

Our Production Crew:

Director.....Julia Nemirovskaya
Script Writer.....Julia Nemirovskaya
Script Translation, Editing.....Jessica Jones, Dana Fleck, Ryan Perkins
Assistant Directors.....Kris Santoro, Dana Fleck, Jessica Jones
Manager.....Heghine Hakobyan
Music Directors.....Jessica Jones, Alexander Polishchuk
Live Music.....Alexander Polishchuk, Peter Lisle, Donna Searles-Brown
Art, Costume & Set Design.....Jenny Kroik, Anastasia Savenkova, Youn Lee,
Jessica Miller, Elizabeth Vaintrob
Painters.....Youn Lee, Brian O'Donnell, Jessica Jones, Ryan Perkins,
Dana Fleck, Heghine Hakobyan, Hanna Samola, Gabrielle Josephson,
Marian Larson, Hikari Dekura, Anthony Topoleski, Donna Searles-Brown,
Miriam Lipton, Brianna Kemper, Lydia McNeil, Michael Butler, Elizabeth Vaintrob
Choreographers.....Tanya Beede, Donna Brown, Elizabeth Hope
Screens.....Michael Butler, Elizabeth Hope
PR, Editing.....Youn Lee, Michael Butler, Anthony Topoleski,
Heghine Hakobyan, Jessica Jones, Peter Lisle, Brianna Kemper
Graphic Design.....Youn Lee, Peter Lisle, Brianna Kemper
Photographer.....Heghine Hakobyan, Nathan Whitwer, Elena Chiovaro
Language Tutors.....Daria Shulgina, Alexandra Stepanova,
Heghine Hakobyan, Elizabeth Prishchenko, Nadine Astrakhan
Stage Managers.....Nick Gurevich, Youn Lee, Miriam Lipton, Michael Butler
Technical Support.....Irina Botvinnik, Alexander Polishchuk
Lights.....Kris Santoro

Special Thanks to:

Katya Hokanson, REEES Director
Judith Baskin, Associate Dean of Humanities
John Schmor, Theater Arts Department Head
David Frank, Clark Honors College Dean
Julia Heydon, Oregon Humanities Center Associate Director
Ronald Renschler, UO Libraries Communications Director
Nargas Oskui, UO Libraries CMET Consulting Manager
David Baker, UO Libraries Classroom Technology Specialist
Stacy DeHart, UO Libraries Classroom Technology Specialist
Kevin Hatfield, UO Housing Residence Life Assistant Director
Matthew Nelson, UO Housing Complex Director
Heather Kropf, UO Housing Program Coordinator
Hope Marston, OCIA Graduate Coordinator
Shelley Lubbers, Inspections Unlimited, Inc.

***UO Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Program,
in collaboration with the Department of Art,
UO Libraries, and UO Housing, present***

RUSLAN & LYUDMILA

A bilingual adaptation of Aleksandr Pushkin's 1820 romantic fantasy



V.A. Tropinin, 1827

Additional support provided by the Oregon Humanities Center's Endowment for Public Outreach in the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities; College of Arts and Sciences Deans' Discretionary Fund; Clark Honors College; and Theatre Art

March 2012
Eugene, OR

Welcome to LUKOMORIE!

