'BORIS GODUNOV'
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Princeton University Office of Communications: "Staging Boris Godunov"

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###
A Pushkin work rises from the Soviet scrap heap
By Patricia Cohen
Tuesday, April 10, 2007

PRINCETON, New Jersey: In 1936, two of the Soviet Union's greatest artists decided to work on a new production of Pushkin's "Boris Godunov" for the author's coming jubilee. The composer Sergei Prokofiev wrote 24 pieces, while the visionary stage director Vsevolod Meyerhold mapped out scenes and started rehearsals.

The following year, Stalin's Terror fixed its gaze on Meyerhold and he abandoned the project. Three years later, he was dead by firing squad.

But now, thanks to the recent discovery of Meyerhold's original notes and Prokofiev's handwritten score and comments, their collaboration is finally having its world premiere Thursday night at the Berlind Theater here, 70 years after its planned opening.

The mammoth undertaking by Princeton University, in conjunction with the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow, rescues a production that artists and scholars in Russia and elsewhere thought was lost forever. It also introduces a seminal theatrical thinker to an audience that is largely ignorant of his work.

"I was fairly stunned and I continue to be stunned," said Simon Morrison, an associate professor of music at Princeton, who is writing a book on Prokofiev and excavated Meyerhold's notes in 2005 from a sealed section of the Russian archive to which he managed to get access. "This is one of the scores that he composed in the '30s when he was at the top of his game, and it went to waste. He never heard it in his lifetime."

"Godunov" ran afoul of politics long before Prokofiev and Meyerhold got hold of it. The play, which tells the story of the 16th-century tyrannical czar Boris Godunov and Dmitry, a monk who pretends to be the true heir to the throne, "is very seditious," said Caryl Emerson, chairwoman of Princeton's Slavic Languages and Literature Department, who is overseeing the project with Morrison.

Although Pushkin is close to a national saint in Russia, his 1825 work was not published until 1831 and not performed until 1866. This production is the first time all 25 scenes that Pushkin wrote are being performed together, Emerson said. "It combines three geniuses of Russian culture: Pushkin, Prokofiev and Meyerhold, the poet, the composer and the stage director," she said.

A Russian television crew is here to explain why this seminal work is being first performed in New Jersey, in four sold-out performances of a new English translation by Antony Wood.

Modest Mussorgsky used Pushkin as a source for his fabulously successful opera "Boris Godunov." But Prokofiev and Meyerhold were contemptuous of what they considered to be Mussorgsky's thick, syrupy, optimistic and romantic score.

Meyerhold, for example, envisioned the final scene with a choral sound for the crowd that is "dark, agitated, menacing, like the roar of the sea."
"One should feel a gathering of forces, the restraining of an internal rage," Meyerhold wrote.

Mussorgsky offered a 19th-century sound, Morrison said, while "Prokofiev was the first to get at the 20th-century sound." Meyerhold gave Prokofiev detailed instructions about what kind of orchestral and choral music he wanted. Those notes, along with Prokofiev's manuscript, descriptions of the work in various memoirs and Meyerhold's rehearsal transcripts guided this production.

"This is an original creation based on some of his ideas," Tim Vasen, the director, said at a dinner break during the technical rehearsal over the weekend. "It's an amazing collaboration with someone who's not in the room."

Since Meyerhold often liked to work with architects, Morrison asked Princeton's Architecture School to design the set. Graduate students came up with rows of floor-to-ceiling bungees made of stretchy surgical tubing set along grooves that run across the stage. The cords can be arranged to suggest trees in a forest, pulled and snapped like bows and arrows during a battle scene or wrapped around a character's body to evoke emotions like anger or frustration.

The set is remarkably flexible, though it did prevent the choreographer Rebecca Lazier from using pointe steps, because the dancers' toe shoes kept getting stuck in the grooves.

For a scene set at a Polish ball, Meyerhold wrote that he wanted a "full orchestra in a social setting performing three numbers, 'Rêverie,' 'Polonaise,' and 'Mazurka,' " which Prokofiev composed.

Vasen has placed some of the musicians and the conductor, Michael Pratt, onstage. Wearing wigs in 18th-century style that look like neon-colored cotton candy, they are stacked on levels behind a giant red window frame.

Although he originally worked with Konstantin Stanislavski, Meyerhold came to disdain the psychological approach and the naturalistic method of acting, preferring much more stylized, physical movement that he developed into a system he called biomechanics. He drew on a wide range of influences, from Japanese Kabuki to Frederick Taylor's time-and-motion studies to create theater that would dissolve the wall between the actor and the audience.

An enthusiastic revolutionary, his "people's theater" was initially endorsed by the Bolsheviks. But by the 1930s, Socialist Realism became the approved revolutionary aesthetic, and Meyerhold's avant garde, cinematic style was considered subversive.

Vasen, with advice from Morrison and Emerson, has incorporated those ideas into the play. Maryna, the Polish princess with whom Dmitry falls in love, stands rigid, arms at her sides, wrists bent at 90-degree angles like a mannequin while her suitor professes his undying love. To accompany her command to "Reveal your heart to me," Prokofiev wrote an "Amaroso" that was inspired by the cheap, trashy sound of 1930s Hollywood melodramas.

During the battle scenes, Vasen decided to use one of Meyerhold's physical warm-up exercises - a rhythmic, mechanized toe-to-heel step - for the soldiers' march. Prokofiev composed what Morrison calls a "musical cartoon," using carnival rhythms and the fife-and-drums.

During the technical rehearsal, the line of soldiers, wearing helmets like that of the Tin Man in "The Wizard of Oz," clumped towards the edge of the stage and then pivoted. One went a bit too far and accidentally fell off before quickly scrambling back up. After the scene, Morrison shouted up to a few musicians perched on a balcony to slow down the tempo.

Harlow Robinson, a professor at Northeastern University who wrote a biography of Prokofiev, said of the Princeton performances that "it's certainly significant to be hearing and seeing it all together." The original aborted production "promised to be very brilliant," he said.
The 15 actors (who play 70 parts), 10 dancers, 24 choral singers and 35 musicians are all undergraduates at Princeton. "The entire campus became a kind of creative workshop, an atelier," Morrison said. Many of them are participating in the play as part of an academic course.

On Thursday, a three-day symposium begins with Russian scholars, and there is an exhibition of materials from the period at Firestone Library on campus. Putting on the four performances cost $140,000, he estimated.

Still, Morrison said he thought that the Russians "would like to do it on their own - it's an idea waiting to happen."

For Morrison, "one of the great tragedies of musical history is what happened to Prokofiev's art."

Only half of what Prokofiev composed is known; the rest was unpublished, altered or lost, he said. Though Prokofiev's music for "Godunov" has been recorded, Morrison said, "the music doesn't make sense without the words."

Now, after seeing this production, Morrison said, he feels as if the "words don't make sense without the music."

###
An avant-garde Soviet production of Pushkin's play *Boris Godunov*, in an unrealized production by the director Vsevolod Meyerhold with incidental music by Sergei Prokofiev, gets its long-delayed world premiere tomorrow at Princeton University.

Meyerhold, a major force in early 20th-century theater, had planned to mount his staging in Moscow in 1936, but the political climate under Stalin's regime forced him to cancel the production. He was ultimately arrested in June 1939 on charges of treason and shot in February 1940.

Prokofiev's score, for chorus and orchestra, has never been used for a live performance of Pushkin's play, although it has been recorded. It features a military tattoo, drunken singing, ballroom dances, a reverie and a love scene; one of the numbers, a Polonaise, requires complex choreography. As in Mussorgsky's operatic version of *Boris Godunov*, Prokofiev's music includes a passage for a Holy Fool.

*The New York Times* quotes Simon Morrison, an associate professor of music at Princeton who is writing a book about Prokofiev, as saying, "I was fairly stunned and I continue to be stunned. This is one of the scores that he composed in the '30s when he was at the top of his game, and it went to waste. He never heard it in his lifetime."

Directed by Tim Vasen, the Princeton staging — of which we offer a few photos below — uses Meyerhold's aborted plans as its foundation. The university's Mendel Music Library owns copies of Meyerhold's rehearsal transcripts, which reportedly state that Meyerhold wanted the acting to be energetic, with the set in constant motion and the audience made to feel part of the action.

The text will be given in a new English translation by Antony Wood. According to the Princeton website devoted to the project, this will be the first known performance in English of Pushkin's complete text.

The production is a collaboration between Princeton University and the Glinka Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow, and will involve students in the university's Program in Theater and Dance and School of Architecture, as well as the Princeton University Orchestra and Chamber Chorus.

*Boris Godunov* runs April 12-14 at the Berlind Theater in the McCarter Theater complex in Princeton, New Jersey.
All photos by Denise Applewhite © 2007, and provided courtesy of the Princeton University Office of Communications.
PRINCETON, NJ—In 1936, two of the Soviet Union's greatest artists decided to work on a new theatrical production of Pushkin's "Boris Godunov" for its author's coming jubilee. Sergei Prokofiev wrote 24 musical pieces while the visionary stage director Vsevolod Meyerhold mapped out scenes and started rehearsals. The following year, Stalin's terror fixed its gaze on Meyerhold and he abandoned the project. Three years later, he was dead, shot by a firing squad.

Now, thanks to the recent discovery of Meyerhold's original notes and Prokofiev's handwritten score and comments, their collaboration is finally having its world premiere on Thursday night at the Berlind Theater at Princeton University, 70 years after its planned opening.

This mammoth undertaking by Princeton, in conjunction with the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow, rescues a production that artists and scholars thought was lost forever. The four sold-out performances will also introduce Meyerhold, a seminal theatrical thinker, to an audience largely ignorant of his work.

"I was fairly stunned and I continue to be stunned," said Simon Morrison, an associate professor of music at Princeton, who excavated Meyerhold's notes in 2005 from a sealed section of the Russian archive, to which he managed to gain access. Mr. Morrison, who is writing a book about Prokofiev, said: "This is one of the scores that he composed in the '30s when he was at the top of his game, and it went to waste. He never heard it in his lifetime."

