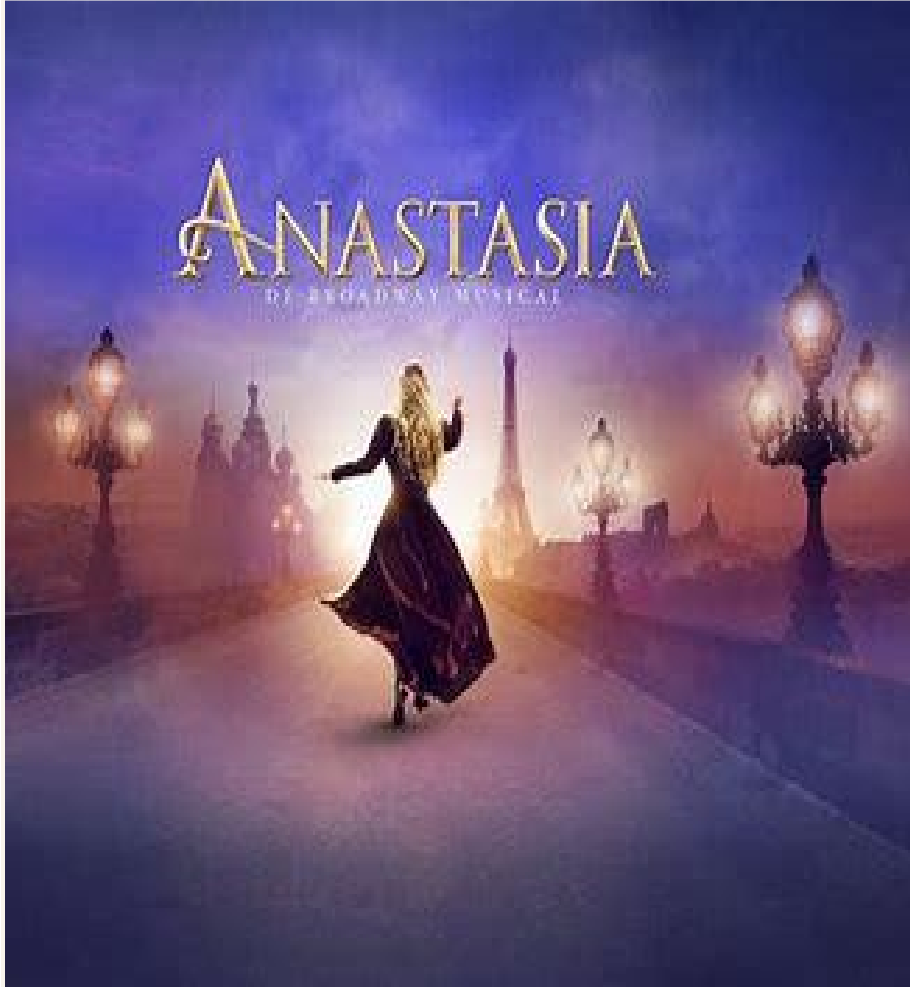


Actor's Packet

Curated by Olivia Widmer



Book by Terrence McNally, Music by Stephen Flaherty, Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

**Directed by Candace Vance
for
Seattle Pacific University Theatre's 24-25 Season**

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Playwrights

Ahrens and Flaherty started working together in 1983 on a project called *Bedazzled*. Though they were not able to secure the rights for it they worked on many other productions which included; *Once On This Island*, *Dessa Rose*, *Seussical*, *Chita Rivera: A Dancer's Life*, and many more. They would work with Terrence McNally, the “bard of American Theatre,” many times before his death in March of 2020. Their collaborative credits include *Ragtime*, *A Man of No Importance*, and *Anastasia*.

A Century of Imperial Intrigue, The Mystery of Anastasia

Who is Anastasia?

Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna was the youngest daughter of Tsar Nicolas II and Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna, the last imperial rulers of Russia. Born in 1901 to the richest monarch in history, the death of Anastasia and her family in 1917 would captivate the lives of numerous scientists, archeologists, politicians, relatives, revolutionaries, and theatre-makers for the next century. Here is the story as we know it today;

Captivity

In July of 1917, after being held captive for seventy-eight days by members of the Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik's, the seven members of the Imperial family along with four members of their household were murdered. The Bolshevik leader assigned to the murder, after failing to incinerate the bodies, buried them. The now-Bolshevik Russian government claimed the Tsar was killed in an escape attempt and denied the deaths of his party.

