

Stray Thoughts on the 2010 Golden Mask Festival

By [John Freedman](#)

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I have no fewer opinions than usual about the Golden Mask Festival that ran from the end of March to last Thursday, or about the awards ceremony, with which it concluded on Friday.

I do, however, have fewer opinions that I intend to share publically. This is because I was a member of the jury judging drama and puppetry this year.

Several phrases match the situation I find myself in as I consider what I witnessed over the last three weeks.

One is "don't kiss and tell." Another is "don't wash dirty linen in public."

That said, let me begin by giving a huge thumbs-up to the organizers of the awards ceremony. The location in the cavernous atrium of the Gostiny Dvor complex in the shadow of the Kremlin was exquisite. It was designed with taste and humor by designers Pavel

Kaplevich and Irina Korina and illuminated beautifully by lighting designer Gleb Filshtinsky.

As they did last year, the Mark Pekarsky Percussion Ensemble again provided an intriguing, effective, but nonintrusive soundscape that accompanied the announcements of nominees and winners.

The enormous, open space of the atrium meant that the sound of most of the applause was lost as it rose up and rattled around in the hundreds of softly-lit arches and numerous distant corners. But then Moscow audiences consisting of the theater elite are rarely generous with applause anyway. Consider this no great loss.

I happened to catch the end of the televised version of the ceremony on the culture channel when I got home, and was impressed by that, too. It was easily the most professional and dynamic of all the televised ceremonies I have seen.

Effective swirling and twirling cameras chased the winners up to the stage as they came to accept their awards, giving the proceedings a tangible sense of artistry and dynamics. Short, static cut-in shots of audience members listening (or not) also tactfully undercut the sense of pathos and injected a nice human note.

In general, this year's festival appeared to suggest that we are on the verge of generational change.

Conspicuous by their absence were numerous major figures: Valery Gergiyev, Kama Ginkas and Pyotr Fomenko, among others. Gergiyev's and Fomenko's theaters were present and won awards, but in all cases it was for work created by others.

That is not to say there were no familiar names. Sergei Zhenovach, now a perennial winner with his Studio of Theatrical Art in Moscow, was again singled out for his work. The popular actor Yevgeny Mironov took his second Golden Mask in the best actor category. Dmitry Krymov took the experiment award with his "Opus No. 7" at the School of Dramatic Art. He is a repeat winner after taking the same award for his "Demon. The View From Above" in 2008.

But there were breakthroughs for such theaters as the Et Cetera, the Theater of Nations and several young artists, all of whom picked up their first-ever Golden Mask awards.

Alina Somova (best female ballet dancer), as well as the creative teams of Maria Litvinova and Vyacheslav Ignatov (best puppet production), and Vera Martynova and Maria Tregubova (best designers, drama) are all just beginning their careers.

On a personal note, I must say I am thrilled for Litvinova and Ignatov. It so happens that my clumsy voice played the lead role in their production of "The Epic of Lilikan," about which [I wrote](#) last May.

Anyone looking to pin corruption charges on the Golden Mask or me will have to look elsewhere, however. I officially refrained from participating in the discussions of the awards made to puppet theaters and I abstained from voting in those categories as well.

Now, however, I can send up a big congratulatory whoop to Litvinova and Ignatov, as well as to every other winner.

In fact, I'd like to congratulate every nominee. Over the course of the festival, I saw an awful lot of talented and accomplished actors, directors and designers who did not end up on the winners' dais. Awards are a pig in the poke. Congrats to this year's winners; good luck to those who may make it next year.

The complete list of Golden Mask awards for 2010 (including productions that premiered in the 2008–2009 season):

DRAMA

Large-scale production: "Shukshin's Stories," Theater of Nations, Moscow.

Small-scale production: "The Potudan River," Studio of Theater Art, Moscow.

Director: Yury Pogrebnichko, "La Estrada," Okolo, the Theater Near the Stanislavsky House, Moscow.

Actress: Polina Kutepova, Molly in "Ulysses," Fomenko Studio, Moscow.

Actor: Yevgeny Mironov, various roles in "Shukshin's Stories," Theater of Nations, Moscow.