"Boris" ran afoul of the government long before Prokofiev and Meyerhold got a hold of it. Pushkin's play -- about the 16th-century tyrannical czar Boris Godunov, and Dimitri, a pretender to the throne -- "is very seditious," said Caryl Emerson, chairwoman of Princeton's Slavic languages and literature department, who is overseeing the project with Mr. Morrison.

This production, which is using a new English translation by Antony Wood, is the first in which all 25 scenes that Pushkin wrote are being performed together, Ms. Emerson said. "It combines three geniuses of Russian culture," she said. "Pushkin, Prokofiev and Meyerhold, the poet, the composer and the stage director."

Modest Mussorgsky used Pushkin's play as a source for his fabulously successful opera "Boris Godunov." But Prokofiev and Meyerhold were contemptuous of what they considered that work's thick, syrupy, optimistic and romantic score. Meyerhold, for example, envisioned the final scene with a choral sound for the crowd that was "dark, agitated, menacing, like the roar of the sea." He wrote, "One should feel a gathering of forces, the restraining of an internal rage." Mussorgsky's was a 19th-century sound, Mr. Morrison said, "Prokofiev was the first to get at the 20th-century sound."
Meyerhold gave Prokofiev detailed instructions about the kind of orchestral and choral music he wanted and which scenes it would go in. Those notes, along with Prokofiev's manuscript, descriptions of the work in various memoirs and Meyerhold's rehearsal transcripts, guided this production. "This is an original creation based on some of his ideas," Tim Vasen, the production's director, said, referring to Meyerhold. "It's an amazing collaboration with someone who's not in the room."

Since Meyerhold often worked with architects, Mr. Morrison asked Princeton's Architecture School to design the set. Graduate students came up with rows of floor-to-ceiling bungee cords made out of stretchy surgical tubing (3,750 feet in all) set along grooves that run across the stage. The cords can be arranged to suggest trees in a forest, pulled and snapped like bows and arrows during a battle scene or wrapped around a character's body to evoke emotions like anger or frustration. The set is remarkably flexible, though it did prevent the choreographer, Rebecca Lazier, from using pointe steps, because the dancers' toe shoes kept getting stuck in the grooves.

For a scene set at a Polish ball, Meyerhold wrote that he wanted a "full orchestra in a social setting performing three numbers, 'Reverie,' 'Polonaise,' and 'Mazurka,' " which Prokofiev composed. Mr. Vasen has placed some of the musicians and the conductor, Michael Pratt, onstage. Wearing 18th-century-style wigs that look like neon-colored cotton candy, the musicians are stacked on levels behind a giant red window frame, like an extended "Hollywood Squares" set.

Although he originally worked with Stanislavski, Meyerhold came to disdain the naturalistic method of acting, preferring much more stylized, physical movement that he developed into a system called Biomechanics. He drew on a wide range of influences, from Kabuki to Frederick Taylor's time-motion studies, to create theater that would dissolve the wall between actor and audience.

An enthusiastic revolutionary, Meyerhold initially found his "people's theater" embraced by the Bolsheviks. But by the 1930s, Socialist Realism had become the approved revolutionary aesthetic, and Meyerhold's avant-garde, cinematic style was considered subversive.

Mr. Vasen, with advice from Mr. Morrison and Ms. Emerson, has incorporated these ideas into the play. Marina, the Polish princess with whom Dimitri falls in love, stands rigid, arms at her sides, wrists bent at 90-degree angles like a mannequin while her suitor professes his undying love. To accompany her command to "Reveal your heart to me," Prokofiev wrote an "Amoroso" that was inspired by the cheap, trashy soundtracks of 1930s Hollywood melodramas.

During the battle scenes, Mr. Vasen uses one of Meyerhold's physical warm-up exercises -- a rhythmic, mechanized toe-to-heel step -- for the soldiers' march. Prokofiev composed what Mr. Morrison calls a "musical cartoon," using carnival rhythms and the fife and drum. During Sunday night's rehearsal, the line of soldiers, wearing helmets like the Tin Man's in "The Wizard of Oz," clumped toward the edge of the stage, and then pivoted. One went a couple of inches too far and accidentally fell off the stage before quickly scrambling back up. After the scene, Mr. Morrison shouted up to a few musicians perched on a balcony to slow down the tempo.

Harlow Robinson, who wrote a biography of Prokofiev and is a professor at Northeastern University in Boston, said of the Princeton production that it was "certainly significant to be hearing and seeing it all together." The original aborted production "promised to be very brilliant."

A Russian television crew from the state-run Channel 1 was scheduled to film Tuesday night's dress rehearsal and explain to viewers how it is that this essentially Russian work is being first performed in New Jersey. In Russia, Pushkin is more often read than performed, particularly since the fall of the Soviet Union, which ended state subsidies and introduced artistic freedom.
From Mr. Morrison and Ms. Emerson’s perspective, only a university with resources like Princeton’s could afford such an undertaking. The 15 actors (who play 70 parts), 10 dancers, 24 choral singers and 35 musicians are all undergraduates. "The entire campus became a kind of creative workshop, an atelier," Mr. Morrison said.

Many are taking part in the play as part of an academic course. On Thursday, a three-day symposium begins with Russian and other scholars, and there is an exhibition of materials from the period at the Firestone Library on campus here. Putting on the four performances is costing an estimated $140,000, Mr. Morrison said. The performances are sold out, but he said there was a chance some seats would become available before curtain time. There are also free tickets to Wednesday night’s dress rehearsal that may become available 20 minutes before the 8 p.m. start.

For Mr. Morrison, "one of the great tragedies of musical history is what happened to Prokofiev’s art." Only half of what Prokofiev composed is known; the rest was unpublished, altered or lost, he said. Though Prokofiev’s music for "Boris" has been recorded, Mr. Morrison said, "the music doesn't make sense without the words." Now, after seeing this production, he said he felt as if the "words don’t make sense without the music."

URL: http://www.nytimes.com

GRAPHIC: Photos: A dress rehearsal of "Boris Godunov" at Princeton University, above. Architecture students designed the set, with its rows of floor-to-ceiling bungee cords. (Photo by Laura Pedrick for The New York Times)(pg. B1)
A rehearsal of "Boris Godunov," with a Prokofiev score and staging based on notes by Vsevolod Meyerhold. (Photo by Laura Pedrick for The New York Times)(pg. B8)
An 1825 Play Finally Premieres

'A lucky combination of circumstance. An event that was waiting to happen." That is how Princeton University professor of Slavic languages and literature Caryl Emerson explains the converging events that have brought about a gigantic cooperative production of the world premiere of the play "Boris Godunov," originally written in 1825 by Alexander Pushkin, with music by Sergei Prokofiev written for a proposed but never realized production in 1936, the "brainchild" of the innovative Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold.

"Our first piece of luck was that Simon Morrison (Princeton associate professor of music) was working on the Prokofiev archives and was in touch with the composer's heirs." When Emerson heard that they had given permission to use the music, she says, "I got excited because I wrote my dissertation on this play, and I've been thinking about it for 35 years." In addition to the British translation by Antony Wood that is the credited text for this production, a new translation by American James Falen, emeritus professor from the University of Tennessee, was published last year and has proved very useful in preparing this production.

Finally this chunk of Russian history will have an English language outing. The play focuses on the intertwined fates of Godunov and Dimitri, the pretender, who will usurp the throne once Boris is gone. A political play, it is not without allusions to power plays throughout history - as Emerson describes it, "being in power and wondering if it mattered how you got there." Gruesome murders and doing whatever-it-takes to win the top spot are the order of the day.

Not only is the story filled with conspiracy, betrayals, and murders, so is the history of Pushkin's play. Finally, in 1936, more than a 100 years after the play was written, Meyerhold worked diligently to mount a production. First there were censors, then delays. Then under the Stalinist regime, Meyerhold was arrested, charged with treason, and a year later, shot. Talk about drama and intrigue. Fortunately, he left copious notes.

An unbelievable number of Princetonians are working on this project, which has grown to include a stage production complete with orchestral and choral accompaniment, a scholarly symposium, and a special library exhibit. The play with music is directed by Tim Vassen, a lecturer in the program in theater and dance with a cast of 13 students playing 36 roles. The historical drama/comedy will play at the Berlind Theater at McCarter for four performances, Thursday through Saturday, April 12 through 14. The production is a collaboration between the university and the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. Also integral to the production are the university orchestra and the university chamber choir.

Vassen worked with Emerson and dramaturg Michael Cadden (director of the program in theater and dance at Princeton) to build the script they are using. "I'm the Pushkinist in the group. I was watching every word with a hawk's eye," Emerson says. "We don't want some word coming from an American student that no one can understand. But on the other hand, Pushkin is Russia's greatest poet and you don't want to start messing around with his words."
I watched their first rehearsal on the abstract set designed by graduate students in Princeton's School of Architecture. Actors moved, twisted, and navigated a forest of bungee cords that keep the set constantly moving. Vassen was staging the coronation of Boris. A semester class project, Emerson tells me that the set began traditionally but evolved into something much more abstract.

This is not the first time that Morrison has tapped disparate pools of talent at Princeton to bring a nearly-lost piece of Russian art to life. Just two years ago he brought "The Steel Step," a long-forgotten Prokofiev ballet, to life with the help of choreographers, dancers, and musicians, and set designers from the university community. (U.S. 1, April 6, 2005).

Emerson had arrived late for our interview, riding her bicycle through the rain but quickly corralled three student actors to tell me about their work on the play. We clustered together in a dressing room just off stage. The students enthusiastically told me about their roles in the production. Roger Mason, a junior with a major in English plus certificates in African American studies and theater and dance, plays the role of Pimen, a monk. Mason describes his character, saying that there are two sides to Pimen, a peaceful, submissive worshiper of God and also a fervent speaker of the truth. "In the play, Pushkin has him speak out about the past (Godunov's reign) as a way of remedying the present," says Mason.

Pushkin was influenced by Shakespeare's plays, which he read in translation. "Boris Godunov" reflects a lot of "Macbeth." As Emerson terms it, "guilt with ghosts that come alive." She adds, "And the opening scene is right from 'Julius Caesar.' There are certain plot structures or contours that are taken from Shakespeare, even lines taken directly from 'Henry IV.'"

