THE PROGRAM IN THEATER PRESENTS

a World Premiere of a 1936 adaptation by
KRZHZHANOVSKY

with an original score by
PROKOFIEV

of a novel-in-verse by
PUSHKIN

Eugene ONEGIN

a drama in verse translated by James FALEN with the cooperation of Caryl EMERSON
directed by Tim VASEN

February 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18 2012
8 p.m.
MARIE AND EDWARD MATTHEWS '53 ACTING STUDIO
Lewis Center for the Arts, 185 Nassau Street

Presented by the Department of Music, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, the Program in Dance, and the Lewis Center for the Arts, with generous funding from the Office of the President, Office of the Dean of Faculty, David Gardner '59 Magic, Fund of the Council for the Humanities, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, and the Edward T. Cone Foundation.
Welcome

Welcome to the world premieres of a musical, choreographic, and theatrical re-imagining of Alexander Pushkin’s celebrated Russian novel-in-verse, Eugene Onegin.

The Onegin Project is the third in a series of 20th-century Russian artistic treasures, lost, abandoned, or banned in their own time, that have been brought to life on Princeton’s stages. What you will see and hear was never enjoyed by the Stalinist-era audience for which it was written. In fact, composer Sergei Prokofiev, playwright Sigismund Krzhizhanovsky, and director Alexander Tairov did not even have an opportunity to watch their vision blossom in rehearsal. It is only now, 75 years after its abandonment, that this project has assumed a full-fledged form — one that both embraces and transcends the work of its original architects.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication and imagination of our faculty and students, who, in partnership with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra, have once again united scholarship and artistic expression in the service of education and culture. I am delighted that so many elements of our University community have come together to turn a historic loss into a triumph of creative reconstruction. If ever a whole exceeded the sum of its parts, it is the Onegin Project!

Thank you for joining us,

—Shirley M. Tilghman
President, Princeton University

February 9, 2012 marks the 175th anniversary of the death of Alexander Pushkin, killed in a duel of honor in 1837 at age 38. Such commemorative rituals are important markers in Russian culture. However, for the 1937 Stalin centennial of the death, celebrated with stupendous pomp, much more was planned by Russian artists than ever passed the censor. Our first attempt to revive a casualty from that troubled year was Princeton’s all-campus production of Boris Godunov (Pushkin’s play and Prokofiev’s musical score), mounted in The Berlind Theater in 2007.

The present Eugene Onegin, in a two-pronged premiere, again features Prokofiev and Pushkin and the talents of our acting and singing undergraduates. The first version of this premiere, on February 9, is “music-and-dance forward” (in Richardson Auditorium), with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra and the Princeton Ballroom Dance Club. The second version, which opens February 10 at the Lewis Center for the Arts in a six-night run, is “words-forward,” the fully-staged play adapted from Pushkin’s novel-in-verse. No theater could have matched this university as a resource for transforming scholarly research from page to stage, under conditions that would have dazzled the original creative team in Moscow 1936. Welcome to the Princeton campus as it celebrates its multiple Onegins.

—Carol Emerson, Princeton University Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
and Simon Morrison, Princeton University Department of Music

Thursday, February 9, 2012, 8 pm
Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall

EUGENE ONEGIN
Princeton Symphony Orchestra
Rossen Milanov, Music Director and Conductor
Princeton University Glee Club
Gabriel Crouch, Director
Princeton Ballroom Dance Club
Sydney Schiff ‘10, Director & Choreographer
Ksana Blank and Denis Zhernovskiy
Speakers
Rebecca Lazier
Stage Director

PROGRAM
Sergei Prokofiev
(1891–1953)
Eugene Onegin
A Choreographic Adaptation featuring Sergei Prokofiev’s music and selections from Sigismund Krzhizhanovsky’s adaptation of Alexander Pushkin’s novel-in-verse.

INTERMISSION
Gabriel Prokofiev
(b. 1975)
Concerto for Bass Drum and Orchestra
I. 21 Ways
II. Bass War
III. In the Steppes
IV. Four to the Floor
V. May Speed
Joby Burgess, Bass Drum

Presented by the Department of Music, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, the Program in Dance and the Lewis Center for the Arts, with generous funding from the Office of the President, Office of the Dean of Faculty, David Gardner ’69 Prize Fund of the Council for the Humanities, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, and the Edward T. Cone Foundation, along with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra, which has received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts for this project.
EUGENE ONEGIN at Princeton: A Backstory

How far back does a backstory go in the performing arts? In the case of classic repertory, a rich production and reception history can become an integral part of the artwork. With interrupted, censored, or aborted productions, the tale is coarser, shallower. Crucial components fall away or never come together. Traces of the project end up not in playscripts, but in memoirs or archives. And in a closed, closely watched society that reveres its artists and mobilizes them for political ends, these archives are often sealed shut. Timing and chance play a huge role in getting documents out.

Princeton's role in this extraction began in 2007, when Simon Morrison was completing research on a book about the composer Sergei Prokofiev's troubled years in the Soviet Union. The project involved mining the once-closed holdings at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow (RGALI). In 1936 Prokofiev had been commissioned to compose music for a dramatic production of Eugene Onegin at the Moscow Chamber Theater. The occasion was the 1937 centennial of the death of Alexander Pushkin, Russia's greatest poet, who had long enjoyed cult status as a national icon. The project was abruptly cancelled in December of 1936. In 1973, the music was partially published under the editorship of the Soviet musicologist Elizabeth Dattel, and thereafter partially recorded by Melodiya Records (1974), and then by Sir Edward Downes in Great Britain (1994). Although the order of episodes, voice-overs, and liner notes for these two recordings reflect an awareness of the original theatrical context, the strong message in both cases was that Prokofiev had conceived his music in response to Pushkin's novel-in-verse. But the files at RGALI told a different story.

Before he learned that the project would not, for ideological reasons, be brought to the Soviet stage, Prokofiev had been working with a full-length theatrical adaptation of Pushkin's text by the all-but-blacklisted writer Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky. In fact, Prokofiev had conceived each number of the score with Krzhizhanovsky's innovative, experimental adaptation in mind. The music as published and recorded was bowdlerized, subject to rearrangement, reordering, cuts, and alterations that altogether suppressed Krzhizhanovsky from history, and that drained the score of subtlety and inflection. The music needed to be restored, and it needed to be reattached to its intended text.