Investigation

Months later Nicholas Sokolov, legal investigator and Imperial sympathizer, was assigned to prove the case. After a short and splotchy investigation he concluded that everyone had died and that the bodies had been incinerated therefore leaving no evidence. He fled shortly after to Paris, where he published his claims. Multiple first-hand participants in the murder would die telling this story.

Evidence

Almost fifty years later, in 1976, scientists proved Sokolov's claims impossible because there were no remaining teeth, which are virtually indestructible by common fire.¹ In the meantime,

¹ Cremation occurs between 1,400 and 2,000 degrees fahrenheit.

the location of the murder, the Ipatiev House, became a museum to the mystery of the Imperial deaths. In 1977 a KGB officer convinced the president of Russia that the Ipatiev House was a secret meeting place for monarchists. Because the revolutionized government was so closely removed from Imperial rule this was seen as a direct threat. The government paid someone off to destroy the house three days later.

Discovery

Alexander Avdonin, a local geologist consumed by a passion for discovery, bored with the sanitized version of Russian history that was available to him, went in search of the stories he was sure were missing. During this time in Russia legend and rumor were passed through word of mouth given that the government's ban on books kept contradicting material locked away. He then met Geli Ryabov. The two would become a pair, Ryabov's station in the Ministry of Internal Affairs granted them access to the banned material they hoped would fill in the gaps.

Between Sokolov's writings, a miraculous first-hand account turned over by the son of the Bolshevik leader responsible, and photos of the area, Ryabov and Avdonin were able to locate the site of the burial. In May of 1979 they uncovered three bodies, the remains of which would stay under their beds for a year as they decided their next steps. Fearing the repercussions of their actions they decided to re-bury the remains until the political situation became less tenuous.

Case Closed...

With the presidential change of 1982 Ryabov, against the behest of his partner, published the findings. Russia would end communism in 1991 with their first Presidential election paving the way for the grave to be officially exhumed. They found nine bodies. While the scientists of the Russian government were not financially equipped to fund DNA testing they proved with mathematics the statistical probability that these were the remains of the Romanovs. The chances? Three in 100 trillion. That number works out to be more people than have walked the face of the earth since the dawn of time no matter your belief in the origin of the world. There were equally divided parties of legitimate scientific thought debating whether it was Anastasia or Maria, her older sister by two years, who was missing.² A Russian builder participating in exploratory digs stumbled upon the last two remains in 2007. DNA testing against living relatives and historically exhumed graves unequivocally confirms the legitimacy of the Romanov family skeletons.³ Whether or not Anastasia was found in 1979 or 2007 remains a contested mystery to this day.

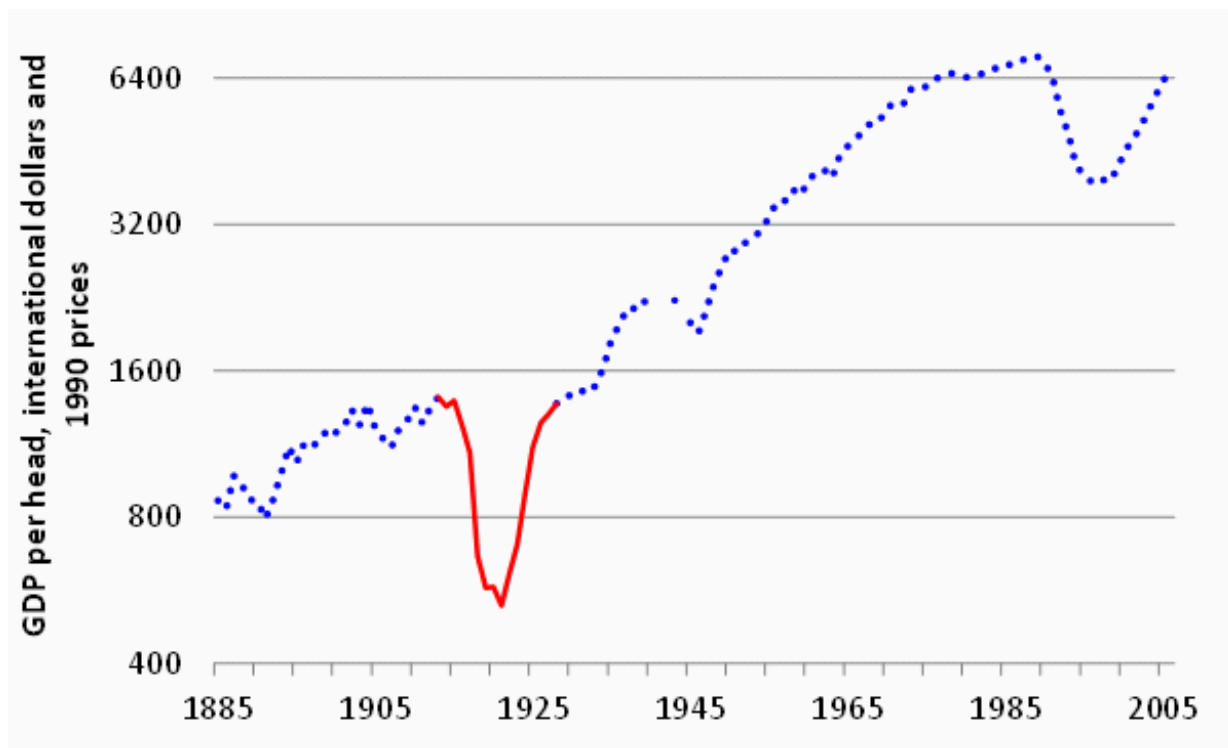
² Go hug a scientist, we need them.

