Black Snow

Department of Theatre and Dance

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/theatre-dance-performances-2022-fall

Part of the Theatre and Performance Studies Commons
Black Snow
Keith Reddin’s dramatization of the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov

October 15 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22, 2022
Alexander Kasser Theater
Montclair State University
Black Snow

Keith Reddin’s dramatization of the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov

Director Debbie Saivetz
Scenic Designer J. Eric Harriz
Costume Designer Leon Dobkowski
Lighting Designer Chris Brusberg
Sound Designer Germán Martínez
Hair/Makeup Designer Krisza Hajek
Collaborator/Acting Coach Ellen Lancaster
Movement Director Virginia Scott
Vocal Coach Sarah Koestner
Production Stage Manager Lillian Schweikert

Cast (in order of appearance)
Sergei Leontievich Maxudov .............................................................. Alex Eilen
Illya Ivanovich Rudolfi, Baklazhanov, Bakhthin, Bombardov ...................... Jake Declan
Friend One, Waiter, Soldier, Toropetskaya’s Assistant, Props Man ............ Terry Nickerson
Friend Two, Yegor, Soldier, Actor ...................................................... Elijah Davis
Friend Three, Old Woman at Rudolfi’s House, Phyllip Philippovich’s Assistant, Molière, Actor ................. Sydney Coleman
Kerenin/Aloysius, Gavril, Old Man with Bucket, Actor ........................... Isaiah Robinson
Young Man, Strizh .............................................................................. Trent Greenwell
Konkin, Phyllip Philippovich, Patrikeyev .............................................. Emery Myers
Party Host, Ivan Vasilievich ................................................................ KB Merkel
Likostav, Musician ............................................................................. Donovan Lee
Ismail Alexandrovich Bondarevsky, Ilchin, Actor ................................... Desmond Jackson
Tango Dancer, Natasya Ivanovna, Mother, Actor .................................... Jessica Sconfienza
Eulampia Petrovna, Old Woman Outside Ivan’s House, Shakespeare, Stage Manager ................................................................... Diana Maldonado
Anna, Ludmilla Pryakhina .................................................................... Sofia Melfi
Polixena Toropetzkaia, Sophocles, Actor ............................................ Elise Bednar

Other roles played by members of the company.
Ensemble Jack Brustowicz, Nala McCalla

Presented by permission from Dramatists Play Service, Inc.
Duration: Two hours and 20 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.
In consideration of both audiences and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in the theater.
Time and Place

**Time:** 1920s–1930s

**Place:** Moscow, Russia: Sergei Maxudov’s apartment; the offices, rehearsal studios, and stages of the Independent Theatre.

Program Notes

“Manuscripts don’t burn.”

This quote, by Mikhail Bulgakov, rings extremely true in this novel-turned-play, *Black Snow*, adapted by Keith Reddin. Here, Bulgakov satires his own experiences as a playwright in Russia during the 1920 and ’30s. He began writing the novel in 1936–37, then abandoned it and was unable to complete it before his death in 1940. Portraying himself through the main character, Sergei, Bulgakov satirizes his experience working with the Independent Theatre (the Moscow Art Theatre) and Ivan Vasilievich (Konstantin Stanislavsky). In the 1920s, the Moscow Art Theatre was struggling financially due to its practice of performing old classics. They needed new works that reflected the changing politics of the time, and Bulgakov was one of the new authors selected to have his works staged. *Black Snow* combines his experiences as a new playwright trying to stage his first play, *Days of the Turbins*, in 1926, with the drawn-out rehearsal process of one of his later plays, *Molière*, from 1931 to 1936.

Bulgakov was trying to stage his play in Soviet-era Russia during the totalitarian regime of Joseph Stalin. Many authors were censored, imprisoned, exiled, and executed at this time as any literature against the state was banned, and Bulgakov was no exception. Although wildly successful, Bulgakov’s early plays (including *Days of the Turbins*) were banned and removed from the stage in 1929. After this ban, he was never able to stage another play, largely because of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, who worked hand in hand with Stalin and the Russian police. He was repeatedly bashed in the press for writing plays with “anti-Soviet” leanings which, however true, hurt these works in the public eye. Once Bulgakov’s works were banned from the stage, they would not be published until the 1960s. *Black Snow* encourages us to reflect on commercialization and censorship in art, a struggle that continues to this day.

