

Vaclav Havel Center & Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association

Truth prevails

2025 Annual gala

Joan Baez

Vaclav Havel

Program

Truth Prevails:

This year we honor “Truth Prevails” as a celebration of the art of resistance and the enduring strength of the human spirit.

Havel’s Quote of This year:

“The salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human humility and human responsibility.”

Our Mission:

We promote **democratic freedoms**, **universal human rights**, and **the power of the arts** to uplift and transform our lives in the **spirit of Vaclav Havel**.

Nicholas D. Lowry: Master of Ceremonies and Actioneer This Evening



Nicholas D. Lowry, Czech-American, President and Principal Auctioneer of Swann Auction Galleries, is tonight’s auctioneer and MC. An expert in vintage posters, Lowry is most recognized for his role on the PBS television series *Antiques Roadshow*, he also conducts numerous charity auctions across America. His documentary, **Identita – příběh českého grafického designu**, can be seen on October 14th in New York at the opening night of the Architecture and Design Film Festival. His current project is a two-part exhibition of Czech Travel posters which will be on display at the Bohemian National Hall and at Poster House museum in New York in 2026.

Menu:

First Course:

Roasted pear & arugula salad with gorgonzola, candied walnuts, and champagne vinaigrette

Main Course:

Braised beef short rib with red wine reduction, served with creamy horseradish, baby baked colorful potatoes and glazed root vegetables
or
Wild mushroom barley risotto with parmesan crisp and truffle oil



Dessert:

Czech vanilla cream puff with lemon glaze



Wine:

White - Müller Thurgau 2022 (dry) - Czechia
Red - Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 (dry) - France
Sparkling - Poema Cava (extra dry) - Spain

Beer:

Draft Pilsner Urquell - Czechia

Lifetime Achievement Award: Joan Baez



For six decades, as a **singer and nonviolent activist**, Joan kept her pact with the **spirit of her voice**. At times when it was neither safe nor fashionable, she put herself on the line, tirelessly championing **human rights**. The soundtrack for the turbulent '60s is heard on Joan's remarkable, timeless Vanguard LPs and the merger of **her music and her message** echoes throughout her recorded legacy.

Joan has received countless **awards and honors**. She is also an author and **an accomplished portrait painter**. Her two recent solo exhibitions of portraits highlight risk-taking visionaries who have brought about social change through nonviolent action.

„With Love, Jane Fonda“

Dear Joan,

I'm sad not to be there to celebrate you receiving this Vaclav Havel Lifetime Achievement honor. This represents the joining in celebration of two truly inspirational heroes of mine...of the world's. You with your gorgeous voice and presence, he with his writing and presidency. Each of you have transformed so many lives. I met with President Havel not long after you were there. He was still glowing. Because of these dark times, I can't resist citing one of my favorite Havel quotes: **“Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something is worth doing no matter how well it turns out.”** I know you'll keep inspiring us all to fight, Joan, for Democracy, the planet, peace and justice.

With Love,
Jane Fonda

Disturbing the Peace Award: Maksim Znak



Maksim Znak is a Belarusian **constitutional lawyer, writer**, and **one of the most prominent members of the Belarusian opposition**. He was arrested in September 2020 and sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2021 on charges widely recognized as politically motivated. In prison, he wrote *Zekameron*, a remarkable cycle of 100 short stories chronicling daily life behind bars.

Reviewers have described *Zekameron* as a work in which “banality and brutality vie with the human ability to overcome oppression. The tone is laconic, ironic; **the humor dry**. The stories bear witness to resistance and self-assertion and the genuine warmth and appreciation of fellow prisoners.”

BBLA Award for Service to the Czech and Slovak Communities: Henry Kallan

Henry Kallan, president and owner of the **Library Hotel Collection**, is one of New York's most innovative hoteliers and a true example of the American Dream. Arriving as an immigrant, his first job was as a busboy at The Gotham Hotel, where by 28 he became general manager. In 1992 he launched Hotel Wales, one of New York's first boutique hotels, and later developed the award-winning Library Hotel Collection. His properties in New York, Prague, Budapest, and Toronto are celebrated worldwide for their **design, guest experience**, and Kallan's **vision of gracious, innovative hospitality**.



