

The New Russian Drama Season 2009-2010

[www.newrussiandrama.org](http://www.newrussiandrama.org)

The Department of Theatre Arts will present an entire season of contemporary Russian drama in 09-10, developed in collaboration with The Center for International Theatre Development, Philip Arnoult, director.

December 4 and 5 at 8pm, December 6 at 2pm

December 9 and 10 at 7:30pm

December 11 and 12 at 8pm

The Studio Theatre

By Olga Mukhina

Adapted by Kate Moira Ryan

Directed by Yury Urnov



**NEW  
RUSSIAN  
DRAMA**  
VOICES IN A  
SHIFTING AGE

[www.newrussiandrama.org](http://www.newrussiandrama.org)

## **Conversations After the Play**

Please join us for a series of post-performance conversations about the play and contemporary Russian society. Discussions will begin shortly after the performance and last for approximately thirty minutes.

**December 4th** with director Yury Urnov, choreographers Albert Albert and Alexandra Konnikova, playwright Olga Mukhina, and Moscow Times Theatre Critic John Freedman.

**December 9th** with Political Science professor Alison Millett McCartney.

**December 10th** with theatre critic and scholar of Russian literature John Barry.

**December 11th** with director Yury Urnov.

Towson University Department of Theatre Arts, in association with the  
Center for International Theatre Development, presents

# Tanya Tanya

By Olga Mukhina

Adapted by Kate Moira Ryan

**Director**

**Choreographers**

**Set Designer**

**Costume Designer**

**Lighting Designer**

**Sound Designer**

**Stage Manager**

Yury Urnov

Albert Albert, Alexandra Konnikova

Daniel Ettinger

Rebecca Eastman

Heather Mork

Jay Herzog and Yury Urnov

Jill Berman

## Cast

Okhlobystin

Zina

Ivanov

Tanya 1

Tanya 2

Boy

Uncle Vanya

Joseph Ritsch

Caroline Reck

David Gregory

Caitlin O'Hare

Shannon McPhee

Rich Buchanan

Matt Shea

## Production Staff

**Technical Director**

**Assistant Technical Director**

**Assistant Set designer**

**Assistant Costume Designer**

**Assistant Stage Managers**

**Master Electrician**

**Charge Artists**

**Costumiere**

**Costumiere Assistant**

**House Electricians**

**Props**

**Dramaturgy**

**Light Board Operator**

**Sound Board Operator**

**Deck Hand**

**Wardrobe**

**Production Manager for Towson  
University's Russia Season**

Trevor M. Collins

C. Justin Stockton

Charis Bartenslager

Jessica Springer

Caitlin Quinn, Molly Hopkins, Vonetta Massey

Brandon Ingle

Heather Mork

Cheryl Kitz Partridge

Julie Gerhardt

Katie Nelson, James Alfred Rose Johnson

Heather Mork, Antony Rosas

Abby Grimsley, Lauren Guy

Rachel Erin Blank

Brendan Leahy

Kathryn Clark, Robert Loreto

Alex Li

Cat Hagner

## **Crews and Staff**

### **Costume Shop Staff**

Alex Li, Abby Grimsley, Elizabeth Chapman,  
Charis Bartenslager, Jessica Springer,  
Phoebe Troiani, Kathy Abbott, Ciara Grant,  
Irene Wise

### **Costume Shop Crew**

Adam Brooks, Trevor Collins, Sarah Durivage-  
Jacobs, Eric Gazzillo, Andrew Hann,  
Charles Henderson, Stephanie Holland,  
Jessica Hutchinson, James Johnson,  
Caitlyn Joy, Jon Lazarus, Katie Nelson,  
Lindsey Nixon, Success Okoronkwo,  
Kerlyn Paul, Beau Peregino,  
Molly Purcell, Mitchel Troescher

### **Scene Shop Staff**

Trevor Collins, Eric Gazzillo, Brenden Leahy,  
Eric Poch, Todd Staffieri

### **Scene Shop Crew**

Brandon Beatty, Ashley Bryner,  
Johanna Cifuentes, Christina Clark,  
Vincent Constantino, Jessica Dugger,  
Sarah Durivage-Jacobs, Todd Herman,  
Jessica Hutchinson, Charmise Jackson,  
Troy Jennings, Emily Jewett, Janet Giacinto,  
Caitlyn Joy, Alexander Kafarakis,  
Timothy Lorch, Crystal Luberecki, Molly Purcell,  
Kaitlin Solomon, Nancy Stange,  
Angelina Tebarts, Phil Payne,  
KP Prescott-Ezickson, Sara Morin

### **Lighting Crew**

Brandon Trevor Beatty, Jill Berman,  
Richard David Buchanan, Benjamin Boyd  
Buhrman, Alex Burch, Christina Rose Clark,  
Tameka Shonte Gray, Todd Christopher Herman,  
Troy R Jennings, Janet N Giacinto,  
Alexander Phillip Kafarakis, Jon Kevin Lazarus,  
Brendan Michael Leahy, Crystal Valentina  
Luberecki, Kerlyn Toli Paul, William Carson  
Shelton, Jessica Lynn Springer,  
Todd Anthony Staffieri, Karissa Lynn Strawl

# The New Russian Drama Season

By the end of the 1990s, young people who were raised in the Soviet Union and discovering themselves as adults amidst the promise and chaos of a society undergoing a similar process of discovery, started bringing their unique generational perspectives to the stage. In a wave of writing that was soon dubbed “new drama,” playwrights created work that blends frank discussions of contemporary social issues with bold experiments in theatrical style. For much of the twentieth century, such writing was not seen on stage in Russia. Dramatic texts were censored and only theatrical production could hint at a potential critical spirit or individual sentiment beneath the approved language. Thus the new drama rang out a startling and inspiring note to fellow Russians. The playwrights have been greeted by their peers as the heroes of a new era who are following in long line of Russian literary figures by bringing new artistic vision to the 21st century in much the same way that authors like Anton Chekhov spoke to the dawn of the 20th century. Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, playwrights like Maksym Kurochkin, Yury Klavdiev, Olga Mukhina and Vyacheslav Durnenkov, have continued to create diverse and compelling visions of life in this shifting age.

For students and audiences in the United States, those visions offer an exciting experience of a life that is at once familiar and unknown. The search to find one’s true path amidst a deluge of conflicting influences, the struggle to create a new community when the one we were promised unexpectedly and cruelly dissolves, the longing for a love that continually eludes our grasp – these narratives will resonate for us in the sardonic wit of Kurochkin, the vibrant imagery of Klavdiev, the lyrical poetry of Mukhina and the idiosyncratic characters of Durnenkov. Yet the plays also take us into everyday experiences of people whose lives most of us have not had the opportunity to encounter. Given the historic tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as the environment of misunderstanding that still permeates our country’s relationship with Russia, insights we might gain about this culture from the plays seem particularly timely and necessary.

The desire to engage with these plays, and through them with the people and the culture that created them, gave birth to our New Russian Drama Project. Inspired by the work of Philip Arnoult’s Center for International Theatre Development, which has been building bridges between theatre artists in the U.S. and Russia for over a decade, students and faculty in the Department of Theatre Arts have been learning about contemporary Russian theatre and its people for the last three years. Seven members of the theatre faculty visited Russia. We attended performances, we conversed with fellow artists, and, yes, we even drank a little vodka. Over that time we developed this project in collaboration with CITD and partners in Russia, Moscow Times Arts Editor John Freedman and director Yury Urnov. In order to help bring new Russian drama to audiences in the United States, we commissioned translations of new plays. We studied the work in classes and brought in guest artists from Russia – including Yury Urnov, who is here as a Fulbright scholar for the entire school year. In the spring, CITD will host a professional conference at the university.

Yet the plays, of course, are designed to live before an audience. We’re delighted to have you join us for tonight’s presentation of Olga Mukina’s *Tanya Tanya*, in a new adaptation commissioned by our project from American playwright Kate Moira Ryan. Urnov has directed the play and the choreography was created by our CEC ARTSLINK and Rosenberg Guest Artists Alexandra Konnikova and Albert Albert, who have been in residence with the theatre and dance programs for the past six weeks. This production also features members of our undergraduate and graduate programs performing together as part of our main stage season. We hope this encounter with a contemporary play that found a devoted audience in Russia will make you curious to learn more about the experiences of people in that country. The notes in this program, our website and our post show discussions may help to start you on that journey. There’s much to discover . . .