Most of the play is written in iambic pentameter but the comedy scenes "suddenly collapse into prose," says Emerson. One of those comic segments features Kelechie Ezie, a junior history major with a certificate in theater, who plays the hostess of the tavern. She also transforms herself to play another character, this one male: the challenging role of Basmanov, the head commander in Boris' army. In this role, she has a quick character turnaround - first proudly assuming this leadership honor not usually given to someone who is not of noble blood and promising fealty to protect Boris' son and heir. "In the very next scene, he realizes he has to betray Boris and join the pretender Dimitri, who has the popular support. Playing a man - that's very cool. I've never done that before," says the beautiful young Ezie.

Emerson describes the scene: "People are assembled from poor to landed gentry. This is a big example of the nature of this play: learn how to give anybody what they want to hear as a way of getting ahead politically."

Sophomore Lily Cowles plays the "bewitcher" Marina, a Polish girl who is the love interest of many men, including the Pretender Dimitri. Tall with long blond hair and large blue eyes, playing the much-desired inamorata isn't a stretch for her. However, the significant thing about this character is that unlike most noble women of the 16th century, Marina is described by Emerson as "an incredibly empowered woman in charge of her own destiny." Marina is also playing for power, deciding who will be the lover who can also further her own ambitions. Cowles says, "She's a fun character to play and the bungees on the set add to the excitement and add freedom." She says they allow her to create tensions, move them around, rearrange them, and let them snap back - all physicalizations of her character's objectives.

Cowles explains the concept that director Vassen has chosen based on the work of Vsevolod Meyerhold. "We're doing this whole Meyerholdian take on this play, kind of physical, with huge body language, not at all small, Method work. It is interesting to play such a historical play and at the same time try to make something large and abstract."

It is also challenging to work with the musical underscoring. Emerson says that it is interesting the way the play is written very prophetically cinematic. "The music just adds to that," Cowles adds, "What's great about this play is that it's opening up Russia to all of us. Whoa! So unlike anything I've ever known in my life."
Emerson wants to make sure I hear about the other role that Cowles plays, that of the Holy Fool. She has been quite impressed with the actress' transformation into this character, who roams the land in rags, has the gift of prophesy, yet with the protection of superstition is allowed as the Holy Fool to speak truth to tyrants. Emerson tells me that at a run-through of the play for alumni, "I was so amazed." To Cowles, she urges, "Show how you do it. You can't believe how those eyes carry." Good naturedly, Cowles obliges.

Theater is clearly in Cowles' blood. Her mother is actress Christine Baranski (yes, the eyes have it), who is widely known for the TV show Cybil. Matthew Cowles, her father, has also done film and television, including nearly seven years on "All My Children." Their daughter, however, doesn't plan to go into the "family business," but rather dreams of working for National Geographic. "My dream, dream job would be to be a paleontologist, but I don't have the math in me."

Says Emerson: "One thing I've come to understand working with these talented undergrads is that they see things, understand and embody them, I would say 4 to 5 million times faster than I. It's a hard play to do but these kids grasp it. They react fast and deep."

In spite of the play's being "hard" to do, Emerson feels that it is a good play for young people. She remembers something that Meyerhold said about "Boris:" "I want everyone on stage to look like they are a warrior who just got down off a horse, that kind of youthful energy." She thinks Meyerhold would be pleased with this production. "They wiped the floor with me when I first heard this in the rehearsal hall. This just goes to show that one of the more effective ways to communicate is drama."

Through the dressing room door that is ajar, we hear a resounding, "Long live Tsar Boris."

Boris Godunov, Thursday through Saturday, April 12 to 14, Princeton University Theater and Dance Program, Berlind Theater, University Place. World premiere of Alexander Pushkin's 1825 historical drama. $15. 609-258-2787.

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Новости

В Принстоне восстановлена постановка Мейерхольда «Бориса Годунова»
11.04.2007 16:46

Принстонский университет — по архивным материалам — подготовил премьеру спектакля «Борис Годунов» в сценической версии Всеволода Мейерхольда с музыкой Сергея Прокофьева. Постановка планировалась в Москве в 1936 году, но так и не была завершена. Мейерхольд обдумывал постановку «Годунова» с конца 1910-х годов, а в 1924-1925-м начал репетировать спектакль в студии имени Вахтангова. В начале 1936 года режиссер заказал музыкальное оформление Сергею Прокофьеву, и композитор сочинил для спектакля 24 фрагмента. Театр Мейерхольда был закрыт в 1938 году, а сам режиссер арестован в 1939-м и расстрелян в 1940-м. Для принстонской постановки пушкинскую пьесу перевел Энтони Вуд, режиссером спектакля стал Тим Васен. Дирижировать оркестром будет Майкл Пратт. В спектакле заняты 15 актеров, десять танцоров, 24 хориста и 35 музыкантов, все они — студенты университета. К премьере приурочены большая выставка, посвященная Пушкину, Прокофьеву и Мейерхольду, и трехдневная научная конференция. Официальные премьеры в США пройдут 12, 13 и 14 апреля.

###
Tonight at Princeton University's Berlind Theater, a production of Alexander Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, with incidental music by Sergei Prokofiev, makes its debut some 71 years after it was created and abandoned before hitting the boards.

*Here's the story describing the production*, which pays particular attention to the notes for the original left by the martyred director Vsevolod Meyerhold, who was by scholarly consent one of the most important theater artists in 20th-century Russian history. Meyerhold was executed in 1940 during a wave of Stalinist repression, and Shostakovich, among others, mourned his loss.

Prokofiev's *Boris Godunov* music has been recorded (I found several discs containing it on the Web), but I don't recall ever hearing it. Simon Morrison, the Princeton professor who discovered Meyerhold's original notes, says Prokofiev's score was written when the composer was "at the top of his game."

I've only just listened for the first time to Prokofiev's two string quartets, having not gotten to them yet in all the years I've been listening to music. These quartets were written in the 1930s as well, and No. 1 in B minor, in particular, is marvelous. I'm going to have to seek out the *Boris* score to hear what I've been missing.

I'd also like to have the opportunity to see this Meyerhold-Prokofiev *Boris*, and perhaps someone will film it so interested wider audiences can take a look. The two Russians wanted to get away from the
Mussorgsky opera on this topic, not liking its score. I love it, but I'm interested in seeing and hearing another take on this story, too.

What will be most interesting is seeing the work of two powerful creative minds wrestling with a classic story at a time of huge cultural ferment. These artifacts tell us a lot about the society in which they were brought to life, and in this case, a lot about the government pressure that shut it down.

Stalin was a micromanager when it came to the arts, and I can't imagine having been able to concentrate well enough for creative work knowing he might disapprove, in which case anything could happen and often did.

Anyway, hats off to the team at Princeton for bringing this piece back to life. Although Prokofiev's music can live again at any time, it's much harder to recreate a theater director's wishes, so this production is nothing less than a lovely act of homage to an artist who fell afoul of a tyrant.

###
They are three of Russia's most towering cultural figures: the national poet Alexander Pushkin, the composer Sergei Prokofiev, and Vsevolod Meyerhold, the visionary theatrical director who was imprisoned and executed during Stalin's purges.

Now after a delay of 70 years, the fruit of their collective genius will be unveiled in a world premiere of a new version of Pushkin's verse masterpiece, Boris Godunov. But the performance will not take place on a Moscow or St Petersburg stage, but more than 4,000 miles away at Princeton University, in New Jersey.

The story of the lost Boris Godunov and how the work made its way from a long-closed Russian state archive to an Ivy League campus in America, begins in the mid-1930s, when Prokofiev and Meyerhold joined forces to produce their own version of the Pushkin classic - a bleak tale of tyranny, war, betrayal and murder based on the life of the 16th century regent and tsar.

The story of Godunov, and the "Time of Troubles" that his reign ushered in, has always been a touchy subject for Russia's rulers and their censors. Pushkin's original work, written in 1825, was not published until 1831 and not performed until 1866. A century later the work was as sensitive to the Communists as it had been to the tsars. Although Prokofiev had written 24 musical pieces - one for each of the play's scenes - and Meyerhold had started rehearsals, the project was shelved in 1937, by which time "Socialist Realism" had become the only permitted style.

Deeply suspicious of Meyerhold's avant garde techniques, the Soviet authorities closed his theatre a year later. The director's work was deemed "alien to the Soviet people". He was arrested, convicted on trumped up charges, and shot in prison in February 1940. Only in 1955 was his reputation rehabilitated, as Stalin's successors admitted the evils of the purges.

There the matter might have rested, but for Simon Morrison, an associate professor of music at Princeton who is writing a biography of Prokofiev.

Professor Morrison managed to gain access to a previously off-limits section of the official state archives of literature and art in Moscow. There he found the missing score, along with detailed instructions from Meyerhold on the type of music he wanted, as well as transcripts of the rehearsals.

"This is an original creation based on his ideas," Tim Vasen, who is directing the Princeton production, told The New York Times. "It's an amazing collaboration with someone who's not in the room."
The Prokofiev/Meyerhold Boris Godunov is very different from the version familiar to Western audiences - the rich, majestic opera composed by Modest Mussorgsky in the 1870s. But 19th century romanticism did not sit well with the grim mood of the 1930s, as Stalinism tightened its grip on Russia.

Mussorgsky’s score is redolent of the liturgies of the Orthodox Church, but Prokofiev ranged more widely for inspiration. He veers from the “dark agitated and menacing” score demanded by Meyerhold for the final scene when Boris is dead and a holy fool predicts the bloodshed and turmoil that lie ahead for the country, to almost carnivalesque music.

The production that opens tonight at Princeton's Berlind Theatre is remarkable by amateur standards, made possible only by the vast financial resources of one of America's most lavishly endowed universities. The four scheduled performances - all sold out - will cost $140,000 (£71,000), even though the 84 actors, singers, musicians and dancers are all undergraduates.