Close inspection of the source materials, however, revealed a paradoxical concept at the heart of the collaboration. Prokofiev and Krzhizhanovsky had taken separate paths from the same source; interpreting the subject in their own idiosyncratic and ingenious ways. Prokofiev's music has obvious aspirations to grandeur; with luxuriant ballroom scenes and a delicious outdoor duel, musically, the characters in the story interact boldly and passionately with each other. In contrast, Krzhizhanovsky's script is intimate and lonely, concerned with the life of the mind and dream states. All the principal characters are alone — and every event that matters increases this loneliness. The music and words have points in common in their elegiac and grotesque strains, but ultimately it is hard to imagine how so exotverted a score could be connected with so introverted a text. We came to the conclusion that capturing both the outside and inside versions of the suppressed musical and verbal materials would require two different kinds of performance.

In the summer of 2007, in a brief Moscow "document exchange," Simon passed Cary a photocopy of the archival playscript with Prokofiev's markings. He also invited her to write about this collaboration for a collection of essays on the composer. With that 2008 publication, the present project was launched.

Chopinovsky's chamber opera, a select setting of "lyrical scenes" from Pushkin's text, had popularized the plot. Any new adaptation of Pushkin would draw a crowd, especially one featuring Prokofiev's music. This dramatic production of Onegin was one of the more ambitious events planned for the Centennial of Pushkin's death in 1937. The wild card was the unknown stage adaptor. Since the early 1990s, Krzhizhanovsky's disappeared works (largely short pastasmagorical prose) had been slowly returning to circulation in Russia. Fortunately, the surviving of the Onegin typescript coincided with his breaking into print in English with masterful translations of his modernist fiction. His work as a dramatist and dramaturg had remained in the shadows, however; as of 2010, only three of Krzhizhanovsky's plays had appeared in print in Russian, his Onegin play script not among them. In his private notebooks, Krzhizhanovsky refers to himself as a "crossed-out person." This project, a world premiere, helps to undo that delete. In the process, it connects what history had torn asunder.

—Caryl Emerson and Simon Morrison

Krzhizhanovsky's Eugene Onegin, page 1. Courtesy Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI)
Pushkin’s EUGENE ONEGIN: A novel-in-verse

Pushkin divides the plot of his Eugene Onegin (1823-31) into eight chapters with the following sequence of events, related by a semi-embodied narrator and itself reminiscent of a sentimental novel.

A bored and bankrupt St. Petersburg dandy, Eugene Onegin (introduced with his brief life story in chapter 1) takes up residence in the country upon the death of his uncle, and there he befriends the young Romantic poet Vladimir Lensky (chapter 2). After a chance visit to the neighboring homestead of Lensky’s betrothed, Olga Larina, Onegin unwittingly becomes the love object of Olga’s older sister Tatiana, a shy maiden raised on sentimental novels; she writes him a desperate love letter (chapter 3). Onegin, who knows he is not the marrying kind and is disinclined to seduce this impetuous infatuated girl, gently disengages himself from her advances (chapter 4). This causes Tatiana exquisite humiliation. In an attempt to divine her future husband she participates inconclusively in Yuletide fortune-telling. But the only solace she receives is a terrifying dream (chapter 5), closer to a prophetic nightmare, in which she is pursued by a bear through snowdrifts to a hut in the forest where Onegin presides over a crew of monsters (seeing her, Onegin disperses the monsters, claims Tatiana as his own, leads her to a bench) — but this act of erotic tenderness and wish-fulfillment is interrupted by the arrival of Olga and Lensky: a knife fight starts up between the two men and Lensky falls.

Meanwhile in waking life, Onegin’s Byronic spleen is triggered by Lensky’s transports of love. The two friends are invited to Tatiana’s Naimeday celebration in early January, which turns out to be a rauous, rustic affair full of drunken bumptkinks and badly-played music (chapter 5). Irritated at the banalities of country life, Onegin flirts with Olga. Lensky is incensed and demands satisfaction. In a snow-shrouded duel the next day, Lensky is killed (chapter 6). The disillusioned Onegin wanders over the south of Russia, Odessa and the Caucasus, everywhere penniless and bored. Among Pushkin’s major themes in the novel (and in life) was a poet’s restlessness: acutely aware of his fate, he is not able to escape place or memory.

Tatiana’s life moves miserably forward. She is still in love, but even more alone. Olga quickly marries another man and her mother is impatient for her older daughter to be settled. Tatiana visits Onegin’s abandoned estate and peruses his library (chapter 7). She understands him better through his books: perhaps he is only a parody, a pastiche of fads and fashionable words? But understanding is not the same as release. When her mother takes her to Moscow to the “marriage mart,” Tatiana says farewell to her beloved rural childhood. A portly General of noble rank notices her at a Moscow ball, and she marries.

By chapter 8, Onegin has returned gloomily to St. Petersburg. He comes across Tatiana (now a princess) as hostess of an elegant salon. Falling hopelessly in love, he writes her abject letters (none of which she answers). One spring day he bursts into her boudoir. Now it is her turn to lecture him: his behavior in pursuing her is inexcusable, beneath his dignity and honor; and although she loves him still she requests that he leave her; for she “has been given to another and will be faithful all her life.” Onegin is thunderstruck; the General appears in the doorway, and Pushkin takes leave of his novel.
The Music

Of the various scores that Prokofiev received commissions to compose in the mid-1930s, he claimed that Eugene Onegin “interested” him “the most,” largely because it allowed him to respond creatively to Pkyot Chaikovsky’s operatic treatment of the same subject—albeit in the realm of incidental music. One problem with Chaikovsky’s opera, according to Prokofiev, was the absence of rusticity in the first dance-based episode, which takes place at a country estate. Prokofiev derided Chaikovsky’s use of “chic, metropolitan music” to represent a “provincial landholder’s evening,” whereas in reality, the audience would have “danced to a piano” that sounded “a bit broken-down and jangling” with a coarse “tarantlyam” polka being the evening’s highlight.

