

The Russian and Eastern European Studies Center Presents:

PNIN

**or, The American Misadventures
of a Hapless Russian Professor**



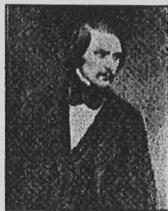
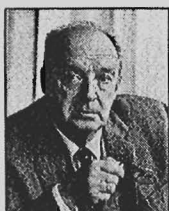
A play inspired by:

**V. Nabokov's *Pnin*,
A. Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*,**

N. Gogol's *Nose*, and

F. Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*

IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN!



Director's Note

Like millions of his compatriots, forced to emigrate after the Socialist Revolution, Professor Pnin lost everything: his parents, motherland, his job, and the woman he loved. His tragedy mirrors the tragedy of the intelligentsia in Russia — an idealistic, and bookish class of Russian intellectuals who admired the West, but never got to really learn the rules of the game here. Pnin becomes a curiosity in the American academia. He is clumsy, loud and emphatic. His classes on Russian Literature are unstructured and old-fashioned. He is demanding and requires careful analysis of any text. But his love for literature and for his distant Russian homeland is infectious. And, like a lonely knight, he fights grade inflation and cheap fashionable trends in the academia. Those who love Pnin also know that he does not care about money or a career, and he is unable to harm anyone. All he needs is a good library and a minimal steady income to teach and research.

Italians are crazy about their opera, Russians — about their classical literature. The classics that Pnin teaches on our stage are works by such greats as Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky.

Aleksandr Pushkin is truly the greatest Russian writer, but his best works are in verse, and most translations are inadequate. So, Pnin gives his students an idea of Pushkin by discussing *The Queen of Spades* (1833), Pushkin's most successful prose work. Pushkin himself gambled and believed in omens and fortune-telling. Perhaps that is why this supernatural tale about magic cards and a vengeful ghost is so convincing. But the narration is ambiguous: it can be also viewed as a story of the protagonist's mental illness. Pushkin's sparse style and irony make both possibilities plausible. As in many works by Pushkin, the author winks and leaves it up to us to decide. *The Queen of Spades* was adapted as an opera by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in 1890.

The Nose (1836), Nikolai Gogol's best known and most bewildering work, is fantastic and imitates the world of dreams. Its title in Russian, "Nos," spelled backwards is SON, the Russian word for dream. As any great work, it resists interpretations. Pushkin called this tale of a runaway nose who walks around in a general's uniform a "fantastic jest." It plunges you on to the streets of a deceptive St. Petersburg where anyone can meet the Devil and experience his tricks. *The Nose* was adapted as an opera by the well-known 20th century Russian composer, Dmitri Shostakovich, in 1929.

Finally, the students are exposed to a key text in world literature, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864). The name Underground Man is as well-known as Hamlet and Don Quixote, while modern philosophies like Freudianism, Expressionism, Surrealism, and Existentialism, to name just a few, claim to be rooted in this short novel about a bitter and lonely man. As the writer J. Frank puts it, the Underground Man's monologue is like a revolt of the human personality against all attempts to limit its inexhaustible potentialities, a symbol of alienation in an oppressively normative world. The book is also an anti-utopia, a brilliant satire of rational social theories and political agendas. The Underground Man's best known statement is, "I admit that two times two makes four is an excellent thing, but... two times two makes five is sometimes also a very charming little thing."

There is one similarity in the three stories featured in our show. They all are based on this strange formula, two times two makes five. Nothing works as it is supposed to work, and the reality is ambiguous and elusive. For a rational mind, these three stories are disturbing and exotic.

Will you, dear public, for one night abandon the familiar reality and follow us to that strange irrational world? And, most importantly, will you read the books afterwards? Will you catch the Russian germ that Pnin's students get and carry throughout their lives?

Even if you won't be transformed into bookworms and Russian majors by Professor Pnin's lectures, you will have a chance to see twenty people who did everything, from writing music and poetry to painting and sewing, for the sake of just one show, ephemeral and short-living, like a butterfly. Twenty people who worked day and night to make an attempt at passing on to you the germ of their love for Russia and for theater. When I think that there are people like them around, I believe that life is worth living, despite so many disappointments — worth living, whether you believe in two times two makes four or in two times two makes five.