In Russian, Lukomorie is the name of a fairytale inlet of sea where the land curves inward. It is on that curved land that Aleksander Pushkin, Russia's most venerated author, spent the best hours of his otherwise unhappy childhood. His peasant nanny, Arina, told him that at Lukomorie, around the Tree of Life, a green oak, a Learned Cat walks right and left on a golden chain telling tales, Leshij the forest spirit roams the woods, mermaids sway on tree branches, fantastic animals leave their footsteps on the ground, and a witch Baba Yaga lives in a hut on chicken legs that has neither doors nor windows. Young Pushkin inhabited the magic Lukomorie along with the imaginary creatures; when he grew older, he dreamt about Lukomorie's fair maidens stolen by evil magicians and rescued by fearless knights. One day when he was still in the Lyceum (a high school for aristocrats founded by Emperor Aleksander I to educate the new generation of statesmen) Pushkin began writing a poem about one beautiful and virtuous Russian prince Ruslan (his name has RUS in it!). On Ruslan's wedding night with Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev's youngest daughter Lyudmila, an evil magician steals his wife. On their way to rescuing Lyudmila, Ruslan and his contenders meet the Learned Cat, witches and wizards, forest and river creatures. Some critics wrote that any old Russian peasant could tell a story or two about the witch Baba Yaga, talking giant's head, and lovesick mermaids, or that authors should take nobler stories for their poetic narratives. But critics were few: after the poem was published, the reading public proclaimed Pushkin Russia's best poet. By that time the Tsar had already exiled the unruly and naughty Pushkin to the Russian Empire's southern borders for politically charged poems and Pushkin's adult life, as turbulent as that of his imaginary knights, began. It ended in 1837 when Pushkin was killed on a duel defending his wife's honor.

The cast of "Ruslan and Lyudmila" is of the same age as Pushkin when he was writing the poem. It is a good age to be preoccupied with fantasies of love and to set out on a quest. This play was one such quest where thirty cast members, the thirty fearless knights, many of whom are only in Russian 101! — proved to be worthy. Not only did they memorize numerous verses from the famous poem — they wrote their own version of it in English verse. As they rehearsed it, they improvised, added funny characters and episodes and generally had a lot of fun with Pushkin's fantasy. They will involve you all in their big educational project as they teach you Russian cultural norms and how to pronounce Russian letters and words.

I am honored to work with this year's amazing cast and crew and witness their love for each other, Pushkin, and Russian literature in general. Working with them filled me with joy — it is to them I give my respect and gratitude.

Speaking of gratitude, these are difficult times for the non-profit artistic world. I would like to thank our own REEES and all the UO departments who generously supported us. And thank you all, dear public, for your donations and patronage! I feel like we already know and admire you all: if you came to theater to enjoy a fairy tale, your heart is in the right place!

Julia Nemirovskaya
Assistant Professor
Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies



Nicholas Gurevich is a sophomore majoring in economics. Nicholas plays the roles of Nick and Farlaf. He became interested in this class because he enjoys both theater and Russian, making this an excellent opportunity to combine the two interests. His favorite Russian book is *Dead Souls* by Nikolai Gogol.



Lydia McNeil is a junior majoring in psychology. She plays the roles of Baba Yaga's flying hut on chicken legs, Izbushka, and Undina. She became interested in the Russian Through Theater class because she enjoyed being a part of Julia's creative world last year and having the opportunity to improve her Russian. Her favorite Russian author is Dostoevsky.

Peter Lisle studies physics at the University of Oregon, but he also dabbles in other areas as well. He enjoyed helping out with poster design and music for this year's production. He does not study Russian, but considers the class a very interesting experience.



Gabrielle Josephson is a junior studying linguistics. She plays the roles of the Realtor and the Western Ambassador. She came back to the world of Russian Through Theater simply to surround herself with fellow Russophiles. She loves Mayakovsky's Bania = Bathhouse, Dostoevsky, and the word *божья коровка* = ladybug, which literally translates as "God's little cow." How charming!

Liz Prishchenko is a freshman at the UO and also plays a student in the play. As a heritage speaker of Russian, she was interested in meeting other people who speak Russian as well as those who love and study Russia's wonderful language and culture.





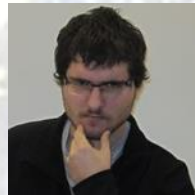
Sasha Stepanova is a freshman studying biology. In Ruslan and Lyudmila, she plays Lilya, a student. She is a part of this class because she wanted to speak more Russian and to sing songs in Russian. Of all things Russian, her favorite is пельмени = Russian dumplings.