³<https://www.facebook.com/HISTORY/videos/historys-greatest-mysteries-solved-ultimate-fate-of-duchess-anastasia-revealed/784325768837080/> (Greatest Mysteries Solved Series video).

Russian Revolution (1905-1917)

Imperial Reign

The gravity of the impoverished peoples of Russia in the time preceding the Russian Revolution was catastrophic. Eight hundred and seventy families made up the nobility. They occupied 1.5% of the population but owned 90% of all Russia's wealth. During the rule of Tsar Nicholas II 84%, four out of five people, were peasants. It was common for them to mix clay, straw, and birch bark into their bread to make it last longer. Their coats doubled as blankets and many would never leave their village. Each village's elders assigned plots of land for families to cultivate. The acreage only decreased as the population grew, preventing them from providing sustenance even for themselves.⁴ Most believed the only way to obtain more land was for the nobility to give up their rolling estates.



Political Shift

At the turn of the 20th century literacy was skyrocketing. The printing press had become a widespread form of education. This caused an ideal shift in the lower-class from their circumstances being inevitable to being correctable wrongs. Thus their desire for reversal, dehumanization, and vengeance on the nobility deepened. This led to the creation of multiple legal and illegal political parties, the two most influential being the Socialist Revolutionary (SR)

⁴ From 1890-1910, because of the Industrial Revolution, the populations of St. Petersburg and Moscow doubled in size.

Party and the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP). The latter would then split into two factions; Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.

Revolution

Bloody Sunday of 1905, a civil upheaval and protest catalyzing the Russian Revolution in which the military enacted violent murders, would force Tsar Nicholas II to create The State of Duma (similar to American Congress) with the hope that feigned power would be a substantial aphrodisiac. It worked for almost a decade. But, the autocracy's disregard for the emerging civil government's legitimacy provided fertile ground for the Tsar to make unilateral decisions including deferring the Duma's power back to himself in 1915. The brief interlude of peace broke into unabashed hatred with the removal of the barest of human rights.

Daily Life

The plight of the lower-class was compounded by the eight costly wars fought by Russia between 1853 and 1921 (including WWI). Between 1905 and 1915 factories would effectively strike for days on end so the workers could search for food. Shortages at the front lines and economic hardships at home ignited protests and demonstrations against the autocracy. It was most potently felt by the mothers. With the men at war they would stand in endless lines rarely receiving rations and return to their homes to watch their children slowly dying.

End of Imperial Reign

In 1915 Tsar Nicholas II was advised to abdicate as emperor. After two years of increasing violence and poverty he made the last decree of Russian nobility in March of 1917. His choice was to abdicate to his son Aleksei with his brother Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich as regent. This one act represents his ideology that absolute power would be honored. Not so. Aleksei was underage at the time and therefore could not accept the throne. After a diagnosis of hemophilia (the inability for the blood to clot) Nicholas revised his abdication in favor of his brother. Years before, in a decision to marry a commoner, the Grand Duke Mikhail renounced all entitlement to the throne. While the Provisional Government of The State of Duma provided the courtesy of informing Mikhail of the situation, he would immediately sign official abdication. The Tsar reign was over.

Post-Revolution Russia

Bolshevik Party Takes Over

Enter the Bolsheviks. It was 1918 and the Tsar was dead with no legitimate heir and a new Soviet-Communist government. Vladimir Lenin, the Marxist leader of the new order, would head the charge until 1924. Upon his death the city was renamed Leningrad in his honor. The leadership of Lenin and the Bolsheviks was such a terror that it caused mass exodus from the

home state. The father of Leninism, he believed in the absolute ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ by disciplined revolutionaries to continually overthrow capitalist society.

