Our Production Crew:

Director and Script Writer...........................................Julia Nemirovskaya
Assistant Director....................................................Tanya Beede, Kris Santoro
Manager........................................................................Heghine Hakobyan
Producers.........................................................Heghine Hakobyan, Alexis Gunderson, Dana Fleck
Assistant........................................................................Alexis Gunderson
Music Director..........................................................Alexis Gibbons
Costume Team..........................................................Abigail Kuhn, Cara Fitzgerald, Dana Fleck
Choreographers............................................................Julie Reid, Tanya Beede
PR, Editing..............................................................Heghine Hakobyan, Randianne Leyshon,
                                                     Xenia Slabina, Andrew Whalen, Diana Wildridge
Graphic Design................................................................Youn Lee, Randianne Leyshon
Stage Managers, Stage Set.....................................Taylor Tomlin, Elizaveta Pyanzina,
                                                     Oksana Moroz, Edmon Jeiranian, Jade Kline
Translation.................................................................Heghine Hakobyan, Alexis Gibbons,
                                                     Raina Smith, Alexis Gunderson, Daria Smirnova, Andrew Whalen
Technical help......................................................................Jade Kline
Cast support.........................................................................Sara Davidson

Special thanks to:

Katya Hokanson, REES Director
University of Oregon Libraries
Ronald Renchler, Communications Director
Katie Brennan, Marketing Graduate Fellowship
David L. Baker and Stacy L. DeHart,
Classroom Technology Specialists
Raina M. Smith, Financial Management Specialist
Cristian Boboia, Exhibit Services
David Landazuri, Copy Cataloger
Jima Britain, Agate Hall Manager
Jim Newell, Tuba Czar
Irina Kuzmina, UO Web Designer

UO REESC and UO Libraries presents
an annual bilingual Russian-English theatre production:

SUICIDE:
A Russian Comedy
an adaptation of Nikolai Erdman’s 1928 comedy

NOVEMBER 19, 2010
7:30PM
AGATE HALL
1791 Agate Street, Eugene

FREE AND OPEN TO PUBLIC

Erdman’s hilarious play, ”The Suicide”, was never staged in
Soviet Russia. Stalin was displeased with the play and its
author sent to live in Siberia.
**Director’s Note**

Anna Karenina jumped under a moving train. A typical Russian happy ending, so it’s no surprise that one of the funniest Russian comedies is entitled "A Suicide."

Why did I choose this play for our annual Russian Theatre Production? These days, what can be more true and touching than a story of a man who lost his job, hopes to learn to play the sousaphone in order to earn money for his family, and fails to do so? But Nikolai Erdman, Russia’s forgotten genius who was imprisoned and exiled by Stalin and therefore was never able to write anything better than this play, transferred this real situation to a world of grotesque and absurd. He wrote a story of suicide for sale.

In this extraordinary comedy everyone around the poor man, Semyon Semyonovich, is a leach and wants him to kill himself ASAP, but first leave a suicide note in which he dedicates his death to a specific cause.

Who will persuade Semyon to take their cause: a member of political opposition, an environmental activist, a physically disabled woman, a writer, an intellectual, or perhaps one of the two women who want to enflame their lover with another man’s suicide note about unrequited love for them? By these competing vamps Semyon is proclaimed a genius and a modern hero; taken to the best restaurant in Moscow; and his wife Masha is sent personal tailor who is outfitting her for the funeral.

But something unexpected happens.

I am not going to tell you what—you’ll have to find out yourselves. Instead, I am going to share with you my love and admiration for this amazing cast. Each one of them is beautiful, gifted, and creative, and when they come together they truly shine. You will find out about each one when you read the short entries in this program, but more when you see them on stage.

A choice of culture to love and study, just like a country of origin, speaks a lot about a person. These actors and crew of this Russian production are a hardy flock. And at a time when the majority is choosing to learn Spanish or Chinese for a successful career, this crew has chosen the road less traveled—impractical, brave, and idealistic. But what seems impractical may in the end prove to be more meaningful than a lot of what seemed immediately important.

Yes, they are not very practical. We have just one show, and it’s free because we want anyone who wants to see it to see it. Our theatre is a butterfly that lives one day. But the flapping of its wings stays with us. And like so many ephemeral things, it will also mean more for us than most of the things real and material.