Brianna Kemper is a junior majoring in family and human services. Her roles are Volchok, Lady Rain, Mermaid 3, and the Oak Tree. She is participating in Russian Through Theater because she is interested in learning Russian and enjoys the company of her cast members. She absolutely loves Heghine's borscht!



Youn Lee fell in love with Russian Through Theater last year when she participated as moral support for a friend. This year she is participating as a community member and playing the roles of the Blue Muppet and a Muslim Ambassador. She loves how the language sounds to her Russian-illiterate ears.

Sam Brazil is a junior majoring in linguistics. He has the roles of the Green Muppet, Ratmir, and Chernomor in Ruslan and Lyudmila. He loves beets in Russian cuisine and enjoys making the play's male lead emote.



Dana Fleck is a student studying computer science. Her role in the play is the Pink Muppet. She has had a great time helping throughout the production. This is her second time in Russian Through Theater and it has been a crazy, fun experience for her.

Cast in Order of Appearance:

Nick, Farlaf.....Nicholas Gurevich
Hut on Chicken Legs, Undina.....Lydia McNiel
Ty.....Peter Lisle
Tara, Pagan Goddess Lada.....Jacquelynn Lubbers
Realtor, Western Ambassador.....Gabrielle Josephson
Sasha, First Skomorokh.....Elizabeth Prishchenko
Lilya.....Alexandra Stepanova
Lady Rain, Oak Tree, Volchok, Third Mermaid.....Brianna Kemper
Blue Muppet, Moslem Ambassador, Green Muppet in Act TwoYoun Lee
Green Muppet, Ratmir, Chernomor.....Samuel Brazil
Pink Muppet.....Dana Fleck
Birthday Boy Kirill.....Kirill Moore
Birthday Guest Gersh.....Gersh Botvinnik
Birthday Guest Andrei.....Andrei Bindeman
Birthday Guest Philipp.....Philipp Bindeman
Lyudmila's Maid, Waitress, Second Mermaid.....Hikari Dekura
First Occupy Girl, Nenila.....Daria Shulgina
Second Occupy Girl, Naina.....Nadine Astrakhan
Pushkin.....Michael Butler
Pushkin's Dancing Quill (Muse).....Elizabeth Hope
Learned Cat.....Jessica Jones
Leshii, Grand Prince Vladimir.....Brian O'Donnell
First Mermaid, Second Skomorokh, Count Dracula, Fawn.....Donna Searles-Brown
Ruslan.....Ryan Perkins
Lyudmila, Ghost Singer.....Abby Grewatz
Baba Yaga.....Miriam Lipton
Grand Princess Anna, Blue Muppet in Act Two.....Marina Larson
Armenian Ambassador.....Heghine Hakobyan
Rogdai.....Anthony Topoleski
Finn.....Nathan Whitwer
Head of Chernomor's Brother, Zulfia.....Hanna Samola

Choir: Aleksandr Polishchuk, Jessica Jones, Brianna Kemper, Jacquelynn Lubbers, Abby Grewatz, Daria Shulgina, Alexandra Stepanova, Hanna Samola, Lydia McNiel, Youn Lee, Dana Fleck, Peter Lisle, Elizabeth Hope, Ryan Perkins

Music and songs by Anton Arensky, Mikhail Glinka, David Tukhmanov, Igor Stravinsky, Alfred Shnitke, Donna Searles-Brown, Peter Lisle

Plot of Our Play: Act I



A group of American and Russian students rent an apartment in the UO proximity, where they discover that it is also the abode of three forgotten Muppets. After some deliberation, the students and Muppets decide to combine their talents and start a theater troop. Following a successful performance at a children's birthday party they decide to take on one of Pushkin's epic fairy tales, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, as their next project.