The set itself could not be more modern, consisting of little more than rows of floor to ceiling stretch cords anchored in grooves that run across the stage. They can be moulded into the shape of trees, used like bows and arrows in battle scenes, and even wrapped around the bodies of performers - reflecting the "biomechanics "method of acting pioneered by Meyerhold, where specific physical movements are used to express outward emotions.

**The story of 'Boris Godunov'**

Alexander Pushkin's play depicts the historical events following the death of Ivan the Terrible, during the period known in Russian history as the Time of Troubles.

When Ivan died in 1584, his idiot son Fyodor inherited the throne, so the powerful noble Boris Godunov was appointed as regent.

Already virtual ruler of Russia, Boris Godunov engineered the assassination of Dmitri, Fyodor's younger brother, to ensure his grip on power but the murder haunted him for the rest of his life.

With Russia in the throes of famine and poverty, a young defrocked monk posed as the murdered prince and marched on the Russian capital at the head of a Polish army to claim the throne.

Boris Godunov, stricken by the image of the slain boy, died before the pretender, known as the False Dmitri, arrived in Moscow.

###
В ПРИНСТОНЕ С УСПЕХОМ ПРОШЛА ПРЕМЬЕРА РЕКОНСТРУКЦИИ МЕЙЕРХОЛЬДОВСКОГО "БОРИСА ГОДУНОВА"

Накануне в Принстонском университете с огромным успехом прошла премьера реконструкции так и не поставленного Мейерхольдом «Бориса Годунова». Уникальные архивные документы, позволившие реализовать этот проект, были предоставлены Российским государственным архивом литературы и искусства (РГАЛИ). Все роли в спектакле исполняют студенты. В частности, в спектакле звучит музыка Прокофьева, написанная специально для этой постановки.

В зале университетского театра "Берлинд" яблоку было негде упасть. Критики пишут, что студенты играли бесподобно, трудно было проверить, что на сцене - непрофессиональная труппа.

Данная постановка является частью научного проекта "Годунов", осуществляемого рядом факультетов и центров Принстонского университета. В рамках проекта проходит также выставка "Борис Годунов": Пушкин, Прокофьев, Мейерхольд" и научный симпозиум "Пушкин, Прокофьев и русский театр, сообщает ИТАР-ТАСС.

###
One of the University's most ambitious theatrical collaborations came to fruition last night with the world premiere of Alexander Pushkin's 1825 play "Boris Godunov" at McCarter Theatre.

The play was brought to life in 1927 by acclaimed Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold and lost to the censorship of the Soviet era when Meyerhold was executed by Stalin in 1940. Though Meyerhold had started rehearsals for his vision of the production, it was never performed in its entirety and had seemingly vanished in the tumult of post-Communist Russia.

Vanished, that is, until music professor Simon Morrison found Meyerhold's long-lost notes in a sealed section of the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. While researching acclaimed Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev in 2005, Morrison said he stumbled across Meyerhold's "instructions for how this could be put together and made into a performance, and the function of the music in the performance."

Morrison and Slavic languages and literatures professor Caryl Emerson set to work as project managers, fusing Meyerhold's theatrical vision with a score composed for the play by Prokofiev.

After more than two years of intense research and creative planning, more than 500 members of the University community have come together to stage the play for the first time. Drawing from the Program in Theater and Dance, the music department, the University Orchestra and the Glee Club, the cast includes 15 actors, 34 singers and
"This has been such a great showcase for the talent in the undergraduate population," said director Tim Vasen, a theater and dance professor.

Many of the students who worked on the play are enrolled in courses about Godunov. Vasen and English professor Michael Cadden taught THR 329: The Boris Godunov Project. Emerson taught COM 335: Pushkin, Prokoviev, Meyerhold: Boris Godunov on the 20th-Century Stage and SLA 537: Boris Godunov.

The play tells the story of Czar Boris Godunov's autocratic rule of Russia from 1598 to 1605, until his nefarious rise to power is unmasked when Dmitry the Pretender claims his right to the throne as the son of former czar Ivan the Terrible.

The production was staged with an emphasis on the innovative frame of mind in which it was originally conceived, Emerson said. "[We've] tried to be modernists, in the spirit of Meyerhold, who was a modernist," she said. "We're trying to do what he would have done with all these resources he didn't have."

The set, which was created by graduate students in the architecture school, centered around a system of bungee-cord cables that were rearranged to create each of the different settings in the play's 25 scenes. The production has cost an estimated $140,000.

"The ideas for how to do the play were influenced by Meyerhold's sense of physicality and daring," said Cadden, who is the dramaturg for the play.

The expansive nature of the production provided an opportunity for performers to experiment outside their areas of expertise, Vasen said. Glee Club members appearing onstage near the end of the first act had to sing through thick fake beards, something to which they were not accustomed.

Several portions of Prokofiev's vocal arrangements do not include words, leading Glee Club director Richard Tang Yuk to "become part of the orchestral fabric ... to come up with certain vowel sounds to match the orchestra, there was some level of experimentation involved with that," he said.

Prokofiev's unfinished score was completed by emeritus music professor Peter Westergaard, whose additions created greater challenges for Tang Yuk.

"The project required people to do things that they've never done before," Vasen said. "Stirring things up and getting people off balance often allows things to come forward that have never been tried before."

To enrich the performance with the play's strong academic element, Emerson and Morrison have educated the performers with a specialized course combining theatrical, literary and historical components.
"I don't think it could have been done in the United States without such scholarly expertise," said Max Staller '08, who played Father Superior and Semyon Godunov in the performance. "[Emerson and Morrison] gave us all these little nuggets and from that we could create a piece of art that had never been done before."

Emerson and Morrison said the project aligns closely with the effort to enhance the University's creative and performing arts programs following the $101 million gift Peter Lewis '55 gave the University in January 2006. "It goes with Princeton's performing arts initiative, a sort of flagship project," Emerson said.

###
Vision helps 'Godunov' live up to its importance

By Naomi Nix
Princetonian Staff Writer

Two years ago, in a sealed section of Moscow's Archives for Literature and Art, music professor Simon Morrison found a handwritten score and stage notes for a 70-year-old theatrical production of Alexander Pushkin's "Boris Godunov."

Now, here at Morrison's home campus, those decades-old papers have come to compelling, if uneven, life.

With the original 1936 compositions by Sergei Prokofiev and stage notes from director Vsevolod Meyerhold, "Boris Godunov" combines the extraordinary talents of undergraduate students, faculty and graduate students in a historic performance. The artistic vision fueling this effort is commendable. Nevertheless, the depth of talent involved in the production's technical aspects occasionally overwhelms the actors' efforts.

The projection of an old, traditional red curtain at the start of the play was a unique way to bring the audience together in nostalgia, reminding it that this was a remarkable moment in theater history. This beginning — like most moments during the production — emphasized that this was not going to be a "safe" Princeton performance, and such risk taking deserves our applause.

The music in "Boris Godunov," which Meyerhold believed was essential to the play, is a highlight of the performance. The singers and instrumentalists were able to stir the audience's emotion in a way that no other element of the play could. My only complaint here is that the actors were sometimes overshadowed, this time by moments when their voices couldn't be heard over the music.

The actors themselves employed engaging movements and facial expressions.
Character development was still a work in progress, though; as I left the performance, I wondered whether some of the actors were simply playing themselves.

Other actors did manage to match the talent of the faculty and designers behind them. Roger Mason '08 — who, like every actor in the play, portrayed multiple characters — brought a dynamic personality to every role he played. As an old monk named Pimen, he turned potentially soporific monologues about Russia's rulers into some of the most captivating moments in the performance.

Meanwhile, Lily Cowles '09 brought seductive charm to each role she took on. A bar scene, during which Cowles played a runaway named Grishka Otrepiev who is being chased by the police, was a moment of comic genius.

Unlike many amateur performances, the lighting design in "Boris Godunov" refused simply to supplement the actors; rather, it made a statement of its own. At each scene change, a background was projected on the back wall, which helped orient viewers to the plot's progression. At the same time, however, the lighting often left the actors in the shadows. While this was clearly a conscious and artistic choice, it made for an uncomfortable audience experience, as onlookers struggled to see the play's central characters.

The set design featured mobile brown bungee cords, hung from the ceiling and attached to the stage. This was a creative choice, giving the actors flexibility to communicate their emotions and emphasize plot points. Sometimes, for example, the actors would snap the cords across the stage to heighten the dramatic tension.

But when the actors weren't using the cords, they became a distraction — the stage just looked busy. During the aforementioned bar scene, for example, a translation of a Russian song was projected onto the screen, but the bungee cords blocked the words, preventing onlookers from reading them and understanding the song.

If these obscuring elements of the production were a conscious choice, their artistic value was unclear. Still, other elements of the set — especially the background set that held the singers and instrumentalists — were fabulous, taking set design at Princeton to a new level and creating a breathtaking backdrop for the emotions playing out on stage.

Keep your tickets to this sold-out performance! Its historical significance and artistic vision are worth seeing, but don't expect an over-romanticized version of history.

Rating: 3.5 out of 5.

###
PRINCETON, N.J., April 12 — Sergei Prokofiev and Vsevolod Meyerhold, the Russian stage director, scorned Modest Mussorgsky’s music for his opera “Boris Godunov.” The opera was based on Aleksandr Pushkin’s play about Godunov, the 16th-century czar, and they hoped to present what they believed would be a more accurate representation of Pushkin’s vision with a 1936 staging featuring a new score by Prokofiev.
Musicians playing during a performance of Prokofiev’s version of “Boris Godunov” at Princeton University wore wigs evoking Pushkin’s era.

But they never got the chance. Meyerhold ran afoul of Stalin and (like Pushkin) was shot, and the fruits of the Meyerhold-Prokofiev collaboration languished in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow until recently. The work finally had its world premiere on Thursday here at the Roger S. Berlind Theater at Princeton University.

Mussorgsky’s music for “Boris Godunov,” or at least Rimsky Korsakov’s familiar and plush re-orchestration of the original, is as luxuriant as the golden domes of an Orthodox church. Like Pushkin before him, Mussorgsky had his own artistic battles with the censors, and the cuts and revisions he made to mollify them ended up mitigating the comic elements and adding a loftier tone to his opera.

