

NEW RUSSIAN

DRAMA



Image: *Dembelsky Poezd*, by Aleksandr Arkhipov, from a production directed by Oleg Getze

NEW RUSSIAN DRAMA A STAGED READING

Tuesday, April 21st, 2009 at 8:00pm
The Living Theatre, 21 Clinton Street, New York, New York

Introductions

Masha Pyshkina, Program Director, CEC ArtsLink

Readings

Waiting for the Guests, by Ksenya Stepanycheva,
translated by Natasha Randall

An excerpt from *JUNK!* by Mikhail Durnenkov,
translated by Natasha Randall

An excerpt from *Pacific Island* by Aleksandr Arkhipov,
translated by Sasha Dugdale

Their Crimes, by Aleksandr Rodionov, translated by
Natasha Randall

Q & A

Playwrights' response

Questions from the Audience

Russian-English interpreting by Konstantin Molotilov

EVENT INFORMATION

All of us at CEC ArtsLink are pleased to present this fantastic event premiering the work of four leading young Russian playwrights in the United States.

The playwrights, who represent the younger generation of Russia's vibrant theater world, are in the United States for a two-week residency hosted by CEC ArtsLink and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton University. The visit is part of a professional exchange program sponsored by the Open World Leadership Center at the Library of Congress. Support for the cultural program is provided through partnership and funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

As part of this residency, new translations of their recent work has been commissioned and will be presented tonight in a staged reading. The translations are the work of the highly accomplished literary translators Natasha Randall and Sasha Dugdale.

This event would not have been possible without the excellence and dedication of the staff of The Living Theatre, in particular, Brad Burgess, the extraordinary Kyle Dean Reinford, and the outstanding actors that they have assembled to participate this evening.

PLAYS (IN ORDER OF PRESENTATION)

Expecting Guests (V Ozhidanii Gostyey)

a play by Ksenya Stepanycheva

This play offers a glimpse into the lives of two young people who love each other. It is New Year's Eve, and they are waiting for guests to arrive in their home. Having finished preparations for the party, they start to chat idly—the type of moment that defines the sum and shape of our lives. Stepanycheva writes, “I wanted this sketch to show the humor and the absurd that is hidden in the routine.”

This play was translated by Natasha Randall for this event.

Characters:

TANYA— Female, 27 years old

SLAVA— Male, 27 years old

PUZIK— A fat white tom cat



A scene from a Saratov production of *2x2=5*, Stepanycheva's best-known play.

PLAYS (IN ORDER OF PRESENTATION)

Scenes from *JUNK! (KHLAM!)*

a play by Mikhail Durnenkov

Set in a bargain store, stacked floor to ceiling with footballs and toilet paper, *JUNK!* traces the connections between the assembled shoppers. Asked what the play is about, Durnenkov writes, “it is an attempt to find out if we can break away from the confines of our existence and become Other, having already known everything about oneself for a long time. Can circumstances turn a person into a murderer, or is a murderer born a murderer?”

KHLAM! was produced recently by the Center for Playwrights and Directors Theater in Moscow, and the ILKHOM Theater in Tashkent.

The excerpt presented this evening was translated for this event by Natasha Randall.

Main Characters:

PHILIP— Male, 30 years old

FATTY— Male, 18-19 years old

ANNA GRIGORIEVNA—Female, 40 years

Supporting Characters:

PRODUCER, POPOV— Both male, 45 years old

TAXI DRIVER, SALESMAN— Both male, 35 years old

LENA, SASHA— Both female, 17-19 years old

A DRUNK, DENIS, LITTLE GUY, KOREAN STUDENT, A YOUNG GUY— All male, 20 years old

IRINA— female, 30 years old

MARIA GRIGORIEVNA, TRAIN HOSTESS— both female, 40

PEOPLE FROM A TRAINING COURSE (not present in this fragment),

CUSTOMERS, PEOPLE STANDING IN LINE



A production of *JUNK!* at the 2009 Golden Mask Festival in Moscow.