—Bailey Udin, Dramaturg

Content Warning: Please note that *Black Snow* deals with potentially triggering topics, both physically and verbally, in a comedic fashion. These include suicide, self-harm, and emotional manipulation.

Please scan the code below to access more background information about *Black Snow* and the real people/places it is about.
College of the Arts
Daniel Gurskis | Dean
Ronald L. Sharps | Associate Dean
Christine Lemesianou | Associate Dean
Linda D. Davidson | Assistant Dean
Zacrah S. Battle | College Administrator
Christopher Kaczmarek | Chairperson, Department of Art and Design
Anthony Mazzocchi | Director, John J. Cali School of Music
Keith Strudler | Director, School of Communication and Media
Randy Mugleston | Chairperson, Department of Theatre and Dance
Patricia Piroh | Director, Broadcast and Media Operations
Megan C. Austin | Director, University Galleries

College of the Arts Performance Operations
J. Ryan Graves | Director
Andrew Dickerson | Production Manager
Colin Van Horn | Technical Director
Kevin Johnson | Senior Production Engineer
Gene Lotito | CART Facilities Director
Laurel Brolly | Business Administrator
Robert Hermda | Audience Services Director
William Collins, Maureen Grimaldi | House Managers
Jeff Lambert Wingfield | Box Office Manager
Yazeed Alomar, Jabob Batory, Shannon Mulrane, Martin Pyda, Eliezer Ramirez, Katya Reyes, Susanne Oyedeli | Box Office Lead Associates
Susan R. Case | Program Copy Editor
Bart Solenthaler | Program Layout Design

Production Staff
Heather Benton | Coordinator of Acting
MyoT Stay | Coordinator of Design, Technology, and Management
Peter J. Davis | Production Manager
Cara Scalera | Assistant Production Manager
Cyndi Kumar | Production Associate
Jordan Conklin-Yousei | Production Office Assistant
Lisa Grimes | Social Media and Promotion Manager
Will Collins | House Manager
Erhard Rom | Scenic Design Mentor
Benjamin Merrick | Technical Director
Daniel Graham | Assistant Technical Director
Daniel Haussler | Carpenter
Robert Dietze | Stage Carpenter Mentor
Jeanette Meises | Scene Charge Artist
Alison Merrick | Props Supervisor
Adam Rigg | Costume Design Mentor
Kaitie Adams | Hair/Makeup Design Mentor
Judith Evans | Costume Shop Supervisor
Jeanette Aultz | Assistant Costume Shop Supervisor
Amanda Phillips Balingit, Arden Donnelly, Katie Pippin | Drapers
Marlene Olson Hamm | Wardrobe Supervisor
Rick Sordelet | Fight Director/Intimacy Coach
Donna Scopo | Mental Health Consultant
Nick Kolin | Lighting Design Mentor
Osman M. Morales | Head Electrician
Zachary Brienza | Electrician
Kim O’Loughlin | Sound Design Mentor
Daniel Gonko | Head Sound Technician
Steven Brown | Sound Technician
MyoT Stay | Stage Management Mentor

Staff for Black Snow
Jared Preston | Assistant Director
Bailey Udin | Dramaturg
Valentina Cannao, Olivia M. Buonsante, Rebecca O’Neill | Assistant Set Designers
Sofia Dietze | Assistant Costume Designer
Julyzza Santiago | Assistant Hair/Makeup Designer
Ryan Randazzo | Assistant Lighting Designer
Lauren Bonavitacola | Head Electrician
Sydney Cheplic | Assistant Head Electrician
Winnie Ng Zhen | Practical Specialist
Jack Wyrsch | Assistant Sound Designer
Alison Merrick | Props Master
Julian Orozco | Lighting Programmer
Daniel DaSilva | Light Board Operator
Levi Morici | Deck Electrician
Nick Caburis | Sound A1
Anastasia Swan | Sound A2
Natalie Geoghegan | Wardrobe Head
Ram Patel, Eric Taylor | Production Assistants
Ren Krieger, Samara Lee, Griffin O’Connor | Assistant Stage Managers