Beyond exercising his imagination with that “tarantlyam” polka, interchanging it surrealistically with a sumptuous waltz, Prokofiev created distinct musical portraits for the three main characters in Eugene Onegin. He nuanced these over the course of the drama through transposition, modulation, and changes of timbre. In several instances, the melodic shadings provide insight into the emotional and psychological constructions of the characters and their motivations. Prokofiev tells us that Tatiana opened up her heart in her youth but then allowed it to frost over (the sound he assigns to her is amorous without being effusive); that Onegin regretted his rejection of Tatiana (the “empty” virtuosity of his musical entrance loses its seductive powers); and that Onegin’s duel with Lensky was fated but also pointless (the pulse patterns of the duel scene enter and exit with calculated indifference).

The music is at times elegiac, at other times fateful. Both qualities are manifest in Prokofiev’s handling of the opening and closing melody of the score, which is associated with Lensky and the words “I have outlived all desire.” Initially cast in G minor, the meandering, dissonant melody lurks behind crucial plot events and comments on Lensky’s sad destiny. Later it is sung by an off-stage chorus of female and male voices, and prefaxes both a discussion of the young Tatiana’s romantic prospects as well as her first appearance. The melody returns over tremolo strings in the passage that precedes Onegin and Lensky’s duel.

The isolated mysteries of Tatiana’s personality are captured in a cluster of interrelated themes. Her first appearance introduces a binary-form melody in B-flat major (the relative major of Lensky’s fate music) that involves extreme contrasts of register: The first half of the melody belongs to the flute and the second half to muted first violins; the first half is then repeated by the clarinet in the pensive low register. There follow three variations, which increase in length and differ in timbre, adding nuance to Tatiana’s emotional and psychological portrait. The first accompanies Tatiana’s initial meeting with Onegin; it comprises a single phrase in A-flat major scored for bassoons, cellos, and basses. The second, scored for English horn and alto saxophone, expresses her thoughts in two phrases that cadence respectively in A-flat and D-flat major. And the third comprises three phrases in the upper and lower strings that modulate from D-flat major to B-flat minor (phrase 1) to E major (phrase 2) to D-flat major (phrase 3). This longest and most involved variation matches her unbridled declaration of love.

Listening to the variations can be likened to watching a painter adding detail to a portrait. Tatiana’s music does not describe or narrate events but denotes a subjective interior where recollections and impressions coalesce. In the letter scene, for example, Prokofiev repeats the three versions of Tatiana’s melody intact, allowing them to commingle in the mind of the listener.

For the drama’s conclusion, which portrays Tatiana’s triumph over her own helpless need for Onegin, Prokofiev repeats the second variation, initially associated with her psychological state in the wake of her first meeting with Onegin. Thus he poses a riddle: does the repetition reveal that, beneath the glitter and glamour of the mature, married Tatiana’s aristocratic trappings, she remains the winsome maiden that Onegin had once spurned? Does it reveal that Onegin cannot comprehend her transformation, and that his memory of Tatiana is more real to him than her physical presence? Ultimately, Prokofiev collapses the past, present, and future of Tatiana’s relationship with Onegin, presenting the variations of her melody in different orders.

Toward the end of his score, moreover, he varies the variations, partitioning Tatiana’s music into discrete blocks that can be distributed throughout the drama “at the director’s discretion.” On page 14 of the manuscript of the music, Prokofiev helpfully lists the manner in which the blocks can be separated and combined: “1 A 2 B 3 C 4 A+B 5 A+C 6 A+B+C 7 A+B+C+D+E.” His approach to Eugene Onegin favors re-deployable and re-combinable cells. One senses that he wanted his music to remain elusively distant from its own subject matter. Like Tatiana, a fantasist who does not allow her inner world to be tamed by the outer world, Prokofiev’s music is not contingent or dependent on the stage events with which it is aligned.

—Simon Morrison

Nedday Guests at the Larins, by Alexander Osmyorkin
Courtesy Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI)
The Dance

Why do artists adapt beloved stories from the past? What can we, as witnesses, learn from these new art works that aim to be more than interpretations or reconstructions? Many artists assimilate familiar objects, sounds, movements, and texts into their art outside of the realm of adaptation. Yet others select sole texts to build upon in order to challenge, extend, and re-think convention, placing historic work in new light.

Sigmund Krzhizhanovsky approached his adaptation of Alexander Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin as an iconoclast. What could he, with his theories of poetics, his own voice as a writer, and his depth of knowledge as a scholar, reveal? Would his transposition be constantly compared to the original, or would it be considered a new work, seen without expectations? The question cannot be answered because, for ideological reasons, Krzhizhanovsky’s adaptation never reached the Soviet stage.

For this evening’s performance we have not attempted a historical recreation of Krzhizhanovsky’s complex project. Instead, we seek to continue his line of thinking about Onegin. The seeds for his adaptation were planted by director Alexander Tairov, who advised him to “emphasize emotional knots relevant to contemporary problems and values.” As I applied this directive to my reading of Onegin, it led me to focus on the inner emotional space, to that which exists between the lines of text, and to shift the narrative perspective to Tatiana’s emotional progress, with dance as the vehicle for its expression.

Both Prokofiev and Krzhizhanovsky give dance a central role in their transpositions of Onegin. They imagined grand ball as sites of extreme emotional conflict and lurking shifts in narrative perspective. Dance creates a framework for social interaction both in the plot and its setting, the world in which it lives. Dance also functions as scaffolding and divertissement, as allegorical departure from the narrative. I chose to bring dance to the forefront and make it the principal language of our performance.

Together with choreographer and Princeton alumnus Sydney Schiff, I sought to develop a dance score that does not mimic the music or the spoken word, but instead follows the contours of Tatiana’s emotional transformation. We gathered movement material that highlights, contradicts, and accords with Prokofiev’s melodic, harmonic, and rhythmical material, placing his music in different ways at the center of the body. Elizabeth Stern and I selected those excerpts from Krzhizhanovksy’s text that emboldened this conception.

The cast is comprised of modern and ballroom dancers who assume the roles of Tatiana’s friends, foes, and lovers, as well as opening windows into her inner being. In juxtaposing and marrying contemporary and traditional dance vocabularies we engage modern aesthetics with archetypal representations.