Meyerhold and Prokofiev wanted to restore the lighter, comic aspects of Pushkin’s “Boris Godunov” that were lost in the stirring, emotive opera score, whose music is sometimes so guilt-laden that even a casual listener can start to feel penitent.

Prokofiev was adept at collaborating with directors, as demonstrated by his gripping soundtrack to Sergei Eisenstein’s “Alexander Nevsky.” But whereas that score stands alone as an orchestral work, the score to “Boris Godunov” is very much incidental music, which is what the composer and director intended it to be.

Twenty-five fragments of orchestral and vocal music (done well by members of the Princeton University Glee Club and Orchestra) are woven into the drama like carefully rationed accents, which befits
Meyerhold’s spare and modern production and emphasizes both the comic and weighty aspects of Pushkin’s play. There are long periods with no music; when it appears, it plays a supporting role to Pushkin’s lyrical text, performed here in a vital new translation by Antony Wood.

During wordless behind-the-scenes choruses at the beginning and end of the play, the singers repeat one-syllable vowels with increasing intensity to denote the stirring frustrations of the Russian people. Other scenes feature the widow Ksenia (Boris’s daughter) singing a simple, melancholy lament, and irreverent, drunken monks (who did not amuse Pushkin’s censors) singing liturgical music set to cheeky lyrics.

The composer Peter Westergaard, an emeritus professor of music at Princeton, wrote music for one scene Prokofiev did not complete: an effective paraphrase of Russian liturgical chant to heighten the drama while the young monk Grigory Otrepiev begins to lust after Godunov’s throne.

An amusing multicultural battle scene is boosted by a carnival-like brass band and fife and drum, resulting in a cacophony befitting the chaos onstage and in the audience, as the actors romp in the aisles. As in Mussorgsky’s opera, there is eerie music for a Holy Fool. A Hollywood-style amoroso is the lighthearted musical backdrop over which Grigory tries to woo the haughty Polish princess, Marina.

The Polish ball is one of the most visually striking scenes in the staging, which features floor-to-ceiling spaghettilike cords that encourage the actors (all Princeton undergraduates) to adopt fully Meyerhold’s intensely physical style of acting. Orchestra musicians in fanciful wigs are seated behind a multilayered red grid, against which the brightly colored round skirts of the dancers whirling to a Tchaikovsky-like waltz and a polonaise intersect like circles and lines in a Malevich painting.

While perhaps a new, essential Prokofiev work was not revealed with
this premiere, it unearthed a fascinating collaboration between important artists in a staging Pushkin would have doubtless enjoyed.

The final performances of “Boris Godunov” are today at the Roger S. Berlind Theater, 91 University Place, Princeton, N.J.; (609) 258-2787. Tickets are sold out.

###
16:28 11.04 "Борис Годунов": Пушкин, Прокофьев, Мейерхольд

В Принстонском университете воссоздана постановка драмы Пушкина «Борис Годунов» в редакции Мейерхольда с музыкой Прокофьева. На сцене театра «Берлинд» в Принстоне (штат Нью-Джерси) уже прошла генеральная репетиция, а сама долгожданная премьера состоится в четверг. Всего будет дано четыре представления, билеты на которые давно распроданы. Все роли в «Борисе Годунове» играют студенты, а декорации создали старшекурсники факультета архитектуры.

«Мейерхольду не удалось поставить этот спектакль, он расстался с ним на стадии репетиций в 1937 году, – рассказал один из руководителей проекта, профессор музыки Саймон Моррисон. – Мы изучили сделанные им в ходе репетиций записи, постарались понять его эстетику и реконструировать его замысел, хотя сделать это точно так, как сделал бы он, невозможно. Но мы постарались проникнуться духом Мейерхольда».

По словам Моррисона, зрители впервые увидят спектакль, состоящий из двадцати пяти сцен, как это было в исходном варианте драмы Пушкина 1825 года, не подвергшемся цензуре. Уникальные архивные документы, позволившие осуществить нынешний проект, предоставлены Российским государственным архивом литературы и искусства России.

Как пояснила в интервью руководитель факультета славянских языков и литературы Кэрри Эмерсон, в данном случае не идет речи о постановке спектакля в новой редакции или о восстановлении старой, поскольку «Борис Годунов» так и не был поставлен Мейерхольдом. «Мы восстанавливаем только концепцию Мейерхольда, – подчеркнула она. – Поскольку мы не знаем, чего хотел добиться Мейерхольд, то мы взяли на себя смелость представить, что сделал бы Мейерхольд, если бы дожил до 2007 года».

Постановка является частью научного проекта «Годунов», осуществляемого рядом факультетов и центров Принстонского университета. В его рамках проходит также выставка «"Борис Годунов": Пушкин, Прокофьев, Мейерхольд», которая продлится до сентября, и симпозиум «Пушкин, Прокофьев и русский театр». Эта же тема доминирует этой весной и в учебной программе нескольких факультетов.
Принстон вернул спектакль Прокофьева и Мейерхольда на сцену

Принстонский университет подготовил премьеру спектакля "Борис Годунов" по пьесе Александра Пушкина в сценической версии Всеволода Мейерхольда и с музыкой Сергея Прокофьева. Постановка должна была быть показана в СССР в 1936 году, но так и не была завершена. Официальные премьеры в США пройдут 12, 13 и 14 апреля 2007 года, а за последними прогонами наблюдал корреспондент газеты The New York Times.

Мейерхольд обдумывал постановку "Бориса" с конца 1910-х годов, а в 1924-1925-ом даже начал репетировать спектакль в студии имени Вахтангова, но проект не был завершен. В 1937 году в СССР предполагалось широко отмечать столетие со дня гибели поэта, и Мейерхольд планировал воспользоваться этой возможностью для реализации своего плана. В начале 1936 года режиссер заказал музыкальное оформление будущего спектакля Сергею Прокофьеву, и композитор сочинил 24 фрагмента для "Годунова". В Российском государственном архиве литературы и искусства сохранились подробные пояснения, написанные режиссером для композитора применительно к каждому эпизоду. Мейерхольд подробно описал задачи хора и оркестра, и Прокофьев написал партитуру, соответствующую указаниям постановщика. Но спектакль так и не удалось поставить, театр Мейерхольда был закрыт в 1938 году, а сам режиссер арестован в 1939-м и расстрелян в 1940-м.

Для принстонской постановки "Бориса Годунова" заново перевел Энтони Вуд, режиссером спектакля стал Тим Васен. Дирижировать оркестром будет Майкл Пратт. В спектакле заняты 15 актеров, десять танцоров, 24 хориста и 35 музыкантов, все они - студенты университета. К премьере приурочены большая выставка, посвященная Пушкину,
Прокофьеву и Мейерхольду, и трехдневная научная конференция.

###
Princeton University's "Boris Godunov," an intelligent student production of the Pushkin play with minor music by Prokofiev.

PRINCETON - Academia is the best home for the impossible. Such was the task at hand for the provocative, extravagant Princeton University-produced Boris Godunov - not the famous opera, but the Alexander Pushkin play as it might have been rendered by legendary director Vsevolod Meyerhold with music by Sergei Prokofiev.

The project was being rehearsed and the composer completed 55 minutes of music in 1936 - the year Joseph Stalin squashed Shostakovich's hit opera, Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, in a single stroke. Meyerhold canceled his project, whose Macbeth-like parable of changing dictators would have proved a magnet for trouble.

It lay dormant until Thursday at the Berlind Theatre here (and closed Saturday), in a pungent, streamlined translation by Antony Wood and an intelligent student production directed by Tim Vasen with Prokofiev's music, Meyerhold's notes, and good instincts about how this kind of theater operated. With 36 characters, and a vocal ensemble, chamber orchestra and dancers needed to do it right, the chances of a U.S. professional production are slim.

Entertainment isn't on the agenda here, which means the production offers you as much as the foreknowledge you bring to it. My longtime fascination with epic theater yielded valuable associations I'll digest for months: Among many things, Meyerhold fathered the iconic poses of director Robert Wilson as well as the makeshift poetic suggestion exemplified by Théâtre de Complicité.

Designs supervised by Jesse Reiser are spare and nonrepresentational, using atmospheric scrims and slide projections plus dozens of vertically hung bungee cords that are rigid enough to maintain clean visual lines but are effectively reconfigured to suggest sumptuous curtains in one scene, a birch forest in another.

Rightly, the acting was stylized. In Meyerhold's theater, characterizations evolve from an emblematic physical gesture, similar to early Soviet poster art, though only Sam Zetumer (as the scheming Shuisky) made that work.

It was a long three hours, and the production's revelations were balanced by inadequacies. But the Act II encounter between Dmitri the Pretender and the Polish noblewoman Maryna (portrayed with steely originality by Lily Cowles) was worth the trip: Cards are played, laid on the table, then played again with varying levels of domination, submission, false candor and empty bravado.

And the music? It's minor Prokofiev, but unlike anything in his output. From the pared-down a cappella songs to full-orchestra dance interludes, his harmonic fingerprints are clear, the score's closest cousin being Lieutenant Kijé minus the fun. The story's seamlessness was conveyed with melodies that don't soar and accents that are particularly off kilter. A small but serious effort, then, without which one's view of Prokofiev isn't quite complete.
Contact music critic David Patrick Stearns at dstearns@phillynews.com. Read his recent work at http://go.philly.com/

###
Though it was written nearly two centuries ago, Alexander Pushkin's play *Boris Godunov* only recently saw the stage, when actors at Princeton University's Berlind Theater stepped up to the task. Whisking the set from 17th-century Russia directly into the present day, Reiser + Umemoto, RUR Architecture of New York created an interdisciplinary setting that interpreted the notes of 20th-century Russian theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold and various other source materials.

Meyerhold's transcripts calls for highly energetic acting with certain scenes overlapping, and the décor in constant motion. Barriers between auditorium and stage were to be eliminated, drawing the audience into the action. Faces would peek out from holes punched out of the walls and indecipherable chatter would be heard from the wings.

