Presents

RUSSIAN TRANSPORT

By Erika Sheffer

January 19 – February 11, 2018

Directed by Laura Gordon

Stage Manager ................................................................. ......................... Veronica Zahn*
Assistant Stage Manager .................................................... ......................... Bailey Wegner
Scenic & Lighting Design ...................................................... .......................... Jason Fassl~
Assistant Scenic & Lighting Design ........................................ .......................... Marisa Abbott
Props Design ................................................................................ ..................... Ana McHenry
Sound Design ................................................................................ .................... Megan B. Henninger~
Costume Design ................................................................................ ..................... Jason Orlenko~
Technical Director ................................................................................ ............ Anthony Lyons
Dialect & Language Coach, Dramaturg ............................................... ........................ Graham Billings
Dialect Coach ................................................................................ ......................... Raeleen McMillion*
Fight Choreography ................................................................................ ......................... Reese Madigan*
Russian Language Captain ................................................................................ ........................... Mark Puchinsky

*Appearing through an Agreement between Renaissance Theaterworks and Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States
~ Member of United Scenic Artists  ^ Member of Stage Directors & Choreographers Society
+ Member of Voice & Speech Trainers Association & The American Dialect Society

There will be one 10-minute intermission

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Originally produced in New York City by The New Group (Scott Elliott, Artistic Director).
RUSSIAN TRANSPORT is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.
CAST

DIANA...........................................................................................................................................Elizabeth Ledo*
MISHA.........................................................................................................................................Reese Madigan*
MIRA/SONYA/VERA/SVETA.........................................................................................................April Paul
ALEX ...............................................................................................................................................Max Pink
BORIS ..............................................................................................................................................Mark Puchinsky

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DIRECTOR’S NOTES

Playwright Erika Sheffer describes “Russian Transport” as a family comedy/drama/crime story/thriller. It’s also an immigrant story; in this case Russian immigrants who left the former Soviet Union to pursue a better life in the United States in the 1990’s. Much like Arthur Miller’s “A View from the Bridge,” Sheffer’s play exposes the underbelly of a family and how they must come to deal with the moral and ethical dilemmas that stand in the way of achieving that better life.

I think we’ve assembled the perfect cast of actors to tell this story. They are all wildly talented, generous and intrepid souls, boldly embracing what could be considered a daunting task.

The more time I spend with this play the more I love it. I find it to be a deeply moving, surprising, funny, revealing, complex, and very human portrait of the high cost of pursuing this particular American dream.

Laura Gordon, Director

BIOGRAPHIES

Erika Sheffer (Playwright) Erika Sheffer’s first play, RUSSIAN TRANSPORT, received its world premiere at The New Group in January 2012, directed by Scott Elliott. The play was nominated for the John Gassner Award by the Outer Critics Circle (presented for an American play, preferably by a new playwright). In addition, Erika just received the Paula Vogel Award from the Vineyard Theatre, recognizing a new writer of great promise. Her work has been read at Naked Angels, Primary Stages, The Woodshed Collective and Personal Space Theatrics. She has performed original pieces at Upright Citizens Brigade and Dixon Place. Erika received a fellowship from SPACE on Ryder Farm to develop her newest play and is an alumna of The Movement Theater Company’s New Works/Moving Up Writers Group. Selected acting credits include RED LIGHT WINTER, directed by Adam Rapp, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, directed by Mark Lamos, as well as several productions for The Folger and The American Shakespeare Center. Erika holds a B.F.A. in Drama from Syracuse University.

