

# Olga Mukhina's 'Tanya-Tanya' Leads Russian Drama Season in United States

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It would be gauche of me &mdash; nay, dastardly &mdash; to conceal the fact that I will use this blog space during the next two weeks to shed light on a project that I am deeply involved in. Towson University in Towson, Maryland, is currently hosting an entire season of Russian drama in English &mdash; ten plays by six authors presented in English translation by various production teams consisting of a Russian director, two Russian choreographers, three American directors, two American playwrights and several American translators.

The project is called "[New Russian Drama: Voices in a Shifting Age](#)."

It all is happening thanks to the vision and shrewd judgement of Philip Arnoult, the director of the Center for International Theater Development (CITD) in Baltimore. For [CITD](#), the Russian season at Towson is the culmination of a decade of work seeking talented Russian theater artists who might possibly have an impact on American theater.

Here is my disclosure: I have been Mr. Arnoult's partner for nearly that entire decade. Along with a board of Russians including Pavel Rudnev of the Meyerhold Center, Yelena Kovalskaya of the Lyubimovka playwriting festival, Oleg Loyevsky of the Theater Yunogo Zritelya in Yekaterinburg and director Yury Urnov of Moscow, I have overseen the selection of the writers and plays included in the Russian season. I have translated several of the plays and I stand behind every writer and every work that Towson and CITD are presenting this year. I have traveled to Towson repeatedly throughout the last year to teach, lecture, advise and work, and I will continue to do so until the season concludes with a national conference in May.

In short, I am anything but an impartial bystander. I am absolutely incapable of providing an unbiased or balanced account of what this Russian season is accomplishing &mdash or of what it is not. I trust that others will do that for me.

Three workshop productions or readings took place in October and November, but it was the dual opening of two works over the weekend of Dec. 4 to 6 that truly got the season up to running speed. These were Olga Mukhina's groundbreaking "[Tanya-Tanya](#)," which was presented in a new adaptation by American playwright Kate Moira Ryan, and Yury Klavdiyev's "The Machine Gunner," performed in my translation.

On Thursday I pulled out my trusty camera and asked Urnov, who directed "Tanya-Tanya," to share his thoughts on the play, the writer and his production. I found Yury shortly before the final dress rehearsal as he stood on stage beneath the most prominent element of Daniel Ettinger's evocative set &mdash a straggly, barren tree that, oddly enough, occasionally bears fruit.

To hear what Yury had to say, click on the picture below. Next week I will post director David M. White's comments on Klavdiyev.

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