Adaptations wrestle with a world that is always changing and perpetually familiar. They take well-worn stories and weave in unfamiliar gestures. They can be jarring they can be exhilarating, and they can be means for expressing profound empathy. As Krzhizhanovsky explained: “In reconstructing statues it is not necessary to glue back arms on marble Anteros, and for this reason if Eros teaches us how to enclose the beloved, then Anteros teaches us about armless love, love that distances one from the beloved with an equal force.”

—Rebecca Lazier

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**Cast**

| Lily Akerman ‘13               | Name Day Party Guest, Aniya, 2nd Archival Youth |
| Sarah Bluher ‘13               | Nanny, Elderly Guest                           |
| Molly Brean ‘13                | Stage Manager                                  |
| Gabriel Crouse ‘12            | Eugene Onegin                                  |
| Elena Garadja ‘12             | Tatiana Larina                                 |
| Juliet Garrett ‘15            | 2nd Neighbor, Barber, Nominated Party Guest, 2nd Elderly Female Relative, 1st Archival Youth |
| Peter Giovinco ‘14            | Lensky, Angry Gentleman                        |
| C.C. Kellogg ‘13              | Nominated Party Guest, 1st Elderly Relative, Voronskaya |
| Jeffrey Kuperman ‘12          | Buyanov, Bear, Coachman, Vyazemsky, 2nd Friend |
| Joseph Labatt ‘14             | Bookseller, Name Day Party Guest, General, Lamplighter, Watchman |
| Katie McGunagle ‘14           | Olga Larina, 3rd Archival Youth                |
| Ryan Serrano ‘12              | Zaretsky, Kalmyk, Old Dignitary, Prolazov, 1st Friend |
| Matthew Spellberg GS          | Poet                                           |
| Alana Tomello ‘12             | Hanger-on, St. Petersburg Lady                 |
| Carolyn Vasko ‘13             | Servant, Princess                             |
| Camila Vega ‘12               | Dame Larina, St. Petersburg Lady                |
EXCEPT NO. 1
Post (male voice)
And I, who saw in life my duty
As heeding passion's siren song—
To share with all the world her beauty,
Would take my merry Muse along
To rowdy feats and altercations—
The bane of midnight sentry stations.
And to each maid and fervid rout
She brought her gifts and danced about
Bacchante-like, at all our revels,
And over wine she sang for guests,
And in those days when I was blest,
The young pursued my Muse like devils.
But then our course abruptly veered
And in my garden she appeared,
With mournful air and brooding glance,
And in her hands a French romance.
And she was called Tatjana.
And we may press a modest claim
To be the first to grace and honor
A tender novel with this same name:
A wild creature, sad and pensive,
Shy as a dove and apprehensive,
Tatjana seemed, among her kin,
A strangler who had wandered in.

NO. 2
Tania (female voice)
I hold my breath and still my lips,
My ears are filled with ringing cries
And sparkles dance before my eyes.
As night descends, the moon parades
The distant vault of heaven's hood.
The nightingale in darkest wood
Sings out its mournful serenades.
My soul has sought another's soul,
And now at last I've seen his face,
And now, alas, in sleep's embrace,
In fevered dreams, he hovers near:
All things proclaim: He's here, he's here!

NO. 3
Tania (female voice)
"I love you all sincerely, friends,
But pledged myself to someone else
Forevermore. I've sworn my love
To one most dear — Prince… Yelisey."  

NO. 4
I'm writing you. What else is there
To add, what else is there to say?
I know that now it's in your power
To censure me and turn away.
But if my hapless, wretched lot
Evolves some pity in your heart,
You won't abandon me, I hope.
At first I wanted to be silent;
Believe me, you've never learned
My secret shame, had I discerned
The slightest hope that on occasion,
Just once a week, I'd see your face.
Behold you at our country place,
Might hear you speak a friendly greeting.
Could say a word to you… and then,
Could dream all day and night again.
Of but one thing, till our next meeting.
Another No! In all this world
It's you alone that I adore.
The heavens chose my destiny
And made me yours forevermore!
My life, till now, has been a token
In pledge of meeting you, dear friend;
And in your coming, God has spoken,
You'll be my savior — till the end!
You filled my dreams and sweetest trances;
As yet unseen… already dear
You stirred me with your wondrous glances.
Within my soul, your voice rang clear
So long ago. This was no dream.
And even now, my precious vision,
Did not see your apparition
Sit softly through the luminous night?
Was it not you who seemed to hover
Above my bed, an angel — lover
To whisper hope and sweet delight?
Are you my hallowed angel of salvation?
Or hell's dark demon of temptation?
Be kind… and drive my doubts away.
This may be raving — nothing more,
Just words a foolish girl would say.
With death from him is sweet release.
I don't complain or feel distress.
He cannot give me happiness.

NO. 9
Lensky (male voice)
Young life's great whirlwind… full of sound.
Each pair a blur in quick succession.
The rousing waltz goes whirling round.

NO. 10
Olga (female voice)
This endless dance already seems
To haunt me, like a heavy dream.

NO. 11
Tania (female voice)
I'm hoisted and full of doubt.
Should I go on… should I go back?
He isn't here… and no one knows me…
I'll have a peek at grounds and house.

NO. 12
Tania (female voice)
A dangerous and sad eccentric,
A work of Heaven or of Hell,
Is he an angel or a demon?
Or something else? An imitation?

For few will understand you so,
And innocence can lead to woe.
So judge yourself, what roses…
You'd start to weep, but all your tears
Would fail to touch my rigid heart;
They'd only drive me to a rage.
That's how I am. And was it this
For which your ardent spirit pined,
When with such innocence of soul,
Such strength of mind; you wrote to me?

Tania (female voice)
He pushes straightway through the door.
Then lays me down upon the floor.
On coming to, I look around me.
Around a table, in a ring,
A horde of monsters shout and sing.

"She's mine," proclaimed Eugene,
commanding:
And all the monsters fled the room.
While I stood there, barely standing,
Alone with him amid the gloom.

Tania (female voice)
I want to die; a black abyss
Has opened up and looms before me,
But death from him is sweet release.
I don't complain or feel distress.
He cannot give me happiness.

This is the night of endless dance,
And in my heart I cried: It's him!

Tania (female voice)
"I love you all sincerely, friends,
But pledged myself to someone else
Forevermore… I've sworn my love
To one most dear — Prince… Yelisey."

