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From Russia with love (and headphones)

Checking out Chekov in his native tongue
 Published April 19, 2012 by [Kathleen Renne](#) in [Theatre](#)

Watching a foreign film in the native tongue of its actors (with subtitles, of course) makes for a more authentic cinematic experience than seeing some Hollywood actor adopting a fake accent. (Just think how much better *Valkyrie* — the story of Col. Claus von Stauffenberg — would have been sans Tom Cruise, with a full slate of German actors, performing in German.)



Similarly, seeing a play in the language in which it was written also offers a more authentic theatrical experience than seeing it — as we usually do — in translation.

However, thanks to Valery Pashchuk and Russian Theatre Calgary, Calgarians have a rare opportunity to see three one-act plays by Anton Chekhov performed in Russian, by Russians.

DETAILS

The Bear, The Proposal, and The Night Before Trial presented by Russian Theatre Calgary

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“If we do the play in English, we can lose our unique Russian style. It’s very important to keep the Russian language tradition,” says Pashchuk, who worked as a director in Siberia before coming to Calgary in 2006.

Paschuk, along with fellow expatriate Maxim Ivanita, formed Russian Theatre Calgary in 2007.

The three Chekhov one-acts will be the company’s third production, following *Miriam*, and Marc Camoletti’s *Pajamas for Six*.

English-speaking audience members will be given headphones through which an English translation of the plays will be delivered.

In keeping with Russian tradition, Pashchuk is trying to assemble a consistent ensemble of actors from Calgary’s Russian diaspora to perform in the theatre’s offerings.

“In Russia, every theatre is unique because it has people unique to it,” Pashchuk explains, noting the difference between the Russian and Canadian theatre scenes — here, actors and directors move from company to company. Pashchuk says another difference is that, in Russia — unlike in the West — theatre is “more like an art than a business or entertainment.”

Paschuk chose to present three one-act plays by Chekov — “the Russian Shakespeare” — because these works are rarely performed.

The three plays are: *The Bear (The Boar)*, *The Proposal* and *The Night Before Trial*. Each is approximately 30 minutes in length.

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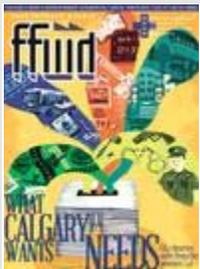
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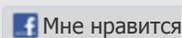
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“These are different Chekhov, not boring Chekhov,” Paschuk laughs.

“We are going to show that Chekhov is bright, interesting and very active,” he says, adding that it was the famed Russian actor, director, innovator and teacher, Constantin Stanislavski, who interpreted Chekhov’s work in such a way as to turn it into serious dramas rather than the comedies Chekhov had originally intended them to be.

“All these plays are about relations between a man and a woman. The most important thing is relationships,” says actor Dmitry Nekhoroshkov. “Chekhov wrote his plays 100 years ago. We human beings are still the same. We’re still laughing at the same things we were laughing at 100 years ago,” he adds.

“It’s a unique cultural experience that Calgarians can have right here in Calgary. It’s quite difficult in Canada to ever hear Chekhov in Russian,” Paschuk says, adding that he hopes Russian Theatre Calgary will be offering a full slate of plays next season

As for the three Chekhov one-acts, there are plans in place to tour them to Edmonton and Vancouver.



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