Rehearsal for Truth

The Rehearsal for Truth International Theater Festival is a yearly presentation of performances from Central and Eastern Europe, **all honoring Havel's legacy**: his artistic legacy as well as his political and human rights legacies. This year's theme was Perseverance, and it was our largest ever, including 16 different shows, from Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, and even South Africa (an adaptation of Kafka). When possible, we work with the cultural institutions and consulates of participating countries. We are one of the few American festivals that practices this sort of outreach and cultural diplomacy. We also mix visiting international artists, immigrant artists, and native New York artists together, both on stage and off. Performances are often followed by discussions with artists and diplomats. The festival is curated by Artistic Director Edward Einhorn. More information of the festival and its history is at rehearsalfortruth.org

As part of this ongoing collaboration, **Barbora Krupkova**, actress and member of **Prague's Švandovo Divadlo**, will read from **Zekameron by Maksim Znak**. For her performance as Barbora in *Šikmý kostel* (The Leaning Church), she received a wider nomination for the prestigious **Thálie Award in 2022**, one of the Czech Republic's highest acting honors.



Special Performance by Steve Earle

Steve Earle is one of the most **acclaimed singer-songwriters of his generation**. A protégé of Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark, he has become a **master storyteller** whose songs have been recorded by Johnny Cash, Joan Baez, Emmylou Harris, and many others. His debut album **Guitar Town** (1986) topped the country charts and is now a landmark of Americana. Earle has earned multiple GRAMMY® Awards, and his anthem *Copperhead Road* was named an official Tennessee state song in 2023. Also an **author, actor, and producer**, Earle hosts Hard Core Troubadour Radio. In September 2025, he will be inducted into the **Grand Ole Opry**.



Sponsor an 'Azulejo' (Tile) of the Peter Sís 'Velvet Bridge'

'Velvet Bridge' is a monumental Portuguese made **'azulejo'** tile mural designed by world-renowned Czech-American artist **Peter Sís**, composed of more than 6,600 hand-painted and **glazed ceramic 'azulejo' tiles**. Conceived by Art for Human Rights Founder and Executive Director Bill Shipsey, who also serves on the Vaclav Havel Center Board, and carried out together with fellow Board Member Petr Šimůnek, the joint project is now nearing completion. The tiles have been paid for and are already sitting on pallets in Prague, awaiting installation on the Prague 1–designated wall in Kampa Park. The 230' long and 12' high mural, designed by Peter Sís in homage to the Charles Bridge, narrates the story of Czechoslovakia's struggles and triumphs from its founding in 1918 to the Velvet Revolution of 1989 led by Václav Havel.

Now you can become part of this monumental and historic project!

For a simple sponsorship of \$100 per tile, your name — or the name of a loved one — will be inscribed by pen on the back of a tile before it is affixed to the wall.

Every tile is hand painted and unique, and every sponsor becomes part of a collective tribute to freedom, democracy, human rights, and Václav Havel's enduring legacy. When installed, the Velvet Bridge will be one of the largest azulejo tile murals in the world outside Portugal, a permanent artistic symbol of resistance, hope, and connection.

"Support the Vaclav Havel Center and Art for Human Rights by sponsoring a tile of the Velvet Bridge. Together, we'll turn a wall which divides into a bridge that connects."

Bill Shipsey

Velvet Bridge Project Promoter



Live Auction:

1. A Taste of Bohemia: \$250 Dinner at Bohemian Spirit Restaurant

Take your palate on a trip to Václav Havel's homeland with this \$250 gift certificate to Bohemian Spirit Restaurant on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Enjoy the comforting flavors of Czech cuisine — hearty goulash, roast duck, dumplings, and pastries — the kind of dishes Havel himself might have enjoyed after a night of plotting “mischief.” Bring a friend or two to conspire with over dumplings, and raise a glass to freedom, laughter, and good company. This dining experience brings a slice of Prague to New York with humor, culture, and delicious tradition.