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Liza Pyanzina, a graduate student at the UO, plays several roles- a TV pop star, Dusya, an old woman, a Gypsy, and a photographer. “I wanted to be a part of the Russian community, to expand my knowledge of Russian culture, to gain experience in acting, and to have fun!!!” Favorite Russian word—очаровательно delightfully

Julie Reid, a UO student double majoring in PPPM and REES, plays Anastasia Lomonssova “I’m doing this to learn more about the language and culture in a fun, interesting way.”Favorite Russian word- всё равно who cares

Julia Rettig, a UO student majoring in REES, plays Aristida Dominikovna “The play is a fun way to improve Russian skills.” Favorite Russian word- черепаха tortoise

Xenia Slabina, a UO student, is helping with the marketing for the show. “I love PR.” Favorite Russian word- радость joy

Daria Smirnova, a graduate student, plays multiple roles. A pop-star, Musya, a Gypsy, and a babushka. “I wanted to be part of a theatrical performance, to know more about Russian drama, and to help people learn Russian, because I enjoy it.” Favorite Russian word - лазурный sky blue

Taylor Tomlin, a student at the UO, plays Mr. Boyko and Victor Victorovich. “I joined the play in order to better my Russian speaking skills.” Favorite Russian word- Никогда! Never!

Andrew Whalen, a UO student, plays the priest, Father Elpidy. “I wanted to build my Russian language skills.” Favorite Russian word- Давай come on

Diana Wildridge, a student at the UO, plays a Gypsy. “I have always loved theater and the Russian language, so this was a great way to get involved in both of those things!” Favorite Russian Word: белый white
Randianne Leyshon is a graduate student at the UO studying magazine journalism. She's part of the marketing team for this production. “I’ve been obsessed with all things Russian for awhile now.” Favorite Russian word- надежда hope

Anton Li, a recent UO graduate, plays the sausage guy in the commercial. “I’m in the play because I love Russian culture. Favorite Russian word- искусство art

Lydia McNiel, majoring in psychology at the UO, plays the parts of Alice and a Gypsy. “It was perfect opportunity to both dabble in theater AND learn more about Russian culture/language!” Favorite Russian word- обычно usually

Emily Moon, a senior at the UO, plays Pugach, a Gypsy, and a singer in Gogol-Mogol. “I wanted to learn more about Russian culture and language and to DANCE!” Favorite Russian word- колокольня bell tower

Oksana Moroz is a student at LCC. She plays a girl on the TV-show (Act I) and Raisa Fillipovna (Act II, III). “I’m passionate about acting! On stage, I can be silly, and nobody will judge me because I am playing ‘the character’!”

Stephan Nance, a UO student majoring in REES, plays Egorushka and the TV Host. “This is an excellent opportunity to improve my Russian, spend time with a wonderful group of people, and work with an especially wonderful director.” Favorite Russian word - попугай parrot

Anna Polishchuk, a Eugene community member, plays a part in the commercial, a pop singer, an actress playing Semyon’s wife, and she’s in the funeral choir. Favorite Russian word- почему why

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

TV show host, Egorushka....................................................Steven Nance
Pop star, photographer, Dusya; Gypsy, fashion designer, old woman..................................................................Elizaveta Pyanzina
Pop star, Raisa Fillipovna..................................................Oksana Moroz
Pop star, Musya, Gypsy, old woman.............................Daria Smirnova
TV show musician, girl in the TV commercial, Anna, church choir singer..........................................................Anna Polishchuk
TV show musician, Gypsy, Natalia Arsentievna Pugach....Emily Moon
First man in the TV commercial, Mr. Boyko, Viktor Viktorovich............................................................Taylor Tomlin
Second man in the TV commercial......................................Anton Li
First paparazzi, first man from the boulevard, guard, first man from the funeral home............................................................Edmon Jeiranian
Second paparazzi, second man from the boulevard, guard, second man from the funeral home..............................................................Jade Kline
Semyon Semyonovich Podsekalnikov (Act I, Act III)....Braden Larson
Maria Lukyanovna Podsekalnikova (Act I, Act III)........Sommer Fain
Jane, person with poster, Gypsy.............................................Dana Fleck
Alice, talking Gypsy.............................................................Lydia McNiel
Jill, Gypsy, person with poster............................................Marina Larson
Lillian, Gypsy singer, person with poster..........................Youn Lee
Kleopatra Maksimovna.........................................................Tanya Beede
Father Elpidy...........................................................................Andrew D. Whalen
Nastya........................................................................Gabrielle Josephson
Gypsy...............................................................................Diana Wildridge
Plot of Our Play:  
Act I

The play begins with the main character of the story, Semyon Semyonovich Podsekalnikov, and his wife, Maria Lukianovna, watching a TV show in which a group of pop artists sing their hit, “All Will Turn Out Well”! Afterward, Semyon Semyonovich (Senya) and Maria Lukianovna (Masha) fall asleep. In the middle of the night, Semyon wakes up feeling very hungry, so he wakes Masha and asks her for a sausage. After a quarrel that awakens exchange students in the apartment below, Masha brings Semyon his sausage, but he refuses to eat and disappears. Masha fears that he has decided to take his own life. Semyon lost his job and it is hard for him to accept the idea that he, as the head of the family, has now become economically dependent on his wife. He feels depressed and humiliated and starts to think that everybody around him is trying to disparage him.