Julia Nemirovskaya, Director

Cast, in order of appearance

U.S.A., I.N.S., AND WAINDELL UNIVERSITY

U.S. I.N.S. officer	Maren Couch
Pnin.....	Christian Miller
Liza Bogolepova-Pnin, his wife.....	Luda Kremers
Eric Wind.....	Ilya Purkerson
Kathy.....	Xenia Slabina
Tony.....	Ryan Marquardt
Betty.....	Alla Yarmosh
Dan.....	Vincent Artman

THE QUEEN OF SPADES

Lisa.....	Polina Yemelyanova
Hermann.....	Braden Larson
Surin.....	Vincent Artman
Tomsky.....	Ryan Marquardt
Host.....	Ilya Purkerson
Chekalinsky.....	Chris Pike
Countess.....	Tanya Beede
St. Germain.....	Maren Couch
Three of Clubs.....	Lisa Garvey
Seven of Hearts.....	Alex Bontecou
Ace of Spades.....	Alla Yarmosh
First Maid.....	Xenia Slabina
Second Maid.....	Sara Davidson
Ghost from the Past.....	Lisa Garvey
Ghost's Suitor.....	Maren Couch
First Lady.....	Oksana Moroz
Second Lady.....	Holly Coombes

THE NOSE

Ivan Yakovlevich, the Barber.....	Vincent Artman
Praskovia Osipovna, his wife.....	Sara Davidson
Young Lady.....	Lisa Garvey
Doctor.....	Holly Coombes
Priest.....	Ilya Purkerson
Butler.....	Oksana Moroz
Newspaper Boy.....	Alla Yarmosh
Policeman.....	Braden Larson
Street Peddler.....	Polina Yemelyanova
Editor.....	Richard Iskenderov
Old Woman.....	Tanya Beede
Major Kovalev.....	Ryan Marquardt
Nose.....	Maren Couch

Second Young Lady.....	Lisa Garvey
Lady Podtochina.....	Oksana Moroz
Lady Podtochina's Daughter.....	Xenia Slabina
First Curious Person.....	Chris Pike
Second Curious Person.....	Braden Larson
Third Curious Person.....	Holly Coombes
Fourth Curious Person.....	Alla Yarmosh

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

Professor Hagen.....	Ryan Marquardt
Professor Thomas.....	Polina Yemelyanova
Underground Man.....	Chris Pike
Underground Man's Double.....	Ryan Marquardt
Joan Clements.....	Holly Coombes
Ferfichkin.....	Ilya Purkerson
Simonov.....	Ryan Marquardt
First Waiter.....	Oksana Moroz
Second Waiter.....	Matt Reynolds
Zverkov.....	Braden Larson
Host at Brothel.....	Sara Davidson
First Girl.....	Maren Couch
Second Girl.....	Holly Coombes
Third Girl.....	Lisa Garvey
Fourth Girl.....	Oksana Moroz
Fifth Girl.....	Yulya Drobishevskaya
Liza.....	Tanya Beede

WAINDELL AND PNIN'S HOUSE

Mrs. Hopper.....	Xenia Slabina
Saleswoman.....	Polina Yemelyanova
Passer-by, Bus Driver.....	Vincent Artman
Passer-by.....	Sara Davidson
Passer-by.....	Maren Couch
Victor.....	Richard Iskenderov
Mrs. Thayer, Librarian.....	Oksana Moroz
Professor Blorengé.....	Ilya Purkerson
Professor Lawrence Clements.....	Vincent Artman
Amy Weeks.....	Sara Davidson
Mr. Schmidt.....	Maren Couch
Dancer.....	Alex Bontecou
Dancer.....	Tanya Beede

SYNOPSIS

Act I

Timofey Pnin, a Russian literary scholar, flees from France to the US during WWII. With his pregnant wife Liza, Pnin hopes to become an American citizen. However, Liza suddenly informs him that the child is not his, but rather her lover's, the Austrian psychoanalyst Eric Wind. Leaving her poor husband alone in the rain, Liza runs off with Eric.

Pnin begins to teach and moves to the quiet university city of Waindell. There he encounters a small group of students — Kathy, Tony, Betty, and Dan — who are curious about Russia and interested in learning about Russian literature.

As he begins his lessons, Pnin's descriptions of such classics as Aleksandr Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*, Nikolai Gogol's *Nose*, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* are so vivid, that the students see the stories come alive in front of their eyes...

Queen of Spades

A young German card player, Hermann, discovers that the old Countess Anna Fedorovna knows a secret trick of using three cards to always win the game of Pharaoh. Desperate to become rich, Hermann decides to learn the secret and pretends to fall in love with the old lady's foster daughter Liza, using the poor girl to gain access to the Countess.

One night he sneaks into the Countess' bedroom and begs her to give him the secret. The old woman refuses, and the frustrated man threatens her with a gun. The Countess dies of fright, but her ghost later visits Hermann and reveals the three winning cards.

Following the Countess' instructions, Hermann bets on each card for three consecutive nights. After winning twice, he places a bet on what he thinks is the right card... only to discover that he has bet on the Queen of Spades. The old Countess had tricked him. After losing everything he had, the penniless Hermann goes insane, endlessly screaming the names of the three winning cards: "Three, seven, ace!"

