

University Theatre presents

PHILISTINES

by

**Maxim
Gorky**

March 11, 12, 13, 14

8:00 p.m.

Tustin Studio Theatre

PHILISTINES

by

Maxim Gorky

in a new version by Dusty Hughes

Cast

in order of appearance

TATYANA Mary Elizabeth McGlynn*
a schoolmistress, the Bessemenovs' daughter
POLYA Mary Cullison
A seamstress who works during the day for
the Bessemenovs, Perchikin's daughter
PYOTR Chip Mortimer*
the Bessemenovs' son, a student expelled from university
VASILY VASILYEVICH BESSEME NOV Dennis Baumwoll
A prosperous house-painter, head of his guild
AKULINA IVANOVNA MaryAnn Sigler*
his wife
STEPANIDA Mary Jane Hyde*
the cook
PERCHIKIN Tony Gosse
a bird-catcher, a distant relative of the Bessemenovs
TETEREV (Terenty Khrisanfovich) Peter Bandarenko*
choirsinger and lodger
NIL Andrew Garman
a train-driver, the Bessemenovs' foster son
YELENA KRIVTSOVA Shelly Simonds
a jail-warden's widow who lodges with the family
SHISHKIN Jonathan Uffelman*
a lodger
TSVETAeva (Masha) Laura Michalec*
a schoolmistress and a friend of Tatyana's
THE DOCTOR Chris Ludmer*

THE PLAY IS SET IN PROVINCIAL RUSSIA AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

Director Robert Gainer
Scenic Supervision Richard Harmon
Lighting Designer Stephen Chené
Costume Designer Beth Kalbach Phelps

There will be one intermission of ten minutes

PRODUCTION STAFF

Technical Director Stephen Chene
Stage Manager Carolyn E. Ball*
Assistant Stage Manager Maureen Hickman
Set Construction: Dawn Albert, Jason Aten, Peter Bandarenko, John Bellace,
Jose De La Mar, Bill Nelson, Patrick Sheridan, MaryBeth Sodini, Jonathan Uffelman
Master Electrician Bill Nelson*
Properties David Himmelreich*
Ali Abels, Dabney Giles, Tad Klopccic, Alden Phelps
Costumes Eileen Marks*
Mary Kate Behlke, Kristin Hellstedt, Jenny Noa
Box Office & Publicity Sue Gardner* & Ali Abels*
Michael Boarwright, Tad Klopccic, Karen McCann
*member of Cap & Dagger

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE

Co-chair, Acting and Directing Robert Gainer
Co-chair, Design (on leave 1987-88) F. Elaine Williams
Director of Dance, Technique and Theory Danna Frangione
Technical Director Stephen P. Chene
Dance Instruction Joan Moyer Clark
Theatre History, Theory, Directing Gary Grant
Design (visiting) Richard Harmon
Secretary Chris Fry

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Alison Abels
Dawn Albert
Peter Bandarenko
Sue Gardner
David Himmelreich
Joel Klopccic
Jose De La Mar

Eileen Marks
Bill Nelson
Jenny Noa
Todd Rosenlieb
Diana Rudge
MaryBeth Sodini



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Publicity David M. Himmelreich
Activities Jenny Noa
Play Selection Alison Abels

Special thanks to the following people for their help with this production: Ernest Keen for character work with the cast, Robert Beard and Madhu Malik for dramaturgical assistance, Danna Frangionne for movement, Lois Svard for music, Alden Phelps for design assistance, Tom Patten and the Great Susquehanna Piano Company, Zoya Jenks, Aaron Levin, Gabor Follinus, Dusty Hughes, David M. Himmelreich, The Victorian Lady, Dining Services, Nancy Matheson, Gary Grant, Tony DeRitis, and Jackson Hill.

NOTES

Maxim Gorky and His World

Gorky (meaning "bitter") was the pen name of Alexei Peshkov, born into a family of merchants in the Russian town of Nizhni Novgorod in 1868. Abandoned by his widowed mother and cruelly treated by his grandfather (upon whom the father in *Philistines* is based) the young Gorky entered into a world of incredible squalor, misery and violence. This was the period of Russia's belated and ruthless Industrial Revolution. He left home at the age of ten to work as a boot-boy, baker, railway nightwatchman, birdcatcher, dishwasher and stevedore.