## **Robyn Quick**

Associate Professor, Department of Theatre Arts  
Russia Season Dramaturg

# The New Russian Drama Season 2009–2010

Towson University's Department of Theatre Arts will present an entire season of contemporary Russian drama in 09–10, developed in collaboration with The Center for International Theatre Development, Philip Arnoult, director.  
[www.newrussiandrama.org](http://www.newrussiandrama.org) For Reservations call 410-704-ARTS

Main Stage Productions

## Tanya-Tanya

By Olga Mukhina  
Adapted by Kate Moira Ryan  
Directed by Yury Urnov  
In the Studio Theatre

December 4th and 5th at 8:00 pm  
December 6th at 2:00 pm  
December 9th and 10th at 7:30pm  
December 11th and 12th at 8:00 pm

## Martial Arts

By Yury Klavdiev  
Translated by David M. White  
with Yury Urnov  
Directed by Yury Urnov  
and Stephen Nunn  
In the Marder Theatre

April 21st and 22nd at 7:30pm  
April 23rd at 8:00 pm  
April 24th at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm  
April 25th at 2:00 pm  
April 26th and 27th at 7:30pm

## Frozen in Time

By Vyacheslav Durnenkov  
Translated by John Freedman  
Directed by Peter Wray  
In the Main Stage Theatre

April 30th at 8:00 pm  
May 1st at 8:00 pm  
May 2nd at 2:00 pm  
May 5th and 6th at 7:30pm  
May 7th and 8th at 8:00 pm

Workshop Productions

## Vodka, F\*\*\*ing, and Television

By Maksym Kurochkin  
Translated by John Hanlon  
Directed by Stephen Nunn  
In the Dreyer MFA Studioe

October 21st and 22nd at 7:30pm  
October 23rd and 24th at 8:00pm

## The Polar Truth

By Yury Klavdiev  
Translated by John Freedman  
Directed by Joseph Ritsch  
In the Marder Theatre

November 12th at 7:30pm  
November 13th and 14th at 8:00 pm

## Natasha: I won and Natasha's Dream

By Yuroslava Pulinvich  
Translated by John Freedman  
Directed by Stephen Nunn  
In the Dreyer MFA Studio

February 3rd and 4th at 7:30pm  
February 5th and 6th at 8:00 pm

Staged Readings

## Playing Dead

By The Presnyakov Brothers  
Translated by Juanita Rockwell  
with Yury Urnov Directed by Yury Urnov  
In the Main Stage Theatre

November 16th at 7:30pm

## The Schooling of Bento Bonchev

By Maksym Kurochkin  
Translated by John Freedman  
Directed by Yury Urnov  
In the Studio Theatre

February 3rd at 5 pm

Associated Productions

## I Am the Machine Gunner

By Yury Klavdiev  
Translated by John Freedman  
Produced by Generous Company  
At Towson University

Friday, December 4th at 6pm  
Saturday, December 5th at 3pm  
Sunday, December 6th at Noon

## Playing Dead

By the Presnyakov Brothers  
Translated by Juanita Rockwell  
with Yury Urnov Produced by Single Carrot Theatre

February 17th – March 14th

## Reading of Tanya-Tanya

By Olga Mukhina  
Adapted by Kate Moira Ryan  
Directed by Yury Urnov  
Produced by New York Theatre Workshop

October 8th

# A Conversation with the Adaptor

Dramaturg Robyn Quick speaks with playwright Kate Moira Ryan about her adaptation of *Tanya Tanya*.

Kate Moria Ryan -Upcoming projects – Her adaptation of Russian Olga Mukhina’s play *Tanya Tanya* will open at Towson University in December and will be directed by Yury Urnov. *Mommie Queerest* written with and for Judy Gold will premiere at Theatre J in Washington, DC this December. *Bass for Picasso* will be produced on Theater Row (NYC) by Theater Breaking Through Boundaries in April. Recent projects include – *The Beebo Brinker Chronicles* written with Linda S. Chapman and directed by Leigh Silverman ran to sold out houses off-Broadway and received the 2008 GLAAD Media Award. It is published by the Dramatists Play Service and will open at Brava Theater in San Francisco this February. *25 Questions for a Jewish Mother* written with and for Judy Gold ran eight months off Broadway, received the 2007 GLAAD Media Award and is currently in its third year of a nationwide tour. A book based on the play was published by Hyperion and was nominated for the Quill award. Her play, *Cavedweller*, based on Dorothy Allison’s bestselling novel was produced by New York Theater Workshop and was directed by Michael Grief. It is published by Dramatist’s Play Service. OTMA produced by the Atlantic Theater Company and published by Playscripts. It has been performed at colleges around the United States as well as in Russia. She has received numerous fellowships most recently the Sundance Playwriting Fellowship, the Alfred E. Sloan Fellowship and four fellowships from Center for International Theatre Development to Russia..

*Tanya Tanya* was commissioned for the Russian Season at the Towson University Department of Theatre Arts, developed with the Center for International Theatre Development.

**RQ: What drew you to Mukhina’s work in general and this play in particular?**

KMR: I really did not know anything about Olga Mukhina’s play or her work. I asked to do an adaptation of a Russian woman playwright and picked this one without knowing much about it. I felt it was important as a woman playwright to bring her work here. I was surprised when I first read John’s translation as it was unlike any of my work. I was at Wyoming for a Sundance Playwriting Fellowship and every night at dinner I would say, “I don’t know how I am going to make this work.” So I went on long walks and slowly it came to me-solidify the structure, let Olga’s language come out and make it accessible to American audiences. Every day I would work 3-4 hours a day and just let the play speak to me.

**RQ: Your version of this script is called an adaptation. How do you consider an adaptation different from a translation and how did your notion of adaptation guide your approach to your work on *Tanya-Tanya*?**

KMR: I originally worked off of John Freedman’s literal translation of *Tanya Tanya* and then I hired a young Russian student from the University of Chicago to translate it word for word to make sure I was completely clear on the text. Then I adapted it which means I changed the language, cut parts which could not translate to an American audience and lastly, I tried to make Olga’s work not only as clear as possible, but also as poetic as possible. Just about every line from the literal translation has been changed. Olga is a poet. She’s a playwright and a poet and I wanted her wonderful language to come through.

## **A Conversation with the Adaptor (cont)**

**RQ: What are your goals in adapting the play?**

**KMR:** My goals were simple, but in some ways quite lofty. I wanted to make this play accessible to American audiences. As a nation are still very much entrenched in a linear framework i.e. a beginning, middle and end story line. This play is more ethereal than that. So I attempted to make it as understandable as I could for an American audience without destroying its own structure and beauty.

**RQ: There were two staged readings of your script prior to our production – one at Towson in May and one at the New York Theatre Workshop in October. What kind of information does a staged reading give a playwright and how did this particular script change as a result of what you perceived in those readings?**

**KMR:** Stage readings are great resources for me as a playwright. In the first one, I made cuts and tweaks. In the second one, I actually had Yuri with me for two days. We spoke about the play. I listened to his notes, I listened to the actors questions and made changes. I said to Yuri, "I am here for you. You tell me what I need, how I can help you and I will figure out how to do it." My job is the script. Yuri's is to make it come alive. I rarely if ever interfere with a director's job, but I am always available to help a director when questions come up in rehearsal.

**RQ: Where there any moments in the play that created challenges for you because of very specific Russian cultural references? How did you attempt to craft those moments in a way that would speak to audiences in the U.S.?**

**KMR:** Yes, there are very specific references to Russian poets especially when Ivanov starts quoting from Mayakovsky. I said to Yuri - most Americans do not know of Mayakovsky's work-so we'll have to reference it somehow. And I did a very simple reference like, "Why are you quoting Mayakovsky?" Russians know their poets. They are proud of their poets. Every city has a Pushkin Square. In America, I guess the closest poets would be Whitman or Frost, but I don't find many Americans quoting poetry. In Russia, poets have an almost god like stature, so it's refreshing for me to enter into this world, but also challenging to try and convey how Russians feel about their poets and writers. How they feel about their language. I've studied Russian on and off for a couple years and I love to speak it. I love to listen to it. Some people think Russians are abrupt when they speak English, but the Russian language is very formal and very, very polite. I love going to Russia. I think I've explored almost every inch of Moscow and St. Petersburg. I just wish I could get more Americans to visit and experience it the way I do. I am so grateful for the CITD and the Trust for bringing me and for opening my world the way it has. I wish I was fluent enough to read Chekhov or Turgenev or Ahkmatova or Mukhina in Russia.