The Nose

One morning in St. Petersburg, the barber Ivan Yakovlevich wakes up with a nasty hangover. As he cuts his breakfast bread, Ivan discovers a nose, which he recognizes as that of his customer, Major Kovalev. With no memory of what had happened the day before, and unsure as to whether or not he had accidentally shaved off the nose, he tries to get rid of it, eventually throwing the nose into the Neva river.

That same morning, the Major Kovalev wakes up to discover that his nose has disappeared. Desperately wandering the streets and worrying that he will frighten the pretty girls that he had planned to flirt with at a ball that evening, he suddenly notices his own nose dressed in a uniform of a higher rank than his own. While in a church, Major Kovalev tells the Nose that it belongs to him. The superior Nose just leaves without honoring Major Kovalev's request to return back to his face.

The Major tries to persuade a newspaper Editor to place a runaway-nose ad for him, but soon afterwards a policeman finds and brings the Nose back to its home. However, Kovalev is unable to re-attach it by himself and turns to the Doctor for help, only to receive advice on how to pursue a healthy life style to make up for the lack of a nose.

Major Kovalev goes to bed, tired of the day's nightmare, and wakes up the next morning with his nose safely and firmly back on his face.

INTERMISSION

Act II

Notes From Underground

The Underground Man is a destitute, hopeless, depressed individual, hating himself and his life. He is waiting at a restaurant to meet with some of his acquaintances, one of whom has received a prestigious position in another city, but they are making fun of him, and arrive late on purpose,

The Underground Man offends his friends and gets ridiculed, teased, and embarrassed, eventually leading up to his challenging Firfichkin to a duel. After a quarrel, the Underground Man follows the four men to a brothel, where he encounters and takes a liking to the prostitute Liza.

A conversation on the inevitability of death leads the Underground Man to trying to convince the miserable Liza that she is still young and has a better life ahead of her. But realizing that he cannot give her happiness and after he crushes her dreams, Liza abandons the Underground Man and he is left to wallow in his own despair.

THE END



CREDITS

Assistant directors.....		Tanya Beede
	Maren Couch	Polina Yemelianova
Assistants.....		Polina Yemelianova
	Heghine Hakobyan	Chris Pike
Stage directors.....		Maren Couch
		Braden Larson
Music director.....		Ryan Marquardt
Music editing.....		Vincent Artman
		Ilya Purkerson
Music assistant.....		Sasha Polishchuk
Original music.....		Alex Arrowsmith
		Ryan Marquardt
FEATURING MUSIC BY:		
Alfred Schnittke	Alexander Glazunov	Kronos Quartet
Trevor Rabin	Dmitri Shostakovich	Apocalyptica
Alicia Svigals	Dizzy Gillespie	Yann Tiersen
Richard Clayderman	Benny Goodman	Arvo Pärt
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Infected Mushroom	Circus Contraption
Nikolai Volshaninov, Rada Volshaninova and Roman Gypsy Theater		
Editing and translating.....		Chris Pike
	Maren Couch	Christian Miller
	Alla Yarmosh	Polina Yemelyanova
	Xenia Slabina	Heghine Hakobya
Choreography.....		Liza Garvey
	Tanya Beede	Matt Reynolds
Backdrops, stage set design and painting.....		Alek Iskenderov
	Holly Coombes	Richard Iskenderov
	Charlotte Hewitt	Oksana Moroz
	Tanya Beede	Sara Davidson
	Matt Reynolds	Heghine Hakobyan
	Xenia Slabina	Lizka Vaintrob
Flyer and program.....		Gabriella Anelauskaite
Props.....		Braden Larson
		Sara Davidson
Language tutoring.....		Heghine Hakobyan
	Oksana Moroz	Polina Yemelyanova
	Xenia Slabina	Luda Kremers
		Tanya Beede
PR.....		Polina Yemelyanova
	Heghine Hakobyan	Sara Davidson
		Braden Larson
Costume director.....		Charlotte Hewitt
Costumes.....		Charlotte Hewitt
	Megan Garvey	Matt Reynolds
	Sara Davidson	Tanya Beede
	Lizka Vaintrob	Valerie Couch
Makeup.....		Tanya Beede
	Oksana Moroz	Charlotte Hewitt
		Holly Coombes
Technical support.....		Raina Smith
	Sasha Polishchuk	Heghine Hakobyan
	David Beede	Vincent Artman
		RJ Purkerson
Lights and show finishing.....		Chris Santoro
Cast manager.....		Sara Davidson

Thank You For Coming!



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