2. Private Glassblowing Experience for Two at UrbanGlass Estimated value: \$570

Discover the magic of glass in this unforgettable hands-on experience for two at UrbanGlass, New York City's premier nonprofit glassblowing studio in Downtown Brooklyn. Guided by a skilled teaching artist, you'll spend three exhilarating hours in the hotshop learning the basics of gathering, blowing, and shaping molten glass at 2100°F. Each of you will create and take home your own unique piece — whether a vibrant flower, a solid paperweight, or a delicate floating bowl. This one-of-a-kind experience combines artistry, craftsmanship, and adventure, offering you the chance to explore an ancient medium in a fresh, modern setting.



3. Havel and Zappa at Prague Castle, 1990 Estimated value: \$3,000

This remarkable pair of photographs, taken by David Dušek, captures a historic meeting on January 22, 1990, at Prague Castle — less than a month after Václav Havel became president of Czechoslovakia. A longtime admirer of Frank Zappa, Havel welcomed the legendary musician, who had come to Prague hoping to establish business ties but was instead embraced as the “enfant terrible” of American rock and a symbol of artistic freedom. To everyone's surprise, Zappa appeared in a suit. Invited by Michael Kocáb, adviser to the president and singer of the banned band Pražský výběr, this encounter reflects the spirit of change and cultural solidarity. This pair of photographs is offered as a limited edition (1 of only 5 prints), and no further prints will be produced.



4. Paris Getaway: 4 Nights in Le Marais with Exclusive Van Gogh Tour Estimated value: \$1,500

Live like a Parisian with four nights in a stylish two-bedroom apartment in the heart of Le Marais. Enjoy a spacious dining and living area, full kitchen, and easy walking access to the district's finest cafés, boutiques, and cultural landmarks such as the Picasso Museum and Maison Victor Hugo. Your stay includes an exclusive guided tour by Bill Shipsey to Auvers-sur-Oise, where Van Gogh spent his final days — including a visit to the inn where he died and the cemetery where he and his brother are buried. To be scheduled between March and November.

5. Joan Baez Signed Print of Her Painting: Václav Havel Estimated value: priceless

Joan Baez's portrait of her dear friend Václav Havel captures the mischievous sparkle she always remembered. This signed print (15 x 12 inches on 19 x 16 paper) comes with a story that binds art to history: on one unforgettable night in Prague, Havel slipped past the secret police disguised as Baez's “roadie,” carrying her guitar. Mid-concert, she introduced him to a packed theater; the crowd erupted, the TV broadcast was cut, and Baez sang “Swing Low” without a microphone. Later, Havel would call that daring moment “the last drop before the revolution.” A work of art, memory, and resistance.



6. Prague in Harmony: Luxury Stay & Czech Philharmonic Experience Estimated value: \$1,500

Indulge in an unforgettable Prague escape with a stay in a luxurious 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom Art Nouveau-style apartment featuring elevator access, a queen bedroom, a second room with a queen and twin bed, a full kitchen, and a spacious dining area — all with breathtaking views of the Vltava River and Old Town. To make the experience truly extraordinary, the Czech Philharmonic has generously donated two tickets to its Open Air concert on June 24, 2026, celebrating the close of its 130th season at the picturesque Hradčany Square at Prague Castle. The evening includes a VIP reception and a glass of wine (or beer) with one of the Philharmonic principals. If that date is not convenient, the winner may instead attend another concert of their choice (subject to availability). This unique combination of luxury accommodations and a once-in-a-lifetime musical experience promises a magical Prague getaway.



Our Year So Far...