Tania (female voice)
And happiness was ours… so nearly
An empty phantom or a joke,
A Muscovite in Harold's cloak,
A glossary of affectation,
A lexicon of modish words.
Perhaps he's just a parody.
Can I have solved this pantomime?
Can I have found the final word?

Tania (female voice)
Farewell, my meadows, gentle rills.
Farewell, you too, beloved hills.
And woodlands where I used to roam;
Farewell, familiar beauty's home.
Farewell, fond nature… where I languished!
I leave your world of quiet joys.
For empty glitter, fuss and noise.
Farewell, my freedom, deeply cherished.
Where and why do I now flee.
And what does fate prepare for me?

Vyzemsky (male voice)
The night has countless stars to light her,
And Moscow countless beauties, too.
And yet the realm of beauty brighter
Than all her friends in heaven's blue.
But she, whose beauty…

Onegin (male voice)
Who'd dare to seek that tender maiden
In this serene, majestic lady.
This Mistress of the grand salon.
And once I moved her heart to tears.
But could it be…
The letter… where she spoke so boldly.
Where all was shown and offered freely.
That girl… or was it all a dream!

"So long ago. This was no dream.
When you came in, I seemed to waken.
I turned to flame, felt faint and shaken.
And in my heart I cried: It's him!"

Tania (female voice)
"I love you all sincerely, friends,
But pledged myself to someone else
Forevermore… I've sworn my love
To one most dear — Prince… Yelisey."

Tania (female voice)
And happiness was ours… so nearly
An empty phantom or a joke,
When I mention that I am directing a play, people ask what it is, and if they don’t recognize the title, they might ask what the thing is about. I have been trying mightily over the past year of thinking about and working on this fantastic project to be able to answer that question, blurb-style, and failing miserably. I talk animatedly for a while about getting lost in the tangles of the challenge making art under totalitarian pressure and of the impossibility of adapting narrative poetry Russians all know by heart into theater, and then the further absurdity of dragging all that kicking and screaming into English, of Krzhizhanovsky’s audacious theatrical vision and Prokofiev’s sophisticated anti-romantic response to it, and on and on into the only-at-Princeton circumstances of having a talented, energetic, curious and motivated acting company that is also a class, and artistic collaborators who are also world-class scholars, and then I kind of peter out, utterly unable to find my way to the end of a coherent sentence on the subject. Puzzled silence usually ensues.

Fortunately, you are sitting here waiting to watch the production, so you don’t need me to tell you what it is anymore. In a word, this Eugene Onegin is irreducible. Like Pushkin’s dazzling original, it resists explanation, and demands to be experienced. I can think of no better reason to direct — or watch — a play.

—Tim Vasen

Krzhizhanovsky’s
Eugene Onegin

When, in the mid-1930s, Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky began discussions with his friend Alexander Tairov over the optimal form of his Onegin for the Chamber Theater stage, among their first decisions was to do without Pushkin’s Narrator. This was to be a real play; the words would be spoken directly by the characters, not about them by an idiosyncratic storyteller. For several reasons, it was a gamble. Every personality in Pushkin’s novel reaches us through the narrator’s whimsical scrim. We know only what he wants us to know, and his digressions shape a good deal of the plot. On their own, Pushkin’s characters — Onegin, Tatyana, Lensky, Olga — don’t talk very much. Onegin thinks and strikes poses in front of the mirror; Lensky recites Romantic verse, Olga flirts and smiles, the Nanny fusses about. Tatyana writes letters, reads romances, experiences a nightmare, dreams by the window, but about all these things she is largely silent. Take away the Narrator and these fictive people might float away. To be sure, the poetic stanza through which the narrator tells his story was a marvelous glue, and Krzhizhanovsky resolved to keep its basic contours sounding on stage. The novel-in-verse would become a drama-in-verse retaining Pushkin’s words, reinforced through dances, swaying trees, rocking chairs, chiming clocks. This fidelity to Pushkin’s meter would also help keep the play script distinct from Chaikovsky’s wonderfully evocative opera with its loosely paraphrased libretto. (For our production, James Fenby, author of the best-selling verse translation of Pushkin’s novel, turned Krzhizhanovsky’s text into a metered and rhymed play.) Additional cohesion would be provided by the forty-four numbers of Prokofiev’s score, which musicalized several crucial scenes that Chaikovsky had not operatized. Tairov always rehearsed his actors with music. But their speech is not sung; Krzhizhanovsky would have to re-motivate, and externalize their utterances as dialogue with real addresses.

The playwright did this in several ways. He divided the events of the novel into fourteen “fragments” preserving Pushkin’s direct dialogue and creating full speaking characters out of names that Pushkin’s narrator only mentions in passing: Vyazemsky, Zaretsky, Bujanov. Appropriately these “supplementary characters,” who emerge from proper names alone, are often fleshed out on stage as caricatures in the style of Nikolai Gogol. Their grotesque drunken antics provide concrete stage-worthy activity and set off the dreamy or gloomy silence of the principals. Then Krzhizhanovsky added additional “performable” texts — a poem by Vyazemsky, a stanza from Byron’s Don Juan, and texts by Pushkin from outside the world of Onegin. Lensky recites an early elegiac poem by Pushkin over Dmitri Larin’s grave; a ribald Mummers’ Song causes Tatyana to faint during her Nemeday; in St. Petersburg, young men recite one of Pushkin’s natty epigrams; in Fragment 13 on the Neva embankment, Onegin overhears an early drinking song that Pushkin wrote at age 15; and the Nanny chants out the opening passage from Pushkin’s 1833 Fairy tale about the Dead Tsarevich and the Seven Knights to her lovesick charge, which is then interwoven with Tatyana’s fantasies about Onegin.

Finally and most scandalously for the censorship committees that did not approve the play, Krzhizhanovsky altered the order of some canonized episodes and wholly eliminated others. There is no “scene at the Bench,” where Onegin delivers his sermon to the writing girl (his reprimand is delivered at another venue, more ghostly because more public the Nemeday ball). Then he places the Dream after, not before, the Nemeday debacle, permitting the knife-play between Onegin and Lensky (which causes Tatyana to wake up in horror) to segue seamlessly into the final moments of their real-life, or real-death, duel. The ambient boundaries between dream and wakefulness, a powerful theme in Krzhizhanovsky’s own prose takes, are here softened by snow, twilight, mist, and longing. Winter is the signature season in this play, where important feelings are frozen into place and trivial passing lulls are melted away.

