



Image by Ilona Kohlová

The **6-Minute** Challenge, #17

December 16, 2024
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).

Produced by Suzanna Halsey
Moderated by Christopher Harwood

PRESENTERS *(in order of appearance)*

Maxim Višňovský

Nicolas Dostal

Michael Krondl

Ester Wiesnerová

Věra Dvořák

Tomáš Kohl

Michaela (Misha) Záborská

Martin Plavec

Alan Bartuš

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.

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.



Alan Bartuš, born on February 22, 2001, in Lučenec, Slovakia, is among the top ten pianists of his generation. A semi-finalist in the 2023 Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Piano Competition, Alan has collaborated with legends like Jerry Bergonzi and Tim Armacost. Since 2023, he has lived in New York and is active on the jazz scene. In 2022, he won the Excellence Piano Awards, Grand Prix Majestic Excellence Award, and the Ö1 Austrian Jazz Prize and was accept-

ed into the Manhattan School of Music. In 2023, Alan earned the Artedea Prize and first prize at the Langnau International Piano Competition in Switzerland. His work has been praised by Peter Bernstein and Tony Lakatos, among others. In 2024, Alan received the Dave Brubeck Award and performed with Jeff Tain Watts and Robert Hurst at Lincoln Center NYC, solidifying his reputation as a rising jazz star.

Interests and hobbies: hanging out with friends, cooking, movies

Contact: www.alanbartus.com

Special thanks to Jiří Mirovský, Věra Dvořák and Helena Fiserá!



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST!

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We welcome your comments, suggestions, skills, and/or donations.

Website



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Michaela “Misha” Zábranská, director, writer, producer, designer, and animator, was born in Hradec Králové in communist Czechoslovakia, nurtured in inclusive Canada, and matured in the melting pot of Brooklyn. Fluent in several visual media and art forms, she developed her storytelling skills by creating a number of original short films, such as *Passers by* (2000) or *The First Political Speech* (1993), and animating and

directing the ground-breaking TV shows *ReBoot* and *Transformers*. Misha was a Lead Animator at George Lucas’ company Industrial Light & Magic, contributing to films like *Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace* (1999), *The Green Mile* (1999), and *Jack Frost* (1998). Her creativity led her to multi-media performance-based collaborations such as with the choreographer David Parsons on large-scale projections and set design for American Ballet Theatre’s performance *Pied Piper* at the Metropolitan Opera, *ReCreate* at NYU’s Skirball Center, or *Finn* by Mabou Mines. Misha is a Professor at Pratt Institute and a former Professor at NYU. She has currently expanded into virtual reality with *All is Relative* immersive experiences.

Interests and hobbies: Anything and everything that keeps my child-like curiosity and creativity expanded.

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Martin Plavec, MD, FACC, born in Příbram, Czech Republic, earned his medical degree at the Charles University in Prague in 1994. Before coming to the United States, he worked at the Department of Cardiology at Motol Medical Center in Prague. In 1997, he finished the Internal Medicine internship and residency at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, and in 2004, the Cardiovascular Disease fellowship at Ochsner Clinic Foundation in New Orleans, Louisiana. Since 2017, he has been a part of

the academic medicine department at the Heart & Vascular Center at Yale School of Medicine. Martin served on several committees in different hospitals. He is a member of numerous professional societies and certified in multiple specialties, including the American Board of Cardiovascular Medicine, the National Board of Echocardiography, the American Board of Nuclear Cardiology, and the American Board of Internal Medicine. His professional focus includes the implantation of cardiac devices, echocardiography, nuclear cardiology, and treatment of life-threatening cardiovascular conditions.

Interests and hobbies: tennis, skiing, cycling, swimming, reading, traveling

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Maxim Višňovský is a Prague-born student of International Affairs at Columbia University. He is half Czech and half Slovak. After graduating from Johannes Kepler Grammar School, Maxim pursued a Bachelor’s in War Studies at King’s College London in the UK. He also spent a year in Tokyo, studying Indo-Pacific security. Maxim is interested in foreign policy, national security, and multilateral diplomacy.

Prior to his studies at Columbia, Maxim had internships at the Czech Embassy in London, the Permanent Delegation of the Czech Republic to NATO in Brussels, and the Czech Ministry of Defense. Being the president of the Columbia European Union Student Association, Maxim engages with various EU-related topics. In the future, he would like to work for the Czech government, in an EU institution, or at NATO.