I once heard an old recording of Vladimir Nabokov on BBC radio. They asked him if he mourned his loss of estates and wealth (he had fled after the revolution). He answered that the only thing he mourned was writing in his mother language of Russian. And the irony is that he became one of the greatest English language writers of the 20th century.



## About the Playwright

Olga Mukhina was born in 1970 to two geologists living in Moscow. When she was six years old, the family moved to Ukhta in the far north, where she spent the remainder of her childhood. Mukina returned to Moscow as a young adult with the hope of writing films. After several unsuccessful efforts to gain admission to a screenwriting program at the cinema institute, she turned her attention to the stage. Based upon her first play, *The Sorrowful Dances of Ksaveria Kalutsky*, she was invited to study dramatic writing at the Gorky Institute in 1991. She wrote two other plays, *Alexander August* (1991), and *The Love of Karlovna* (1992), before crafting the work that established her position as an important new voice in Russian theatre, *Tanya Tanya*, in 1994. This play was introduced to the public in June of 1995, through a staged reading at Lyubimovka, which had been the suburban estate of Konstantin Stanislavsky. Early the next year, a full production of *Tanya Tanya* opened to great acclaim at the Fomenko Theatre in Moscow. This production has been marked by some critics as instrumental in convincing critics and audiences in Russia that contemporary playwriting was worthy of their attention. According to critic and translator John Freedman, "This is the play that broke the vicious circle, that proved to large numbers of people with disparate backgrounds, styles and tastes, that a contemporary play could look, sound and feel good when performed on the stage" (Introduction xii). In the ensuing years, new drama was increasingly presented at festivals and produced by new theatre companies.

Part of the sensation created by Mukhina's work may be due to its dramatic departure from the dominant styles of playwriting during previous decades. Mukhina turns her attention to the realm of the personal and the emotional, with characters lost in a swirl of poetic images and desires. According to Freedman, "Mukhina is a writer of a completely different sensibility. She is a poet playwright, a dreamer capable of following the raptures of life into enchanted territory while never losing sight of the harsh limits and killing pressures of reality. Mukhina's characters soar in their aspirations even as their lives figuratively are dashed on the rocks" ("Bringing Forth Brilliance"). The impact of her poetic vision quickly spread beyond Russia's borders. Within a year of its first Moscow production, *Tanya Tanya* was translated into five languages. The Moscow production toured to Poland, Germany, and Bulgaria. Staged readings were presented in 1997 at the Avignon Festival and, in 1998, at the New York Theatre Workshop. An English translation by John Freedman was published in 1999 and later presented in a reading at Portland Stage and performed at the California Institute of the Arts. Mukhina's subsequent plays include *YoU* (1996), which was produced at the Moscow Art Theatre and *Flying* (2004), which has been made into a film to be released in 2010.

### Works Cited

- Freedman, John. Introduction. *Two Plays by Olga Mukhina*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.
- . "Bringing Forth Brilliance From Her Creative Cauldron." Rev. of *YoU* at the Moscow Art Theatre. *The Moscow Times*. 27. Sept. 2001. LexisNexis Academic. 17 Nov. 2009. Web.

# Notes on the World of the Play

*When Tanya Tanya was written in 1994, Russia was undergoing tremendous social, political and cultural changes. The following essays will provide some insight about this extraordinary moment in history and describe other aspects of Russian culture in the world of Tanya Tanya.*

## Politics

When *Tanya Tanya* was written, Russia had been in turmoil for over ten years. It started as a slow burning, underground rumble with the death of hardline Soviet dictator Leonid Brezhnev in 1982, followed by two leaders who both died shortly after gaining office. By 1985, the Soviet Communist party decided that a younger man was needed to ensure stability, and they thought they found the appropriate man in Mikhail Gorbachev. However, Gorbachev quickly made dramatic changes in the Soviet Union, recognizing that the old way of doing things was sending the country into ruin. He raised prices on alcohol, started allowing some small free enterprise, and lifted restrictions on freedoms of speech and the press. Suddenly, Soviet citizens were no longer being fed stories about the greatness of the empire and instead learned the truth - they were economically bankrupt, and mired in political and intellectual confusion. The empire couldn't afford its clothes any longer and no longer knew which clothes it even wanted.

Soviet citizens spent the next few years watching their European empire crumble, including places considered parts of "Russia." By 1991's end, their own country disintegrated, mostly peacefully, and Russia was reborn. Boris Yelstin, a firebrand Russian nationalist, became president, and he faced the difficult task of rebuilding this demoralized country without a consensus on exactly how Russia should be rebuilt or even what Russia was.

One political grouping of nationalists, sometimes referred to as neo-Slavophiles, sought to restore Russian greatness by creating what author Nicolai Petro called a "constrained autocracy," meaning a strong, single, powerful leader who nonetheless is subject to some democratic mechanisms, such as free speech. For this group, communism was an interruption in Russian history, and they sought to rebuild Russia's national identity through links with symbols from the past, reestablishing a preeminent place for the Russian orthodox church, and both protecting and utilizing Russia's environment and natural riches. They did not feel that only adopting Western ways, an old argument harkening to Peter the Great's reign, was the way for Russia to regain its past glory and power. Indeed, some authors have noted that even the term nationalism does not quite have a direct translation into English, and one, Leonard Shapiro, prefers to instead to translate Russians' view of nationalism as "one's own way of being."

A second group was the Westernizers. They saw everything Russian as backward and wrong and that Russia's future lay in the political and economic structures of the West, which could be successfully transferred to Russia, a view that Western countries readily encouraged - and funded. This group initially won the fight over Russia's future, beginning with the imposition of elections and economic liberalization, known as "shock therapy." Russia, for them was an important part of the West, not its own type of entity.

The third group was comprised of former communists who thought that Western countries were using this moment of Russian weakness to increase their own power at Russia's expense. They promoted the values of political independence, power, stability, and sovereignty and emphasized political autocracy, state control of all sectors, and the military. Some members of this group argued that certain accommodations to Western ways could be made, mere facets of capitalism, but only if they served to strengthen the Russian state. It was this group that led the revolt against Yeltsin in October 1993.

In spring 1993, arguments between President Yeltsin and the Russian parliament about Russia's political and economic direction became quite heated, resulting in what is known as the Russian Constitutional Crisis. A referendum was held on the new constitution in April, and after the constitution passed, Yeltsin used this opportunity to dissolve the troublesome parliament in September. Parliament responded by impeaching Yeltsin and installing Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi, a statist, as acting president. While still declaring himself as president and with the support of some legislators, Yeltsin marshaled his political supporters for protests at the Russian White House, home of the Supreme Soviet branch of the legislature. Tens of thousands of people were out in the streets on one side or the other. By September 30, the White House was barricaded. The Russian government started to fight itself - literally with arms - and eventually the army, which was initially neutral - sided with Yeltsin. Gaining the army's support was crucial, and shells were lobbed at the building to create confusion and allow crack troops in to arrest the alleged conspirators. Yeltsin regained power, but his control was never complete. In total, the ten-day conflict cost 187 lives and 437 more were wounded, though some unofficial sources (former communists) put the number closer to 2,000 injured/killed. As one of Yeltsin's prime ministers, Yegor Gaidar, once said "Russia is today not a bad subject for long-term prognostication, and a very inappropriate subject for short-term analysis." The economic, social, and political upheavals left tomorrow uncertain for everyone, though for the youth, many saw it as a time of opportunity and excitement, not knowing if things would return to the same old ways or a new Russia would really be born from the ashes of communism.