Krzhizhanovsky, an unknown writer without patrons or protection, had dared to dilute the nation’s sacrosanct poet with his own vision. He opens his play on a “Prologue,” where a Pushkin-like poet haggles with a potential publisher. Its text is a mix of lines from chapters 1, 2, and 8 of Onegin embedded in an ironic poetic dialogue by Pushkin. Conversation between a Bookseller and a Poet, which had prefaced chapter 1 of the novel for its serialized debut in St. Petersburg in 1825. One creative interpretation that Tim Vasen made in the play script was to turn it into a Prokofiev-like poem into Krzhizhanovsky himself, a penniless writer without food or work in the Soviet 1920s and 30s, warming himself by the light of his own banished art. It is this same poet who watches a chastened Onegin depart from Tatyana’s chambers in the final Fragment. Pushkin’s novel in verse, now into its third century, still presents us with more open doors than endings.

—Caryl Emerson
About the Artists

JOBY BURGESS, Bass Drum

Joby Burgess is best known for his virtuosic, often lissom performances, daring collaborations, extensive education work, and regularly appears throughout Europe, the United States. Joby commits much of his time to three chamber music projects - Powerplant, New Noise and ensemblebash - of which, he is either the artistic or co-artistic director. Founded in 1999 his duo New Noise, with bassist Janey Miller, has given in excess of two hundred performances, whilst creating an entirely new repertoire and distinctive sound. In 2001, Joby joined Britain's leading percussion quartet, ensemblebash, replacing founding father Richard Benjamins. The group has since gone on to tour and record extensively with drumming legend Stewart Copeland, and during 2005 was in residence at the VCA, Melbourne, Australia. Earlier that year Joby founded the multimedia collective Powerplant, a collaboration with sound designer Matthew Fairclough and visual artist Kathy Hinde. Powell also created an experimental movement coach for challenging repertoire fusing seminal percussion works alongside its own work, improvisations and commissions; releasing two albums of its work to date. Joby regularly performs, records and collaborates with artists including Stewart Copeland, Michael Finnissy, Graham Fitkin, Peter Gabriele, John Kenny, Akram Khan, Sarah Leonard, Joanna MacGregor, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Nitin Sawhney, Andy Sheppard, Keith Tippett and Nana Vasconcelos. Joby studied at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London.

REBECCA LAZIER, Stage Director (Musical Production)

Rebecca Lazier is the artistic director and choreographer of Terrain, a project-based, NYC dance company and Senior Lecturer at Princeton University Lazier and Terrain have performed in many New York venues including Danspace Project, The Kitchen, the Guggenheim Museum, 92nd Street Y, Joyce SoHo, and Movement Research at Judson Church. Recently Lazier has received grants for her choreographic research from the Canada Council on the Arts, NY State Council of Cultural Affairs and the American Music Center. She has been artist-in-residence at Movement Research, The Joyce Theater Foundation, The Yard, and the Ojai/Resident Artist Program. In 2005 Lazier began her first collaboration with Simon Morrison as the assistant choreographer in the re-staging of the 1977 ballet Les Pas d'Acier. Additional collaborations include choreographing Claude Debussy's final masterpiece, La Bohème Jourjoux with 16 students in 2010, and being the choreographer and movement coach for Caryl Emerson's project restoring Pushkin's Boris Godunov, directed by Tim Vasen in 2007. For more information please visit: www.terraindance.org.

CARYL EMERSON Project Manager

Caryl Emerson is the A. Watson Armour III University Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton University, with a co-appointment in Comparative Literature. Research interests include Mikhail Bakhtin, 19th-century Russian literary classics (Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky), and Russian opera and vocal music. Among her current projects are Tolstoy and Bernard Shaw on Shakespeare; the modernist Sigmund Krathmann; and the adapting orchestra in the Russian literary tradition to the Stalin-era stage.

ROSSEN MILANO, Conductor & Music Director

The Princeton Symphony Orchestra Music Director Rosenn Milano has been recognized as “one of the most promising figures in the upcoming generation of conductors” by The Seattle Times and “one who bears watching by anyone who cares about the future of music” by the Chicago Tribune. He began his tenure with the PSO in June 2009. Mr. Milano recently completed an 11-year tenure as associate conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra and artistic director of The Philadelphia Orchestra's series at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts. As a commended supporter of music education, Mr. Milano is music director of both the New Symphony Orchestra, a privately-funded youth orchestra in its native city of Sofia, Bulgaria; and Symphony in C, one of the leading professional training orchesras in the U.S. Mr. Milano studied conducting at The Juillard School, The Curtis Institute of Music, Duquesne University, and the Bulgarian National Academy of Music. He has received the Award for Extraordinary Contribution to Bulgarian Culture and in 2005 was chosen as Bulgaria’s Musician of the Year.

SIMON MORRISON

Simon Morrison specializes in 20th-century music, particularly Russian and Soviet music, with special interests in dance, cinema, and historically informed performance based on extensive archival research.

He is a leading authority on composer Sergey Prokofiev and has received unprecedented access to the composer’s papers, housed in Moscow at RGALI. At present Morrison is researching and writing a work of biographical non-fiction under contract with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. He has also signed with Norton for two books on twentieth-century Russian music.

TIM VASEN Stage Director (Theatrical Production)

Tim Vasen is Acting Director of Princeton's Program in Theater where he teaches acting and directing and coordinates the student thesis productions. After being recruited by Emerson and Morrison to direct the world premiere of the Meyerhold / Prokofiev Boris Godunov, he fell into the Russian vortex, and has yet to emerge from it. Professional credits include several seasons as Resident Director at Baltimore's CENTERSTAGE, as well as freelance work on new plays and classics in prominent theaters around the country. He holds an MFA in directing from the Yale School of Drama, where he currently serves as an advisor to the directing program. He lives in New York City with his family, whom he is looking forward to seeing again after all these weeks of rehearsal.

