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'Ordinary Miracle' Remixed On Stage

By Ingrid Nevenchannaya

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The musical uses the songs from the classic 1978 film along with new tunes written by the original composer and lyricist, Gennady Gladkov and Yuly Kim.

Most Russians know "Obyknovennoye Chudo," or "An Ordinary Miracle," as the magical 1978 film starring Oleg Yankovsky, Alexander Abdulov and Andrei Mironov among others. Now audiences have a chance to see the story, based on a play by Yevgeny Shvarts, on stage in a musical version currently showing at the Dubrovka Theater Center.

The film, directed by Mark Zakharov, is a classic Soviet film about a magician, played by Yankovsky, who creates a reverse fairy tale by turning a bear into a human being. That bear, Abdulov, must find and kiss a princess so he can become a bear again, but love and much more interferes in the tale.

"Its theme is eternal love — such heroes exist in our time, believe it or not," said Yevgeny Khalturin, who plays the innkeeper in the musical. "We need such idealists to give us an example to follow."

Ordinarily, the makers of such a musical would expect tough criticism for touching an old classic, but director Ivan Popovsky has soothed those opposed to the idea.

The three-hour musical has proved popular since it debuted earlier this year, winning acclaim and praise from critics.

“[Popovsky] doesn’t fight against the favorite film but the complete opposite — he references the unforgettable show for the viewer,” wrote the Izvestia newspaper in a review of the show.

“There is nothing cheap in this show,” wrote the Rossiiskaya Gazeta newspaper, “Neither the decoration, nor the fairy tale costumes that express the characters of each of

the characters.”

The film featured six songs by much loved composer Gennady Gladkov and lyricist Yuly Kim. All of these can be heard in the show, which has also reunited the pair to write three new songs for the musical.

“It is absolutely wonderful. All the best bits are united in it: beautiful drama, great music and wonderful songs,” producer Alexei Ivashchenko said.

Nevertheless, there are distinct differences between the two.

“The Mark Zakharov film is in first place a philosophical proverb,” Ivashchenko said. “[Our director] wanted to create a bright fairy tale. ... We have staged it as Shvarts wrote it, without any changes. We have just shortened it a little bit.”

The musical would have run 4 1/2 hours without those cuts, Ivashchenko said.

“If you see our show you will immediately want to watch the film,” Khalturin said.

The show is recommended for children over the age of ten years old.

“Obyknovennoye Chudo” (An Ordinary Miracle) plays at the Dubrovka Theater Center until Feb 27. 7 Ulitsa Melnikova. Metro Volgogradsky Prospekt, Dubrovka. Tel. 987-1010, www.chudo-musical.ru.

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