Designer: Vera Martynova and Maria Tregubova, "Opus No. 7," School of Dramatic Art, Moscow.

PUPPETRY

Production: "The Epic of Lilikan," Ten Theater, Moscow.

Director: Erdeni Zhaltsanov, "Beneath the Eternal Light of Kumalan," Ulger Puppet Theater, Ulan-Ude.

Designer: Viktor Nikonenko, "My Friend the Genie," Puppet House Theater, Penza.

SPECIAL JURY PRIZES FOR DRAMA AND PUPPET THEATER

Sergei Fedotov and Theater U Mosta, Perm.

"Life Is Grand," a co-production of the Playwright and Director Center and Teatr.doc, Moscow.

OPERA

Production: "Lucia di Lammermoor," Stanislavsky and Nemirovich–Danchenko Musical Theater, Moscow.

Conductor: Valery Platonov, "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," Tchaikovsky Opera and Ballet Theater, Perm.

Director: Alexander Titel, "Hamlet (Danish) (Russian) Comedy," Stanislavsky and Nemirovich–Danchenko Musical Theater, Moscow.

Female Singer: Khibla Gerzmava, Lucia in "Lucia di Lammermoor," Stanislavsky

and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theater, Moscow.

Male Singer: Andrei Popov, various roles in "Gogoliada," Mariinsky Theater, St. Petersburg.

DANCE — BALLET AND CONTEMPORARY

Ballet Production: "Russian Seasons," Bolshoi Theater, Moscow.

Contemporary Dance Production: "Casting Off," Yevgeny Panfilov Ballet Theater, Perm.

Choreographer: Alexei Ratmansky, "The Little Humpbacked Horse," Mariinsky Theater, St. Petersburg.

Female Dancer: Alina Somova, Tsar-Princess in "The Little Humpbacked Horse," Mariinsky Theater, St. Petersburg.

Male Dancer: Vladimir Varnava, Mercutio in "Romeo and Juliet," Theater of Opera and Ballet of the Republic of Karelia, Petrozavodsk.

OPERETTA/MUSICAL

Production: "The Producers," Et Cetera Theater, Moscow.

Conductor: Vsevolod Polonsky, "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg," Karombol Musical Theater, St. Petersburg.

Director: Dmitry Belov, Et Cetera Theater, Moscow.

Female Actor: Natalya Blagikh, Et Cetera Theater, Moscow.

Male Actor: Yegor Druzhinin, Et Cetera Theater, Moscow.

MUSICAL THEATER COMBINED

Composer: Vladimir Kobekin, "Hamlet (Danish) (Russian) Comedy," Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theater, Moscow.

Set Designer: Zinovy Margolin, "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg," Karombol Musical Theater, St. Petersburg.

Costume Designer: Yelena Stepanova, "Lucia di Lammermoor," Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theater, Moscow.

Lighting Designer: Alexei Khoroshev, "Casting Off," Yevgeny Panfilov Ballet Theater, Perm.

SPECIAL JURY PRIZES FOR MUSICAL THEATER

"Gianni Schicchi," Novaya Opera, Moscow.

"Gogoliada," Mariinsky Theater, St. Petersburg.

EXPERIMENT

"Opus No. 7," School of Dramatic Art, Moscow.

CRITICS' PRIZE

"I Think About You," a production of the NET Festival and the French Cultural Center, Moscow.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Ivan Romashko, actor, Novosibirsk Theater of Musical Comedy.

Vera Vasilyeva, actress of the Satire Theater, Moscow.

Vladimir Zeldin, actor of the Russian Army Theater, Moscow.

FOR SUPPORT OF THEATER ARTS IN RUSSIA

Vladimir Kozhin, the administration of the President of the Russian Federation.

Anatoly Pavlov, President of FINPROMKO and director of Pnevmostroimashina, Yekaterinburg.

The Mikhail Prokhorov Trust of Cultural Initiatives

BEST FOREIGN PRODUCTION PERFORMED IN RUSSIA IN 2009

"Lipsynch," Ex Machina Theater, Canada. Directed by Robert Lepage.

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