cafes in the city. The establishment belongs to the famous Czech roaster Doubleshot, so you can always count on the highest quality coffee here. In addition to coffee, guests can enjoy a varied breakfast and lunch menu prepared from fresh, seasonal products.



Recommended dishes:

Fried eggs with avocado and spinach - an ideal breakfast with rich taste and healthy ingredients.
Berry and yogurt pancakes - a light dish with berry freshness, ideal with morning cappuccino.

EMA Espresso Bar

This establishment has gathered coffee lovers from all over the city thanks to its Scandinavian simplicity and consistently high standards. EMA Espresso Bar is a place for true coffee connoisseurs, where baristas will help you choose the type and brewing method to suit your taste. The café often updates its range of beans, working with famous European roasters, which makes each visit unique.

Recommended drinks:

V60 Pour Over — a pour-over coffee that reveals the complex notes of each bean.
Flat White — a rich espresso-based coffee with a soft foam, perfectly balanced in taste.

Aux Merveilleux de Fred

This French dessert paradise in Prague is a branch of the Parisian brand known for its airy and light meringue cakes. Aux Merveilleux de Fred is a place where those with a sweet tooth can try “merveilleux” with a variety of fillings, from classic chocolate to berry. The taste and aroma of these desserts will take you straight to the cozy streets of Paris, filling the day with bright gastronomic impressions.

Recommended desserts:

Merveilleux Chocolate — a light and airy meringue cake with chocolate mousse, covered with grated chocolate.
Crème Brûlée is a classic French dessert with a crispy crust and vanilla cream.

Alexandra Makarova

THERE ARE NO GOOD MEN IN THIS GAME

Victoria Elizabeth Schwab is an acclaimed American writer of adult fiction books under the name V. E. Schwab and children's and young adult fiction books under Victoria Schwab. She debuted in 2011 with the standalone YA fantasy novel *The Near Witch*. Among her over 20 published works, there are names that stand out: *Shades of Magic* trilogy (2015), *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* (2020) and her breakout novel *Vicious* (2013) which introduces the darkly compelling *Villains* series. V. E. Schwab is currently working on a standalone novel described as a “spiritual sibling” to *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* and expanding her *Shades of Magic* universe with *The Fragile Threads of Power*. She is also developing *Victorious*, the third book in the *Villains* series. Exploring themes of power, identity, and morality, Schwab creates unforgettable characters such as Victor Vale and Eli Cardale in *Vicious*.

There are no good men in this game.

Vicious is a gripping tale of ambition, revenge, and the blurred lines between good and evil — who's the hero and who's the villain? Schwab's writing is sharp and precise, altering between past and present events to build tension as the story unravels around Victor Vale and Eli Cardale.

Victor and Eli were once college roommates and close friends, until they discovered a dangerous way to create superhuman abilities by triggering near-death experiences. What once began as a scientific experiment of theirs turns into betrayal that leaves Victor in prison and sparks a deadly rivalry between them. Years later, when Victor escapes, he has one thing on his mind — to take down Eli, who has declared himself the moral arbiter of the world, hunting and killing other ExtraOrdinaries (EOs). Their ideologies and philosophies collide in a brutal dance of manipulation and violence.

When no one understands, that's usually a good sign that you're wrong. Schwab's characters are as extraordinary as human. Victor is the cunning anti-hero for whom morality is irrelevant, what matters is power and survival. His ruthlessness contrasts with Eli's self-righteousness which makes him believe that his crimes are justified for he was chosen by some divine will. Through the psyches of those two morally gray characters, Schwab challenges her readers to question what makes someone a hero or a villain and whether anyone truly fits those roles. In the world of *Vicious* superpowers are not a form of heroism, they are something dark and dangerous — this is what

makes the novel different.

Plenty of humans were monstrous, and plenty of monsters knew how to play at being human. Victor's team of misfits, his “arsenal” — a child with extraordinary powers regarding life and death, a hacker that has a surprising fondness for chocolate milk, and a half-dead dog, adds depth to the narrative. Their bond is a symbol of true loyalty and their found family is contrasting to Eli's isolated, single-minded mission to eradicate every other super-powered person that he can find — aside from his sidekick, a woman with an unbreakable will.

For the fans of dark fantasy and sci-fi, exploring the flaws of power and knowledge, *Vicious* is a thrilling masterpiece that lingers long after the final page. Schwab's ability to create such human characters — flawed yet fascinating — that makes readers question their own morals is more than just part of the story, it's a journey into the heart of what it means to be extraordinary. And remember: Victor Vale was not a fucking sidekick.

