

For immediate release: Wednesday 21 June 2017

Smile upon Us, Lord
based on novels by Grigory Kanovich
Vakhtangov State Academic Theatre of Russia

**Barbican Theatre, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London,
EC2Y 8DS**

Wednesday 28 February–Saturday 3 March 2018
Press performance: Wednesday 28 February, 7pm

Following the sell-out run of *Eugene Onegin* in 2015, Vakhtangov State Academic Theatre of Russia return to the Barbican with a new production, *Smile upon Us, Lord*, adapted from two novels by Lithuanian-born writer, Grigory Kanovich.

Written in the late 80s post-Soviet era and inspired by the real-life stories Kanovich collected while researching the history of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, *Smile upon Us, Lord* is a tale of three unremarkable men in the later stages of their lives who embark on an epic journey from their shtetl to the city of Vilnius.

Each has his own reason for undertaking the journey. Efraim Dudak, an elderly stone-cutter, travels to see his son who is imprisoned in Vilnius awaiting trial for attempting to assassinate the Governor General. Schmucl Sender, a water carrier, believes that a letter from his son in America awaits him in Vilnius and Avner Rozental, a formerly prosperous store keeper fallen on hard times, persuades them to take him along for the ride.

The trio encounter various perils along the way, which prefigure those facing European Jews not far into the future. As they approach the end of their journey and glimpse the city their discourse becomes more plangent and philosophical.

At times fantastical and dreamlike, at others expressive and skilfully comic, this image-rich drama illuminates the Jewish experience in the first half of the 20th century. Underscored with a rich musicality and theatrically inventive settings that transform the everyday to the universal, *Smile upon Us, Lord* explores the search for belonging, the need for family and identity and celebrates the indefatigability of the human spirit with its capacity for love, compassion and friendship.

Smile upon Us, Lord features an all-star Russian cast including Sergei Makovetsky, Vladimir Simonov and Alexey Guskov, familiar to London audiences from their performances in *Eugene Onegin* at the Barbican and *Uncle Vanya* in the West End. The 40-plus ensemble is led by Vakhtangov's esteemed Artistic Director, Rimas Tuminas, whose previous productions have received numerous accolades and 5 star reviews.

"Tableaux of striking beauty and grace"
New York Times

"A dark sorrowful lament with moments of piercing and poetic imagery"
Boston Globe

Smile upon Us, Lord is performed in Russian with English surtitles

Journalists please note: There is an opportunity to see *Smile upon Us, Lord* in Moscow, prior to its Barbican run. Please contact the Barbican's Communications office for more information.

Toni Racklin, Head of Theatre at the Barbican, said:

"It is with great pleasure that we welcome back Vakhtangov State Academic Theatre of Russia after their wonderful production of Eugene Onegin in 2015. We thank Oksana Nemchuk and ArtsBridge for bringing this esteemed company to London with a new piece of striking beauty and originality. Smile upon Us, Lord, promises Barbican audiences the opportunity to experience Vakhtangov's trademark theatrical inventiveness and impeccable ensemble playing which illuminate this deeply poignant human story."

Rimas Tuminas said of *Smile upon Us, Lord*:

"This is an eternal theme. It is clear that there is no Promised Land, but there is something sacred for everybody. There is a world created for us, there is life, and all of us are eager to live. We have become cosmopolitans, always travelling somewhere, not realising where and why, but knowing we should go. Each time preparing for a trip, even for a short one, we believe in finding something better at the end of the journey. The road purifies us. 'Smile upon us, Lord' is the road towards a smile. We'll share a cart, one cart for all of us"

Vakhtangov's irresistible productions of *Eugene Onegin* and *Anna Karenina*, as well as Moscow Art Theatre's famed *Cherry Orchard*, can be seen as part of the Afternoon Arts: Stage Russia cinema screenings this autumn. For more information click here:

Vakhtangov State Academic Theatre of Russia is located in the centre of Moscow's Arbat (Old) Street. Beloved by generations of Muscovites the Vakhtangov Theatre has become the cultural hub of the central heritage district of Moscow. The creative life of Vakhtangov Theatre is inseparable from ancient Russian culture but at the same time it sets its gaze on the future. While committed to the legacy of its founder, Evgeny Vakhtangov, the company's work is alive to the challenges of modern-day life and its ambition is to deal with complex moral issues whilst maintaining a strong theatrical tradition to stir deep human feelings in its audiences.

ENDS

Press information

For further information please contact:

Bridget Thornborrow, PR Consultant, 07802 166594 or bridget.thornborrow@barbican.org.uk

Freddie Todd Fordham, Communications Officer for Theatre and Dance, 020 7382 7399 or freddie.todd-fordham@barbican.org.uk

Public information

Box office: 0845 120 7511
www.barbican.org.uk/theatre

Listings information

Smile upon Us, Lord

Vakhtangov State Academic Theatre of Russia
based on novels by Grigory Kanovich
Russia

Directed by Rimas Tuminas

Set design by Adomas Jacovskis

Costumes by Aleksandra Jacovskyte

Music by Faustas Latenas

Wed 28 Feb–Sat 3 Mar 2018

Barbican Theatre

7pm

3 hours 20 mins/including an interval

£16–100 plus booking fee *

Includes a limited number of premium seats at £100 *

Age guidance: 14+

Press performance: Wed 28 Feb 2018, 7pm

Presented by the Barbican

Produced by Oksana Nemchuk in association with ArtsBridge

#Smileuponus

Barbican newsroom

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communications team's contact details are listed on our website at www.barbican.org.uk/news/home

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over 1.1 million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas One, Two and Three, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, foyers and public spaces, a library, Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue Entertainment](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). International Associates are [Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam](#), [New York Philharmonic](#), [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#), [Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig](#) and [Jazz at Lincoln Center](#).

Find us on [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)