Comrade Structure

The Duma, a peace offering of the Tsar, had been stacked with officials of the upper-class elite. Effectively the Tsar’s pals. While they had exercised some opinions, what Lenin and the Bolsheviks promised was a government of the soldiers, peasants, and laborers. The common man, or comrade, would finally have a voice. The reality of society breaking from Imperialist structure would take an entire Civil War and half a century of negotiation. Russia would war against itself from 1917-1923 continuing to strip people of resources providing little opportunity for the imagined liberties of Socialism.

Paris of 1917

Russian Expats

Called White Russian émigrés (defector), the monarchists and autocracy of a revolutionized Russia fled in droves to Paris, along with anyone attempting to escape the impending Civil War.⁵ Between 1917 and 1921 upwards of 80,000 Russian people would immigrate. They were welcomed in France where they would establish their ‘expat playground’ and provide laborers after WWI.⁶

France

In 1917 France finished fighting the Great War. Of their eight million mobilized troops more than 1.8 million had died and another million were severely altered in physical ability. Because of their losses and the need to ratify the devastation to their land and cities they lowered immigration barriers accepting defectors from many surrounding countries. Their push for revitalization to the infrastructure and landscape would be greatly accomplished by 1925.

Something New is Born

In addition to the mechanics of post-Great War life we see France grapple with devastating trauma through Expressionisms’ harsh turn by the end of the war. Avante-garde art forms were emerging everywhere and ideology was being questioned. France’s claim as a cultural and artistic hub through the Neoclassical movement of the 16th century was only solidified by their stance on promoting new-age thought and cutting ideology.

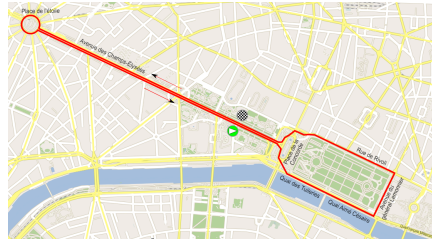
⁵ The numbers in Paris reached upwards of 50,000 by 1930, superseded only by those who fled to Turkey.

⁶ The Russian Taxi Drivers Union numbered 5,000.

Glossary

Locations

Champs-Élysées - Situated as one of the world's most famous streets, the Champs-Élysées runs from the Arc de Triomphe (the Arch pictured) to the Palace de la Concorde (the largest square in France measuring 19 acres). The muse of music and poetry alike, its infamous nature brings over 300,000 people every day.⁷

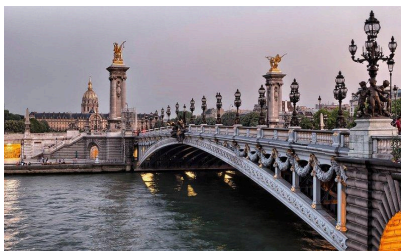


Neva River - St. Petersburg is built on the mouth of the Neva, the city's main architecture. It is the fourth largest river in Europe and the only one flowing from Lake Lagoda into the Baltic Sea. It was of unparalleled trade importance to the Russians, Swedes, Finns and Balts which would lead to constant conflict on its shores as recent as WWII.

Odessa (Odesa) - Located in present-day Ukraine on the northwestern shore of the Black Sea, this multi-cultural city was dedicated in January 2023 as a World Heritage Site. This was in the midst of the ongoing war that continues to advance on the city of Odesa. A major port city, it was one of the most populous cities of the Russian Empire (along with St. Petersburg) and continues to be of great economic and historical value to the country of Ukraine.

Perm - A city in Russia. It is located between 950 and 1300 miles (depending on route) from St. Petersburg. What a walk.

Peterhof - Referred to as the 'Versaille of Russia' this palace was built as a passion project of Peter the Great. Construction would last for seven years and be finished in 1721. During the years of Anastasia's life it was used as a summer mansion for the Romanov family and their guests to escape to every May. It is located on the Neva River.



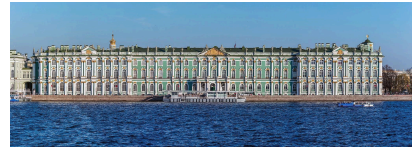
Pont Alexandre III (Le Pont Alexandre) - A symbol of Franco-Russian relations, the bridge's first stones were laid by Tsar Nicolas II in 1896. This marks the end of a seven year negotiation and the signing of an Alliance between the two countries forged by Tsar Nicolas II's father, Tsar Alexander III

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7B4CLQGxHmI> (Champs-Élysées song).

and the French President Sadi Carnot. Most recently it was the launching point for the 2024 Paris Olympic Triathlon.