Laura Gordon (Director) Laura is happy to be back with some of her favorite collaborators at Renaissance Theaterworks where she has directed SKIN TIGHT, AMELIA, and MEMORY HOUSE, and performed in AGNES OF GOD, LETTICE AND LOVAGE, and HONOUR. A Milwaukee based actor and director, other directing credits include THE UNEXPECTED MAN, AN IDEAL HUSBAND, THE ROYAL FAMILY, Edward Albee’s SEASCAPE, OLD TIMES (American Players Theatre); THE FOREIGNER, VENUS IN FUR, SPEAKING IN TONGUES, ALMOST MAINE, LAUREL AND HARDY, GUTENBURG! THE MUSICAL! (Milwaukee Rep); MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING (Santa Cruz Shakespeare); MEASURE FOR MEASURE, LOVE’S LABOUR’S LOST, THE WINTER’S TALE (Utah Shakespeare Festival); IN THE NEXT ROOM (Actors Theater of Louisville); RED, GOING TO ST. IVES (Forward Theater); RICHARD III (Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival). Her acting credits include GOOD PEOPLE (Margie), DEATH OF A SALESMAN (Linda Loman), THE CRUCIBLE (Elizabeth Proctor), DOUBT (Sister Aloysius), THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE (Maureen). Laura is a Lunt-Fontanne Fellow and an Associate Artist with the Milwaukee Repertory Theater. She is a member of SDC and Actors Equity Association.

Veronica Zahn* (Stage Manager) Veronica is honored to be doing her first show with RTW. Other Milwaukee credits include THE OTHER PLACE (Next Act, SM); COMPLETE WORKS... (ABRIDGED) [REVISED] (Chamber, ASM); SPOOKLEY THE SQUARE PUMPKIN (First Stage, ASM); I AM MY OWN WIFE, WOYZECH (Theatre Gigante, SM); and I DO! I DO! (Acacia, SM); and theatres in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. Veronica mentors student SMs at the high school and college levels and recently taught
at Carthage. She is the Managing Director for MYT and works in the administrative office at Next Act. BA in Theatre Arts, Bethel College; MFA in Stage Management, Wayne State University. Thanks to Julie Swenson, Judy Martel, and Brandy Kline for their support! Matt Norby—I could not do this without you. For JC. www.veronicazahn.com

**Bailey Wegner (Assistant Stage Manager)** Bailey joins Renaissance Theaterworks as Production Manager following her recent role as Stage Manager for the Br!NK New Play Festival & this year’s Groundworks production of BLISS (OR EMILY POST IS DEAD!). She has worked with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre as a Stage Manager for Young Playwright’s Festival, and an Assistant Stage Manager for THE FEW. Her University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee credits include TRANSLATIONS, DIDO & AENEAS, and DAMN YANKIES. In addition, she has also completed a practicum with Theatre Bonn, in Germany. She has a BFA in Theatre from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

**Elizabeth Ledo* (Diana)** Elizabeth is thrilled to be joining RTW for the first time. Elizabeth has performed in over 20 productions with Milwaukee Rep including: ALMOST MAINE, THE LONESOME WEST, WIT, ESCAPE FROM HAPPINESS, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE and 9 seasons of A CHRISTMAS CAROL. Chicago credits include: TUG OF WAR: CIVIL STRIFE, A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM, AS YOU LIKE IT, AMADEUS AND FUNK IT UP ABOUT NOTHIN’ (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); SECRET GARDEN, ONE MAN TWO GUVNORS, TARTUFFE, THE MISANTHROPE, TITUS ANDRONICUS, UNCLE VANYA, THE REAL THING (Court Theatre); THE MATCHMAKER, BOLEROS FOR THE DISENCHANTED and 3 seasons of A CHRISTMAS CAROL (Goodman Theatre); BRIGHT HALF LIFE, LE SWITCH, THE HOMOSEXUALS (About Face Theatre) where she is an Artistic Associate, as well as work with Writers Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Drury Lane Oakbrook, Lookingglass Theatre. Regional credits include HAMLET, ROMEO AND JULIET, RICHARD III, COMEDY OF ERRORS (Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival); THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHTTIME, BOEING BOEING, ARCADIA (Indiana Repertory Theatre). Elizabeth is a proud graduate of Loyola University of Chicago.