To resolve the situation, Maria talks to her mother Serafima Ilinichna and they both decide to call their neighbor, Alexander Petrovich Kalabushkin, for help. Kalabushkin is a widowed bank guard, who is spending the night with his lover, Margarita Ivanovna. All together they chase Semyon and try to convince him that life is wonderful. The next morning a Russian-American journalist and media shark, Mr. Boyko, comes to the American students in order to interview them for his newspaper, and it is from them he learns about their neighbor Podsekalnikov and about his decision to commit suicide. Boyko is very excited when he hears such news because Semyon is a potential source for a dramatic media story. Rather than trying to talk Semyon out of it, Boyko plans to interview Semyon and to persuade him to write a beautiful suicidal note revealing the unbearable life of people under the current government. In order to make sure things go as planned, he sends two paparazzi to spy on Mr. Podsekalnikov who suddenly becomes a star as the news spreads.
Our play returns to a party, an ironic celebration of both life and death. Gypsy dancers have come to dance wildly in honor of Semyon Semyonovich. The man himself is surrounded by his neighbors and friends, awaiting the end of his life, and toasting to it. Similarly, the other characters ponder their own ends and the self-destruction of mankind, but acknowledge that there is little to do to stop the end from coming.

Semyon Semyonovich looks to his own suicide note and finds: “Why I cannot live: Look into the eyes of history! ... Intellectuals are the salt of the nation.” He is struck by the idea that he will be the icon of this gradual decay of humanity, the “art” which the party celebrates, but this thought is lost when Alexander Petrovich convinces him to switch out the suicide notes for one that will “leave his family assured.”

The time when he was supposed to kill himself comes and goes, and a hysterical Maria and her mother watch the “body” of Semyon Semyonovich carried into the living room. Maria falls over her husband, pleading and praying for him to wake up. And then, to her surprise, he does! But, being completely drunk, Semyon Semyonovich believes himself to be dead, and falls to his knees, crying out prayers to his wife, whom he has mistaken for the Virgin Mary (“Maria”), and his mother-in-law.

Maria and her mother leave Semyon alone with his pistol, and not finding the resolve to kill himself in time, he is forced to make a quick decision. Semyon chooses to uphold the ruse of his death, and climbs into the coffin where he plans to wait out the ceremony. Maria and her mother enter the room of mourners, trying to convince them that Semyon was truly alive, but the mourners write them off as having been driven insane by their grief. As is traditional, each mourner make their way up to the casket to give their final goodbyes to the dead, and then one by one they are scared off as Semyon reveals himself to the mourners as alive. They each run screaming from the room until the only one left is Maria. The lovers share the final lines of the play, and they embrace one another, alive and finally happy.

**Cast Biographies:**

Tatiana Beede, a Eugene community member, plays Kleopatra Maksimovna. “I’m taking part in this play because theater is my secret passion. I wanted some extra drama in my life. This is a perfect dosage. This show is my 6th show with Julia Nemirovs-kaya. I enjoy every moment of working with her, creating, performing, and feeling sad after the show is over.”

Michael Butler, a graduate student at the UO, is playing the part of Semyon Semyonovich in Act II. “I’m here to amaze, dazzle, disturb, and delight the masses. Also to improve my Russian.” Favorite Russian word- достопримечательность landmark of interest

Sara Davidson has her B.A. in Russian and Genetics. She loves Russian poetry, history, and pop music. This is her second Russian play.

Sommer Fain, a UO student, plays Maria Lukyanovna. “I’ve been involved in theatre for years but this Russian play is a whole new monster.” Favorite Russian word- домохозяйка housewife

Cara Fitzgerald, a UO student, helped create and coordinate the costume designs. “While I have absolutely no desire to be on stage, I like being behind it and I love the sound of Russian.” Favorite Russian word- бобер beaver

Dana Fleck, a student at the UO, plays the exchange student Jane and a Gypsy. She is also a member of the costume team.
Act II

Momentarily, Semyon Semyonovich puts aside his plans to kill himself. His wife and mother-in-law encourage Semyon to learn to play the sousaphone, thinking this activity will take his mind off suicidal thoughts. However, Semyon seems to have grandiose plans for his sousaphone playing and after failing to learn how to play the instrument within the span of 5 minutes the distraught man is only further troubled. He renews his decision to commit suicide, but even death has obstacles in store for Semyon. His neighbor, Alexander Petrovich, decides to turn a profit from Semyon’s death, and begins offering – to the highest bidder – for Semyon to die for any cause. Semyon is approached by the intelligentsia, environmentalists, proponents of gay rights, marijuana, women’s rights activists, artists, Russian Nationalists, and all other manner of individuals and organizations who want to manipulate Semyon’s suicide as a rallying cry for their particular cause, instead of trying to save him. Meanwhile, the media oligarch, Mr. Boyko, uses his power and money to put himself in position to use the suicide for himself. Semyon is flattered by all people who are vying for his attention and gains a self-important air, saying things like “I am like Ghandi.”

Intermission