To that end, RUR principal Jesse Reiser, who also teaches at Princeton, took Meyerhod's concept of the machine as object and symbol and rendered the entire stage a machine-like "vibratory mechanism." Using hundreds of feet of surgical tubing, the design team created a tension field held in place like the strings of a harp, but flexible enough that to be "infinitely modifiable by the actors," and becoming, in turn, the palace in the Kremlin, a tavern on the Polish border, the forest, a battle ground, and more. "A spatial ether somewhere between solid and void," the staging elements were solid enough that images could be projected upon them, but permeable enough to accommodate the actors' movements.

Reiser worked with students at Princeton to design and build the set, including assistant set designer Mitsuhisa Matsunaga and several graduate students at the School of Architecture. The production was a collaboration between Princeton and the Glinka Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow.

RUR is known for its specialty in large-scale, infrastructural urban developments. The firm developed a proposal for the East River front of Manhattan and was one of six teams selected to design for the
World Trade Center design competition. Currently, RUR is getting ready to break ground on the Alishan Tourist Infrastructure project in Taiwan. In Dubai, RUR has kicked off 0-14, a 22-story office tower.
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
COVERAGE
Articles/Releases
A version of the classic Russian play "Boris Godunov" that was unrealized in the era of Soviet censorship some 70 years ago will have its world premiere at Princeton University in four performances April 12-14 at the Berlind Theatre.

In a wide-ranging collaboration, Princeton scholars and students are working to restore a version of Alexander Pushkin's 1825 historical drama that had been crafted by innovative director Vsevolod Meyerhold, with a score by famed composer Sergei Prokofiev. Meyerhold's vision for the politically charged production was abandoned in the late 1930s in the threatening climate of Joseph Stalin's regime.

The "Godunov" project is managed by Simon Morrison, an associate professor of music who has tracked down lost scores and choreographies by Prokofiev and other artists, and Caryl Emerson, chair of the Slavic languages and literatures department and a leading authority on Pushkin's play. The production will feature student actors, singers and musicians as well as a student-designed set, and is directed by Tim Vasen, a lecturer in the Program in Theater and Dance and former resident director of Baltimore's CENTERSTAGE theater company. The project also involves several academic initiatives related to the production.

"Tackling this play in 2007, Princeton has advantages undreamt of by Meyerhold in 1936," Emerson said. "Lighting, film projections, special musical and stage effects are the technological advances, but we also have a half-century's worth of experience in contemporary theater adaptation. Since Meyerhold only rehearsed intensively a handful of the play's 25 scenes, leaving copious notes for others, we are daring to speculate on his concept of the production."

The production is a collaboration between the University and the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. It involves contributions from numerous departments and groups at Princeton, including the University Center for the Creative and Performing Arts, Department of Music, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, School of Architecture, University Orchestra and University Chamber Choir. The project represents a major step in Princeton's efforts to enhance the role of the creative and performing arts on campus.

"The University Center for the Creative and Performing Arts is the major sponsor of the production of 'Boris Godunov.' This is just the kind of project which we plan to underwrite in the future," said Paul Muldoon, director of the center, which was established last year. "Its collaborative aspect is one about which we're particularly enthusiastic."

Pushkin's play dramatizes Godunov's rise to power in late 16th-century Russia, his increasingly tyrannical reign as czar from 1598 to 1605 and the challenge to his throne by Dmitry the Pretender, who claimed to be a son of Ivan the Terrible. Godunov's death in 1605 launched the country into the "Time of Troubles," the interregnum and civil war between Russia's two imperial dynasties. For political as well as dramatic reasons, Pushkin's play was approved for performance only in 1866 and then adapted into an opera by composer Modest Musorgsky between 1869 and 1874.

Meyerhold, whose experimental productions made him a seminal figure in modern theater, twice attempted to stage "Godunov," first in 1924-25 and then in 1936. Prokofiev composed choral and orchestral music for the later production, which was intended to honor the centennial of Pushkin's death. The politics of Stalinist Russia, however, prevented Meyerhold from realizing his vision. He was arrested on charges of treason in 1939 and shot a year later. Prokofiev's score has never been used for a live performance of Pushkin's play, nor has the full text of the play ever received a first-class staging in English.

"I'm hoping the production ends up feeling connected to what Meyerhold was trying to do in the Soviet
period and what Pushkin was trying to do in the 1820s -- a new way to look at a history play, something that is very physically dynamic and unexpected and involves a lot of different points of view," Vasen said.

Emerson added, "Although a gifted operatic director, Meyerhold very much wished to liberate Pushkin's play from the heavy, oily sounds of Musorgsky's opera, and of the operatic focus on guilt and punishment. There is plenty of guilt and fate in Pushkin's play, but it is balanced by fast movement, personal initiative, battles where no one knows who wins, dances, prophetic dreams and a lot of comedy and wit."

Morrison noted that recordings of Prokofiev's score for the production "have either been incomplete or inaccurate. The published score is likewise inaccurate, which meant that, for this staging, we have had to work with the archival manuscript." Princeton composer Peter Westergaard is providing the music for a scene that Prokofiev did not complete.

"'Boris Godunov' is one of Prokofiev's most beguiling scores," Morrison said. "The music is terribly lonely, which might seem like a paradoxical thing to say about singers and instrumentalists working together, except that Prokofiev does all that he can to create a sense of empty, reverberant spaces -- the long, dark tunnel of Russian history. The score includes songs of lonely wanderers and earthy, text-less choruses, which frame resplendent dances for the middle scenes of the drama. Prokofiev offers us the musical equivalent of grainy black and white shifting to dazzling color and back again."

In addition to the production, the "Godunov" project includes: an April 12-14 international symposium on Pushkin, Prokofiev and Russian theater; an exhibition devoted to the project, opening April 1 in Firestone Library; and spring courses for undergraduates, graduate students and alumni focusing on aspects of the production. The set design for the play was generated by graduate students in an architecture seminar last fall.

Performances are scheduled for 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, April 12-14, at the Berlind Theatre, with a 2 p.m. matinee performance April 14. Tickets can be purchased by visiting the McCarter Theatre Center box office, calling (609) 258-ARTS or visiting the McCarter website at http://www.mccarter.org.

Members of the press interested in attending the production should e-mail the University's Office of Communications at commpro@princeton.edu by noon Thursday, March 29.

More information about the "Godunov" project can be found on its website at http://silvertone.princeton.edu/boris/.

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###
Creative connections: 'Godunov' project driven by scholarly, artistic collaborations

by Eric Quiñones · Posted March 5, 2007; 11:49 a.m.

From the March 5, 2007, Princeton Weekly Bulletin

Honoring a legendary Russian director's unfulfilled vision for a classic tale of power and intrigue, an army of Princeton scholars and artists is working this semester to mount a world premiere production of "Boris Godunov."

Bringing this new interpretation of the famed Russian play to the stage is a creative team with dozens of members from numerous disciplines, including faculty experts in Russian music and literature, seasoned music, theater and dance professionals, and student actors, singers, dancers, musicians and architects. The production is accompanied by several academic initiatives, including courses, an international symposium and a Firestone Library exhibition (see "By the numbers").

The Princeton premiere, which runs April 12-14 at the Berlind Theatre, is inspired by a version of Alexander Pushkin's 1825 historical play that was conceived by director Vsevolod Meyerhold but abandoned in the 1930s. Though Pushkin's play about the Russian tyrant is one of his most famous works, the full text of "Godunov" never has received a first-class staging in English. The Princeton production also will feature a new translation by Antony Wood as well as an original score by composer Sergei Prokofiev that was commissioned by Meyerhold but never has been used for a live performance of "Godunov."

The project exemplifies Princeton's mission to enhance the role of the creative and performing arts on campus, which resulted last year in the establishment of the University Center for the Creative and Performing Arts. The center is the major sponsor of the production, along with several departments and offices across campus.

Tim Vasen, a lecturer in the Program in Theater and Dance who is directing "Godunov," said the scholarly and artistic collaborations are "unprecedented and completely extraordinary."

"I really don't think this kind of thing could happen anywhere but at a university like Princeton. At least in this country, there is no theater company that has these resources to offer," Vasen said. "Back when Meyerhold was creating the original idea for this production, most theaters would have had their own orchestra and a large company of actors and dancers — that was normal, but now would be almost an absurd luxury.

"For me, it's absolutely thrilling," he added. "I love collaboration, and I love learning about new areas of the world every time I do a play. This is a quantum leap in that regard, so I'm having a fantastic time."
A multifaceted effort

The "Godunov" project is managed by Simon Morrison, an associate professor of music who has tracked down lost scores and choreographies by Prokofiev and other artists, and Caryl Emerson, chair of the Slavic languages and literatures department and a leading authority on Pushkin's play (see "From dissertations to collaborations"). It is a collaboration between the University and the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art.

The play is accompanied by several initiatives in this multifaceted project. In addition to their rehearsals six times a week, student cast members are participating in a course led by Vasen and Michael Cadden, director of the Program in Theater and Dance. Emerson is teaching two courses — one for undergraduates and one for graduate students — on Pushkin, Meyerhold and Prokofiev. She and Morrison also are leading an alumni studies course focused on the production. A Firestone Library exhibition devoted to the project will open April 1. An international symposium on Pushkin, Prokofiev and Russian theater is slated for April 12-14 to coincide with the premiere.

"This is something that no members of the cast have ever experienced," said freshman Nadia Talel.

"It's a different type of theater, it's a play in which many of us get to play different genders and different roles, and it's something the University has been working on for a long time. One of the best things about this production is it's so interdepartmental," said Talel, whose roles will include the patriarch (who encourages Godunov's ascension to the Russian throne), a lady at a party, an old woman and a Polish gentleman named Sobanski.

"Professor Emerson comes every Friday to our seminar and gives us a lot of history and background," she added. "This is a culture and time period with which many of us are unfamiliar, and we get a lot of different perspectives from the people working on it."

Pushkin's play dramatizes Godunov's rise to power, his increasingly tyrannical reign as czar from 1598 to 1605 and the challenge to his throne by Dmitry the Pretender, who claimed to be a son of Ivan the Terrible. For political as well as dramatic reasons, Pushkin's play was not approved for performance until 1866 and then was adapted into an opera by composer Modest Musorgsky between 1869 and 1874.