The play begins with a monologue establishing a traditional Russian fantasy setting, with such famous folk characters as Leshii, Baba Yaga, and her ambulatory chicken hut. After Pushkin briefly succumbs to some nihilistic self-doubt, the focus shifts to the wedding of Ruslan and Lyudmila. With an array of suitors and foreign ambassadors present, Lada, the pagan goddess of love, sings an angry lamentation at Grand Prince Vladimir's decision to convert his kingdom to Christianity. Just before the consummation of the wedding, Lyudmila is kidnapped from the arms of Ruslan by a mysterious figure. Prince Vladimir then furiously declares the marriage annulled and grants the right to marry Lyudmila to whichever suitor is able to recover her, thus beginning an epic quest.

Ruslan and his companion, the Learned Cat, begin their journey by seeking out a powerful magician known as the Finn, who proceeds to tell them how he gained his powers because of an unrequited love for Naina the Witch. After receiving the blessing of the Finn, Ruslan gets in a scuffle with the evil Prince Rogdai, from which he emerges victorious, leaving Rogdai to be resurrected by a mermaid. The first act concludes with Pushkin hashing out creative differences with his quill.

Intermission



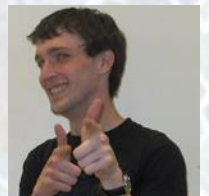
Hikari Dekura is a junior and a part of the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Program. She plays the Mermaid 2, Waitress, and Lyudmila's maid. She is participating in this play because she wants to develop her Russian and learn Russian culture through theater. Her favorite Russian is Evgeni Plushenko and, of course, borscht.

Daria Shulgina has been in three of Julia's plays in previous years. She is double majoring in Russian and linguistics. She is taking Russian Through Theater this year, because she loves being in a play and interacting with the amazing cast. She is playing Occupy Girl 2, Naina, and is also in the choir. This play, as well as Julia's previous plays, is exciting, fun, and colorful. She likes theater, the outdoors, the arts, and much more. Her favorite line from *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is "Она моя! Она моя! = She is mine! She is mine!"



Nadine Astrakhan is studying international studies and Russian in her first year at the University of Oregon. Her roles in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* are Naina and Occupy Girl 1, the Protester. She became interested in this class because she wanted to practice her Russian and have fun! She says, "My Mama's borscht is the best, don't fight it! Love you, mom!"

Michael Butler is in his second year in the REEES Graduate Program. He plays the part of Pushkin. After years of studying Pushkin, he revels in the opportunity to BE Pushkin. He is hoping to share in some of the God-like status among his Russian colleagues. The works of Mikhail Bulgakov and Fyodor Dostoevsky touch him in the deepest pits of his cold, black heart.



Cast Biographies:

Nathan Whitwer is a senior finishing his Russian language major. He is playing the part of the Finn, a magician. He was interested in taking Russian Through Theater to get better at reading and speaking Russian. He loves the history of Russia.



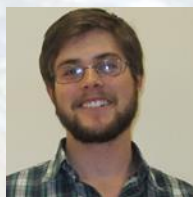
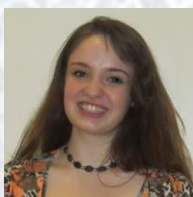
Jackie Lubbers is currently attending her second year at the UO studying mathematics. She is playing the part of Lada, the goddess of love, and Tara. She is participating in Russian Through Theater because she always wanted to be in a play. Her favorite Russian food is пирожки = little pies!!!

Brian O'Donnell is a student at the University of Oregon in his junior year. He is studying Chinese and Russian. He plays the parts of Prince Vladimir and Leshii, the wood spirit. His favorite character in the play is Baba Yaga.



Hanna Samola is studying Finnish literature in the UO Comparative Literature Department. Her roles in this play include the Head and Zulfia. She is a part of Ruslan and Lyudmila because she wanted to practice her Russian language skills. She enjoys the Russian animations made by Iurii Norshtein.

Elizabeth Hope is a UO student studying at the School of Business. Her experience in dance led her to play the part of the Quill, representing Pushkin's muse in Ruslan and Lyudmila. Liz joined this class because of her interest in theater, but also because the class sounded like a great time. She had much fun and met some really awesome people.