PLAYS (IN ORDER OF PRESENTATION)



A scene from *Dembelsky Poezd*, by Arkhipov, in a production directed by Oleg Getze

Scenes from *Pacific Island* (*Ostrov Mirny*)

A play by Aleksandr Arkhipov

On an island somewhere along the maritime border of the Russian Federation, a first lieutenant charges two inartful new recruits with the task of producing a morale-building play. No one on the base is prepared for ensuing Russian Nationalist interpretation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Translated for the Royal Shakespeare Company by Sasha Dugdale.

Characters:

CAPTAIN MORENKO, aged 38, in charge of the frontier post
His wife, DASHA, aged 23

FIRST LIEUTENANT REBRIK, aged 34

FIRST LIEUTENANT ANDROSOV, aged 28

Pre-Demob:

GORBATY, two years service, aged 20

'Shovellers' (a year into military service):

TUVA, aged 19

'Spirits' (first year military service):

MALYOK, a year's service under his belt, aged 18

BOTYA, likewise, aged 18

TOLSTIY, (Sergei) first year of service, aged 18

PLAYS (IN ORDER OF PRESENTATION)

Their Crimes (Ikh Prestupleniya)

By Aleksandr Rodionov

Three pairs of Russian tourists arrive at a seaside resort on the Persian Gulf and discover that while their bad behavior provokes no notice at home, here, a simple scuffle lands them in court, facing as much as life in prison.

This new work by Rodionov walks the line between writing for stage and writing for film, and employs his trademark technique of verbatim dialogue, recorded in real-life situations and bent into dramatic adaptation.

Translated for this evening's event by Natasha Randall.



A scene from *The Battle of the Moldovans for a Cardboard Box*, in a production at the TEATR.DOC festival.

Characters:

VALYUSHA— Female

KOLYA— Male

PETYA— Male

JULIA— Female

SANYA— Male

SANYA'S FRIEND

COURT INTERPRETER

THE HONORABLE JUDGE MOFATTEH

THE HONORABLE JUDGE ABADI

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS



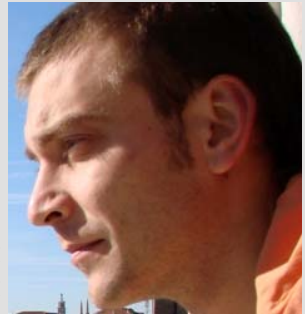
Aleksandr Arkhipov

is a Yekaterinburg based playwright. Of his work, he says, "I write plays not because I know something that I want to teach others, but to learn something myself. With each text, I hope to discover something new about myself, about the world, and about the people who inhabit it. They are all so different and so much alike at the same time." Arkhipov, who studied with the

eminent actor, director and playwright Nikolai Kolyada, now teaches playwriting at the Academy of Filmmaking at the Sverdlovsk Film Studio. He received a prize for Honor and Merit (2005) from the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, as well as stipends to support his creative work. He was also awarded a medal for Contribution to National Culture from the Victor Rozov Foundation (2006). His plays, including *The Underground God* and *Pavlov's Dog*, have been published in national journals and are performed frequently across Russia and abroad.

Mikhail Durnenkov

is a playwright and screenwriter working in Moscow. He began writing for theater in 2000, and has been working professionally in the field since 2005. He is a member of the "New Drama" movement of young Russian playwrights. Durnenkov has lectured at Moscow Pedagogical University, and taught documentary theater seminars. He is a



frequent participant in playwriting seminars and workshops across Russia, and is the author of more than 15 plays and screenplays. His most recent play, *KHLAM!* was produced by the Center for Playwrights and Directors Theater in Moscow, and the ILKHOM Theater in Tashkent. *Last Summers Day*, a collaboration with his brother Vyacheslav, premiered at the Moscow Art Theater in 2005, with ongoing performances. *The Drunks*, a new play by the Durnenkov brothers will premiere in August 2009 at the Courtyard Theater in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. The play is one of four specially commissioned works in a series that the Royal Shakespeare Company calls "Other Russia".

