THE QUICK-CHANGE ROOM

SCENES FROM A REVOLUTION

UM School of Music
Dept. of Theatre & Drama

February 12 - 15, 2004
Mendelssohn Theatre
The UM School of Music, Department of Theatre and Drama

presents

THE QUICK-CHANGE ROOM
Scenes From A Revolution

By Nagle Jackson

Originally produced at the Denver Center Theatre Company on January 13, 1995,
Donavan Marley, Artistic Director

Director Philip Kerr
Assistant Director Sarah-Jane Gwillim
Scenic & Lighting Designer Gary Decker
Costume Designer Sheila McClear
Sound Designer Christopher Konovaliv
Choreographer Garrett Miller
Stage Manager Erin A. Whipkey

Setting:
The Kuzlov Theater, St. Petersburg, Russia, a dozen years ago

There will be one intermission.

The Quick-Change Room is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

Latecomers will be seated at a suitable break or scene change. As a courtesy to others, please set pagers to silent mode. Cellular phones and electronic watch alarms should be turned off so they will not interrupt the performance. Photography and videotaping are not permitted due to copyright restrictions. Flash photography endangers performers by causing momentary blindness.

The School of Music acknowledges the generosity of McKinley Associates, Inc. whose support has helped make this production possible.
Cast of Characters

Nina, a student actress ................................................................. JoAnna Spanos
Marya Stepanova, wardrobe mistress/supervisor ...................................... Erin Farrell
Lena, seamstress and dresser ................................................................ Elizabeth Hoyt
Sergey Sergeyevich Tarpin, Director of the Kuzlov Theater .................... Adam H. Caplan
Vera, his assistant ........................................................................ Sari Goldberg
Nikolai, an actor ................................................................................. Brad Fraizer
Ludmilla Nevchenka, prima donna actress .......................................... Anika Habermas-Scher
Anna, leading actress ....................................................................... Meghan Powe
Boris, box office manager and procurer ............................................ Brian Luskey
Sasha, stage electrician ...................................................................... J. Theo Klose
Tatyana, an actress .......................................................................... Allison Brown
Svetlana, an actress ......................................................................... Kellie Matteson
Timofey, stage hand ....................................................................... Zachary Booth
Itap, stage hand ................................................................................ Justin Patrick Holmes

About the Playwright

Nagle Jackson (Playwright) has a long career as a director of Shakespeare, staging productions for the Old Globe in San Diego, Shakespeare Santa Fe, and the Shakespeare Festivals of Oregon, California, Texas, and Alabama as well as for the Acting Company in New York. He has directed both classical and contemporary works for many regional companies in the U.S. as well as serving as Artistic Director for the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre (1970-1976) and the McCarter Theatre (1979-1990). In 1997, Jackson was the first American to garner an Onassis Foundation International Playwriting Award for his play, The Elevation of Thieves which had its world premiere at the Denver Center Theatre Company. Denver has also seen the world premiere of three other Jackson works, A Hotel on Marvin Gardens, The Quick-Change Room, and Taking Leave. Jackson was the first American stage director to direct in the Soviet Union, staging The Glass Menagerie for the Bolshoi Dramatic Theatre in Leningrad. In 1990 he staged Romeo and Juliet for the Trondelag Theater in Norway. He is also known for his operatic repertoire, having staged Falstaff, Ariadne auf Naxos, The Marriage of Figaro, A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Albert Herring for the New Jersey Opera Festival. Jackson is a member of The Dramatists Guild, The Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, studied Theatre in Paris as a Fulbright Scholar, and holds an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Whitman College.

