

# SHOSTAKOVICH & THE BLACK MONK

## A RUSSIAN FANTASY

**Created by James Glossman  
and Philip Setzer**

**Music Direction by  
Philip Setzer**

**Written and Directed by  
James Glossman**

*Produced by the Great Lakes  
Chamber Music Festival*

**Following the performance, please  
join Professor Simon Morrison  
for a conversation with Director  
James Glossman and violinist  
Philip Setzer.**

*This production was co-commissioned  
by the Great Lakes Chamber Music  
Festival, Princeton University Concerts,  
and Tanglewood Music Festival.*

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generous donations of Lizabeth and  
John Adams, Linda and Maurice Binkow,  
Aaron Egigian, The Maxine and Stuart  
Frankel Foundation and Linda George.*

### STARRING:

**LEN CARIOU**, *Dmitri Shostakovich*  
**JAY O. SANDERS**, *Josef Stalin*

### EMERSON STRING QUARTET

Eugene Drucker, *Violin*  
Philip Setzer, *Violin*  
Lawrence Dutton, *Viola*  
Paul Watkins, *Cello*

### MUSIC

Shostakovich Quartet No. 14 in F-sharp Major  
Gaetano Braga *Angel's Serenade*

### CAST

**Ali Breneman**, *Younger Woman*  
**Alex Glossman**, *Younger Man*  
**Evelyn McGee-Colbert**, *Middle Woman*  
**Paul Murphy**, *Older Man*  
**Linda Setzer**, *Older Woman*

### CREATIVE

James Glossman, *Writer/Director*  
Bettina P. Bierly, *Costume Designer*  
Julie H. Duro, *Lighting Designer*  
Carolyn Kelson, *Stage Manager*  
Jeff Knapp, *Multimedia Designer*  
Christopher & Justin Swader, *Scenic Designers*

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## FROM THE CREATORS

**Chekhov wrote: “When a person is born, he can embark on only one of three roads in life: if you go to the right, the wolves will eat you; if you go left, you’ll eat the wolves; if you go straight, you’ll eat yourself.” This is a perfect description of the life of Dmitri Shostakovich, as well as the character Kovrin in Chekhov’s story, “The Black Monk.”**

I didn’t know this Chekhov story until my friend, Gerard McBurney, mentioned it years ago during our work together with his brother, Simon, on another music/theater collaboration about Shostakovich: *The Noise of Time*. Gerard told me that Shostakovich loved the story and had long planned to write an opera based on it – a project that never came to fruition. I filed this information in the “that might be interesting to explore someday” part of my brain.

I have admired James Glossman’s work as a director, writer and actor for many years. In the course of our friendship, we’ve often talked about wanting to collaborate on something. Last year, I told him about “Shostakovich and The Black

Monk,” and he loved the idea of trying to create something together. Jim gives me much more credit than my role in this project warrants. I may have planted the seed, but he took that idea and wrote a brilliant script, masterfully interweaving Shostakovich’s life with the Chekhov story.

When I first read “The Black Monk,” I was struck by the fact that Chekhov refers to someone singing Braga’s “Angel’s Serenade” at a party. I also read that Shostakovich referred in a letter to “that Italian thing” in the slow movement of the 14th Quartet (this material returns near the end of the whole quartet). I discovered that he had made an arrangement of the Braga, which he clearly intended to incorporate into his opera. And then I thought of the swirling passages of fast notes in the 15th Quartet and realized: This music could represent The Black Monk. That was a key moment in the process of linking the composer’s music to Chekhov’s story.

In *The Noise of Time*, we performed the 15th Quartet. “Shostakovich and The Black Monk” features the 14th Quartet. We will

play the whole quartet in the course of the evening, but not in one stretch; the complete story of “The Black Monk” will also unfold, interspersed with other dramatic and musical elements. The first movement functions as an overture; the slow second movement as an accompaniment to Irina Shostakovich’s monologue, breaking off at the end of her spoken “aria.” The slow movement resumes later, near the end of the Chekhov story. The actors listen to the third movement for several minutes before the final dramatic action coincides with the nostalgic concluding measures of the quartet.

We perform the Braga in our own version for soprano and string quartet. Other excerpts from the Shostakovich string quartets are drawn upon to complement both stories – Shostakovich’s and Chekhov’s.

I tried carefully to weave those passages into the complex tapestry that Jim had created. Sometimes the music functions symbolically: for example, the three percussive chords from the 8th Quartet recur often in the early stages of the drama. According to cellist/conductor Mstislav Rostropovich and others, if a person who couldn’t be trusted entered a café or restaurant, someone would knock three times under the table – “Be careful what you say!” Elsewhere the music underscores the action, as it does in opera and film.

