

Two European Directors Vie for Golden Masks

By [John Freedman](#)

March 20, 2013



Director Yevgeny Marcelli's return to the early Anton Chekhov play, "Without a Title," promises to be a bold one.

It is the 19th time we have gathered to celebrate along with the Golden Mask Festival. And it is intended to be a celebration, a celebration of the best Russia has to offer in music, dance, drama and puppetry.

It's not as easy to pinpoint what exactly the Golden Mask is anymore. In the proverbial good old days, the first nominated show played on International Theater Day on March 27, and about two weeks later, everybody gathered for an award ceremony that made some people happy and a lot of people angry.

The part about happy and angry hasn't changed much, but everything else has. Now, several satellite festivals showcasing contemporary writing, non-nominated Russian shows, and even some foreign shows, run throughout the month of March before the main event

technically begins.

As for the main event, in reality it now runs for nearly two and a half months. This year the first nominated show was performed on Jan. 28. That is because the schedules of many of Russia's opera and ballet theaters won't allow them to travel to Moscow for the short period of the festival. Nominated opera and ballet productions have performed throughout February and March.

Even the drama segment spilled over the old boundaries this year. Kama Ginkas' production of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" for St. Petersburg's Alexandrinsky Theater performed Wednesday and will be on again Thursday evening, a full week before we would traditionally have expected it.

The Golden Mask is always something of a numbers game, and once again there are plenty of numbers to be added and subtracted.

A total of 30 productions are nominated for awards in the musical categories, encompassing opera, ballet, contemporary dance and musicals. Twenty-six are nominated in the fields of drama and puppetry. Counting all individuals in the running for personal awards, a total of 203 nominations involving 11 cities were made. Moscow and St. Petersburg artists drew the lion's share of nominations, but Perm, Yekaterinburg, Yaroslavl and Novosibirsk are up for multiple citations.

All nominations are drawn from productions that opened during the 2011-12 season.

The field of drama, which we shall now look at in some detail, is as wide open as it has ever been. Once again, it is split into two categories: large-form and small-form shows. There are nine nominations in each category, while 16 directors will vie for the best director nod. Konstantin Bogomolov, with productions of "Lear" for Priyut Komediانتov of St. Petersburg and "The Year I Was Not Born In" for the Tabakov Theater, is nominated twice.

Conspicuous in his absence among nominated directors is St. Petersburg's Lev Dodin, although there are numerous artists whom we see represented almost every year. They include Ginkas, Dmitry Krymov, Yevgeny Marcelli, Yury Pogrebnychko, Rimas Tuminas, Oleg Rybkin and Mikhail Bychkov.

Making his first appearance at the Golden Mask is the young St. Petersburg director Dmitry Volkostrelov. In recent years, his challenging, finely honed productions have garnered him a strong reputation. His production of Pavel Pryazhko's "Evil Girl" for the Bryantsev Young Spectator Theater of St. Petersburg was given one of the slots in the small form category. His fascinating, 15-minute production of Pryazhko's "Soldier" for Post Theater of St. Petersburg and Teatr.doc of Moscow is nominated in the Experiment category.

Ginkas, a perennial nominee for his work at Moscow's Young Spectator Theater, is nominated for the first time for his work outside his home theater. He mounted "Hedda Gabler" at the Alexandrinsky in the fall of 2011, creating a piece that is in many ways different from what we are used to seeing him do. It has a slick, European feel to it, which is surely due, in part, to the spectacular set by Sergei Barkhin (nominated as designer) and to the cool, even intellectual style of the St. Petersburg actors.

One of the most talked-about shows is Bogomolov's "Lear." This cross-dressing, modern-dress work features actress Roza Khairullina in the role of the old king who foolishly deconstructs his kingdom. Khairullina must be considered one of the front-runners for the Best Actress award.

Yevgeny Marcelli of the Volkov Theater in Yaroslavl presents his interpretation of the early Anton Chekhov play which is often denoted as "Without a Title," because when the manuscript was found after the writer's death it lacked a title page. Marcelli actually staged this play some 20 years ago, but has returned to it now in a completely new social and political age. This director's work is always eclectic and bold. Judging by the photographs circulated by the Golden Mask festival, this show will be no different.

Surely a sentimental favorite will be Rimas Tuminas' "Landing Stage" for the Vakhtangov Theater. A potpourri of various texts, it gave a large number of actors a chance to participate in a show dedicated to the theater's 90th anniversary in 2012. Like everything Tuminas has a hand in, it is a beautifully calibrated piece with stunningly attractive physical tableaux. Veteran actors Galina Konovalova and Yury Yakovlev are both up for awards, as is Tuminas.

Productions by two European directors are in the running for citations. The Swiss-born Matthais Langhoff's staging of "Sophocles. Oedipus the Tyrant" for the Saratov Youth Theater, and German-born Thomas Ostermeier's "Miss Julie" for Moscow's Theater of Nations, are both nominated in the large scale category.

Other shows of note include Dmitry Krymov's "Gorki-10" at Moscow's School of Dramatic Art, a radical and often deeply satirical look at some old Soviet-era plays; Viktor Ryzhakov's bold recalibration of "Pushkin's Little Tragedies" for Moscow's Satirikon Theater; and Oleg Rybkin's minimalist interpretation of "Alice's Trip to Switzerland," Lukas Barfuss' play about a young woman seeking to end her suffering through euthanasia, at the Krasnoyarsk Pushkin Theater.

For the first time, the festival includes nominations for dramatic actors in supporting roles, mixing both men and women. The initial nominees in this category are Yulia Marchenko in "Hedda Gabler," Natalya Tenyakova in "The Year I Was Not Born In," Svetlana Nemolyayeva in "Talents and Admirers" at Moscow's Mayakovsky Theater, and Lavrenty Sorokin in "August. Osage County" at the Novosibirsk Globus Theater.

Small is the key word in the field of puppetry this year.

The storied Obraztsov Puppet Theater of Moscow offers up a miniature production of "The Snowman," while "Emergency Help," Ilya Epelbaum and Maya Krasnopol'skaya's opera parody for Moscow's innovative Shadow Theater is performed for audiences of five to seven. "The Water Sprite Sveta from the Village of Peremilovo," although tiny in size, is the product of two theaters in two cities — the Puppet Format Theater of St. Petersburg and the Puppet Theater of Yaroslavl.

Moscow theaters dominate the Experiment category, with only Volkostrellov's "Soldier" coming from St. Petersburg. Even that show, however, is co-produced by Teatr.doc in Moscow. Teatr.doc's "BerlusPutin," an adaptation of Dario Fo's play "The Two-Headed Anomaly" is in the running, as is "Uzbek," Talgat Batalov's one-man show about

the difficulties faced by immigrants to Russia, co-produced by the Joseph Beuys Theater and the Sakharov Center.

Two shows combining dance, music and drama round out the Experiment nominees: "Full Moon" by Moscow's Territory Festival, and "The Story of a Soldier" by Moscow's TSEKH Festival with Club Guy and Roni of the Netherlands.

The Golden Mask Festival runs through April 15 at various venues in Moscow. See The Moscow Times' calendar listings for venues and times. Detailed show, schedule and ticket information available at www.goldenmask.ru Box office: +7 495-507-3553.

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