Aleksandr Rodionov

is a playwright, scriptwriter, and writer of short stories. He lives in Moscow with his wife and 5-year-old daughter. A graduate of the Gorky Literary Institute, Rodionov has worked with the Lyubimovka Festival of Young Dramaturges, TEATR.DOC Festival, and the New Drama Festival. His writing is based on documentary theater techniques, collecting real life dialogue and adapting it for dramatic purposes. His plays, *The Battle of the Moldovans for a Cardboard Box* and *Songs of the People of Moscow*, premiered at the TEATR.DOC festival in 2003 and 2002, respectively. He is the co-author of several screenplays for narrative film, notably the film *Everybody Dies But Me* (co-written with Yuri Klavdiyev and directed by Valeria Gai Germanika), an award-winner at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival, and *Help Gone Mad* (co-written with screenwriter and director Boris Khlebnikov), 2009. He has also adapted novels for film and written for television. Rodionov's translations of British playwright Mark Ravenhill's early plays have been staged prominently in Moscow and St. Petersburg.



Ksenya Stepanycheva

is a playwright. Born in Saratov, she spent parts of her childhood in Germany, the Ukraine, and North of the Arctic Circle, thanks to her father's military service. While studying to receive a degree in marketing in Saratov, Stepanycheva began writing plays, and never stopped. Her play $2 \times 2 = 5$ received First Prize at the All-Russian Competition of Playwrights, *Deystvuyushiye litsa*, 2004, and was staged by the School of Modern Drama Theater in Moscow and at the Saratov Drama Theater, among others. The play *Private Life (Chastnaya Zhizn)* was shortlisted for the same prize in 2007. *The Pink Bow (Rozovy Bantik)*, a fairytale, was a winner at the All-Russian Competition of Plays for Children in 2007. The literary journal *Contemporary Dramaturgy* has published the text of several of her works. A three time participant in the Forum for Young Russian Writers in Moscow, Stepanycheva received a Ministry of Culture stipend to participate in the 2007 Forum.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS

Natasha Randall has worked as a translator from the Russian for many years in New York, Moscow and St. Petersburg. In her early career, she was a translator for the Mariinsky Theater (formerly the Kirov Theater); she translated legal documents for child adoption processes; and she translated research material for CEOs in the Russian oil industry. In the late 1990s, she translated academic texts for the East West Institute, which addressed living conditions and the political climate in Russia. Lately, she has published mainly literary translations including various poems by Osip Mandelstam (for the literary journal *Jubilat* and for an anthology poems published by Ugly Duckling Presse, New York) as well as letters and short fiction by Arkady Dragomoshchenko and Olga Zondberg. She was guest-editor of a special portfolio on Russian writing for the second issue of the literary magazine *A Public Space*. Her new translation of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (Random House) was short-listed for the Oxford Weidenfeld translation award in 2008. It was reviewed in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Salon.com*, *Las Vegas Weekly*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Washington Times*, amongst other publications. She also was featured in a 30-minute interview on the Leonard Lopate Show on WNYC (NPR) in New York (listen to this interview at www.wnyc.org/shows/lopate/underappreciated). Her translation of *A Hero of Our Time* by Mikhail Lermontov will be published in May 2009 (Penguin Classics). Natasha Randall's critical work has been published in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, *The Moscow Times* and *BookForum*. Her translations featured tonight were commissioned specially for this event.

Sasha Dugdale is a poet and translator. Based in the U.K., her translations of contemporary Russian drama have been staged by the Royal Court and internationally. Her translation of *Plasticine* by Vassily Sigarev was awarded the Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright Award in 2002. Her poetry has been published in *Oxford Poets 2002* and *New Writing 12*. She received an Eric Gregory Award for her writing in 2003. She has plays include *Ladybird* (2004) and *Black Milk* (2003). Her translation of Arkhipov's *Pacific Island* was produced for a forthcoming production by the Royal Shakespeare Company and is used here with her permission.

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The **Open World Cultural Leaders Program** aims to forge better understanding between the United States and Russia by enabling emerging Russian leaders in the arts to experience America's cultural and community life, and to work with their American counterparts. Support for the cultural program is provided through partnership and funding from the National Endowment for the Arts; the Open World Leadership Center funds the administrative portion of the program.



CEC ArtsLink is an international arts organization with offices in New York City and Saint Petersburg, Russia. Our programs encourage and support exchange of artists and cultural managers between the United States and Eastern and Central Europe, Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus. We believe that the arts are a society's most deliberate and complex means of communication, and that artists and arts administrators can help nations overcome long histories of reciprocal distrust, insularity and conflict.

CEC ArtsLink offers a variety of programs, residencies, and grants for artists, arts managers, and non-profit organizations. More at www.cecartslink.org.