**Alison Millett McCartney**

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

## The Sputnik Generation

Donald J. Raleigh's interviews with individuals from the Russian baby-boom, or the Sputnik Generation as he refers to the group, include a conversation with Arkdii Olegovich Darchenko, who reports, "our entire generation . . . welcomed Perestroika" (152). Darchenko was born in 1950, which made him an established adult by the time his country experienced drastic social and economic changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He describes hardships of the time: "in connection with Perestroika, the institute where I worked practically shut down. Well, it's still open, but you can't work there, because they don't pay a thing" (128). However, unlike many others, he was well prepared with a strong education to be able to switch jobs, in part because he spoke English. Although he says his peers welcomed Perestroika, he also believes that "most likely, our generation didn't differ at all from our parents . . . But after us came a new generation that was completely different" (129). In Darchenko's mind, younger Russians might be better prepared to adapt to new social and political conditions.

Work Cited

Raleigh, Donald. *Russia's Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives*. Indiana University P, 2006. Print.

**Kate Lilley**

Senior, Theatre Arts

## The Children of Perestroika

Deborah Adelman interviewed teenagers during the reforms of the late 1980s in Russia to capture their views on the economy, the politics and the changes that were happening. She later came back in 1991, initially to just give them a copy of her book, *"Children of Perestroika" Come of Age: Young People of Moscow Talk about Life in the New Russia*, but turned out to add a new chapter to it from their recent experiences. She observed that, "The young people express bitterness about failing new economic policies and increasing poverty and crime, but at the same time they still believe that the lives of ordinary Russians can improve and, more important, that they can personally play some role in ensuring that outcome. The excitement and enthusiasm I had found three years earlier were gone, but they had not been replaced with indifference" (xii). These young people had greater levels of ambivalence, revealing a generation "still caught between the old and the new, a generation not yet ready to abandon totally the values and attitudes that are part of the Soviet legacy, yet also not ready or sure how to incorporate themselves fully into a new way of life--especially economic life--in the new Russia" (xii). Over the next few years, their pessimism would increase in the political and economic turmoil of the 1990s.

Work Cited

Adelman, Deborah. *The "Children of Perestroika" Come of Age: Young People of Moscow Talk about Life in New Russia*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

**Kate Lilley**

Senior, Theatre Arts

# In the Meantime: An Examination of Recreation in Russian Culture

Welcome to a world of complex relationships driven by conflicting desires. In this world, lovers co-exist despite the difficulties in their personal lives and what's happening in the world around them. Providing an escape route from the chaos and simultaneously fueling the romance, are music, drinking, and dancing. Like Russia, the world of the play is full of activities that can be enjoyed in times of hardship and good fortune.

There are a significant number of encounters in this play that revolve around eating and drinking, which brings us to a popular activity in Russia; mushroom hunting. Mushroom hunting is a seasonal activity that occurs starting in the summer and ending in the fall. It doesn't require any guns, only a sharp knife, a basket, and knowing what to pick. It's an activity that is both free and useful, because once the mushrooms are picked, they are cooked and eaten. They can be found in the forests and the woods throughout Russia and are deeply rooted in Russian history and tradition.

According to Irina Sheludkova, the relationship between the Russian people and mushrooms dates back to ancient times. Mushrooms saved lives during periods of famine, and were a staple food of all Slavic people who lived in forested areas with poor agricultural land. Since the 10th century, when Orthodox Christianity was widely introduced, they became an essential part of Russian meals as a substitute for meat during Lent. Some Americans, particularly vegetarians as well as vegans also use mushrooms as a substitute for meat. When cooked thoroughly, they become tough and have somewhat of a meaty texture. More than 200 kinds of edible mushrooms can be found in Russia ("Free Food").

Drinking is quite popular among the masses in Russia. It often occurs amongst friends and goes hand in hand with a meal. Although vodka is a favorite choice for consumption amongst Russians, the characters in this world consume a significant amount of wine and champagne. Wines made in Russia include, Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling, Aligote, Muscat, Rkatsiteli, Saperavi, Port, Madera, and Sherry ("About Russian Wines"). The fact that the characters are consuming wine or champagne isn't altogether surprising, as wine and champagne are viewed as aphrodisiacs in some cultures. In this play we see wine being served with chocolate, which is also known as an aphrodisiac. The younger Tanya associates champagne with a clear mind and kissing.

It is more common for a man and a woman who have an intimate relationship to drink wine rather than hard liquor. In a situation where it's just the guys hanging out, such as the one we see in the scene with Ivanov, Okhlobystin, Uncle Vanya, and the Boy; vodka is usually the drink of choice. Alcohol has several functions in Russian society. One function, as George Bernard Shaw stated so eloquently, is "it makes life bearable to millions of people who could not endure their existence if they were quite sober" (Shaw). It also provides an occasional slip of the tongue and/or lapse in judgment, showing us a bit more of the characters than they were initially intending to reveal.

## In the Meantime (cont.)

Music and dancing are at the center of this play, as these characters dance with one another, both literally and figuratively. There are many images of dancing and music, as well as comments on how specific characters feel about music and/or dancing. The atmosphere of music, dancing, and drinking, creates a gateway for romance and opens up the door for relationships beyond platonic to develop. The production's musical selections range from contemporary Ukrainian folk-rock by Screams of Vidopliasov to classical Russian opera performed by Feodor Chaplain. This range of musical selections sweeps the characters up on a journey that won't soon be forgotten.

In Russian culture, one way of measuring a person's intellect is by observing how well they pick up on references to writers and their works. An intelligent person should read literary and philosophic works, be able to quote authors and characters, and even know biographical information about well known writers. We see Zina ironically measure Tanya's character by this very notion; "She seems like a serious girl to me. Always quoting poetry." Besides its enjoyable nature, another reason reading is so cherished is that some books (and music) were forbidden during the Soviet era. As a result, an underground network formed amongst Russia's population, where people would exchange banned books and music. Therefore, is not uncommon to be in a theatre full of people who have read the same books, and know specific references to an author's work as well as details about their life. For example Ivanov says "GIVE ME A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN, I WILL WASTE HER SOUL! I WILL RAPE HER!" The younger Tanya immediately identifies the author as Mayakovsky, whose works she has probably read. In the spirit of Russian quotes, She might have found a similar sentiment in Mayakovsky's *Attitude to a Miss*:

That night was to decide  
if she and I  
were to be lovers.  
Under cover  
of darkness  
no one would see, you see.  
I bent over her, it's the truth,  
and as I did,  
it's the truth, I swear it,  
I said  
like a kindly parent:  
"Passion's a precipice –  
so won't you please  
move away?  
Move away,  
please!

In a world of mixed up emotions, complex relationships, and social and political upheaval, it would be difficult to survive without a little Russian recreation.

Works Cited

About Russian Wines. Russiawines.com. 2 Sept. 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2009.

Shaw, Bernard. Major Barbara. Penguin Books, 2000. New York. Print.

Mayakovsky, Vladimir. "Attitude to a Miss", Marxist Internet Archive. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.

Sheludkova, Irina. "Free Food." Passport Magazine. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

**Oituwra Anderson**

Senior, Theatre Arts

# Love and Marriage Developments in Russia

She throws the purple vase from the table and it smashes to the ground.(9)

Zina and Okhlobystin pick up the shards of the vase. (*Tanya Tanya*)

Whether one is married, engaged, single, dating, younger, or older, love draws people to one another. But the way that people pursue romantic partnerships and the form they expect such relationships to take may be informed by their individual impulses and society's influence. In response to shifting social forces, men and women of all stages of life in Russia faced major challenges that affected many aspects of their lives. By the early 1990s, ideas of love and marriage were once again transforming in reaction to a new and uncertain time.

Many ideas of love and marriage in Russia are deeply rooted in a Russian Orthodox past. Relations between men and women were influenced by the interpretation of scripture and a predominant patriarchal tradition. This tradition upheld the belief that the man should lead the household and be the breadwinner of the family and the woman should help her husband and allow him to lead her and the family (Kay 158).

Amidst all of the social and political changes that came after the revolution of 1917, was the promise of gender equality. Soviet authorities sought to abolish the patriarchal family structure, not only because this idea was rooted in religious doctrine, but also because it promoted a form of social division:

Marxist-Leninist doctrine proclaimed that couples should marry for love only and without regard to economic considerations [...] And, having been protected for 70 years from unemployment and other fluctuations that normally occur in a market economy, many youth and their parents perceived the future to be stable and predictable. (Cartwright 2)

Men and women were to be esteemed equally; both sexes supposedly worked and provided for their families. Even though the Soviet Union sought to establish equality among all social groups, some traditional notions of male and female roles in the family still carried from one generation to the next. After the fall of the Soviet Union, both ideologies were part of the conversation as people considered what new mosaics might be created out of the fragments of the past.