Celebrating St. Petersburg

The history of St. Petersburg is an extraordinary tale of arts transforming and arts transformed. Founded by Peter the Great 300 years ago, the glorious city redefined Russia’s idea of itself. St. Petersburg, with its architectural splendor and its magnificent public institutions, embodies the ambition of Peter’s vision to forge a new national identity. Included in the tale of St. Petersburg is its transforming power on the West. Artists of genius, inspired by St. Petersburg, infused visual arts, music, dance, and theater with a Russian flavor that fundamentally changed the face of Western and world arts. “Celebrating St. Petersburg: 300 Years of Cultural Brilliance” includes more than 60 free and ticketed cultural and educational events by the University of Michigan Museum of Art, the University Musical Society, the Center for Russian and East European Studies, the University of Michigan School of Music, and University Libraries.
In the spring of 1986, I was invited by the director of the Bolshoi Dramatic Theater of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), known as the Gorky, to direct a production there. In exchange, Georgi Tovstonogov, the theatre’s Artistic Director, would come to the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey, of which I was Artistic Director, to stage his celebrated production of Chekov’s Uncle Vanya. It was the first private cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and the United States; that is, it was not arranged officially between government agencies. It was one of the first cultural fissures in what would become the earthquake called “perestroika.” For Georgi and me, however, it was just a deal we made over lunch at Sardi’s! There have since been countless such “deals.” My superb colleague and friend, Mark Lamos, then heading up his splendid Hartford Stage Company, was invited a year later to stage Desire Under The Elms in Moscow; as it turned out, we both arrived in Russia around the same time: March-April of 1988. Mark’s production opened a few weeks before my staging of The Glass Menagerie. (Georgi asked me over a transatlantic phone call - rare from the USSR in those days — if I would be interested in staging “that Williams play about the zoo.”) This, then, is the background behind my writing The Quick-Change Room.

The usual disclaimer — “any resemblance to persons living or dead, etc.” — almost holds. Certainly “Sergey” reminds me of Georgi, but without the real director’s robust Georgian temperament. And there was a Boris, but he was scarcely the Machiavellian we meet in my play; he was my guardian angel, a true factotum who could “arrange” anything. And, no, no one suggested that we should turn Tennessee Williams’s gorgeous play into a musical.

It was a fascinating time to be in Russia; heady optimism was in the air. People nearly said what they wanted and the fact that the phone in my apartment (located in the theater) was bugged didn’t worry me in the least. But a cynical side of my nature kept asking: “Do they know what they’re getting into?” I could see what would happen to this theatre company, which employed some 300 souls, when government subsidies vanished to be replaced by box office reality. No one could remember ever having seen an empty seat in the theater’s 1500 seat auditorium. Eight shows a week, a repertory of some twenty to thirty plays and tickets priced at the equivalent of about two dollars - this was the happy state of affairs then. Now, of course, that has all changed (although my production of The Glass Menagerie is still in the repertory!). Tickets cost a lot more than two dollars.

I have written a comedy because that is all I know how to do. But beneath the sometimes farcical energy there is deep concern. This play is a tribute and a gesture of great love to the wonderful Russian artists I was privileged to work with. I hope you will share my affection for them.

— Nagle Jackson

I met Nagle Jackson when I was in Moscow in 1988 directing the Pushkin Theater Company in a production of O’Neill’s Desire Under the Elms (Lyubov pod Viasami). By a diplomatic hair’s breadth, I became the first American director to work with a Russian theater company in the “former Soviet Union;” Nagle’s The Glass Menagerie opened a few weeks later in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg; but we were rehearsing at virtually the same moment. I couldn’t get away from Moscow, so Nagle took the train from St. Petersburg, and we spent a happy, chatty day together, having our picture taken in front of the Kremlin, both of us gushing with relief at finally being able to communicate without an interpreter! We shared impressions of our curious time in Russia and traded tales from the trenches of Regional Theater Land back in the States, since both of us were artistic directors in those days. It was a thrilling time for us, and for the West. Russia was experiencing “perestroika,” and every day brought new sights to the weary eyes of Russians who had lived under the repressive regimes of the last fifty years.