**Reese Madigan* (Misha, Fight Choreographer)** Reese is thrilled to be back at RTW, having appeared previously as many people in AMELIA. Recent Milwaukee credits include Bob Cratchit in A CHRISTMAS CAROL at Milwaukee Rep, and Peter in SILENT SKY at Next Act. Reese has appeared on

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Broadway, (Lincoln Center, Circle in the Square); Off-Broadway (The Public Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, Variety Arts Theatre, Abingdon Theatre Company). Regional credits include: Arizona Theater Company, Cincinnati Playhouse, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Centerstage, The Shakespeare Theatre, CATF, Virginia Stage, San Jose Rep, Indiana Rep, Shakespeare on the Sound, Door Shakespeare and the first National Tour of SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION. Recent TV includes THE BLACKLIST and HOUSE OF CARDS. He is proud to be an associate artist with Milwaukee Rep.

April Paul (Mira/Sonya/Vera/Sveta) April is incredibly delighted to return to Renaissance Theaterworks, where she was last seen as Karlie in LUNA GALE. With a Bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, April has worked with several companies across the Milwaukee area. Some recent projects include PEPPER’S GHOST (The Alchemist Theatre), LITTLE GEM (Milwaukee Irish Arts), JACK OF HEARTS (Milwaukee Entertainment Group), and THE FLICK (Forward Theatre). Coming up next, she will be appearing as Sister James in DOUBT, A PARABLE with Milwaukee Chamber Theatre. April extends her gratitude to all the individuals here at RTW for continuing to provide opportunities that inspire growth and development within the surrounding community.

Max Pink (Alex) Max was born in York, U.K. He is a member of First Stage’s Young Company. Max is a winner of the Tommy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor for Sweeney Todd, Outstanding Supporting Actor for St. Jimmy and has been nominated for Outstanding Lead Actor for Archibald Craven. He was also nominated for Best Actor at the Jimmy awards in New York, representing his home state of Wisconsin. He has appeared in INTO THE WOODS (Cinderella’s Prince), THE SECRET GARDEN (Archibald Craven), SWEENEY TODD (Sweeney Todd), AMERICAN IDIOT (St. Jimmy), WIT (Dr. Jason Posner), and WEST SIDE STORY (Gee-Tar) at Shorewood High School; GOOSEBUMPS THE MUSICAL (Brian), ELLA ENCHANTED (Char), THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS (Wiggins) and SHREK THE MUSICAL at First Stage Children’s Theatre; HAMLET (Laertes), OUR TOWN (Howie Newsome), ONCE UPON A MATRESS (Minstrel) and MAUL OF THE DEAD (Lewis) at First Stage’s Young Company; THE HISTORY OF INVULNERABILITY and A CHRISTMAS CAROL at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. In the summer of 2016 he was invited by Sir Alan Ayckbourn to shadow rehearsals, as he directed two new plays at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, UK.
Mark Puchinsky (Boris, Russian Language Captain) Mark is thrilled to be back home making his Renaissance debut. Mark was born in Milwaukee to Soviet immigrants and is now based in NYC where he lives in Brooklyn. Mark was recently part of the U.S./Russian Playwright exchange at The Lark in NYC where Russian writers bring their plays to be translated and uncensored, culminating in a public reading. Recent credits include the controversial JULIUS CAESAR (Ensemble) at The Public Theater directed by Oskar Eustis; GRAVEYARD SHIFT (Brian), VIGILS (Soul), HENRY VI, PART III (Richard III/ Clifford) at The New School. BFA: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, MFA: The New School. Mark would like to thank his family, Hallie, and all those that put up with his antics. Instagram: @markpuchinsky.

Ana McHenry (Prop Designer) Her properties direction and artistry include: MAJOR BARBARA, ARCADIA, ANON(YMOUS) and TRANSLATIONS at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Mainstage Theatre; OTHELLO DEPLOYED and COMING HOME with Feast of Crispian Veterans Organization; CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG, MIRACULOUS ADVENTURES OF EDWARD TULANE and CAT IN THE HAT at First Stage Children’s Theatre; SWEENEY TODD, ZEMIRE ET AZOR, LA CAGE AUX FOLLES at Skylight Music Theatre; TOY STORY THE MUSICAL and DISNEY DREAMS for Disney Cruise Line.

