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Underground Belarus Free Theatre Makes Area Debut

On the 10th anniversary of Anatoly Krasovskaya and Victor Gonchar's disappearance, play based on real events has U.S. premiere at Davis Performing Arts Center

Sept. 1, 2009 — Washington, D.C. — The Georgetown University Theater and Performance Studies Program, in association with Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company and in cooperation with the We Remember Civil Initiative, presents the internationally acclaimed **Belarus Free Theatre** at the Davis Performing Arts Center's Devine Studio Theatre, located on GU's main campus, on **Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 15 and 16, 2009 at 7:30 p.m.** Effectively banned in its home country, this underground troupe from Minsk, Belarus will perform the **area premiere of "Generation Jeans" on Sept. 15**, a freedom fighter's semi-autobiographical monologue which details growing up as a member of the counterculture that regarded jeans and Western pop music as a symbol of rebellion. On **Sept. 16**, the company performs the **U.S. premiere of "Discover Love,"** based on the true story of Irina Krasovskaya, whose husband Anatoly, a businessman who supported the Belarus opposition movement, was kidnapped and murdered. The performance takes place exactly 10 years after Anatoly and Victor Gonchar, the Vice-Speaker of the Belarusian Parliament, disappeared on Sept. 16, 1999. Irina, who is now based in Washington, D.C., co-founded We Remember, a civil initiative that disseminates information about politically motivated disappearances of Belarusian citizens and informs the world community about the situation. A memorial reception organized by Irina Krasovskaya follows the Sept. 16 premiere.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity to introduce the Georgetown community and D.C. audiences to two urgent works from a world-class company doing theater that couldn't matter more," says Davis Performing Arts Center Artistic Director Derek Goldman.

Since its founding in 2005 in Europe's last surviving dictatorship, Belarus Free Theatre has been giving memorable performances in apartments, bars, and other private locations, alerting audiences to the location of performances and time — often the middle of the day — through text messages and e-mail. The husband-and-wife team of Nikolai Khalezin and Natalya Koliada and director Vladimir Scherban created the company as a means to resist government censorship and have garnered praise from around the world for their powerful message and visceral, dynamic aesthetic. "Drama doesn't come more urgently political than in the work of the Belarus Free Theatre," noted The Times. Renowned playwright Tom Stoppard has praised their "marvelous work," noting that "What I saw in Minsk is much closer to a true theatre, to its sources, to its true objective," and Nobel Prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter has said, "They're bringing back the essence meaning of the theatre."

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Described as a love story, "Discover Love" explores the reflections of a woman who finds out her husband has been kidnapped and murdered. Following the initial shock of the tragedy, her thoughts turn to words left unsaid, dreams unrealized. The work intermingles the experience of the widow Irina Krasovskaya with that of similar stories of women from Asia, South America and Latin America. For "Discover Love" and the troupe's previous activities, Belarus Free Theatre received the French Republic Human Rights Prize in 2007, marking the first time in the history of the prize that it was awarded to a cultural institution. Collection of materials for the piece took nine years, and the play launched an artistic campaign to support the UN Convention against enforced disappearances in the world.

Both "Generation Jeans" and "Discover Love" are underscored by a soundtrack from DJ Laurel (Lavr Berzhanin) and performed in Russian with subtitles.

Sept. 15, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. / *Generation Jeans*

Sept. 16, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. / *Discover Love*

**Davis Performing Arts Center, Devine Studio Theatre
(37th and O Streets, NW – Washington, D.C.)**

Tickets are \$12 general; \$10 faculty/staff/senior (65 or older); and \$5 student. To order, visit

<http://performingarts.georgetown.edu> or call (202) 687-ARTS (2787).

The performances are offered in association with the world premiere of "ECLIPSED" at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, based during the Liberian civil war in 2003. Woolly Mammoth will host a special post-show discussion titled "From Liberia to Belarus: Theatre for Human Rights" following the 8 p.m. performance of "ECLIPSED" on Sept. 9 with Georgetown University Theater and Performance Studies Program Director Maya Roth. "ECLIPSED," running at Woolly Mammoth through September 27, was written by Global Tolerance Award-winning Danai Gurira ("In the Continuum"). More information is available at www.woollymammoth.net.

The Georgetown University Theater and Performance Studies Program integrates creative and critical inquiry, emphasizing artistic excellence, interdisciplinary learning, socially-engaged performance, and the spirit of collaboration. Now offering a dynamic major in Theater and Performance Studies, the Program features a nationally-recognized faculty, including a number of the field's leading scholar/artists, and many of the region's leading professional theater practitioners. One of the country's only undergraduate programs in Theater and Performance Studies, the fast-growing program has rapidly attracted significant national attention for its distinctive curriculum, reflecting the political and international character of Georgetown, as well as for its commitment to social justice, and its high-quality, cutting-edge student production seasons. A partial and rapidly growing list of theatrical luminaries who have had sustained contact with Georgetown students in the Davis Center includes: Theodore Bikel, Irina Brown, Dan Conway, Nilo Cruz, Peter DiMuro, David Dower, Joe Dowling, Olympia Dukakis, David Edgar, Rick Fouchoux, Michael Friedman, Marcus Gardley, Ed Gero, Danny Hoch, David Henry Hwang, Moises Kaufman, Liz Lerman, Emily Mann, Sister Helen Prejean, Heather Raffo, Clint Ramos, Stephen Richard, Ari Roth, Christopher Sivertsen, Molly Smith, Tony Taccone, Irina and Paata Tsikurishvili, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Charles Randolph Wright, Karen Zacarias, and Mary Zimmerman.

Now in its 30th season, **Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company** continues to hold its place at theatre's leading edge. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Howard Shalwitz and Managing Director Jeffrey Herrmann, Woolly Mammoth is acknowledged as "Washington's most daring theatre company" (*The New York Times*), as a regional and national leader in the development of new plays, and as one of the best known and most influential small theatres in America. Woolly Mammoth has gained this reputation by holding fast to its unique mission:

...to ignite an explosive engagement between theatre artists and the community by developing, producing and promoting new plays that explore the edges of theatrical style and human experience, and by implementing new ways to use the artistry of theatre to serve the people of Greater Washington, DC.

Activities of the civil initiative **We Remember** have contributed to creation of the Commission on Enforced Disappearances in Belarus of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The outcome of the activities of the Commission was the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that banned Belarusian high-ranking officials listed in the report as individuals involved in disappearances from entering the countries of the European Union and the United States. More than 200,000 copies of the report were distributed in Belarus by supporters of Civil Initiative We Remember. In 2004, the Belarus Democracy Act was adopted. This document that refers to Civil Initiative We Remember as an organization apt for international interaction was approved by the U.S. Congress and signed by President George W. Bush.

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