Special Thanks to:
Peter Bower, Director of Bands, Columbia High School, Maplewood, NJ
Anna Chibisova, Russian Language Consultant, Montclair State University
Drew University, Department of Theatre and Dance

Find us on Facebook, @peakperfs, @peakperfs
Debbie Saivetz (Director) has directed and developed new plays at New York, regional, and international theaters including the Public, the Foundry, Fulcrum, Clubbed Thumb, Rattlestick, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Ma-Yi Theater Company, INTAR, American Lyric Theater, the Lark, the Playwrights’ Center, Hartford Stage, the Goodman, the Guthrie, Long Wharf, and Seattle Rep. Her directing credits include Sarah DeLappe’s *The Wolves* (Pace Performing Arts); Stephanie Fleischmann’s *Sound House*, inspired by British electronic composer and inventor Daphne Oram (New Georges); the New York premiere of Javier Malpica’s *Papá está en la Atlántida* (Working Theater); the Mexican premiere of Sarah Ruhl’s *La Casa Limpia* (Teatro Helénico, Mexico City); Verónica Musalem’s *Rebanadas de vida* (Lab Trece, Mexico City); and Ruhl’s *Eurídice* (La Casa de los Teatros, Oaxaca, Mexico). Saivetz is a member of SDC, AEA, and the National Alliance of Acting Teachers. She is a Drama League Directing Fellow, a New Georges Affiliated Artist, an alumna of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab and WP Directors’ Forum, and was a resident director at New Dramatists.

J. Eric Harriz (Scenic Designer) has worked as a set designer for film, television, theater, and dance for the last 37 years. His work in theater and dance has been presented at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, the Triad Theater, and the Joyce Theater in New York City, the Ballet De Monterrey in Monterrey, Mexico, Theater Artaud in San Francisco, and many others. Harriz has designed for ABC, CBS, and PBS and earned two Emmys for his collaboration with Boyd Dumrose on the daytime dramas *All My Children* and *The City*. Harriz was nominated for the Bay Area’s Isadora Duncan Dance Award for the Chen and Dancers’ production of *Transparent Hinge*. He designed the scenery for the Off-Broadway production of *Boobs, The Musical!* starring Gennifer Flowers based on the songs of Ruth Wallace.

Leon Dobkowski (Costume Designer) has design credits including The Muny (St. Louis Theatre Circle Award *Seussical* and *The Wiz*), Paper Mill Playhouse, Maltz Jupiter Theatre, Theatre Under the Stars, Weston Playhouse, Irish Repertory Theatre, George Street Playhouse, Yale Repertory Theatre, Pittsburgh CLO, Music Theatre of Wichita, Engeman Theater, Feld Entertainment’s Disney Live, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Epic Theatre Ensemble, Penguin Repertory, Westchester Broadway, New York Musical
Festival (Outstanding Costume Design, *Claudio Quest*), and TheaterWorks Hartford (CT Critics Choice Award nomination, *The Legend of Georgia McBride*). He holds a BA from Montclair State University and an MFA from Yale School of Drama. LeonDobkowski.com @MrLeonD

**Chris Brusberg** (Lighting Designer) is a lighting designer based in New York City. Brusberg has worked on more than 175 productions over the past 15 years in dance, opera, and theater. Select design credits include Tri-Cities Opera, Annapolis Opera, Syracuse Opera, EMERGE125 (NYC), Cherry Arts (Ithaca), Wolftrap/NOI (DC), Dance Place (DC), New Rep Theatre, Lyric Stage Company of Boston, Company One, Manhattan School of Music. Brusberg holds an MFA from the University of Maryland. ctblighting.com.