Jason Orlenko~ (Costume Designer) Jason is delighted to return to Renaissance where he has designed THE VIOLET HOUR, LETTICE & LOVAGE, and THE UNDERSTUDY. Other designs include SOUVENIR, LADY DAY, FOREVER PLAID (Milwaukee Rep), ANNIE, SWEENEY TODD, THE SNOW DRAGON (Skylight Music Theatre), GREAT EXPECTATIONS, FALLEN ANGELS, COMPLETE WORKS ABRIDGED (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre), SILENT SKY, THE TAMING (Next Act), A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS, BIG NATE (First Stage), THE
GLASS MENAGERIE (In Tandem). Additionally his costumes have been seen at Milwaukee Opera Theatre, Rep of St. Louis, Indiana Festival Theatre, University of Alaska-Anchorage, Marquette University, and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Other professional credits include the Florentine Opera, the Hangar Theatre, and the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Upcoming work includes JUDY MOODY & STINK at First Stage. Jason holds an MFA in Costume Design from Indiana University and is a member of the United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829. www.jasonorlenko.com

Anthony Lyons (Technical Director) This season marks Anthony’s eleventh year as Technical Director for Renaissance Theaterworks. In all, he has worked in various capacities on well over thirty Renaissance productions over the last twenty-five years. Past credits include: light board operator for IMAGINING BRAD and TALKING WITH; Master electrician for SYRINGA TREE (remount), SYNCOPATION, and FULL GALLOP (second mounting). Anthony is also technical director for Wild Space Dance Company and Luminous Theatre. Anthony has worked for Alverno Presents (R.I.P.), Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, and Bialystock & Bloom (R.I.P.). In a parallel universe, Anthony is a partner in a small custom carpentry firm.

Graham Billings (Dialect & Language Coach, Dramaturg) Graham is thrilled to be a part of his first RTW show! He has studied Russian for two years and will be graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in May 2018 with a BFA in Acting. He has worked previously as a dialect coach on ARCADIA and GUN MOLL at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and as a dramaturg on MAJOR BARBARA at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, KING JOHN at Voices Found Repertory, and TALK RADIO.

Raeleen McMillion (Dialect Coach) Raeleen is very happy to return to RTW for more dialect work, and to be mentoring student apprentice vocal coach, Graham Billings, from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s Theatre Department! Raeleen has coached several dialects for Renaissance, including New Zealand for SKIN TIGHT, South African for THE ROAD TO MECCA, and Mississippi for BALLAD OF EMMETT TILL. She was recently seen onstage at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre as Clara Nowak in MIRACLE ON SOUTH DIVISION STREET, and has also had the pleasure of coaching dialect there on several productions: JOE EGG, BROOKLYN BOY, LESSON FROM ALOES, THE FEW, and FRANKIE & JOHN-NNY IN THE CLAIRE DE LUNE. She has served as vocal coach for Skylight Music Theatre as well, rounding out the Broadway Theatre Center experience with MY FAIR LADY, VIOLET, LA CAGE AUX FOLLES, and Sweeney Todd. Raeleen teaches Acting, Voice & Speech, and Dialects at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s Peck School of the Arts, and is a member of Voice & Speech Trainers Association (VASTA) and The American Dialect Society.

Suzan Fete (Artistic Director) A graduate of University of Illinois, Suzan co-founded Renaissance Theaterworks in 1993. Favorite Renaissance Theaterworks projects include: directing TOPDOG/UNDERDOG, THE SHAPE OF THINGS, BLACKBIRD and THE ROAD TO MECCA, touring NEAT to Port Elizabeth South Africa in 2013 and finishing as a finalist with LUCKY NUMBERS in the Samuel French Off Off Broadway Short Play Festival, 2015. She is especially proud that RTW won the prestigious 50/50 in 2020 International Applause Award for the 2015-16 season. The Applause Award is given to theaters in recognition of their commitment to women playwrights. Suzan lives happily in Wauwatosa with her husband Jeff.