"The first years of Alexey Peshkov's life, and his dawning consciousness, were also the last great years of a movement that had embodied all the quandaries, noblest hopes, and strivings of 19th century Russia. The protest of Russia's intelligentsia against tsarism and mass poverty had unfurled steadily from the 1820's into the 1870's. . . . It was a great many-faceted idealistic movement, that attracted most of the finest spirits in the land. . . . Its most common belief was, probably, that history is the story of the struggle for human progress. Its special feeling, by and large, was that Russia, by its rural nature, and the existence of the peasant commune, was closer to the natural, or socialist, ideal than other lands."

Learning to read in secret, Gorky wrote: "Each book was a rung in my ascent from the brutish to the human, toward an understanding of a better life and a thirst after that life. . . . It is to books that I owe everything that is good in me."

"I was overcome with a wish to liberate the world and myself, by some magical act, so that I and everyone would whirl with joy in a mass carnival dance, so that people would live for each other, and their lives be courageous, exalted and beautiful."

"I came into the world to disagree."

"For Gorky, it was his whole life: to find a new Path, a new Law, was his whole ambition. . . . Man has to be rebuilt from the start. This would become Gorky's main theme. It would also become the theme of the Russian Revolution.

from *Stormy Petrel: The Life and Work of Maxim Gorky*
by Dan Levin

The Play

In 1898, Gorky wrote a clumsy, breathless letter to Chekhov. His secret hope was that it would begin a literary friendship. He had decided to make Chekhov his mentor, and when Chekhov responded warmly he initiated a lengthy correspondence touching on every aspect of writing. Within a year, Russia's most famous literary primitive, and patron saint of the down-and-outs, was given a gold watch inscribed 'To Gorky from Chekhov.' Gorky was used to being patronised, but his relationship with Chekhov was a more equal one than he had ever experienced with another writer. The condescension he had frequently to swallow was the reason he still clung to his home town of Nizhni Novgorod (now called Gorky) and why he refused the various literary entrepreneurs who tried to persuade him to come and perform in the Moscow *beau monde*. But his days as a provincial were numbered. In Nizhni his activities included organizing yule-tide sleigh rides for destitute children and fighting a battle to get a wonderfully talented local tavern singer into the snobbish town choir. In this period even his philanthropic work could have got him into trouble for 'unauthorised community fund activities.' He had already begun to go much further. By 1900 he had acquired a mimeograph machine and had begun to write 'proclamations to the workers' whenever there was a strike or a local dispute. His police file was beginning to groan with black marks. Nevertheless he made a move to Moscow and by 1901 had become a celebrity — 'the barefooted tramp,' with the fame of a pop-star. In the summer of 1901 he hired a house in Yalta a few hundred yards from Chekhov and when the actors of the Moscow Art Theatre came down for their traditional summer break, he had his first experience of the glamour and fascination of theatre-folk. Chekhov persuaded him to write a play and introduced him to Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko who were planning to move the Art Theatre into an exciting new building. Though the Art Theatre set were not radicals in the sense that Gorky was a radical, there was still a shared feeling amongst all the members of the company that Russia was on the verge of great change. Gorky often felt a greater affinity with theatre people than he felt for the literary world which made him play the bumpkin. So he needed very little encouragement to write for the stage and began work immediately on two plays — *Meschanye (Philistines)*, and *The Lower Depths*.

"By the end of the year, however, Gorky had attracted far too much attention to himself. On a trip to St. Petersburg he went to a rally to celebrate the liberation of the peasants. He was noticed in a restaurant 'behaving in a revolutionary manner.' He was eventually arrested in his home town after being found in possession of his incriminating mimeograph machine and sent to prison. He had finished *Philistines* and the Art Theatre bravely decided to open their new theatre with it, even though their exciting new discovery was very likely to be languishing in jail when the play appeared. Stanislavsky did his best to get him released but it was Tolstoy, who had met (and patronised) Gorky the year before, who had a word with the Tsar's brother-in-law. Gorky's arrested tuberculosis was used as an excuse to have his punishment reduced to exile in the Crimea.

"When *Philistines* was offered to the censor in 1902, it was refused a licence. But the Art Theatre was persistent and their reputation was difficult to ignore. Eventually the play was cleared for 'members only' performances though certain key lines (for example 'The man who works is the master here too') were considered too progressive for the intelligentsia to hear. On the opening night the box office staff and the usherettes were all members of the secret police, checking to see if any non-members (obviously a more corruptible group) were sneaking in. Nevertheless the Art Theatre couldn't continue to exist on 'exclusive' performances so they decided to take *Philistines* on tour. In every provincial town it had to be cleared by the censor. In Bialostock it provoked a riot which ended up with civil guards, police and demonstrating crowds fighting in the streets and at least one fatality."

Dusty Hughes

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