Anthony Topoleski is a junior at the University of Oregon. He is playing as the Evil Prince Rogdai in Ruslan and Lyudmila. Tony joined the play because of his ongoing interest in the Russian language and culture. Some of his favorite Russian things include the philosophy of Lev Shestov and the films of Alexandr Sokurov.

Jessica Jones is a senior double majoring in history and Russian and Eastern European Studies. She is Кот Учёный, the Learned Cat. The Russian play is the best way she's discovered to increase language ability and comprehension in a short amount of time and also have a great time doing it. She believes that there's something about Russian theatre that brings us all together and makes us friends for a lifetime. Her favorite Russian word is "конечно" which means "of course"—it's such a versatile word, since you can use it seriously or enthusiastically to mean "absolutely!" or to mean, "oh yeah ... of course you did."



Ryan Perkins is a senior double majoring in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies and linguistics. He is playing the part of Ruslan, who just so happens to be a title character. He has always heard about Russian Through Theater as a lot of fun, and figured he'd give it a shot. He thinks Nikolai Gogol is a really awesome author.

Abby Grewatz is a first year graduate student in folklore. She is playing the parts of Lyudmila and a ghost singer. She is taking this class for fun. Her favorite things from Russia are St. Basil's Cathedral and Matryoshka = Матрешка dolls.





Donna Searles-Brown is a junior studying political science and Russian. She plays the Mermaid 1, Count Dracula, very similar to the Count of Sesame Street, Skomorohk 2, and the Fawn. She is participating in this class because she loves Russian. Her favorite Russian phrase is “Ой какой большой!” = Oh, it’s so great!”

Miriam Lipton is graduate student working on her M.A. in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies with a concentration in Soviet history. She plays the part of the illustrious Baba Yaga. She became interested in joining this class because it’s what all the cool kids have been doing. Obviously. Of all things Russian, her favorite is сыр = Russian strained cottage cheese!!!!



Marina Larson is a junior studying Russian history. She graces the stage as Grand Princess Anna in Acts 1 and 2, and also as the Blue Muppet in Act 2. She had heard about the Russian Through Theater group from her professor last year, and she liked it so much that she decided to do it again. Matryoshki (Russian Nesting Dolls) are the best!

Heghine Hakobyan is assistant professor and Slavic librarian at the university. She has been helping Julia with these productions for several years now. She is playing the part of the Armenian Ambassador. She wants to help the students excel, and also to gain and share knowledge, emotions, and experiences.



Act II



Act two begins with Ludmila attempting to kill herself out of grief for having been taken from Ruslan, only to be thwarted by Pushkin who crashes through the fourth wall to give her a sleeping potion. After it is revealed that she is in the clutches of the dark wizard Chernomor, she begins her ultimately futile batch of escape attempts only to discover a hat of invisibility that she utilizes to hide from her captor. Meanwhile, Ruslan and the Cat stumble upon a giant head who turns out to be the brother of Chernomor and the guardian of the only sword that can sever his magic beard, thus causing his demise.

Ruslan then continues onward in his search for Ludmila, surpassing Ratmir who is seduced away from the quest by some enticing maidens. After a hilarious misunderstanding between the forest spirit Leshii, Baba Yaga, and Ruslan, our hero is brought to the castle of Chernomor where the two engage in a monumental conflict spanning both land and air, resulting in Chernomor’s defeat. They discover Ludmila only to find that, having taken the potion, she is now locked in an implacable slumber.

While returning to the kingdom, Farlaf the drunkard steels up and stabs Ruslan in his sleep in order to claim Ludmila as his own. Just when things look hopeless, the cat seeks magical assistance, and they get by with a little help from the Finn. Ruslan returns to the kingdom and discovers that Farlaf has beaten him there with the sleeping Ludmila. Finally, with the assistance of a magic ring, he awakens her from her graceful repose, and the two live happily ever after.

The End.