## Works Cited

Cartwright, Kimberly D. "Shotgun Weddings and the Meaning of Marriage in Russia: An Event History Analysis." Academic Search Premier. EBSCO, 2000. Web. 20 Sept. 2009.

Kay, Rebecca. *Men in contemporary Russia the fallen heroes of post-Soviet change?* Burlington, Vt: ASHGATE, 2005. Print.

## Lauren Guy

Senior, Pre-Early Childhood Education



# Anton Chekhov

Physician Anton Chekhov (1860 – 1904) created short stories and dramatic works that have been praised for their ability to capture both the everyday behavior and the essential longings of human beings. His plays have held the world stage since the time they were written. But Chekhov maintains a particularly important place in Russian theatre, as his statue's position overlooking the Moscow Art Theatre and the emblem of his play *The Seagull* on that building might suggest. Playwright Olga Mukhina credits her countryman with creating archetypes of the Russian people that serve as ancient Greek myths did for that civilization. She notes that his characters "live in us. This is our culture. These people are like family to us" (Freedman, "Olga Mukhina").

A Russian audience – or an American one familiar with the work of the earlier playwright -- may well recognize in her plays, what John Freedman refers to as fragments or debris of Chekhov. In *Tanya Tanya*, the characters Uncle Vanya and Ivanov may have little in common with Chekhov's plays and characters of the same names. But Mukhina evokes the earlier playwright's creations in order to craft them anew. Freedman mentions the strings "humming in the air" in *Tanya Tanya* as Mukhina's response to and reversal of the mournful and disturbing broken string heard in *The Cherry Orchard* (Freedman, Introduction xviii). That Chekhov play also offers a reflection on the present in relationship to the past that director Yuri Urnov finds resonating in *Tanya Tanya*:

Firs: Back in the old days, forty, fifty years ago, they used to make dried cherries, pickled cherries, preserved cherries, cherry jam, and sometimes –

Gayev: Oh, Firs, just shut up.

Firs: -- sometimes they sent them off to Moscow by the wagonload. People paid a lot for them! Back then the dried cherries were soft and juicy and sweet, and they smelled just lovely; back then they knew how to fix them . . .

Liubov Andreyevna: Does anybody know how to fix them nowadays?

Firs: Nope. They all forgot that.

## Works Cited

- Chekhov, Anton. *The Cherry Orchard. The Plays of Anton Chekhov*. Trans. Paul Schmidt. New York: Harper, 1999. Print.
- Freedman, John. "Olga Mukhina on Anton Chekhov." *The Moscow Times* 16 April 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2009.
- . Introduction. *Two Plays by Olga Mukhina*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.

## The Quandary of Post-Soviet Social Hierarchy and Class

Traditionally, the Russian people have been shifted from one authoritarian regime to another. In the age of the Tsars, society was organized according to a strictly stratified hierarchy in which social class, as defined by heredity and economics, determined one's relative level of power over others and over one's own destiny. Even in the "classless" society that the Bolsheviks attempted to make, there were informal social structures that distinguished certain groups of people from others. Though this system may not have operated upon the former hierarchy of privilege according to social class, people belonging to certain groups may have attained a certain status as a result of achievement or association that accorded them special regard or treatment in society. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union, many people retained their sense of belonging to a particular category of individuals within society, but the relationship among those groups was opened to new negotiations.

L. A. Sedov believes that Russian citizens are particularly noted for their lack of trust in the government and institutions (Sedov 54). Given this distrust, Sedov suggests people create groups among themselves irrelevant to social class and outside of government surveillance. The characters in *Tanya Tanya* belong to one of those groups. Critic and translator John Freedman, notes that they "are members of that nebulous category, the Russian intelligentsia, cultured people of learning, upbringing and conscience. They are more than a little eccentric, and their eccentricities make them all the more vulnerable and endearing" (Freedman xxvii). In Russian society, the intelligentsia tends to comprise a minority group of "cultured" people who have traditionally been critics of the government. They are most often the opponents to the authoritarian style of rule that has characterized that country's history (Bashkirova 20). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, right around the time *Tanya Tanya* was written, most people in Russia focused their attention on making money and gaining economic stability rather than the artistic and intellectual pursuits of the intelligentsia (Chukhrov 238). The values that this group held closest were replaced with "values necessary for survival" (Bashkirova 8). This fact may have helped lead the characters' real-life counterparts, to feel disenfranchised from the rest of society. Members of the intelligentsia were always on the perimeter, but then they became even further removed.

In the Soviet era "socialist ideology denied status differences between non-manual and manual workers, at least at the level of official rhetorics" (Bessudnov 1). Even though publicly the Russian people may not have been allowed to express if they felt that one profession carried more prestige than another, people still retained the ability to view

one profession as having a higher social status than another profession. The worker in Tanya Tanya, whom the other characters refer to as Uncle Vanya, is clearly treated as a person of low social status. When he makes his entrance in the play, his concerns are ignored by the rest of the characters. After unfounded accusations against Uncle Vanya for poisoning their milk, Okhlobystin and Ivanov proceed to tie him up and disregard his proclamations that he is innocent. They do not take him as seriously as they do the other characters and seem to treat this lone worker in the play with a lack of respect. At the same time, ironically, Uncle Vanya is the character who offers touching stories of mutual love, understanding and permanent satisfaction among couples – a state that continually eludes the other characters in the play.

The relationships between groups as determined by intellectual interests or occupational category would soon undergo another transformation through the 1990s, as economic stratification and a hierarchy based upon social class slowly returned. In the Russia of this decade, many quipped that the social structure now consisted of two groups: the rich and everyone else.

#### Works Cited

- Bashkirova, E.I. "Transformation of the Values of Russian Society." *Russian Politics and Law*. 39.6 (2001): 6-24. Web. 10 November 2009.
- Bessudnov, Alexey. "An Occupational Status Scale for Russia." *University of Oxford Sociology Working Papers 2009-02*. (August 2009): 1-25. Web. 7 November 2009.
- Chukhrov, Ketii. "Glamour as a Form of Culture on Post-Soviet Russia." *Sarai Reader 07: Frontiers*. (2007): 236-248. Web. 11 November 2009.
- Freedman, John. Introduction. *Two Plays by Olga Mukhina*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.
- Sedov, L.A. "Traditional Features of Russian Political Culture in their Current Perspective." *Russian Social Science Review*. 48.6 ( 2007): 47-63. Web. 10 November 2009.

#### **April Baldwin**

Senior, Political Science

## “Hello Morning Hello:” The Catastrophic Economic Situation in Russia after the Fall

The official collapse of the Soviet Union occurred on December 31, 1991. However, by 1985, Gorbachev's reforms known as *Perestroika* (restructuring) and *Glasnost* (openness) were the beginning of the end for the socialist government. These policies were meant to “reform” the ailing Soviet system; instead they led to its complete demise. When Boris Yeltsin came into office, there was the promise of a “new” market-based system that would bring Russia's economy up to the level of the Western powers. “Most ordinary people had anticipated the onset of American-style affluence, combined with European-style social welfare” (Kotkin 115). Instead, Yeltsin's “shock therapy” program sent the Russian nation into an economic depression far worse than could ever be imagined. Unfortunately, many Russian citizens were forced to go without the necessities for everyday survival. *Tanya Tanya* by Olga Mukhina, takes place during the worst of these times.

By 1991, the annual measured economy declined 17% on top of the previous year's 6% decline. During the height of the American Great Depression, the decline peaked at 9% (Kotkin 119). During this time, it is believed that up to half of Russia's economy was from unregistered activity, which was accompanied by a steady rise in the presence of organized crime (Kotkin). This is also when the hand-full of predatory businessmen known as the “Oligarchs,” who controlled most of Russia's wealth, rose to power (Hoffman). Average people were forced to turn to the black market, or “shadow economy,” for what they needed. Between the years 1992 and 1995, it is believed that up to 25% of the annual GDP was from this informal economy (Kotkin). Those who lacked employment or full employment, as many did, could be seen on the streets selling homemade food and goods for money. In 1998 the economy completely collapsed. By this point, over 18% of Russians were considered to be in utter poverty (Kotkin).