Meyerhold, who became a seminal figure in modern theater through his innovative productions, attempted to stage "Godunov" in 1924-25 and in 1936 but abandoned his efforts in the face of Stalinist Soviet politics. He was arrested on fabricated charges of treason in 1939 and shot a year later.

Prokofiev's score was written for Meyerhold's production in 1936, when the composer "was in top form," according to Morrison. The University Orchestra, which will perform in the April production under the direction of Michael Pratt, presented the North American premiere of this score in concert in December as a preview.

"The music needs the play," Morrison said. "Prokofiev intended it as an acoustic lining and filter for Pushkin's spoken words."
Student singers from the University Glee Club, conducted by Richard Tang Yuk, will serve as the choir for the Princeton production. "The 'above and beyond the call of duty' involvement of the two conductors, Michael Pratt and Richard Tang Yuk, is crucial to this project, which comprises a true synthesis of the musical with the verbal and visual," Morrison said. "Coordination and timing are everything."

Emerson said the Princeton project benefits from the interdisciplinary partnerships and the experience of previous theatrical adaptations at the University, as well as technological advances since Pushkin wrote the play and Meyerhold planned his production a century later. Both the playwright and director also knew that their visions for the politically charged production could not be realized in their times.

"Pushkin's play features monks — and drunken monks at that — as well as the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Pushkin knew that the imperial censorship did not permit the portrayal of ecclesiastics on stage. He dreamed of a kind of production that technically and physically and politically couldn't have happened in his time," Emerson said. "I think Pushkin would have adored the Princeton production."

While they are working from Meyerhold's extensive notes on his concept of the production, the members of Princeton's creative team have more flexibility in exploring the historical period that led to Russia's "Time of Troubles," Emerson noted.

"The Russian audience for whom Meyerhold directed knew Pushkin by heart, so it was impossible to leave something out. Indeed, omitting lines and scenes would actually draw attention to them, since Pushkin's words are part of the inner soundscape of Russian speakers," she said. "Americans in 2007 do not carry around that equipment. These risks are marvelous ones to confront — the actors, set designers, musicians and producers really are free."

'Intellectual firepower'

Vasen said both Emerson and Morrison have been essential in "helping me to understand the artistic impulses behind the writing, the music and the direction. It is a production deeply rooted both in historical Russia and the Russia of the 1930s. I knew very little about that, and they have been fantastic guides in helping me to understand where this play came from and where the music came from and how it all goes together.

"Caryl brings history to life like nobody I've ever worked with. Everything in the play is based on detailed historical research Pushkin did. There is a back story to every character, even somebody who appears in the play for two lines, and Caryl knows that back story. That is incredibly helpful because even though the audience is not necessarily going to be able to get all of that, it will make the experience that much richer for the student actors and for all of us," he said.

Cadden, who is serving as the production's dramaturg, added, "We wanted to take advantage of the intellectual firepower we have here at Princeton. We feel fortunate to be the beneficiary of their lives' work as scholars."

These creative collaborations suffuse every aspect of the production. Because existing recordings are either incomplete or inaccurate, the Princeton team is working with the archival manuscript of
Prokofiev's score. For one scene that Prokofiev did not complete, Princeton composer Peter Westergaard is providing new music. Westergaard, an emeritus professor of music, is paraphrasing authentic Russian liturgical chants to create a supernatural musical backdrop for a crucial dreamlike scene, in which the young monk Grigory Otrepiev begins his transformation into Dmitry the Pretender to challenge Godunov for Russia's throne.

Vasen said, "I'm working with a great living composer, a great composer from 100 years ago, a great writer from 200 years ago and amazing history from 400 years ago."

For the production's main dance scene, students will perform two traditional Polish pieces: a polonaise, which is a stately, procession-like dance; and a mazurka, which is a lively folk dance. Choreographer Rebecca Lazier, associate head of dance, said she is excited about trying to infuse these traditional dances with a more modern flair.

"Tim's vision for the production is really wanting to find ways to do it for today, for this audience and this time," Lazier said.

Lazier said that, similar to the 2005 Princeton production of the lost Russian ballet "Pas d'Acier," the "Godunov" project "is a true immersion into another world. That's part of the gift of it — to be able to take the time to submerge myself in the history, in the literature, in the ideas, in all the layers that go into the production. One of the challenges about this production, as it is the world premiere, is how to invigorate the aesthetic with a sense of contemporary life."

"The process will very much be with the dancers," she said. "There are prescribed steps of how a polonaise and a mazurka are defined. So it will be about taking that prescription, taking those ideas and playing with them for hours to find variations and new versions. Can I find a new version that is a lift, a jump or a turn? That's how I imagine bringing my own contemporary aesthetic to this work."

In outfitting the "Godunov" cast, Catherine Cann, costume shop manager in theater and dance, also is working to balance Meyerhold's vision with the need to appeal to a modern audience. She has consulted with Vasen, Emerson and Morrison to better understand the history of the play and Meyerhold's artistic inspiration.

"There are many different worlds in the play, and the idea is to help the audience understand why those worlds are important and how they relate to each other — especially in this case, because we're trying to do this through the eyes of Meyerhold and to bring a new perspective to historical events," Cann said. "That does come across in clothes — in how much fabric people wear or what colors they're wearing."

Cann also studied the costumes from Musorgsky's operatic version of "Godunov," which Meyerhold disliked, to determine "what bothered him about it and why he thought it was so vile."

Cann said, "In the opera, the costumes are re-enacting history to visualize the events as accurately as humanly possible. In the Pushkin play, and in our production, we are using costumes to depict character and stature so that our contemporary audience will understand the history." Emerson added that this concept "is perfect for a play about a pretender to the throne in a culture that believed in external 'signs' for everything."
Because each cast member plays several parts — some 50 costumes will have to be made — Cann is designing a "worker-like" base costume for each actor, from which they can quickly transform into aristocrats, monks, military figures, peasants or other characters. "We're actually making more costumes than we have for other theater productions, partly because of their stylized nature," she said.

The play's action — 25 scenes, each in a different location — will take place on a set designed by students as part of a graduate seminar last fall led by Jesse Reiser, an associate professor of architecture, in partnership with Vasen. Five of the seminar's 15 students are working this spring to help build the unusual set, which features some 150 pieces of surgical tubing that run vertically throughout the stage, attached to tracks in the floor. The tubes can be pulled together or apart, and actors can climb them as well.

"The set creates the most flexible, dynamic environment we could imagine for this play," Vasen said. "It's a jungle gym, with all the playfulness that implies. I think it'll also be better able to tell the story than a more realistic set — one with walls and doors that look like Russia. Even if we'd wanted to go that route, there are way too many locations to illustrate. We'll be able to project supertitles and images that will give the very concrete sense of place our audience will need to know what's going on, while staying true to Meyerhold's insights about the power of abstraction and theatricality."

Vasen said the set, like so many elements of the production, was "the result of a bunch of different people bringing ideas to the table and synthesizing them down to a few really simple, really dynamic things."

"It was kind of scary in some ways because there was a long period of time that we didn't even know if there was going to be a set because they couldn't put it all together," Vasen said. "But it does what I wanted it to do, which requires a very physical production."

Tickets can be purchased by visiting the McCarter Theatre Center box office, calling (609) 258-ARTS or visiting the McCarter website. For more information, visit the "Godunov" project website.

###
Exhibition showcases 'Godunov' production

by Cass Cliatt · Posted March 21, 2007; 12:25 p.m.

An aged woodcut map showing the boundaries of 16th-century Russia will be featured alongside innovative stage models and lavish costume designs in a special exhibition opening Sunday, April 1, to document Princeton's efforts to mount a world-premiere production of "Boris Godunov."

The exhibition will open in the Milberg Gallery of Firestone Library on campus in advance of the production of Alexander Pushkin's play about the Russian tsar Godunov, which will premiere April 12 at the Berlind Theatre. Managed by Associate Professor of Music Simon Morrison and Chair of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures Caryl Emerson, the "Godunov" project is a multifaceted effort that includes the stage performance, musical composition, orchestral accompaniment and a scholarly symposium, in addition to the library exhibition.

The exhibition will serve a dual purpose, according to curator Paula Matthews, the University's music librarian. It places the tale of Boris Godunov in the historical context of efforts to publish Pushkin's 19th-century play, while also documenting the Princeton production taking shape today.

"My hope is that the exhibition reflects the energy of the production and the historical context of the Princeton 'Godunov,'" Matthews said. "Alongside the background of the abandoned effort by director Vsevolod Meyerhold and composer Sergei Prokofiev to mount their 'Godunov' in 1937, we also show the enthusiasm and creative artistry that our faculty, students and staff are contributing to put their own mark on this production."

Meyerhold abandoned his efforts to stage "Godunov" in the face of Stalinist Soviet politics. He was arrested on fabricated charges of treason in 1939 and shot a year later.

The library exhibition will feature a 1578 German wood-cut map of pre-Godunov Russia, volumes representing the history of efforts to publish "Godunov," a page from a facsimile of the play's musical score commissioned from Prokofiev, and photographs illustrating the theatrical career of Meyerhold, whose unrealized version of Pushkin's play inspired Princeton's production.

Documentation of the University's efforts will include an architectural model of the set designed by Princeton architecture students, sketches of the costume designs, a historical costume, and photographs of the many participants coming together in design meetings and rehearsals. The "Godunov" project is distinguished by the multidisciplinary nature of the production, which includes faculty experts in Russian music and literature, professionals in music, theater and dance, and student performers and architects.

Project managers Morrison and Emerson said the exhibition is critical to developing a full understanding of the "Godunov" project.

"The exhibit is integral to the production, documenting the realization of the Meyerhold-inspired décor by the School of Architecture while also providing crucial background information about a play that is both steeped in Russian history and a part of that history," Morrison said. "Russians know the infamous tale of Tsar Boris Godunov and the Pretender to the throne by heart. This exhibit shows why that lonely, bleak tale has the capacity to haunt all of our dreams."