**Germán Martínez** (Sound Designer), a proud son of immigrant parents, is a New York City/New Jersey–based sound designer. Martínez is the current eastern representative for the TSDCA (Theatrical Sound Designer and Composers Association), and an alum of Montclair State University (Class of 2018). His work has been featured at Williamstown Theatre Festival, MCC, American Repertory Theater, Repertorio Español, GALA Hispanic, George Street Playhouse, Two River Theater, and Trinity Rep. Martínez made his recent Broadway debut on *Into the Woods* at the St. James and has completed his first Broadway play, *The Piano Lesson*. Instagram: @GermanTheSoundDesigner

**Kriszta Hajek** (Hair/Makeup Designer) is a senior graduating in December in the BFA Design, Technology, and Management program concentrating in Hair and Makeup Design. Recent designs include *Head over Heels* (MSU studio production, spring 2022), *As You Like It* (MSU main stage, fall 2021), *Top Girls* (MSU virtual, spring 2021), *Working: The Musical* (MSU virtual, fall 2020), and *Urinetown* (MSU main stage, fall 2019).

**Ellen Lancaster** (Collaborator/Acting Coach) is very happy to be working with Debbie Saivetz again. Prior collaborations include *JON, In the Red And Brown Water, Orlando,* and *We Are Proud to Present*. Lancaster is an actor who has worked on Broadway and in television and film. She is loves working with students at MSU.

**Virginia Scott** (Movement Director) directs and teaches physical theater. She directs the Commedia Company and Some Clowns, performing original commedia and clown shows respectively. Most recently she directed an original clown show with the
third-year MFA students at ACT at the Strand Theater in San Francisco and *Waiting for Godot* at SUNY Purchase. Scott teaches clown at MSU and teaches/has taught at schools such as Brooklyn College (MFA), the Juilliard School, and Tisch at New York University. She was a co-founder and faculty member of the Funny School of Good Acting and recently published through TCG *Discovering the Clown: the Funny Book of Good Acting* by Christopher Bayes with Virginia Scott. Scott offers physical comedy training and consulting through her studio, fizgig-studio.com.

**Sarah Koestner** (Vocal Coach) has previously taught voice and acting at New York University (NYU) and Rutgers University. She was mentored by Scott Miller in the Graduate Acting program at NYU and is a certified teacher of the Miller Voice Method. She earned her MFA in Acting at Rutgers University, where she trained under William Esper and Lloyd Richards, and received her BFA in Acting from Emerson College. New York theater credits include *The Libertine, Love Song, Waiting for Lefty, The Truth about Christmas,* and *Betrayal.* Regional credits include *The Understudy, The Libertine, The Maids, Doubt, Landscape of the Body,* and *She Stoops to Conquer.* She has been a vocal coach on numerous productions at MSU, including *The Rover, Orlando, As You Like It, Big Meal,* and *Top Girls.* She is a proud member of Actors’ Equity.

**Lillian (Lily) Schweikert** (Production Stage Manager) is a senior at MSU studying Theatre Production and Design, focusing in stage management and costume design. She is excited to be starting off the academic year with *Black Snow.* Previous stage management credits at MSU include *The Names We Gave Him* (2021) and *Tasha: A Protest Play* (2020). Credits outside of school include *Much Ado about Nothing* (2022) and *Moana, Jr* (2021).

## Cast Biographies

**Elise Bednar** (Polixena Toropetzkaya/Sophocles/Actor) is currently a sophomore Acting major at MSU. Her past credits include Fabiana Cunningham in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* and Female Swing in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.*

**Jack Brustowicz** (Ensemble) is a freshman in the BFA Acting program and is thrilled to be performing in his first production at MSU. Recent performance credits include Seymour Krelborn in *Little Shop of Horrors,* Juror Three in *12 Angry Jurors,* and Leaf
Coneybear/Carl Dad in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with friends, finding new music, and photo editing.

**Sydney Coleman** (Friend Three/Old Woman at Rudolfi’s House/Phillipp Phillippovich’s Assistant/Molière/Actor), after understudying in *The Big Meal* last year, is looking forward to stepping on stage in this fun, over-the-top, satirical masterpiece.

**Elijah Davis** (Friend Two/Yegor/Soldier/Actor) is performing in his third production at MSU. He was previously in *As You Like It* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

**Jake Declan** (Illya Ivanovich Rudolfi/Baklazhanov/Bakhtin/Bombardov) is a senior BFA Acting major in his fifth production at MSU. You may have seen him as Satan in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* or Actor 1 in *We Are Proud to Present*. He is looking forward to the rest of his final year at MSU.