Despite the troubling economic situation surrounding the characters in *Tanya Tanya*, they make little reference to this aspect of their lives. Instead, they simply live for each moment because they do not know what will happen in the next. Their world changes constantly and without apparent warning. Almost every scene takes place in a different season with no regard to actual timing of the play. One minute it is day, the next it is night. In the course of a day characters may love each other, and then hate one another. At one point, the character Zina, disoriented by the changes surrounding her, suddenly pronounces: “Nothing smells real anymore.” For Zina, as perhaps for many Russians at the time, something she had known her entire life all of a sudden seems completely unfamiliar.

### Works Cited

- Chukhrov, Keti. “Glamour as a Form of Culture on Post-Soviet Russia.” *Sarai Reader 07*. *Frontiers*. (2007): 236-248. Web. 11 November 2009.
- Hoffman, David. *The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia*. New York: Public Affairs, 2003. Print.
- Kotkin, Stephen. *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Sedov, L.A. “Traditional Features of Russian Political Culture in their Current Perspective.” *Russian Social Science Review*. 48.6 ( 2007): 47-63. Web. 10 November 2009.

### April Baldwin

Senior, Political Science

## Women's Day

In a 1932 Soviet poster celebrating the federal holiday known as "International Women's Day" the text reads: *8th of March is the day of rebellion of the working women against kitchen slavery and Down with the oppression and narrow-mindedness of household work!*

The Soviet government established March 8th as a federal holiday to celebrate women as equals in that society. The strength and beauty of women as well as their fight for equality was to be acknowledged through little notes that young boys would write to their female comrades. Husbands and lovers would buy the first flowers of spring, tulips and mimosas, as well as other tokens of affection. These tokens of affection would cost as much, if not more than, gifts for larger holidays (Mamchur). Accounts vary of the holiday's precise origins in Russia and elsewhere around the globe. But one significant event in its history seems to be the day in 1917 when Russian women protested against the world-wide war. With 2 million of their men dead, women went on strike for "bread and peace." Four days later, the tsar was forced to abdicate the throne and the new government granted women universal suffrage (UN).

Even though today not many other countries celebrate this day, Russia upholds the tradition. However, when Russian people do decide to celebrate this day, it is similar to Valentine's Day where personal affections are expressed rather than a general celebration of women's victorious past.

Works Cited:

"International Women's Day." Welcome to the United Nations: It's Your World.  
Web. 18 Nov. 2009.

Mamchur, Yuri. "March 8 - Older than Lilith Fair." Weblog post. [www.russiablog.org](http://www.russiablog.org).  
8 Mar. 2007. Web. 20 Sept. 2009.

### Lauren Guy

Senior, Pre-Early Childhood Education

## Alexander Sergeivich Pushkin (1799-1837)

Dubbed Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Sergeivich Pushkin has received great admiration across all generations as his work continues to inspire new artists. Pushkin ushered in new forms and styles of literary writing to break with the many prevailing classical forms of the time. His major works include the novel Eugene Onegin, the play Boris Godunov, and numerous lyrics and poems. As a nobleman, romanticism flowed not only in his writing, but in his life; he died at the age of 37 in a duel over his wife.

His work has influenced many writers in the 19th and 20th centuries in Russia, but has not made a significant international appearance because it is very complex and difficult to translate. One of the most obvious signs of Russian admiration for the poet is the number of streets and statues named after him; as Lenin had a street in every city named after him, so it is with Pushkin, as well as statues celebrating the author.

### Work Cited

"Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. 2nd ed. Vol. 12. Detroit: Gale, 2004. 489-91. Web. 20 Sept. 2009.

### Lauren Guy

Senior, Pre-Early Childhood Education

In his short dramatic dialogue *A Feast During the Plague*, Vladimir Pushkin captures the spirit of Russians embracing the joy of life in the face of impending doom with this refrain from the Chairman of the gathering:

Old Man Winter we've beat back;  
That's how we'll meet the Plague's attack!  
We'll light the fire and fill the cup  
And pass it round—a merry scene!  
And after we have all drunk up,  
We'll sing: all hail to thee, dread queen! (101)

### Work Cited

Pushkin, Alexander K. *The Little Tragedies*. Trans. Nancy K. Anderson. New Haven: Yale UP, 2001. Print.

## **Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky (1893-1930)**

Mayakovsky believed strongly in the changes that were happening during the Russian revolution in the early 20th century and wanted to support the work of the Bolshevik party. As his radical political ideas fueled him, Mayakovsky experimented with the Russian literary form during futuristic and Dadaistic shifts in art. His focus was to free Russian people from past literary constraints and usher in a new kind of art that is free from the past. He also used these new styles to spread the new political ideas to the general public. However, his personal literary endeavors in relation to the public and governmental efforts began to conflict. The society he had fought to put in place was taking a turn he did not support; this as well as personal strains and artistic conflicts are rumored to be the cause of his suicide in 1930 at the age of 36.

### Work Cited

"Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. 2nd ed. Vol. 10. Detroit: Gale, 2004. 364-365. Web. 20 Sept. 2009.

### **Lauren Guy**

Senior, Pre-Early Childhood Education

# The Drama of the New Russia

Russia in the first decade of the century has done little to change the world's perception that it is a riddle wrapped in a mystery.

After a period of comparative irrelevance in the 1990s, Russia once again is a major player in international politics. Its leadership and influence is felt in virtually every key issue facing the global community. It is a nation whose leaders have learned to talk "democracy and freedom" as skillfully as any.

This all happened, meanwhile, as Russian authorities closed down independent news outlets; looked the other way when prominent "dissenting" journalists and politicians were murdered; provided tacit support to nationalist thugs; and found ways to jail or silence business leaders and social activists who dared to disagree with government policy.

Will the real Russia please stand up?

In fact, one generation of Russians – or, more precisely, a group of playwrights from that generation – has already stepped forward. These individuals were teenagers or pre-teens when Mikhail Gorbachev sought to reform the Communist Party, and entered their 20s while Boris Yeltsin led Russia through awkward battles with poverty, corruption and infrastructural collapse. They attained personal and professional maturity in their 30s as Vladimir Putin established social stability and presided over the onset of affluence and a contingent spiritual stagnation. They continue to create as Dmitry Medvedev leads Russia through the global financial crisis and struggles with hidden dilemmas left over from all the previous eras put together.

These writers, of which we selected five to participate in the New Russian Drama: Voices in a Shifting Age project, were instrumental in raising the status of Russian drama to heights unheard of for decades. Each of their compelling voices stands alone, and their visions are unique. They are not members of any club or movement, but taken together, they offer striking examples of a nation struggling – often clumsily, often cruelly, but always sincerely – to renew itself. Moreover, they represent the diversity of contemporary Russian drama not only in style, but in geography and background.



Olga Mukhina grew up in Russia's Far North in a family of geologists but reflects Moscow's ultra urban sensibility. Vyacheslav Durnenkov and Yury Klavdiev grew up in working neighborhoods in the tough southern city of Togliatti, occasionally known as the "Russian Detroit." Klavdiev, incidentally, has relocated to St. Petersburg and is arguably now that cosmopolitan city's most progressive playwright. The Presnyakov brothers, both of them university professors, hail from Yekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains region, a genuine hotbed for gritty new dramatists. Maksym Kurochkin, educated as an ethnologist and historian, was born and grew up in Kiev, Ukraine.

All have been translated into the major languages of the world and produced throughout Europe and the New World.

Russian writers are not as overtly political as some of their counterparts in the United States, but that does not mean they avoid issues of political and social significance. On the contrary, Klavdiev, Durnenkov and the Presnyakovs all deal in one way or another with the corrosion and breakdown of social norms, a painful process that inevitably leads to confusion, chaos and violence. The plays of Kurochkin and Mukhina, in vastly divergent ways, reflect the paralysis that plagues cultured people as the world changes and tosses ever new challenges at them.

Anyone wanting to know where Russia stands today and where it might head in the future would be well advised to take note of what these and other Russian playwrights are saying. We live in an age when Russian newspapers and television are telling only part of their nation's story. In the arts, poets and prose writers have slipped into the background. The film industry has been in a state of flux and crisis for over two decades.

Not surprisingly, theater and drama have emerged as the most vital and responsive media of social discourse and communication. Thanks to Mukhina, Klavdiev, Durnenkov, Kurochkin and the Presnyakovs, the mystery that is Russia has become a little less enigmatic.