St. Petersburg/ Leningrad - Having gone by alternative names; Petrograd, Peter, Sankt-Peterburg, and Petersburg this city's fame lies with the Romanovs. Having been the Imperial capital for over two centuries it remains as the cultural center and the second largest city in Russia. The government currently resides in Moscow.

The Imperial Palace (Winter Palace) - Built on the site of the first imperial residence, the Winter Palace would be the main home for the imperial family. The Bloody Sunday Massacre took place in 1905 in the palace square. This event—the silence of the Tsar when peaceful protesters were murdered—is cited as the beginning of the end for the Imperial reign. After the abdication of Tsar Nicolas II in 1917 the Bolsheviks turned it into the State Hermitage Museum, a Museum of the Revolution, which serves as a main attraction in St. Petersburg.



Yusupov Palace - Construction commenced in the time of Peter the Great (ref. Peterhof) but took two centuries to complete. While it was a place of diplomacy hosted by the Yusupov dynasty, its pinnacle of fame centers on the murder of Grigori Rasputin, the Romanov family mystical spiritual mentor, on December 17, 1916.

Language

French

La belle France (lah bell Frahnce) - The beautiful France.

La rue (lah rew) - The street.

Mademoiselle (mad-m-waz-el) - Miss. This is the correct title for a young woman who has never been married, or a girl.

Vlad/Anyà (p. 29) -

V. Très bien, mademoiselle, très bien (tray bee-en, mad-m-was-el) - Very good, miss, very good.

A. Merci, monsieur, merci (Mair-see, emiss-yur, mair-see) - Thank you, sir, thank you.

V. Vous parlez français? (Voo par-l frahn-say) - You speak french? (This is the formal address).

A. Un peu (uh puh) - A little.

V. Bonne nuit, ma chère (bone nwee, mah share) - Good night, my dear.

Voilà, Mes Amis (vwah-lah, maize ahmee) - There you go, my friends.

Russian

Spasibo za Slukhi (spu-see-buh zah sloo-hyuh) - Thanks for the rumors.

References

Cheka - Cheka was a secret police force that pre-dated, and then evolved into, the KGB.

“Name Day” - There are many religious traditions where children are named after saints. The Romanovs being Russian Orthodox would have been no exception. Name Day, celebrated as most birthdays, is a celebration of the saint one is named after. The Soviet party would abolish this tradition. Saint Anastasia is the patron saint of martyrs, weavers, and widows.

Nevsky Prospekt - Beginning at the Admiralty, the central port and primary city building, the Nevsky Prospekt is the middle of three main roads in St. Petersburg. This main thoroughfare is home to the historical center and boasts some of the city's most exquisite architecture.

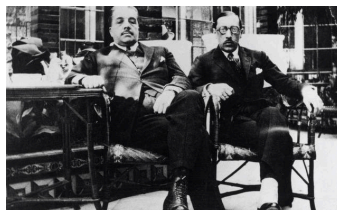
Red's and White's - Anyone sympathizing with Imperial or monarchical rule were called Whites. The Bolshevik's and all other Soviet minded revolutionaries were called Red's.

People

Count Yusupov - Felix Felixovich Yusupov, most famous for the murder of Grigori Rasputin, also became the relative of Tsar Nicholas II by marriage to his niece. His family rivaled the Romanovs in wealth (12).



Diaghilev's Ballet Russes - Between 1909 and 1929 Serge Diaghilev would change the face of Ballet. A Russian-born living in Paris he fostered careers of artists in every discipline; Anna Pavlova, Ballet; Igor Stravinski, Composer/Conductor; Pablo Picasso, Painter. His main focus would remain the telling of Russian stories by Russian trained artists though the Ballet Russes would never get the chance to perform there given the state of revolution. Curating seventy ballets for the Ballet Russes he is credited with reawakening the public's interest in ballet in addition to presenting ballet as an equal partnership between creatives-costume, music, choreography, performance, design- all as one collaborative work (42). (Pictures L-R. Watercolor, pencil, ink costume presentation for Ballet Russes. Serge Diaghilev, R, Igor Stravinski, L. Vaslav Najinski in Le Spectre de la Rose, 1913).



Maps

1. Pre-Revolution Empire.



2. Civil War conflict during Bolshevik Rule. Note; Odesa, and distinction of countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Ukraine.

Reminder; “White forces” refers to Imperial Sympathizers, “Red forces” to Revolutionaries.



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