

LEWIS CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Chair Michael Cadden
 Executive Director Marion Friedman Young

PROGRAM IN THEATER

Director	Jane Cox
Producer	Darryl Waskow
Production Manager	Chloë Z. Brown
Production Stage Manager	Carmelita Becnel
Resident Musical Director/Composer	Vince di Mura
Assistant Stage Manager	Rob Del Colle
Costume Shop Manager	Keating Helfrich
Costume Shop Assistant	Julia Kosanovich
Costume Technician	Caitlin Brown
Technical Director	Timothy Godin
Assistant Technical Director	Jesse Froncek
Theater Technician	Torrey Drum
Lighting & Stage Supervisor	Matt Pilsner
Prop Master	Alexandra Geiger
Scenic Artist	Melissa Riccobono
Master Carpenter	Michael Smola
Sound Engineer	Kay Richardson
Academic Support	Joseph Fonseca
Director of Communications	Steve Runk
Visual Communications Specialist	Tracy Patterson
Web & Multimedia Strategist	Justin Goldberg
Communications Assistant	Hope VanCleaf
Communications Associate	Jaclyn Sweet
Multimedia Specialist	Zohar Lavi-Hasson

For more information about the Lewis Center for the Arts visit arts.princeton.edu

Or contact: Director of Communications, Steve Runk at srunk@princeton.edu

UPCOMING LEWIS CENTER EVENTS

Tune Every Heart: The Princeton and Slavery Project in Song

Students from the Lewis Center's Atelier Program share a staged reading of original musical theater works inspired by the history revealed through the Princeton & Slavery Project. Free and open to the public, but seating is limited.

January 13 at 1:00 & 5:00 PM

Faculty Room at Nassau Hall on Princeton University Campus



A SENIOR THESIS
 EXPLORATION

LETTERS & DREAMS

by Fiona Bell '18

JANUARY 11 & 13, 2018
 8 p.m.

JANUARY 12, 2018
 4:30 p.m.

JANUARY 14, 2018
 1 p.m.

Class of 1970 Theatre,
 Whitman College

arts.princeton.edu

An Exploration of **LETTERS & DREAMS**

by Fiona Bell '18

Two young poets, Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetaeva, begin their careers in the cafés of Imperial Russia. As the twentieth century unfolds, their relationship evolves through a series of poems, letters, and dreams.

CAST

Anna Akhmatova Julia Mosby '19*
Marina Tsvetaeva Fiona Bell '18*
Ensemble Member Billie Runions '20
Ensemble Member Ayo Foster-McCray '20
Ensemble Member Minh-Thi Nguyen '21

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director..... Jhor van der Horst '19*
Music Composer Shruthi Rajasekar '18
Costume Designer..... Emma Claire Jones '18
Lighting Designer Hannah Semmelhack '20*
Stage Manager Scooter Liapin '20
Playwriting Advisor Robert Sandberg
Slavic Department Advisor Olga Hasty

** Denotes a certificate student in the Program in Theater*

Run time: Approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

Please turn off all electronic devices including cellular phones, beepers and watches for the duration of the performance. Please refrain from text messaging during the performance. The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

A NOTE FROM FIONA

Much of the Soviet poetry we read today comes from the realm of the subconscious. Anna Akhmatova wrote her most famous poem, "Requiem," over multiple decades by composing small sections of the poem, asking her close friends to memorize them, and then destroying the scraps of paper for fear of arrest. Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetaeva lived and composed in a precarious political climate, where their choice of confidantes could mean life or death.

Within this environment, the two women developed a decades-long friendship. Their bond was based on a great respect for each other's

poetry, as well as a sense of female camaraderie in the male world of poetry. The poets met just once: in Moscow, in 1941. They spent an evening in a room, and no one knows what they discussed. Tsvetaeva committed suicide later that year. In 1961, Akhmatova penned a poem about her departed friends; in it, she imagines receiving another letter from Tsvetaeva in the mail. This play represents the true story of a friendship between two female artists.

I wrote *Letters and Dreams* in the Summer of 2017, drawing inspiration from my visits to the poets' apartments in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Much of what you will hear are the words of the poets themselves, which I have translated from Russian; the rest is my own imagining. I would like to thank Professor Olga Hasty for advising me on the scholarly aspect of this project, and Professor Bob Sandberg for his insights as my playwriting advisor. Thank you for helping me find the balance between historical integrity and artistic freedom. Another thanks to Jhor van der Horst, the director, who has given this play new life in ways I could have never imagined.

More than anything, I am excited to share these two incredible poets with an American audience. Tsvetaeva wrote: "When somebody dreams of us together – that is when we shall meet." As you watch, then, you yourselves bring this meeting to life. Enjoy!

A NOTE FROM JHOR

I keep being amazed by the layers of this story. On the one hand, it is a story about the personal. It is a story about two individuals with their own wonderfully idiosyncratic ways of coping with the world around them. It's about people and their psychological defense mechanisms. Simultaneously it's a story about friendship. One which doesn't exist because of mere practical benefit but which is based on a deep sense of connectedness. On the other hand, it is a story about life in Imperial and Soviet Russia, told from two perspectives, those of two incredible poets, that sheds light on struggles which female poets faced.

I am humbled by the respect between Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva. A respect that seems to be founded in a deep understanding between the two. Even though they might experience the world in wholly different ways and often criticize each other because of this, they never cease to recognize that they walk a similar path. A deep respect flows from this understanding that, in the end, they are simply two people figuring out how to live an unforgiving life. After all, they are just people.

As I mentioned, it is a story with incredible complexity, a story in which one can recognize many different themes. I am thankful for the chance to highlight some of the themes that I myself connected with, and hope that this production offers an audience something to dream about. I would like to thank Professor Bob Sandberg, Elena Aroaz and Jane Cox for all the support; be it with this production, be it with life in general.

Yet, most importantly, thank you Fiona Bell for creating this work, and for going on this journey together. I am incredibly happy to be a part of this wonderful production that you gave life to.

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Eliot Callon, Elena Aroaz, Jane Cox, Daniel Krane, Susan Marshall, Mary-Sue Gregson, Pavel Zustiak, Katherine Hill Reischl, and Emily Pauls.