

New Beginnings Bode Well for Theater Season

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Annie Baker's "The Aliens," staged by Romanian director Adrian Giurgia, opens at Pushkin Theater Sept. 15.

If uncertainty breeds excitement I would suggest that the coming 2012-2013 theater season in Moscow will be one of the most exciting in years.

What will happen at the Fomenko Studio now that the great Pyotr Fomenko has died? Will the heretofore moribund theaters bearing the names of the actress Yermolova and the writer Gogol be revived by new celebrity artistic directors, Oleg Menshikov and Kirill Serebrennikov, respectively? What direction will Praktika Theater take in April when playwright Ivan Vyrypayev assumes his place as new artistic director?

The questions are legion. Only time will bring answers. In the meantime, we have a season to begin.

The Mayakovsky Theater is already in full swing and it has more than just new shows on tap. Its latest production, Dostoevsky's "Uncle's Dream," opened Tuesday and plays again on Sept. 13 and 29 in a completely renovated hall. New seats, new walls and a new curtain configured by designer Sergei Barkhin are only some of the delights the theater has prepared for audiences. The foyer and cafeteria of this 90 year-old house have been renovated as well.

The Playwright and Director Center emerged from an actors' revolt last season with a change in management, although artistic director Mikhail Ugarov retained his post. Not surprisingly, Ugarov is keeping his focus on contemporary drama. This venue's initial offering this season is the Moscow premiere of "The Slow Sword" by Tolyatti native Yury Klavdiyev. A mix of martial arts cinema, super hero comics and Hollywood westerns, it opens Sunday and Monday.

There will be some healthy competition for audiences between the Pushkin Theater and the Studio of Theatrical Art on Sept. 15 and 16, when both houses offer new shows.

At the Studio of Theatrical Art, Sergei Zhenovach unveils his dramatization of the cult novella "Moscow-Petushki" by Soviet-era author Venedikt Yerofeyev. On paper, at least, it sounds like a radical departure for this theater, which over the first seven years of its existence loyally clung to works written in the 19th century.

The Pushkin Theater, working on its affiliate small stage, reaches into the contemporary American playbook with Annie Baker's "The Aliens." Staged by Rumanian-born, American-based director Adrian Giurgia, it tells the sensitive story of two aging dropouts and the teenage kid they sort of take under their wing.

Following the abrupt departure of founding director Yury Lyubimov a year ago, the famed Taganka Theater began hiring a vast array of directors, Russian and foreign. It opens its second Lyubimov-less season with a show that can't help but intrigue. Iconoclastic director Vladimir Mirzoyev, who has worked with popular success at many Moscow houses, unveils his interpretation of Alexander Ostrovsky's classic comedy "Enough Simplicity in Every Wise Man" from Sept. 21 to 23.

After being forced out of his leadership position at the Rustaveli Theater in Tbilisi, Georgia, last summer, the great director Robert Sturua found a home at Moscow's Et Cetera Theater. He spent the ensuing season preparing and rehearsing, and now he is set to premier a production of "A Place to Feed the Dogs," by French novelist and playwright Tarik Noui, on Sept. 25, 27 and 28.

Other theaters offering premieres in Sept. include the Moscow Art Theater, with Mikhail Bulgakov's "Zoya's Apartment" on the 25th, and Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's "He in Argentina" on the 29th and 30th; the Contemporary Play School, with Alexander Gordon directing a dramatization of his father Garri Gordon's novella "Snow" on the 22nd and 28th; Praktika, with German Grekov's contemporary thriller "The Valve" on the 25th; and Lenkom, with "Lies for Salvation," an adaptation of work by Spanish playwright Alejandro Casona.

One of the most eagerly awaited events of the new season will be the Moscow premiere of Dmitry Krymov's "As You Like It," a rendition of the play-within-the-play in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Following performances in England

in August, it opens at the School of Dramatic Art on Oct. 17 to 19.

The Fomenko Studio has announced it will not declare a new artistic director to replace founder Pyotr Fomenko until winter. In the meantime, Yevgeny Kamenkovich stages a dramatization of Vladimir Nabokov's novel "The Gift" there in the fall.

Menshikov opens his first season as artistic director at the Yermolova Theater only in November. He is currently overseeing the remodeling of the theater's interior and preparing a new repertory.

As for Serebrennikov and the Gogol Theater, that venue's new leader is presently in Germany, where he will soon open a new piece at the Berlin Comic Opera. Until he returns to Moscow in October, plans at that house remain vague.

For details on these performances and more see the [What's On weekly calendar](#).

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