U.S. premiere of the film „Havel Speaking, Can You Hear Me?“



Exhibition: "From Dissident to President"



Book launch: Ambassador William Luers in Conversation with Stephen Heintz



Anne Applebaum on Autocracy Inc: Inaugural Annual Lecture 2025



Meeting with Venezuelan Human Rights Defenders



2025 Rehearsal for Truth Theater Festival:

Spring Readings Series
April 14 – May 4

Once Upon a Time There Was a Rooster (UKRAINE)
Blood Brothers (LITHUANIA)
Dissident Power in Havel's Vaněk (CZECHIA)
Cabaret in Captivity (CZECHIA, AUSTRIA)
Business as Usual (ESTONIA)



Main Festival
May 26 – June 15

Blood, Sweat, and Queens (CZECHIA/USA) | Live Theater
Marketa Foukalova (CZECHIA) | Live Music and Poetry
The Decision (BULGARIA) | Interactive Theater
King Stakh's Wild Hunt (BELARUS) | Opera on Film
Connection (BELARUS/AUSTRIA) | Livestream Theater
The Pit (ROMANIA) | Live Theater
Show Trial (SLOVAKIA/USA) | Live Theater
Furiozo: Man Looking for Trouble (POLAND) | Live Clown Theater
Erben: Vlasý (CZECHIA) | Live Puppetry
The Amateurs (SLOVAKIA) | Live Theater
Psyche (HUNGARY) | Live Theater
Kafka's Ape (SOUTH AFRICA, CZECHIA, AUSTRIA) | Live Theater



Host Committee:

Joseph Balaz	Hon. Richard Pivnicka & Hon. Barbara Pivnicka
Elliot S. Berke	Andrew H. Schapiro & Tamar Newberger
David Dusek	John Shattuck & Ellen Hume
Katya Heller	Bill Shipsey
Stephen B. Heintz & Lise Stone	Petr Simunek
Charlotta Kotik	Peter Sis
Eva Kozarova	Jack & Patricia Stack
Wendy Luers	Rose Styron
Martin Palous	Salil Tripathi
Martin Plavec	

Benefactor:

Joseph Balaz
Parklane International School in Prague
Andrew H. Schapiro & Tamar Newberger
Jack & Patricia Stack

Sponsor:

Katya & Douglas Heller
Hope Holiner & Michael Wolkowitz
Ellen Hume & Ambassador John Shattuck
Marcela & Milan Kroupa
Hon. Richard Pivnicka & Hon. Barbara Pivnicka
Dr. Cecilia Rokusek & the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library
Lida & Matthew Urbanek
Tammy Westergard

Supporter:

Andree Bogaerts	Susan Lucak
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Helena Fisera	Alicka Pistek
Slavka Glaser	Elizabeth Rajec
Daniela & Igor Gonda	Jana Ragucci Trnovcova
Lise Stone & Stephen B. Heintz	Jan Svejnar
Robert Howse	Rose Styron
Gabriela & Benjamin Hort	Petra Valentova
Eva Krchova	Lucie Wenigerova
Charlotta Kotik	Andrea & Gerald Wiant
Wendy Luers	Marilyn Wyatt

Special Thanks to:

Consulate General of the Czech Republic in New York
Community Liaison for Slovak Engagement, Sabina Sabados
Czech Philharmonic
UrbanGlass
Presented in cooperation with **NU AVE ART**
Stage Management by **GOH productions**
Graphic Design by **Heels Make Deals**
Catering by **Bohemian Spirit**
Communications by **Dalia Stoniene and Blue Medium**

Milý Henry,

rád bych vám ještě jednou
- a tímto písemně - za srdce
poděkoval za všechno, co jste pro
naš udělal během našeho pobytu
v New Yorku. Měli jsme se u vás
skvěle a rádi na to vzpomínáme
(tím spíš, že každý, ve vašem tonu,
se těžko rozkašle na dům hrůzy,
v němž jsme ubytováni). Těšíme se,
že budeme moci být vám trochu
napomocem při vašem výpadném
novém pronikání do Prahy.

Šťastný a přeji všechno -
dobré vám a vašim blízkým.

Václav H

12/1/2007



Support Vaclav Havel Center



All proceeds will benefit the Vaclav Havel
Center, a not-for-profit organization
established in the United States.

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nowhere else than in the human heart,
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Vaclav Havel



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Havel
Center

BBLA

BOHEMIAN BENEVOLENT
& LITERARY ASSOCIATION

**Rehearsal
for Truth**

Theater Festival
honoring
Vaclav Havel



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