To the great composer, Dmitri Shostakovich: I hope we have managed, in our own modest and respectful way, to pay homage to the opera you dreamed of writing.

—Philip Setzer, Co-Creator and Violinist of the Emerson String Quartet © 2017



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**When Phil Setzer first approached me about collaborating on a music-theater piece for actors and the Emerson Quartet about Dmitri Shostakovich’s decades-long quest to create an opera from Anton Chekhov’s classic story, “The Black Monk,” I was, of course, immediately intrigued. I am deeply moved by Shostakovich’s quartets, and although I love and have as often as possible worked with Chekhov’s plays – both the full-length masterpieces as well as the sometimes-underappreciated, brilliant one-act comedies – it had been decades since I had read many of the stories. What I remembered of “The Black Monk” was a very 19th-Century tale of a seductively gothic atmosphere luring a promising academic into delusion and madness.**

What I found upon my return to this text was a sharp and deeply moving parable about freedom and conformity, love and fear, and the ruthlessly high cost of getting along by going along - making art and living life, and how hazardous the contradictions can grow. It is a narrative both deeply and profoundly unsettling, and at the same time thrillingly, even joyously theatrical in its exuberant embrace of the “highs” of creation and the “lows” of terror and of the unknown. For someone who has

been adapting and directing prose fiction for the stage for over 30 years, this piece seemed to practically leap off the page.

At the same time, as I began to enhance my general knowledge of Shostakovich’s life and career by beginning more thoroughly to investigate his personal narrative, decade by decade, from his growing fame in the late twenties and early thirties until his death in 1975, I became struck by just how closely the themes of Chekhov’s story seemed to both parallel and converse with the events and arc of the composer’s often direly threatened creative – and physical – life.

First the tremendous reception, both at home and abroad, to Shostakovich’s opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, helping to raise him to a suddenly new level of celebration and celebrity, of sky’s-the-limit artistic freedom... followed by the sudden and unexpected thunderbolt of the front page editorial in *Pravda*.

Rumored to have been written by Stalin himself – headed “Muddle, Not Music,” which condemned his work as “bourgeois formalism” – it was the sort of public words that often tended to cause artists in the Soviet Union to disappear, sometimes forever.

The opera was withdrawn everywhere. Shostakovich's commissions vanished, and he reportedly slept for some nights on his landing, in a coat, with a packed suitcase, waiting to be taken away to the Lubyanka prison by Stalin's secret police - just as friends of his had been so taken.

And yet, somehow, he survived.  
And kept composing.

He always kept in favor just enough with Stalin, and the Party, to be allowed to work, and to stay out of prison, while at the same time, subverting these strictures as best he could through his own apparently endless stubbornness and boundless wit. That is also what I found as I read Shostakovich's words, and especially his letters, to begin to get his voice in my ear. He was sometimes hopeful, sometimes despairing, but endlessly active and often very, very funny. Subversively funny. Both to creatively survive and, as needed, to dance his way around the Immovable Object: Josef Stalin, a man who lived to subvert the will of others. And to force them to define their creativity, their very lives, by the border walls he felt like building. And this seems like a story worth sharing as well, woven together with Chekhov's "ghost story" of well over a century ago;

not simply as an adaptation of Chekhov, nor as any sort of literal "biopic" about the life of Shostakovich, but rather as something more impressionistic, inspired by the sort of playful, speculative approach to historical "fictions" of writers like Tom Stoppard and Michael Frayn: *A Russian Fantasy*.

So we see Dmitri Shostakovich finally taking the chance, now that nothing can hurt him anymore, to tell us the tale of Chekhov's fraught hero trying to find his way through his present, oppressive life, to a brand new one, of either freedom or madness, depending on where one sits.

Shostakovich is assisted in telling his tale by an ensemble of actors and musicians.

But in every way possible, he will be stopped, stymied, disrupted, and blocked by the "shade" of Josef Stalin - who even though long-gone, seems still to have taken up permanent residence in the composer's imagination - and who is, as ever, quite determined to subvert the free artist's will, to control the story.

And so, tonight, can the artist subvert the subverter?

—James Glossman, Writer/Director © 2017

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## ABOUT THE MUSICIANS



### EMERSON STRING QUARTET

The Emerson String Quartet has amassed an unparalleled list of achievements over three decades: more than thirty acclaimed recordings, nine Grammys®, three Gramophone Awards, the Avery Fisher Prize, *Musical America's* “Ensemble

of the Year” and collaborations with some of the greatest artists of our time.