Lora Kostova

Good men will not participate in this “game”

AUTUMN RHYTHM

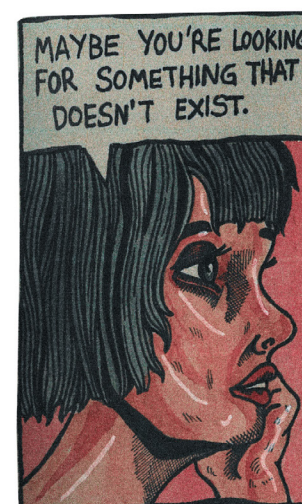
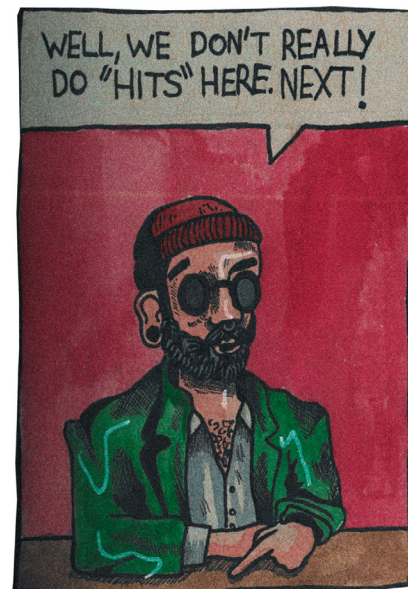
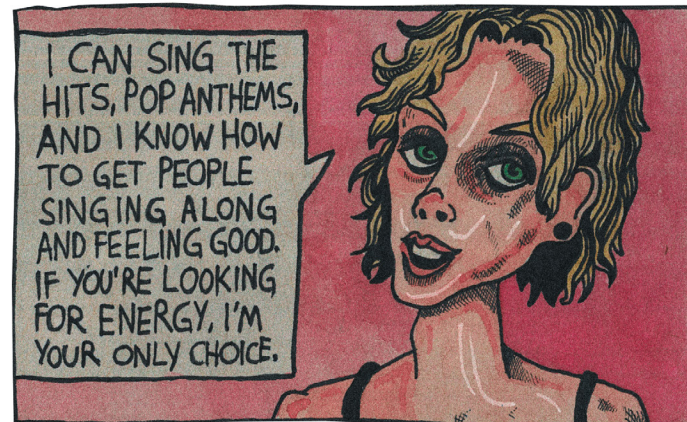
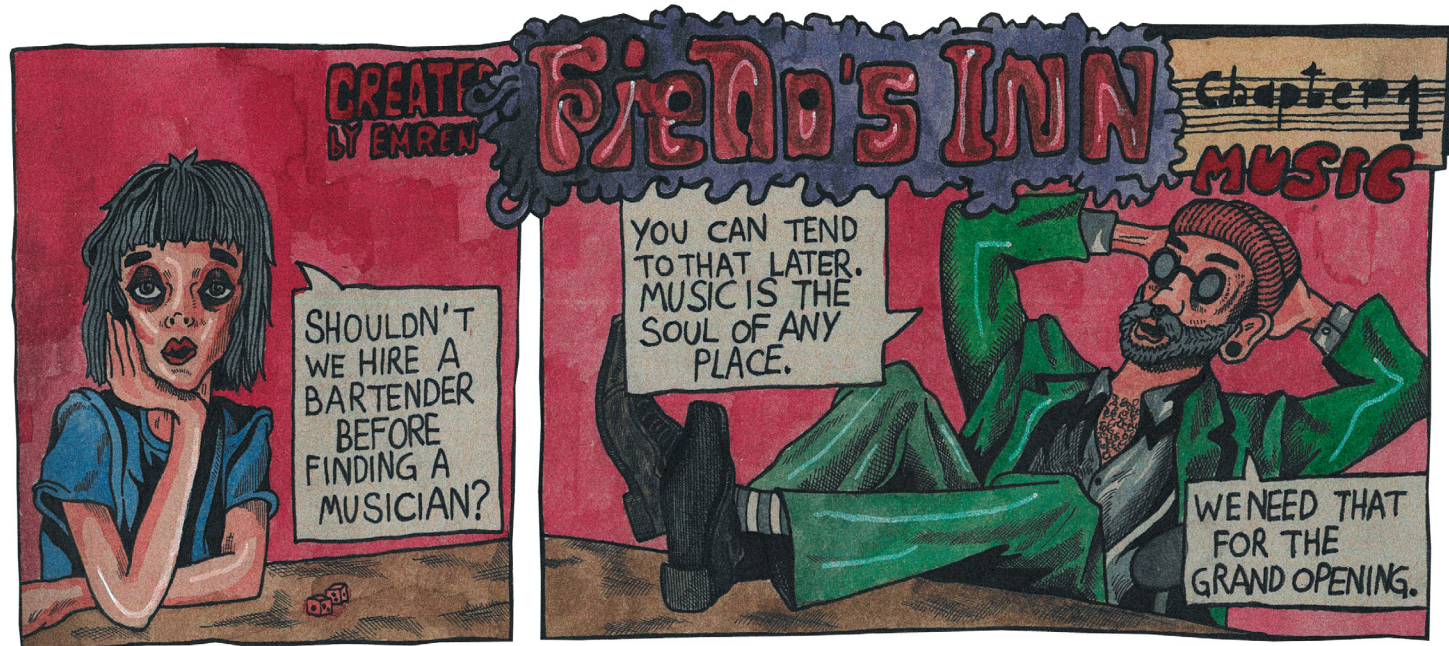
Here is the last month of fall. The warm necklace of yellow, brown and orange goes back in the bijoux box of Prague until the next pile of leaves stands tall.