Lisa Rasmussen (Managing Director) Lisa began her career at Renaissance Theaterworks (RTW) in 2008 as RTW’s first full-time Development Director. Under her leadership, RTW’s donated income increased over 150%! Lisa is thrilled to begin a new chapter as RTW’s first Managing Director. Lisa received
her BA in Theater and Psychology from Cardinal Stritch University. She is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Lisa loves living in Bay View with husband Jake and daughter Anna.

Izetta Rees (Marketing Director) Izetta holds a BA in Theater with Minors in Art and Communication Arts from Cardinal Stritch University. This is her 5th season with Renaissance Theaterworks (RTW), having been promoted to Marketing Director in Spring of 2017. In addition to her work at RTW, Izetta is a local actor and the Costume Designer for the University of Wisconsin-Rock County’s Theatre Department. She lives happily in Mukwonago with her supportive husband, Trevor.

Dana Dossett (Development Manager) Dana holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theater from Drake University and a Master of Science in Nonprofit Management and Leadership from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Prior to joining RTW, Dana most recently served as the Grants and Communications Coordinator for The Women’s Center in Waukesha. She loves exploring Milwaukee with her husband, Corey, and son, Micah.

Mallory Metoxen (Artistic Associate & Director of New Play Development) Mallory is a freelance director dedicated to working with playwrights, developing new works, and narrowing the gender parity gap in theater. She spearheaded and continues to run, refine, and expand Br!NK; RTW’s play development series for Midwestern women playwrights. Mallory Co-Directed LUCKY NUMBERS by 2014 Br!NK playwright Gwendolyn Rice, which RTW took to the Samuel French OOB Festival in NYC and the inaugural MKE Fringe Festival. Favorite directing credits include THE UNDERSTUDY and THE DROWNING GIRLS (Renaissance Theaterworks); THESE SHINING LIVES (Umbrella Group); THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS (Splinter Group) and new works for Br!NK including PARTS OF SPEECH by Janet Burroway, THE HALL OF FINAL RUIN by Kelly McBurnette-Andronicos, TEN THOUSAND MOONS FROM HERE by Kathleen Allison Johnson & Gail Sterkel, and ANNIE JUMP AND THE LIBRARY OF HEAVEN by Reina Hardy.
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If you never stopped asking “why?”
2017-2018 marks 25 years of debt-free operation for Renaissance Theaterworks. For 25 years, Renaissance Theaterworks has been an advocate for women theater artists; providing roles for women both onstage and off and keeping women's stories and perspectives center stage.

Since its inception in 1993, RTW has mounted over 100 productions and staged-readings. Among these are nine original works by Wisconsin playwrights, seven World Premieres and one North American Premiere. RTW has shared many women's stories and provided opportunities for over 700 theater professionals, 75% of these have been women.

Today RTW remains Milwaukee's only women-founded, women-run professional theater company. The mission of Renaissance Theaterworks is to create moving theatre that connects with our shared sense of being human, dedicated to promoting the work of women onstage and off. Renaissance Theaterworks was founded in 1993 by Suzan Fete, Marie Kohler, Raeleen McMillion, Jennifer Rupp, and Michele Traband.
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Each year, more than 30,000 individuals, corporations and foundations in greater Milwaukee annually support the UPAF annual campaign, making it one of the nation’s largest united arts funds. In addition to raising and allocation operating funds, UPAF is enhancing its value to the community, donors and performing arts by serving as a community wide resource for developing the excellence, reputation and impact of our performing arts.
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By Caryl Churchill

A sharp, imaginative, and profound examination of the choices women continue to face on their journey to success.

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