KSANA BLANK, Speaker

Ksana Blank is the Senior Lecturer in Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton University. She is the author of Dostoevsky’s Diocletians and the Problem of Sin, 2010 and has published on Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Nabokov, and Bulgakov. Before joining the Slavic Department at Princeton in 2000, she taught Russian literature and language at Columbia University, Middlebury College, and Hunter College, CUNY.

CAITLIN BROWN, Costume Designer

Caitlin Brown has designed dance and theater productions at Drexel University, Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School and Camp and the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. She received her degree at Rowan University where she designed The Importance of Being Earnest and was assistant designer on Our Country’s Good and 448 Psyche. She currently works in the costume shop in the Theater and Dance Programs at Princeton University.

AARON COPP, Lighting Designer (Musical Production)

Aaron Copp has recently provided lighting designs for Yo-Yo Ma, Philip Glass, Merce Cunningham, Eliot Feld and Laure Anderson. Copp designed the highly regarded Kennedy Center revival of The Glass Menagerie, directed by Gregory Mosher and starring Sally Field; he has also designed frequently at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego, most recently winning a San Diego Theater Critics Award for Joe Hardy’s production of Bus Stop. Copp has worked extensively in the dance world, most recently receiving his second Besse Award for Jonah Bokari’s The Science of One. He has had a long association with Merce Cunningham, designing such pieces as Ground Level Overlay, Windows and Biped for which he also won a Besse. Copp designed La Bohème Jourjoux for Princeton, and is the resident lighting designer for the Princeton Dance Program creating designs for Spring Dance Festivals and Senior Thesis productions since 2008. Copp holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama and a BA from SUNY-Binghamton. For more visit: www.aaroncopp.com

GABRIEL CROUCH, Conductor/Cellist Club

Gabriel Crouch is a Senior Lecturer in Music and Director of Chors at Princeton University. He began his musical career as an eight-year-old in the choir of Westminster Abbey, where he performed a solo at the wedding of HRH Prince Andrew and Miss Sarah Ferguson. After completing a choral scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, he was offered a place in the renowned a cappella group The King’s Singers in 1996. In the next eight years he made a dozen recordings on the BMG label (including a Grammy nomination), and gave more than 900 performances in almost every major concert venue in the world. Since moving to the USA in 2005, first to run the choral program at DePaul University in Indiana, and now at Princeton, he has built a truly international profile as a conductor. In 2008 he was appointed musical
director of the new British early music ensemble Gallicantus, with whom he has released two recordings under the Signum label to rapturous reviews. His work as a singer, coach and musical director has earned him a place in The London Times' list of Great British Hopes.

ANYA KLEPKOVA, Set Designer

Anya is an American-based set, costume and production designer. She collaborates frequently with directors Mike Donahue, Preston Lane, and Tea Alagic; Anya is the recipient of the Connecticut Critics Circle Award, and her work has been featured in Livest Design and American Theatre Magazine. Born in the Crimea, on the northern coast of the Black Sea, Anya immigrated to Boston, Massachusetts at the age of eleven. She holds a BA in the Humanities from the University of Chicago and an MFA in Theatre Design from the Yale School of Drama.

JEFFREY KUPERMAN *’12, Videographer

Jeffrey Kuperman is an award-winning filmmaker who works on both sides of the camera. At Princeton, Jeff has been involved in several senior thesis films, most notably as cinematographer for The Audible. On the Verge. His video work is featured frequently on the Princeton homepage. Jeff’s most recent film collaboration with his brother, in a Moment, continues to screen at festivals internationally from New York to San Francisco, and Buenos Aires to Helsinki. Jeff is the in-house videographer and projectionist for Toronto-based dance company, BTA. More information can be found at www.kupermanbrothers.com.

ALEXANDRA MANNIX *’12, Lighting Designer (Theatrical Production) Alexander Mannix is a Classics and German candidate for Certificate in Theatre at Princeton University. At Princeton, Alexander Mannix’s lighting design credits include work with The Princeton Triangle Club, Theater Intime, The Department in Theater and Dance, The Princeton Shakespeare Club, Princeton University Players, Exposures and DUSac Dance Company and she studied with Jane Cox. She has worked at the McCarter Theatre; the Royal Shakespeare Summer School at Bard College, Ripe Time Productions, The Delaware Shakespeare Festival, and the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Theatre Company, with lighting designer Jane Cox. Miriam Crowe, Keith Parham, Andrew Griffin, Jeff Croiter, Heather Carson and Neil Auditorio. She thanks everyone who has supported and encouraged her work in the theater and hopes one day to “play it forward” in the future as a lighting designer.

PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Whether performing classical masterworks, introducing music of modern-day masters, or hosting students at their first live symphony performance, the Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO) is a cultural centerpiece of the Princeton community and one of New Jersey’s finest music organizations. Led by Music Director Rossen Milanov, PSO’s Board of Trustees, the PSO offers orchestral pops, and chamber music programs of the highest quality, as well as lectures and other events to complement these concerts. Through PSO BRAVO!, the orchestra produces wide-reachng and innovative education programs, carried out in partnerships with local schools and arts organizations. The PSO is a multiple-year recipient of The New Jersey State Council on the Arts’ highest honors—a Citation of Excellence and designation as a Major Arts Institution—and in June 2011, the PSO received an ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. The only professional orchestra to make its home in Princeton, the PSO performs at Richardson Auditorium in historic Alexander Hall.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY BALLROOM CLUB

The Princeton Ballroom Club was founded in 1983 by Neil Clover as a means to promote ballroom dancing as a social and competitive form of art. We are currently an Official University Club with over 50 dedicated members, competing in International Standard and Latin dance. True to our mission, Princeton Ballroom offers structured dance lessons for beginners and seasoned competitors, and provides all members the opportunity to pursue their passion for dancing through competition and social activity.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY GLEE CLUB

Ulysses S. Grant was president. Verdi's Requiem was premiered and the Battle of the Little Big Horn was still two years in the future when Princeton University's Glee Club was founded in 1874 by Andrew Fleming West 74, the first Dean of the Graduate College. In those early years the group consisted of a few young men and was run entirely by its student members, but in 1907, Charles E. Currie became its manager and for a long time directed the club. Under his guidance, the chorus became one of the most successful and well-loved groups in the country and has won many competitions both nationally and overseas. The Glee Club first achieved national recognition under Alexander Russell, one of the great

organists of the day, when it performed the American Premiere of Stravinsky's Oedipus Rex with Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1931. In the 1950s, under the direction of its charismatic appontee Walter L. Nollner, the Glee Club traveled outside the United States for the first time, establishing a pattern of international concert tours to Europe, Asia, South America and Asia Minor. Nowadays the Glee Club performs frequently on Princeton's campus. The choir's repertoire is extremely diverse, embracing anything from Renaissance motets and madrigals, Romantic song and 21st century choral commissions and the more traditional Glee Club fare of spirituals, folk music and college songs. The spectrum of Glee Club members is perhaps even broader: undergraduates and graduates, scientists and poets, philosophers and economists - all walks of academic life are represented, all knit together by their belief in the singular joy of singing together.