### **John Freedman**

Theater Critic, The Moscow Times

## Translating Russia for America

I once met a man who could not understand why anyone would need more than one translation of *War and Peace*. "It's just words transposed into English," he said incredulously. "Once it's done it's done."

It is probable that everyone reading these notes – written, after all, for a university-based project in a prestigious theater program – recognizes that as a radically uninformed statement. What not everyone may realize, however, is the profound degree to which fuzzy thinking penetrates general opinions about translation. Respected producers and directors have told me, "Oh, we'll clean that clumsy translation up before we go into rehearsals."

I have also heard tell of ancient mariners saying, "We'll just plug that little hole," before heading out to stormy seas.

Translation is an art. In fact, a translator is a director, a playwright, an actor and an audience member all rolled into one. He or she constantly must hear the questions of the actor – "Can I say this?" – even as the spectator in the mind's eye is wondering, "What does this mean?" while the segment of the brain thinking about how to direct this slowly emerging text is pondering what gestures and intonations the chosen words will call into being. All of this while the original author's voice – with its unique rhythms, diction and melodies – must be singing in perfect pitch in the translator's head.

No one in the theater is more sensitive than actors and spectators. It is one of the reasons why we love them so. Metaphorically, each must be invited to embark on a journey lacking hazardous obstacles and treacherous turns *not planted there by the author*. If an actor speaks a word that sticks in his or her craw, it must be because the author willed it, not because the translator was lazy. Every time an audience member is distracted by questions or doubts *not envisioned by the author*, communication has broken down. And the translator is to blame.

A play making the transition from Russian into English is threatened by a myriad of potentially catastrophic misunderstandings. As languages, Russian and English are structured differently, and so provide vastly different cadences, stores of information and electric impulses. That is nothing, however, compared to the pitfalls involved in translating cultural phenomena. Did you know, for example, that the contemporary Russian word for "red" is the same one the language still employs for "beautiful" in fairy tales? "Red Square," in other words, has nothing to do with the place where the Red Army used to

march. That gives the notion of “seeing red” a whole new sensation, doesn’t it?

In other words, much in a translation must be interpreted as well. But it must be done inconspicuously and in a way that is organic to the original text. So, yes, you may add scholarship to the jobs a translator is called upon to do well.

English is another problem. The British have been good at sniffing out new plays in Russia, translating, publishing and staging them. But as George Bernard Shaw said so famously: “England and America are two countries divided by a common language.” Indeed, many British translations done in the last decade look and sound as foreign to us as any Russian, German or French play might.

The New Russian Drama: Voices in a Shifting Age project was established to bring the riches of contemporary Russian drama to America in the American idiom. We believe this is the only way that such major contemporary writers as Olga Mukhina, Maksym Kurochkin, Yuri Klavdiev, Vyacheslav Durnenkov and the Presnyakov brothers can fully be appreciated in the United States.

We also believe there is no one way to create a translation that will allow a play to speak clearly and breathe fully in a new language. As such, we experimented with various methods.

We engaged playwright Kate Moira Ryan to create a new American adaptation of Mukhina’s *Tanya Tanya*. Playwrights Juanita Rockwell and David M. White worked closely with Russian director Yuri Urnov to fashion American variants of the Presnyakovs’ *Playing Dead* and Klavdiev’s *Martial Arts*, respectively. John Hanlon, with Kurochkin’s *Vodka, F\*\*\*ing, and Television*, and I, with Durnenkov’s *Frozen in Time*, Kurochkin’s *The Schooling of Bento Bonchev* and Klavdiev’s *The Polar Truth*, took the traditional route of a lone translator rendering an author’s text.

All of us, working with the writers and production teams, endeavored to help five unique Russian voices “speak American” without losing their native flavor, points of view or insights. Each production in this season-long project is confirmation of our belief that American theater will be richer when it embraces what a new generation of Russian playwrights is writing.

## **John Freedman**

Theater Critic, The Moscow Times

# Theatre Arts at Towson University

The guiding principle of the Department of Theatre Arts is that its energies and resources remain devoted to the development of its students as creative, cooperative and humanistically educated theatre practitioners and scholars.

The undergraduate program is designed to provide, in cooperation with other departments, a broad liberal education as well as rigorous professional training in which emphasis is placed on skills as well as knowledge. The faculty works with each student to create of an artistic point of view and a professional work ethic appropriate for the theatre, and other endeavors. The department offers the B.A. or B.S. in Theatre with tracks in Acting, Design and Production, and Theatre Studies. The various degree programs and areas of study within the department work cooperatively to give students a rich education in the diverse aspects of theatre as well as focused training that will help them cultivate their individual talents and potential.

The Towson MFA Program in Theatre Arts—now in its 15th year—is unlike any Masters program in the United States in that it trains the total theatre artist/scholar. Every year, a small group is hand-selected to embark on a rigorous three-year journey that nurtures each member's individual artistic vision.

The curriculum is designed for the artist who is not content working within a single discipline: It is for the actor who is also a playwright; the designer who is also playwright; the director who is also a puppeteer; the choreographer who is also a historian.

Students work with faculty and guest artists in a diverse range of disciplines, styles and techniques. In most cases, this informs the students' work, as they create projects both on their own and in collaboration with one another.

The program is open to all forms of experimentation; it is doggedly interdisciplinary; and it is designed for the kind of person who is a self-directed and self-producing artist, trying to work from his or her own aesthetic.

The Towson graduate theatre program has a long history of international engagement. Philip Arnoult, director of the Center for International Theatre Development (CITD), was a part of the team that originally created the program, and since that time students have participated in festivals and projects in Egypt, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, East Africa, and now Russia. Two MFA students went on for work internationally under the auspices of Fulbright Fellowships. Last summer, a group of MFA students did a Study Abroad Program organized by CITD to Wroclaw, Poland where they attended the Grotowski Institute's festival, "The World as a Place of Truth," a celebration of the life and work of the famous Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski. The students also participated a five-day workshop with the internationally acclaimed company, Teatr ZAR, which was held in the space in which Grotowski rehearsed and presented some of his most famous pieces, including *The Constant Prince* and *Apocalipsis cum Figuris*. This coming summer, thanks to CITD, students are slated to attend and participate in the 18th international Summer Varna Theatre Festival in Bulgaria

# Student Opportunities for Further Study of Russia

Students may combine their interests in Russian theater with their career interests as professional communicators.

Students interested in the behind-the-scenes work of marketing and promoting the fine arts—and other careers in the communications field—may be interested in two new options from Towson University for earning academic credits studying this topic: global trends affecting professional communicators, with an emphasis on Russia and the USA.

## Independent Study

Work to be completed in January mini-mester or spring 2010 semester . . . for three credits.

**No foreign language requirement.** Led by TU Prof. Mark McElreath and Adjunct Instructor Gala Duckworth, each student will conduct independent research, write and present a comparative analysis of global trends affecting professional communicators in the student's choice of careers in three countries:

- 1 Russia
- 2 USA
- 3 The country chosen by the student

## Why Russia?

Russia is undergoing dramatic changes that significantly affect professional communicators. Both instructors have extensive experience in Russia.

## Why USA?

Global standards for best practices in professional communication are being established in the USA, some assert. Students will be expected to gather evidence that supports and contradicts this assertion.

## Why a third country of the student's choice?

Student can intellectually go on a trip to any country in the world and think through what it would be like to work there as a professional communicator. Analyzing data from three different countries allows a "triangulation" of insights that may provide a more realistic picture of global trends.

## Study Abroad to St. Petersburg, Russia

Early Summer 2010, from May 23rd to June 2nd . . . for three credits.

Open to college students throughout Mid-Atlantic region. Russian educators and communication professionals will lead seminars, guided tours and excursions. Learn global best practices and how to market yourself as a professional communicator anywhere in the world. **Russian language not required: all seminars and guided tours in English.**

Cost: **\$4,750** includes tuition, health insurance, housing, roundtrip airfare, some meals and excursions. **Rolling admission.** Deposit required to secure space.

More information contact Prof. McElreath at [mmcelreath@towson.edu](mailto:mmcelreath@towson.edu); the TU Study Abroad Office at **410-7043-2451**; or go to [www.towson.edu/studyabroad](http://www.towson.edu/studyabroad).