Rehearsals for the O’Neill were fascinating and frustrating in equal measure. I had wondered why the artistic director was so set on having me direct the O’Neill tragedy. Deep into rehearsal, I circuitously discovered the reason, and it was a melancholy one. O’Neill himself had supervised the Russian premiere of the play on this very stage, directed by Pushkin founder Alexander Tairov. Pictures of the production were astonishing — highly abstract, Expressionistic, like a mad dream — as far from realism as you could imagine. Clearly, I thought, looking at the photos, these were groundbreaking artists, and, tragically, they were tortured and assassinated in one of Stalin’s camps. My production was a fist raised in defiance as a reminder of a not-too-distant Russian past in which artists were murdered because of race, beliefs, and artistry. Suddenly, O’Neill’s play became more important to me than ever, and I realized why the actors were so committed to bringing it to life.

I had to leave my own country and go to Russia to make theater that was a political act. For me personally, this was a big step. I think about it now in relation to our upcoming An Arthur Miller Celebration (April 2 - 11 at the Trueblood Theatre.) Arthur Miller was almost the only American playwright whose artistic vision could be even remotely perceived as political — theater about ethics, morals, political movements, the consequences of history — among much else, of course. Arthur has spent a great deal of his long life actively fighting the oppression of artists around the world, most particularly in the once-Communist countries, where dissident artists, authors, actors, etc., simply “disappeared” and were never seen again. Not until Solzhenitsyn’s horrific Gulag Archipelago in the 1970s, did the world begin to comprehend the extent of murder and oppression that was finally disappearing as Nagle and I rehearsed our American plays with spiritually-starved but newly-empowered Russian actors and artists.

— Mark Lamos
About the Cast

ALLISON BROWN (Tatyana) sophomore, BFA Perf., Bloomfield Hills, MI
ADAM H. CAPLAN (Sergey) sophomore, BFA Perf., Idyllwild, CA
ZACHARY BOOTH (Timofey) senior, BFA Perf., Irvington, NY
ERIN FARRELL (Marya) sophomore, BFA Perf., Torrance, CA
BRAD FRAIZER (Nikolai) senior, BFA Perf., Saginaw, MI
SARI GOLDBERG (Vera) first-year, BFA Perf. New York, NY
ANIKA HABERMAS-SCHER (Ludmilla) junior, BFA Perf., Minneapolis, MN
JUSTIN PATRICK HOLMES (Ilap) junior, BFA Perf., Idyllwild, CA
ELIZABETH HOYT (Lena) junior, BFA Perf., Manitowoc, WI
J. THEO KLOSE (Sasha) junior, BFA Perf., West Chester, PA
BRIAN LUSKEY (Boris) junior, BFA Perf./BA English, Saratoga, CA
KELLIE MATTESON (Svetlana) senior, BFA Perf., Jenison, MI
MEGHAN Powe (Anna) senior, BFA Perf., Mount Clemens, MI
JOANNA SPANOS (Nina) senior, BFA Perf./BA English, Bloomfield Hills, MI

About the Artists

GARY DECKER (Scenic Designer) has designed more than 100 productions. In Michigan, he has worked at the Gem, Attic, Birmingham, Boarshead, and Purple Rose Theatres. Recent designs include the national tours of The Sunshine Boys and Same Time, Next Year. His scenic design for Fully Committed at The Century Theatre earned the Detroit Free Press 2002 Theatre Design Excellence Award. He has designed interiors or lighting for commercial projects including: The Elwood Grill in Detroit, The Fashion Cafe in New York, and The Arndale Centre in Manchester, UK. He has been a member of the Theatre Department faculty since 1984.

SARAH-JANE GWILLIM (Assistant Director) is an Asst. Professor in the Dept. of Theatre & Drama. Numerous British television and theatre appearances, with Glenda Jackson, Judi Dench, Tim Dalton. U.S. performance credits include Broadway, off-Broadway, and regional LORT theatres. Other: Member: British, Canadian, and American Actors' Equity; SSDC.


CHRISTOPHER KONOVALIV (Sound Designer) is the Audio Coordinator for the University of Michigan Media Union Recording Studios. Sound Design: UM Dept. of Theatre and Drama, UM Dept. of Dance, UM Festival of New Works, Michigan Shakespeare Festival. Studio engineer: Michael Gould Squared, Cashew, Quartex, Transmission, Jazz Set, Ed Sarath with the London Jazz Orchestra, The Count Basie Orchestra, Kristy Hanson, Close Embrace of the Earth, The Ghetto Billies. Other: Graduate of the UM School of Music, 1999; Member Audio Engineering Society.