Black cats, pumpkins, sugar skulls, vivid costumes, gatherings and laughter heard in walls, Monday will always be a day of “beer for all!”

Trees stand naked and unburdened in the streets, telling us we are soon to become a fairytale snow-globe as the winter season approaches and greets.

I put my cigarette out now, shut the windows while I write, my blanket and hot chocolate await for me in coziness with Christmas soon in sight.

Iulia Stetco



PCU EVENTS

Weekly Soccer Game

21 November @ 17:30 - 19:00
TJ Sokol Vinohrady

Ready to play some soccer? Come yourself and bring your friends to our weekly game on an outdoor field with a high-quality Conipur artificial surface. Open to everyone — whether you're a beginner or a seasoned player!

Thursday Show: Typography & Adobe InDesign

28 November @ 16:00 - 17:00
PCU, City Center Campus

"Tomorrow students of the Typography & InDesign course will showcase the page spreads of their very first magazines. Long live serif and sans serif!"

Wellbeing Day

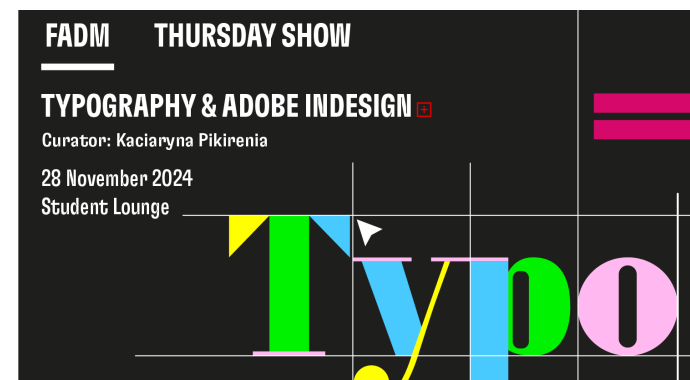
29 November
PCU, City Center Campus

On 29 November 2024 a special Wellbeing Day will offer a range of activities designed to promote relaxation and mindfulness. Attendees can enjoy mindfulness sessions, relaxing classes, and unwind in chill-out rooms accompanied by soothing sounds of nature. There will also be yoga sessions to enhance physical and mental balance.

Friday Show: Interactive Art

13 December @ 16:00 - 17:00
PCU, City Center Campus

Focused on experimentation, the Interactive Art playground will showcase documentation of the past 2 weeks. Students have learned how to create their first audio-reactive visual and make images dance; translated audio into light using microcontrollers; and started their journey with the 3D modeling software Blender to create their digital sculptures...



PCU NEWS

Critic calls Student Play Debut a 'Masterful Achievement'

by Larissa Petryca - read the whole article on the PCU website

Last May, the 23rd annual Prague Fringe Festival premiered a dystopian play created by students from Prague City University, titled "Ants and Other Strong Things." Written by MA Fine Art student Raynar Rogers, the play delved into the intricate and often challenging experiences of queer childhoods, highlighting the personal and political obstacles that hinder the journey toward self-discovery. The performances, held at A Studio Rubin, had a strong impact on the audience who were deeply moved by the relationship between the two main characters, Charlie and Maya.

A Regressive Future?

Set in the future, the play mirrored our current society, where conservative politics and digital surveillance increasingly threaten individual freedoms, particularly within the Queer community, whose rights are often and covertly eroded.

The Power of Collaboration

The collaborative efforts of the cast and crew drawn from PCU's student body brought Ranars' remarkable script to life. Special recognition goes to Manuela Tabarés, an MA Fine Art student, who starred alongside experienced actor Magdalena Škerenčák. Both delivered outstanding performances that did not go unnoticed by critics, who praised their chemistry.

Above all, however, what shines through is the fizzing chemistry and domineering performances of the two main characters, Charlie and Maya.... Raynar Rogers crafted a narrative that balanced humour with heart-wrenching moments, allowing the audience to laugh, cry, and ponder the complexities surrounding love and identity. The storytelling was multifaceted, employing scripted dialogue alongside devised and physical theatre techniques. This blend created a dynamic and immersive experience that resonated on multiple levels. It's a masterful achievement to see such a thorough exploration of all suppressive elements of surveillance capitalism.

Impact Beyond Performance

The impact of "Ants and Other Strong Things" extends beyond its performances at Prague Fringe Festival. It serves as an example of how art can foster community engagement by addressing relevant social issues through compelling narratives.

For students involved in this production—ranging from fine arts to creative media production—the experience provided invaluable professional development opportunities while contributing meaningfully towards broader conversations about inclusivity within society.



Illustration by Anastasiia Pavlova

MEET OUR TEAM



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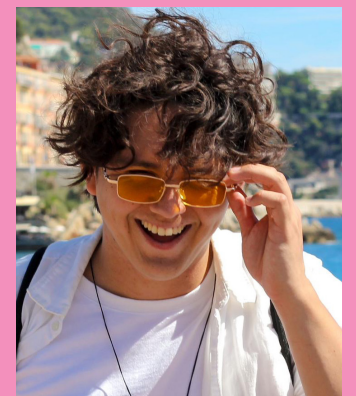
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