**Alex Eilen** (Sergei Leontievich Maxudov) is a sophomore BFA Acting major. He previously appeared in MSU’s *As You Like It*. He'd like to thank too many people, particularly his teachers and his family who always believed in and supported him.

**Trent Greenwell** (Young Man/Strizh) is very excited to be a part of this cast and crew. He is a senior at MSU, and *Black Snow* is his second main-stage production.

**Desmond Jackson** (Ismail Alexandrovich Bondarevsky/Illchin/Actor) is a junior BFA Acting major. *Black Snow* is his second show at MSU, following his performance as Jesus in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. Some of his most notable previous roles include Monsieur Jordan in *The Bourgeois Gentleman* and Cliff from *Cabaret*.

**Donovan Lee** (Likospastov/Musician) has been at MSU for two years and is currently in the junior class. *Black Snow* is his second show with MSU; he was last seen as Butch in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*.

**Diana Maldonado** (Eulampia Petrovna/Old Woman Outside Ivan’s House/Shakespeare/Stage Manager) is a senior in the BFA Acting program. Previous credits at MSU include Ismene in *How to Mourn the Dead: A Tragedy in Flux*, Joyce/Shona in *Top Girls*, and Satan in FAST’s production of *Paradise Lost*.

**Nala McCalla** (Ensemble) is currently a freshman at MSU. *Black Snow* is her first production on campus this year. McCalla has been in 12 productions over the years,
is studying acting to one day be a part of the entertainment industry, and is looking forward to future productions at MSU.

**Sofia Melfi** (Anna/Ludmilla Pryakhina) has been a part of the Acting program for two years now. She is ecstatic to be joining the cast of *Black Snow* for her MSU debut.

**KB Merkel** (Party Host/Ivan Vasilievich) is appearing in their third main-stage show at MSU, other credits being *The Big Meal* and *As You Like It*. They are a senior Acting major. After they graduate, they are looking forward to traveling the world and creating theater in as many places with as many beautiful souls as possible.

**Emery Myers** (Konkin/Phillipp Phillippovich/Patrikeyev) has been at MSU for four years; however, this is his first year in the BFA Acting program. He was in the *Big Meal* last spring and is excited and grateful to be in a show at the Alexander Kasser Theater. He is looking forward to being part of more art at MSU.

**Terry Nickerson** (Friend One/Waiter/Soldier/Toropetzkaya’s Assistant/Props Man) is in his sophomore year at MSU. He is pursuing a degree in Acting with a minor in Film. *Black Snow* is his first production at this school. He is looking forward to working on more productions in the future.

**Isaiah Robinson** (Kerenin/Aloysius/Gavril/Old Man with Bucket/Actor), from Pine Hill, NJ, is a junior in the BFA Acting program. His most recent credits include *The Big Meal* at MSU and *SpongeBob SquarePants: The Musical* at the Levoy Theatre.

**Jessica Sconfienza** (Tango Dancer/Natasya Ivanovna/Mother/Actor) is a junior BFA acting major at MSU. Her recent work at the University includes *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Her other credits include *The Laramie Project*, *Father of the Bride*, and *An Empty Museum*.

**Goodman Theatre**, Chicago’s oldest and largest not-for-profit theater, has won international renown for the quality of productions, the depth and diversity of artistic leadership, and the excellence of its many community and educational programs. Under the guidance of artistic director Robert Falls and executive director Roche Schulfer, the Goodman is committed to producing both classic and contemporary works, giving full voice to a wide range of artists and visions. Central to that mission is the Goodman Artistic Collective, a diverse group of outstanding theater artists whose distinctive visions have given the Goodman an artistic identity of uncommon richness.
and variety. By dedicating itself to three guiding principles—quality, diversity and community—Goodman Theatre seeks to be the premier cultural organization in Chicago, providing productions and programs that make an essential contribution to the quality of life in our city. www.goodmantheatre.org