GABRIEL PROKOFIEV, Composer

Gabriel Prokofiev is a London-based composer, producer, and founder of the NONCLASSICAL record label. He has composed for and collaborated with some major dance and music groups, including the London Dance, Electro & Hip-hop music under a variety of different guises. In 2003 he returned to his classical roots composing a critically acclaimed String Quartet No 1 for the Elysian Quartet. He then released his record of NONCLASSICAL, complete with remixes of the original quartet. What gives his contemporary classical writing its unique edge is his background in dance music combined with his classical roots.

Other recent works include (IMPORT/EXPORT) for percussionist Joby Burgess' group PowerPlant, using Global Junk objects, and Sleeves Noro, a piece for solo violin and solo dancer for Rambert Dance Company. In March 2009, his NONCLASSICAL club made its debut in New York, at the cutting-edge Wordless Music series in New York, and at the Rock festival SXSW.

SYDNEY SCHIFF, Choreographer

Princeton alumnus Sydney Schiff ’10 graduated with a Major in History of Science and a Certificate in the Program in Dance. She is now a freelance dancer and choreographer in the NYC area. In addition to showing her own work at Dance New Amsterdam and Movement Research, she has performed with Patricia Hoffbauer, Pedro Jimenez, The Construction Company, and Emily Faulkner. Having been an active member of the Princeton dance community both within the department and as a competitive ballroom dancer: having produced an epic creative Thesis Context Preconceived, and having danced in two of Simon Morrison's interdepartmental productions Bors Godunov and The Toy Box, it is with pride that she returns to choreograph Eugene O'Neill.
THE PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN I
Basa Danlow
Margaret Banks
Kiri Murakami
Caroline Shaw
Ruotao Mao
Wayne Lee
Elena Chernova-Davis
Lind Howard

VIOLIN II
Michelle Brazier
Cecila Weinkauff
Arthur Moeller
Jody Rajshek
Carmina Gaggiardi
Nancy Ronquist

VIOLA
Stephanie Griffin
Jacqueline Watson
Clifford Young
Emily Muller

CELLO
Jodi Beeder
Elizabeth Loughran
Alistair MacRae
Talia Schiff

BASS
John Grillo
Daniel Hudson
Joanne Bates

FLUTE
Jay Rosenfeld
Amy Wolfe

OBEO
Caroline Park
Adam Hollander

CLARINET
Pascal Archer
Sherry Hartman Apgar

SAXOPHONE
Ron Kerber

BASSOON
Roe Goodman
Edward Burns

HORN
Douglas Lundeen
Alexander Cline

TRUMPET
Jerry Bryant
Thomas Cook

TROMBONE
Ben Arar ‘13
Melanie Barboni Post-Doc
Tova Bergsten ‘15
Carleli Boix ‘15
Christina Bott ‘13
Marcie Brady ‘15
Chris Brownell ‘13
Regina Burgher ‘14
Kathleen Busard ‘14
Annie Cardinal ‘15
Alexa Czer ‘15
Jonathon Choy ‘15
Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen ‘15
Dan Corica ‘12
Flannery Cunningham ‘13
Monique Dinescu ‘15
Katie Dubbs ‘14
Alex El-Fakir ‘15
Eddy Ferreira ‘12
Sasha Finn ‘14
Nathaniel Fleming ‘12
Alexandra Green ‘13
Clayton Greenberg ‘13
Chengcheng Gui ‘14
Charles Guo ‘14
Kamna Gupta ‘14
Naimah Hakim ‘15
Kathy Hawkwood ‘12
Lieve Hendriksen ‘12
Dana Hoffman ‘12

THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY GLEE CLUB

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Charles Guo ‘14
Kamna Gupta ‘14
Naimah Hakim ‘15
Kathy Hawkwood ‘12
Lieve Hendriksen ‘12
Dana Hoffman ‘12

THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY BALLROOM DANCE CLUB

THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY BALLROOM DANCE CLUB

Brian Hsueh ‘12,
Helin Zhao ‘14
Cosmo Zheng ‘13
Caille Woods ‘14
Jouie Suhy ’95
Christopher Cochran ‘14

Priscilla Chan ‘14
Lily Yu ‘12
Valentina Barboy ‘15
Alexis Feliciano ‘14
Nicholas Jin ‘14
Jeffrey Nguyen, 2nd Year Graduate Student

THE EUGENE ONEGIN PROJECT IS SPONSORED BY
The Office of the President
The Office of the dean of the Faculty
The Department of Music
The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
The Lewis Center for the Arts
The David A. Gardner Magic Fund of the Council for the Humanities
The Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies
The Edward T. Cone Foundation
The National Endowment for the Arts (for the Princeton Symphony Orchestra)

SPECIAL THANKS TO...

Vilya Barboy
Catherine Cann
Melanie Clarke
Paul Ciogi
Katja Dammers
Kate Fischer
Chris Gorzelnik
Marlyn Ham
Reagan Maraghy

Mary Jo Mecca
Kim Murakami
Kyle Subramanian
Tracy Patterson
Steven Runk
Anna Schon
Marna Selzner
James Stechens
Jolee Suhy

Sarat Tungkas
Hope VanCleef
Andres Villa
Daryl Waskow
Richardson Auditorium
Tom Myers, Director
Milo Lanoue
Gina Holland
James Alington

Special Facilities
Christopher Gorzelnik
John Burton
Bill Pierre

University Ticketing
Nicole Robinson
Mary Kemler
Sharon Maselli