Ticket-holders for the April 12-14 performances will find in the exhibition much of what they need to know about the symbolism of the play, its history through the 19th century, and Meyerhold's "tragically unrealized staging" in 1937, Morrison said.

"To bring to life this unrealized collaboration of three masters in another country, culture and language is a huge challenge -- and the appropriate literacy cannot all happen on opening night," Emerson
added. “The exhibition is like an exquisite preparatory course that can be savored on one's own time, as often as one likes, as a set of precious stills to accompany the dynamism of the production itself. Russians of the 20th century carried this all around as part of their birthright. We have to work at it.”

Items for the exhibition were drawn from materials in various collections of the Princeton University Library: rare books, manuscripts, historic maps, graphic arts, Cotsen Children's Library, Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, and the Mendel Music Library.

"With the participation of such varied special collections, we hope to emphasize the University library's support of scholarly and creative projects across campus," Matthews said.

The "Boris Godunov" exhibition will open with a lecture at 3 p.m. Sunday, April 1, in 101 McCormick Hall by Morrison and Emerson. The lecture is titled "Boris Godunov: Background of a Princeton World Premiere."

Tours of the exhibition have been scheduled to coincide with select performances of the Godunov production and a one-day scholarly symposium Friday, April 13, that will explore issues of Russian theater, history and translation. The tours will be held at: 6 p.m. Thursday, April 12; 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, April 14-15; 2 p.m. Saturday, June 2; and 11 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 2. The exhibition will be on view through Sept. 4. The Milberg Gallery's hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, except Wednesday, when the gallery is open until 8 p.m., and noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

For more information, visit the "Boris Godunov" project website.
Events accompany 'Godunov,' April 12-14

by Staff · Posted April 4, 2007; 03:28 p.m.

Scholars of Russian history, literature, theater and music will convene Thursday through Saturday, April 12-14, for a series of scholarly events accompanying Princeton's production of "Boris Godunov," the famed Russian play by Alexander Pushkin.

The "Godunov" production, which runs April 12-14 in the Berlind Theatre, is the culmination of a multifaceted project that has involved Princeton scholars, students, artists and theater professionals from across campus. Directed by Tim Vasen, the production is inspired by Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold's unrealized version of Pushkin's historical play and will feature a score by Sergei Prokofiev that was commissioned by Meyerhold but never used for a live performance of the play. The "Godunov" project is managed by Caryl Emerson, chair of the Slavic languages and literatures department, and Simon Morrison, associate professor of music.

The scholarly events, which are open to the public, begin with a keynote address on "Meyerhold and His World (1929-1940)" by independent scholar Leonid Maximenkov at 4:30 p.m. April 12 in 101 McCormick Hall.

From 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. April 13, an international symposium will be held in McAlpin Auditorium, Woolworth Center of Musical Studies. Topics will include Russian modernist theater and set design, the challenge of translating a play such as "Godunov" into English for a contemporary audience, and Prokofiev's incidental music for stage and film.

The symposium will include three panels, featuring Vasen with specialists on Meyerhold's theater and the arts of the Stalin era, "Godunov" translator Antony Wood with other experts on Pushkin's drama, and leading Prokofiev scholars from the United States and abroad. Texas A&M University historian Chester Dunning will deliver a lecture titled "The Pretender Dmitrii in History and the Use of History in Pushkin's 'Comedy.'"

From 9 a.m. to noon April 14, a series of scholarly talks on topics related to Meyerhold and Prokofiev -- conducted only in Russian -- will be held in the Graduate Seminar Room of the Mendel Music Library, Woolworth Center.

Tickets for the "Godunov" production have sold out. If seats become available through last-minute cancellations, they can be purchased at the McCarter Theatre Center box office prior to show times, which are 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday with a 2 p.m. matinee Saturday.

For more information on the events and the "Godunov" project, visit silvertone.princeton.edu/boris/.

###
After months of inspired collaborations between Princeton scholars, students and artists, the curtain will rise on the University's world premiere production of "Boris Godunov" Thursday through Saturday, April 12-14, at the Berlind Theatre.

The sold-out performances are the culmination of a vast creative endeavor that has spanned the entire academic year and numerous departments across the University. The effort to bring new life to Alexander Pushkin's classic play features a cast of student actors in multiple roles as well as performances by the University Glee Club, University Orchestra and student dancers -- all on a flexible, dynamic set designed by graduate students in the School of Architecture. The project also includes a Firestone Library exhibition and several academic initiatives.
Directed by Tim Vasen, a lecturer in the Program in Theater and Dance, the Princeton production is inspired by Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold’s unrealized version of Pushkin’s historical play. Meyerhold, one of modern theater's most innovative and influential figures, abandoned his “Godunov” production 70 years ago in the face of Stalinist Soviet politics. The Princeton performance will feature a score by famed composer Sergei Prokofiev that was commissioned by Meyerhold but never used for a live performance of the play.

The play dramatizes Godunov’s rise to power, his increasingly tyrannical reign as czar from 1598 to 1605 and the challenge to his throne by Dmitry the Pretender, who claimed to be a son of Ivan the Terrible.

The “Godunov” project is managed by Caryl Emerson, chair of the Slavic languages and literatures department, and Simon Morrison, associate professor of music. It is sponsored by the University Center for the Creative and Performing Arts, along with several departments and offices across campus.

As an accompaniment to the production, scholars of Russian history, literature, theater and music will convene on campus for a series of scholarly events that are open to the public. They begin with a keynote address on "Meyerhold and His World (1929-1940)" by independent scholar Leonid Maximenkov at 4:30 p.m. April 12 in 101 McCormick Hall.

From 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. April 13, an international symposium will be held in McAlpin Auditorium, Woolworth Center of Musical Studies. Topics will include Russian modernist theater and set design, the challenge of translating a play like "Godunov" into English for a contemporary audience, and Prokofiev's incidental music for stage and film. The following day, a series of scholarly talks on topics related to Meyerhold and Prokofiev -- conducted only in Russian -- will be held from 9 a.m. to noon in the Graduate Seminar Room of the Mendel Music Library, Woolworth Center.

If seats for the sold-out performances become available through last-minute cancellations, they can be purchased at the McCarter Theatre Center box office prior to show times, which are 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday with a 2 p.m. matinee Saturday.
For more information on the symposium and the "Godunov" project, visit the [project website](#).

Freshman Adam Zivkovic portrays Dmitry the Pretender, the challenger to the Russian throne, in the world premiere production of "Boris Godunov." Princeton scholars, students and artists have worked for months to stage Alexander Pushkin's historical play about the Russian czar. Directed by Tim Vasen, the Princeton production is inspired by a version abandoned by Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold in the era of Stalinist censorship 70 years ago. The sold-out performances run April 12-14 in the Berlind Theatre.

**Above left:** Senior Andy Brown (center, in white) plays Boris Godunov, the tyrannical czar who ruled Russia from 1598 to 1605.
For the production’s main dance scene, students will perform two traditional Polish pieces: a polonaise, which is a stately, procession-like dance, and a mazurka, which is a lively folk dance.

**Above left:** An English translation is projected on the stage as members of the University Glee Club perform a Russian chant.

The production features a colorful array of costumes for the student actors, who play multiple parts. Brown is shown here as Godunov in his ornate robe after becoming czar.

**Above left:** The dynamic "Godunov" set, designed by Princeton architecture students, features rows of tubing that run vertically throughout the stage, allowing the actors to pull them together or apart and even climb them. Here sophomore Sam Zetumer (center) is the crafty Prince Shuisky, who conspires
Sophomore Lily Cowles, as the prophetic Holy Fool, accuses Godunov of being unworthy of the throne.

**Above left:** Freshman Becca Foresman plays an evil monk.

**Below left:** Members of the University Orchestra perform the score by Sergei Prokofiev, which was commissioned for the ill-fated 1936 production and has never been used for a live performance of the play.

*Photos: Denise Applewhite*

Scenes from the rehearsals and comments by participants in the "Boris Godunov" staging have been assembled into a short video presentation.

The [program for the production](#) is available in PDF format.

###
Conductor Michael Pratt:

One and two and...

[Music plays]

Introduction: Honoring a legendary Russian director's unfulfilled vision for a classic tale of power and intrigue, an army of Princeton scholars and artists is collaborating on a world premiere production of "Boris Godunov."

Production Co-manager Caryl Emerson:

Pushkin wrote the play in 1825 for the stage ... had hoped that it would be performed because he had very powerful ideas about where Russian drama should go but knew it would not be performed. There weren't stages that could do it, there weren't actors who could produce it with sufficient naturalism and flexibility and there were characters in the play that would not ever have passed Russian theatrical censorship.

Production Co-manager Simon Morrison:

When we began to talk about this project it seemed that there must be a way to actually map up these words with this music, but that way turned out to be very complicated. And to try to do it right we needed to involve the entire campus, to make the campus a kind of workshop for this. And the first stop for that was going to the School of Architecture and giving them this piece as a problem, and saying "This is Meyerhold. The original director in 1937 wanted to do this, this is the score, these are the meanings associated with this text, and can it be realized on-stage?"

[Music plays]

Director Tim Vasen:

What you're about to see today is what we call a stumble-through, and the way I intend to use this is just to have a sense of, "Oh, I think I know what I want to try to do here."

Student Actress: My name is Kelechi Ezie. I'm a junior. It's been an amazing experience from start to finish. In addition to all our parts we each played members of a crowd in a mob scene, and it fits in with Pushkin's whole vision of history. It's very alive and everyone's involved in it. One moment you can be a singular person making a choice, and in one moment you're just swept into the larger scope of what's going to happen.

Peter Westergaard:

Nowadays, you can't possibly afford to produce a play with a symphony orchestra and a chorus. It's only at a university that you can do this.

[Choir sings]

Production Co-manager Simon Morrison:

"Boris Godunov" is many things. It's a piece of theater that involves music, choreography and a set that is itself a work of art. In order to bring this off each of the main contributors is about to contribute something brand new that stands on its own as a work of art.

[Choir sings, music plays]

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