SHEILA McCLEAR (Costume Designer) is a senior design and production major in the Dept. of Theatre and Drama. She is also pursuing a BA in general studies from LS&A. UM: Assistant costume designer, Guys and Dolls; costume crafts assistant: Oklahoma!, Xerxes, Hamlet, The Cunning Little Vixen; Rude Mechanicals, costume designer, The Fantasticks.

GARRETT MILLER (Choreographer) is a fourth-year student in the Musical Theatre Dept. UM: Choreographer: Luck!; assistant choreographer: Side Show, Jesus Christ Superstar (April '04); performance: Guys and Dolls (Sky), Oklahoma! (Dream Curly), Parade, Good News!, Side Show. Regional Theatre: Burns Park Players, choreography: Annie, The Music Man, Bye Bye Birdie, Music Theatre of Wichita: assistant choreographer/performer, Funny Girl, dance captain/performer, Ragtime; Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera. Other: Member Actors' Equity Association.

ERIN A. WHIPKEY (Stage Manager) is a third-year design and production student in the Dept. of Theatre and Drama. UM: Stage Manager: The Diary of a Scoundrel; assistant stage manager: Xerxes, Children of Eden, The Balcony; Rude Mechanicals: SM: The Fantasticks; Senior Thesis: SM: Trojan Women: A Love Story, Fully Committed; M-Gination Films: make-up designer, Ellie. Regional Theatre: UM Festival of New Works: SM; Broadstrokes, ASM: The Love List, Dead & Kicking; Brant Lake, NY: stage manager/set designer: Cats, Pippin, Fame, Beauty and the Beast, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, Grease.
Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Boris Grebenshikov, Mark Lamos, Alley Mills, Orson Bean, Jaxon Gwillim, Jennifer Taub, Amanda Mengden, Eugene Barconi, and Ed Hastings.

The performers in this production are undergraduate students in the Department of Theatre and Drama. The designers are undergraduate students, faculty, and guest artists in the Department of Theatre and Drama. Scenery, costumes, properties, sound, and lighting were realized by the students and staff of University Productions, the producing unit of the School of Music.

**KC/ACTF**

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KC/ACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater productions. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KC/ACTF representative, and certain students are selected to participate in KC/ACTF programs involving awards, scholarships, and special grants for actors, playwrights, designers, and critics at both the regional and national levels.

**Staff for The Quick-Change Room**

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Design/Production ......................... George Bacon, Mark Allen Berg, Gary Decker, Doug Edwards, Jessica Hahn, Richard W. Lindsay, Jr., Tim McDevitt, Vincent Mountain, Rob Murphy, Christianne Myers, Henry Reynolds, Arthur Ridley, Nancy Ulmer
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House Manager ................................. Dianne Widzinski
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Banner Artist ................................. Janine Woods
Office Assistants ............................. Erin Farrell, Justin Tanis

PRODUCTION STAFF

Production Manager .......................... Amanda Mengden
Production Stage Manager.................. Nancy Ulmer
Technical Director (Frieze) .............. Richard W. Lindsay, Jr.
Technical Director (Power) ............... Douglas Edwards
Assoc. Tech. Director (Power) ............ Donald C. Watkins
Carpenter ..................................... Robert Michael
Scenic Artist .................................... Tim McDevitt
Scenic Painter ................................. Toni Y. Auletti
Properties Master ............................ Arthur Ridley
Asst. Properties Master ..................... Bryan Huddleston
Properties Assistant ......................... Dan Tracy
Master Electrician ............................ Mark Allen Berg
Costume Shop Manager ..................... Julie Marsh
Assoc. Costume Shop Manager ............ George Bacon
Draper ............................................ Jan Evans, Virginia R. Luedke
Assoc. Draper ................................. Lea Marzonie
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