The 2016-17 season marked the Emerson Quartet’s 40th Anniversary, and highlights of this milestone year reflected all aspects

of the Quartet's venerable artistry with high-profile projects and collaborations, commissions and recordings. Universal Music Group reissued their entire Deutsche Grammophon discography in a 52-CD boxed set, and the Quartet released its latest album, *Chaconnes and Fantasias: Music of Britten and Purcell*, the first release on Universal Music Classics' new US classical record label, Decca Gold. The Quartet collaborated with illustrious soprano Renée Fleming at the Kennedy Center, Tanglewood and Walt Disney Concert Hall, performing works by Alban Berg and Egon Wellesz from their first collaborative recording, recently released on Decca. The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center programmed two celebratory concerts in October 2016: the Calidore Quartet teamed up with the Emerson for the Mendelssohn Octet, and the Emerson gave the New York City premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Shroud* (co-commissioned by The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center). Former

Emerson cellist David Finckel appeared as a special guest for Schubert's Quintet in C Major. In May 2017, acclaimed pianist Marc-André Hamelin joined the Quartet for a performance of the Brahms Quintet at Carnegie Hall.

Formed in 1976 and based in New York City, the Emerson was one of the first quartets whose violinists alternated in the first chair position. The Emerson continues its series at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. for its 38th season and is Quartet-in-Residence at Stony Brook University. In January 2015, the Quartet received the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award, Chamber Music America's highest honor, in recognition of its significant and lasting contribution to the chamber music field.

The Emerson Quartet has had a long relationship with Princeton University Concerts and we were pleased to commission this groundbreaking work.

## ABOUT THE CAST



### **JAMES GLOSSMAN**

**Writer / Director**

James Glossman has directed well over 200 plays, for professional theaters and educational programs across the United States, spanning works (among others) of William Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, Arthur Miller, David Mamet, Samuel Beckett, Sam Shepard, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Brian Friel, Athol Fugard, Stephen Sondheim, August Wilson, Oscar Wilde and Thornton Wilder, as well as new plays by emerging and established

playwrights. His productions of *Bluff* with John Astin have been seen across the United States, and his stagings of *The Value of Names*, starring Jack Klugman as a once-blacklisted actor, played in New York, New Jersey, and Los Angeles. His adaptation of Raymond Chandler's "noir" classic, *Trouble Is My Business*, received its world premiere in a sold-out run at Portland Stage, following an earlier benefit staging with David Strathairn at Shadowland Stages in Ellenville, New York, where he is Associate Director. He recently directed the first production in 50 years of Sheldon Harnick's "lost" musical comedy, *Smiling, the Boy Fell Dead*, with a cast led by Judy Kaye and Tony Roberts.



### **ALI BRENEMAN**

**Younger Woman**

Ali Breneman is thrilled to be a part of "Shostakovich and the Black Monk." She can be seen in the upcoming feature

*Nesting Dolls* and web series *Every Exit*. Past favorite credits include Iris in *Living on Love* with Stephanie Zimbalist, Inga in *Young Frankenstein*, and singing with the Blue Ash Montgomery Symphony Orchestra. Much love to the company, family, and friends.



## LEN CARIOU

**Dmitri Shostakovich**

Throughout an international career that spans close to 60 years, Len Cariou has distinguished himself as one of the great theater actors of his generation. He is a member of the American Theatre Hall of Fame, a three-time Tony Nominee, a premier interpreter of Sondheim and

a Tony-Award winner for his legendary performance in the title role of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. His recent off-Broadway solo show, *Broadway & The Bard*, was critically acclaimed. Over the past seven years, Cariou has endeared himself to an audience of millions around the world playing Henry “Pop” Reagan in the CBS hit series “Blue Bloods.” Cariou is a husband of 30 years, a proud father and grandfather, an inveterate gin rummy player and an avid golfer who dwells in possibility.



## EVELYN MCGEE- COLBERT

**Middle Woman**

Evelyn McGee-Colbert is delighted to be a cast member of “Shostakovich and the Black Monk.” She has been a long time fan of the Emerson String Quartet and it is a privilege to share the stage with

them. McGee-Colbert is a graduate of the University of Virginia and the Circle in the Square Theater School. She is a founding board member of the Montclair Film Festival and currently serves as the President of its Board of Directors. She is also an independent film producer and the Vice President of Spartina Productions. She lives in New Jersey with her husband and three children.



## ALEX GLOSSMAN

**Younger Man**

Alex Glossman is thrilled to be appearing with the Emerson String Quartet in “Shostakovich and the Black Monk.”

This is his first “Russian Fantasy,” but previous favorite roles include: Ken in *Red* (Shadowland Stages) and Robert in *Living on Love* (Seven Angels Theatre). Alex is also a writer, so look out for his two upcoming web series, *Every Exit*, and *Blocked*.