## 2009–2010 Friends of the Arts & Communication

We are deeply grateful to our donors for investing in Towson University's College of Fine Arts & Communication. Your generous support contributes immeasurably to the intellectual and cultural life of the university, helping to attract the people and support the programs that make Towson a distinctive institution of higher learning.

We recognize the following alumni, friends, students, faculty, staff, corporations, foundations and other organizations that supported the College of Fine Arts & Communication through the Towson University Foundation, Inc. with gifts of \$1,000 and above from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007.

### **\$50,000 and above**

Ruth Carol Fund

### **\$10,000 to \$24,999**

E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter  
Foundation

Barbara J. '76 & John G. Dreyer

Esther E. Heymann '72

& Benhardt R. Wainio

Barry Levinson & Diana Rhodes

James G. Robinson Foundation, Inc.

### **\$5,000 to \$9,999**

Baltimore Community Foundation

CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

Samuel J. Holtzman Family Foundation

The Ro & Marius P. Johnson

Charitable Legacy, Inc.

J. William & Helen Murray

### **\$2,500 to \$4,999**

Karen Walker Lowman '69

& Ronald W. Lowman

Margaret A. Mitchell

The Presser Foundation

### **\$1,000 to \$2,499**

Ahern Group Monumental Films

& Recordings, Inc.

Christopher J. A'Hern '94

James Muse Anthony

Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore

Donald E. & Mary Louise Bowman

Yu-Wen & Rose L. Chang

Chi Shiang & Wan Yu Chen

Chinese Language School of Baltimore

Thelma B. '50 '69 & George S. Davis

Arno P. & Ruth Drucker

Carl L. & Judy A. Fredericks

Peggy & Yale Gordon Charitable Trust

Yao-King & Celia S. Hsu

The Jandon Foundation

The Japan Foundation

Daisy R. '70 & Dan L. Jones

Amy Macht

Donna Mayer

Christopher S.C. Mitchell

Stephanie B. Mitchell

Wendy L. Muher

Patrick H. & Norma S. O'Connell, Jr.

Padonia LLC

Renegade Productions, Inc.

Ropewalk, Inc.

Gary N. Rubin '69

M. Sigmund & Barbara K. Shapiro

Philanthropic Foundation

Steve Y. & Mei-Jung Shen

Douglas H. Smith & Patricia A. Wray

Christopher H. Spicer

& Mary I. DeFreest '05 '07

T. Rowe Price Associates Foundation, Inc.

The Associated: Jewish Community

Federation of Baltimore

Lorraine L. Thomas '79

Wyman K. & Alsona Wong

## **The Department of Theatre Arts gratefully acknowledges the Following gifts of scholarships:**

**The Askew Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patrons: Theda and Monk Askew

**The Audrey Herman Memorial Scholarship**

Founding Patrons: William Herman, Genevieve Nyborg

**The Charles S. Dutton Theatre Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patrons: Charles S. Dutton, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation  
Home Box Office, Inc.

**The Christopher David Legg Memorial Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patrons: Catherine Behrent and friends of Christopher Legg

**The Cooley Arts Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patrons: Franklin & Alice Cooley

**The C.R. Gillespie and Maravene S. Loeschke Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patrons: Theatre Alumni Group

**The John Glover Scholarship Endowment for Acting Majors**

Founding Patrons: John Glover, Jack and Cade Glover

**The Nina E. Hughes Memorial Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patron: Nina E. Hughes

**The Liberace Foundation for the Performing and Creative Arts**

**The Steve Yeager Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patron: Steve Yeager

**The Theatre Department Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patrons: Purchasers of Mainstage Seats

**The Peter Wray Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patrons: Robin and Peter Wray.

**The Walter F. Kramme Scholarship Endowment**

Founding Patron: Joseph C. Tischer

## Department of Theatre Arts Faculty and Staff

Philip Arnoult	International Theatre
Tom Cascella	Technical Theatre
Tomi Casciero	Movement/Voice
Rebecca Eastman	Visiting Costume Designer
Daniel Ettinger	Scenic Design
Julie Gerhardt	Assistant Costumière
John Glover	Distinguished Visiting Professor of Acting
Jay Herzog	Lighting & Sound Design/Chairperson
Brandon Ingle	Assistant Technical Director/Master Electrician
Michele Madden	Administrative Assistant
Naoka Maeshiba	Acting, Directing/Cultural Diversity
Stephen Nunns	MFA Program Director
Cheryl Partridge	Costumière
Robyn Quick	Theatre History/Dramaturgy
Marie Robertson	Administrative Assistant
Juanita Rockwell	MFA Associate Artist
Anthony Rosas	Technical Director
Diane Smith Sadak	Acting/Directing
Steven J. Satta	Voice/Acting
David White	Theatre History/Theories/Thesis
Peter Wray	Acting/Directing
Georgia Baker	Professor Emerita
C. Richard Gillespie	Professor Emeritus
Maravene Loeschke	Professor Emerita
John Manlove	Professor Emeritus



**Adjunct Faculty**

Steve Bauer	Makeup
Marsha Becker	Acting
Rosalind Cauthen	Topics in Diversity
Margaret Cleland	Acting/Theatre Studies
Temple Crocker	Acting
Ryan Clark	Acting
Donna Fox	Acting
Meg Kelly	Acting
Mark Krawczyk	Acting
Michele Minnick	Acting/Theatre Studies
Peggy Penniman	Acting/Theatre Studies
Dian Perrin	Acting
Kyle Prue	Acting
Anthony Rosas	Technical Theatre
Susan J. Rotkowitz	Theatre Studies/Acting
Tom Shade	American Theatre
Barry Smith	Acting/Directing/Cultural Diversity
Natasha Staley	Acting
Marianne Wittelsberger	Makeup
Steve Yeager	Film Acting

**College of Fine Arts and Communication**

Christopher Spicer	Dean
Trudy Cobb	Associate Dean
James Hunnicutt	Senior Assistant to the Dean/Operations
Louise Miller	Marketing Manager
Sedonia Martin	Publicist
Heather Sorenson	Box Office Manager

# Center for International Theatre Development (CITD)

Philip Arnoult, founder and director

## CITD Advisory Board:

Chris Coleman, Portland Center Stage

Jim Nicola, New York Theatre Workshop

Rob Orchard, American Repertory Theatre/Emerson College, Cambridge/Boston

Molly Smith, Arena Stage

## New Russian Drama Project Advisory Board:

US:

Mark Bly, Alley Theatre, Dallas

Linda Chapman, New York Theatre Workshop

Kate Loewald, The Play Company, NY

Christian Parker, Atlantic Theatre, NY

Russia:

John Freedman, author, translator, Moscow

Yelena Kovalskaya, critic, Moscow

Oleg Loevsky, Ekaterinburg Young Spectator Theater

Pavel Rudnev, The Meyerhold Center, Moscow

Yury Urnov, director, Moscow

## Project Support

The New Russian Drama project is a joint project of Towson University Department of Theatre Arts and The Center for International Theatre Development.

### CITD support comes from:

The Trust for Mutual Understanding, NY

CEC ARTSLINK, NY

The New Drama Festival, Moscow and St. Petersburg

The Golden Mask Festival, Moscow

### Towson University support comes from:

Council for International Exchange of Scholars, a division of the Institute of International Education

The Maryland Humanities Council

The Rosenberg Distinguished Artist Endowment

Towson University Faculty Development Research Committee

The Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas

The photographing or sound recording of any performance without permission from the University is strictly prohibited. Eating and drinking are prohibited in the Theatre. Smoking is prohibited in the Center for the Arts Building. If there is an emergency, please WALK TO THE NEAREST EXIT. The house staff will assist you.

Towson University is in compliance with federal and state regulations regarding nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, marital status, age, political affiliation, veteran status, disability, or other prohibited reason. The University does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. For information, contact the TU Office of Fair Practices, **410-704-2361**.

Towson University is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities are given an equally effective opportunity to participate in and benefit from the University's programs and services. Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations are requested to contact the Box Office at **410-704-ARTS** in advance and we will be happy to assist you.

NEW  
RUSSIAN  
DRAMA  
VOICES IN A  
SHIFTING AGE  
[www.newrussiandrama.org](http://www.newrussiandrama.org)