Interests and hobbies: tennis, technology, languages, politics, exploring, Japan

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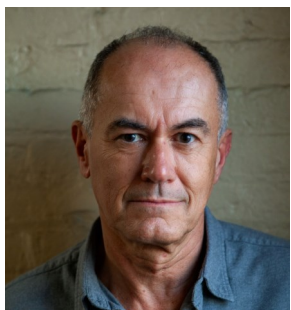


Nicolas Dostal is a Regional Planner at the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments, where he specializes in transportation planning, climate change mitigation, and economic development. Though born in the United States, both of his parents originate from Košice, Slovakia, and frequent trips there and back have played a profound role in his personal and professional development. He graduated from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2022 with a Master’s

in Regional Planning, a Bachelor’s in Political Science, and a minor in Sports Management and Sustainable Community Development. His research explores the proliferation of pedestrian zones through a growing variety of urban typologies and best practices in their organization and programming. He is the author of the article *Pedestrianizing Streets as a Strategy for Urban Greenways*, which he presented at the 7th Fabos Conference in Budapest in 2022.

Interests and hobbies: soccer, tennis, paddleboarding, traveling, and videography

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Michael Krondl, the New York-based installation artist, grew up in Prague and Toronto. He is a graduate of the Cooper Union (BFA) and the CUNY Graduate Center (MLS). His site-specific works often address pressing environmental issues and climate emergencies. At the beginning, there are photographs, which Michael manipulates digitally and via analog to create large-scale installations mounted on walls, billboards, screens, and even floors. His work has been exhibited at private and public galleries in Canada, the USA, and Europe and appeared in numerous public venues, including the Palmovka Synagogue (Prague), the Katonah Museum (New York), and Pier 16 in Manhattan during Climate Week 2024. His permanent public artwork can be seen in the New York City Subway, Surrey (British Columbia), Greenville-Spartanburg Airport, and Vail (Colorado.) Michael is a recipient of many grants, most recently a Canada Council grant to explore rising sea levels in Nova Scotia.

Interests and hobbies: skiing and food history (authored several books)

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Ester Wiesnerová is a vocalist, composer, and educator hailed as “an artist of rare imagination” and “an exciting new voice of European jazz” (Jazzwise, UK). Born in Partizanske in Slovakia, she attended the High School of Performing Arts in Nitra. A Grammy voter, she holds a master’s from the New England Conservatory and a bachelor’s from Berklee College of Music. As an educator, Ester has taught in

twenty countries, co-founded the Slovak nonprofit Za hranice s hudbou (Music Beyond Borders), and received the Forbes 30 under 30 award. Her Grammy-shortlisted debut album fuses contemporary jazz, folk, and Slovakian traditions. Ester’s music has been performed worldwide, from Panama to China, and commissioned by Slovak National Radio and several film projects. Commuting between NYC and Slovakia, Ester balances performing, composing, teaching, nonprofit leadership, and her family life.

Interests and hobbies: salsa dancing, literature, and psychology

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Věra Dvořák, Ph.D., is a linguist, language AI specialist, and language teacher. She hails from Moravské Budějovice in Southwestern Moravia. After studying Czech Philology, Linguistics, and Phonetics at Charles University, she completed her master's degree at the northernmost university in the world, in Tromsø, Norway, where she focused on Chomskian generative grammar. In 2017, she completed her studies in formal linguistics with a doctorate at Rutgers University in

New Jersey. She now works in the IT industry, developing the language AI technologies as a Senior Manager of Machine Learning Operations at Yext, a tech company in Chelsea, NYC. Since her college years, Věra has taught English or Czech for foreigners. Motivated to make her son fully bilingual, she started teaching Czech-American kids at the Czech and Slovak Language Center in Astoria in 2018 and later opened an online Czech course for teenagers. Building on her experience as a heritage language teacher, she recently co-initiated an international working group to create a new Czech textbook for Czech schools abroad.

Interests and hobbies: Moravian folklore & jazz music, afternoon tea, organizing SVU NY events!

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Tomáš Kohl runs a software consultancy that helps marketers and startups build their apps and websites. He grew up in Kralupy nad Vltavou in Central Bohemia and studied viola at the Prague Conservatory, aspiring to become a musician. In the late 1990s, he spent two semesters at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, and he advanced to the final round of the Primrose Viola Competition in Canada. Always nurturing his interest in computer programming, he eventually transitioned to a career as a software engineer.

He has collaborated on several high-profile digital initiatives, including the launch of an electric car-sharing venture by Volkswagen in Berlin and an internet portal by Vodafone in Prague. He moved to NYC in March 2023 to grow his business. Tomáš lives in Brooklyn with his wife Ilona, their son Alois, and their dog Becky.

Interests and hobbies: dancing and DJing tango, playing the piano

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