**PAUL  
MURPHY**  
Older Man

Paul Murphy's theater credits include Finnegan in *Finnegan's Wake*; Falstaff in *Merry Wives*; The Prince in *Jubilee*; Pseudolus in *A Funny Thing Happened*

*on the Way to the Forum*; 42 parts in *1000 Avant-Garde Plays*. NJ and Regional appearances include *Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!)*; Durwood Peach in *Landscape of the Body*; Bohr in *Copenhagen*; Karl in *The Good German*; The Dragon in Sheldon Harnick's *Dragons*; Mack Now in *Kick the Can*; Carr in *Travesties*; Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*. This is for Helen.



**JAY O.  
SANDERS**  
Josef Stalin

Jay O. Sanders just returned from a world tour of Richard Nelson's highly-acclaimed trilogy *The Gabriels: Election Year in the*

*Life of One Family* (also filmed for PBS). Sanders appears regularly in theater, film, and television, and has narrated a long list of documentaries. His own play, *Unexplored Interior*, centered on the Rwandan genocide, was recently the inaugural production of Washington D.C.'s Mosaic Theater.



**LINDA  
SETZER**  
Older Woman

Linda Setzer is delighted to appear in "Shostakovich and the Black Monk." Other work with James Glossman includes: *Old Flame* (Theatre for a New City), *Futebol*

(NYC Fringe Festival), *Bluff* (Boar's Head Theatre, Lansing), *Transit of Venus*, and *A Perfect Ganesh, Copenhagen, The Collection, Endgame, Travesties*, (Luna Stage, NJ). Linda's first career was calligraphy, which she taught at The New School in New York City.

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## ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

### **BETTINA P. BIERLY**

**Costume Designer**

Bettina Bierly is a Costume Designer/ Stylist/Dyer/Knitter and Lecturer. Formerly Costume Director for the New York City Opera, Ms. Bierly's work has been seen at Central City Opera, Bard Summerscape, Shadowland, the George Street Playhouse, Luna Stage, BAM, The Helen Hayes Theatre, and The Bickford Theatre, among others. Ms. Bierly has spoken at the Metropolitan Opera, FIT, Parson's School of Design, and The Juilliard School. Recent projects include costume work for NYC Ballet's Here/Now Festival and turning silk taffeta into dresses for the characters Eliza and Angelica for *Hamilton*. Upcoming projects include *Company and Summer and Smoke* for Farleigh Dickinson University. She is delighted to be collaborating with Director James Glossman once again.

### **JULIE H. DURO**

**Lighting Designer**

Julie Duro is delighted to be a part of "Shostakovich and The Black Monk." She has designed extensively for theatre, opera, and dance. Her theatre credits include *Not That Jewish* (Off Broadway), Olney Theatre, Riverside Theatre, Walnut Street Theatre, Florida Repertory Theatre, Paper Mill Playhouse, Westport Country Playhouse, and the Kennedy Center Jazz Program. Dance credits include Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Tulsa Ballet, Ohio Ballet, Australian Ballet, North Carolina Dance Theatre, and Mark Stuart Dance Theatre. Opera credits include Palm Beach Opera, Connecticut Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Opera International, Santa Fe Opera, Opera at University of Southern California, Dayton Opera, and Opera Illinois.

## CAROLYN KELSON

### Stage Manager

Carolyn Kelson is a theatrical, special event and corporate event stage manager. Her Broadway credits include *Matilda the Musical*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Boeing Boeing*, *Avenue Q*, and *Rent*. Recent events include JFA Great Night in Harlem, the 9/11 Memorial Museum Gala, TED@Tommy Hillfiger. Corporate clients include Pepsi, Dell, Subway, Genentech. Carolyn is thrilled to be working on “Shostakovich and The Black Monk.”

## JEFF KNAPP

### Multimedia Design

Jeff Knapp is the resident sound designer for Shadowland Theatre in Ellenville, New York, Dreamcatcher Rep in Summit, NJ and Writer’s Theatre of New Jersey (Madison). His work has been heard from Florida to Maine with stops in between; mostly in New Jersey and New York. Detroit is the furthest west he’s worked. He lives with his wife and their three kids in New Jersey.

## CHRISTOPHER & JUSTIN SWADER

### Scenic Designers

Christopher & Justin Swader are New York City-based scenic designers. Past and recent collaborations include work with Two River Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem, Lincoln Center Education, Luna Stage, Abingdon Theatre Company, SpeakEasy Stage Company, ArtsEmerson, Company One, Shadowland Stages, 3LD, The New School for Drama, National Black Theatre, La MaMa, Park Avenue Armory, Trusty Sidekick, Mason Holdings, and The Eugene O’Neill Theater Center. They are graduates of Ball State University. For more information on them visit [cjswaderdesign.com](http://cjswaderdesign.com).