

Acting Edition

Mother Russia

by Lauren Yee

This sample is an excerpt of a
Concord Theatricals title.

Samples of Concord Theatricals titles
are for perusal and cannot be used for
performance or downloaded, printed,
and distributed in any way.

This sample may not reflect the version
of the play currently in print.

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

Copyright © 2026 by Lauren Yee
All Rights Reserved

MOTHER RUSSIA is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all member countries of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, the Universal Copyright Convention, and/or the World Trade Organization conforming to the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television, online/digital production, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-71280-7

www.concordtheatricals.com

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

info@concordtheatricals.com

1-866-979-0447

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk

020-7054-7298

Each title is subject to availability from Concord Theatricals Corp., depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *MOTHER RUSSIA* may not be licensed by Concord Theatricals Corp. In your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Concord Theatricals Corp. Office or licensing partner to verify availability.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *MOTHER RUSSIA* is subject to a licensing fee. The purchase, renting, lending or use of this book does not constitute a license to perform this title(s), which license must be obtained from Concord Theatricals Corp. Prior to any performance. Performance of this title(s) without a license is a violation of federal law and may subject the producer and/or presenter of such performances to civil penalties. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title(s) is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Professional/Stock licensing fees are quoted upon application to Concord Theatricals Corp.

This work is published by Samuel French, an imprint of Concord Theatricals Corp.

No one shall make any changes in this title(s) for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, scanned, uploaded, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, digital, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. The text of this title(s), or any portion thereof, may not be utilized as an input or prompt in any generative artificial intelligence or machine learning system, software, website, program, or similar technology. No one shall utilize this title(s), or any part of this title(s), for the purpose of training any artificial intelligence or machine learning technologies. No one shall share this title(s), or any part of this title(s), through any social media or file hosting websites.

For all inquiries regarding motion picture, television, online/digital and other media rights, please contact Concord Theatricals Corp.

MUSIC AND THIRD-PARTY MATERIALS USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music and/or other copyrighted third-party materials (e.g. Artworks, logos) in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music and materials that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for clearances of all third-party copyrighted materials, including without limitation music, and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Concord Theatricals Corp., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of such copyrighted third-party materials by licensees. For music, please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

MOTHER RUSSIA premiered at Seattle Rep (Dámaso Rodríguez, Artistic Director; Jeffrey Herrmann, Managing Director) in Seattle, Washington, on March 12, 2025. The production was directed by Nicholas C. Avila, with set and costume design by Misha Kachman, lighting design by Peter Maradudin, sound design and composition by Vincent Olivieri, and fight choreography by Alyssa Kay. The stage manager was Jessica C. Bomball. The cast was as follows:

EVGENY Billy Finn
DMITRI Jesse Calixto
KATYA Andi Alhadeff
MOTHER RUSSIA Julie Briskman

MOTHER RUSSIA had its New York City premiere at Signature Theatre (Timothy J. McClimon, Executive Director; Emily Shooltz, Artistic Director), on March 3, 2026. The production was directed by Teddy Bergman, with set design by dots, costume design by Sophia Choi, lighting design by Stacey Derosier, sound design and composition by Mikhail Fiksel, fight choreography by UnkleDave’s Fight-House, and dialect coaching by Deborah Hecht. The production stage manager was Katie Ailingner. The cast was as follows:

EVGENY Adam Chanler-Berat
DMITRI Steven Boyer
KATYA Rebecca Naomi Jones
MOTHER RUSSIA David Turner

MOTHER RUSSIA was commissioned by Lincoln Center Theatre/LCT3(Paige Evans, Artistic Director of LCT3).

MOTHER RUSSIA received developmental support from the Colorado New Play Festival.

Developed as part of Chautauqua Theater Company’s New Play Workshop series, 2018, underwritten by the Roe Green Foundation.

CHARACTERS

1. **EVGENY** – He is Russian; he is male; he is twenty-five.
2. **DMITRI** – He is Russian; he is male; he is twenty-five.
3. **KATYA** – She is Russian; she is a singer; she's in her thirties.
4. **MOTHER RUSSIA** – She is the embodiment of the soul of Russia.

(The characters in this play are Russian people of specific ages. The actors portraying these characters may not be. Feel free to embrace the heightened spirit of the show.)

SETTING

St. Petersburg, Russia.
Which is now Leningrad.
Which is now actually BACK to being called St. Petersburg again.

TIME

Our story takes place in fall 1992.
It has been three years since the Berlin Wall fell.
Almost a year since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.
Glasnost, bitches! Perestroika, yo.
Gorbachev is out. Yeltsin's in the house.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

About accents:

Mother Russia speaks with a Russian accent. Our other characters speak in standard American accents, though the vocabulary and grammar may dip into something more Chekovian-feeling at times.

About the play:

This play runs ninety minutes with no intermission.

About Kayta's song:

Music is not provided for Kayta's song. A license to produce *Mother Russia* does not include a performance license for any third-party or copyrighted music. Licensees should create an original composition or use music in the public domain. For further information, please see the Music and Third-Party Materials Use Note on page iii.

SPECIAL THANKS

Kristin Leahey, Joshua Kahan Brody, Joe Ngo, Francis Jue, Stephanie Hsu, Kate Wisniewski, Tyne Rafaeli, Gabriel Ebert, Christopher Fitzgerald, Natasha Sinha, La Jolla Playhouse.

MOTHER RUSSIA was supported by the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation.

For Yana Morgulis and Mikhail “Misha” Fiksel.

Prologue

(**MOTHER RUSSIA** *enters.*)

MOTHER RUSSIA.

Do not bother to check.

I am not in program.

So you will not find me.

Don't worry, I am no one.

They think I will die before long.

But! What do they know?

I tried to warn him, you know.

I tell him, "Gorby. For real."

– This is what I say! –

I say, "Mickey honey, Misha baby.

You change one thing, you will have to change another.

You let them leave, the rest will follow.

And the family we will all break up."

But all he hear is "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

I have been let down by so many shitty men.

Have you ever loved a shitty man?

(*To audience member.*) You have. I see it.

(*To another.*) You? No? Not even once?

My life – if you can call this a life – has been one shitty man after another.

So now I am here.

With you sluts.

You have kids?

Never have kids.

You are only as happy as your unhappiest child and me? I have so many.

And no matter what you do, they will never be happy.

“Why did you love me so much?”

“Why did you feed me so much?”

“Why did you inform on our neighbors?”

There is no winning with them!

But then!

Everything you love it will kill you.

Everything you love it will cause you pain.

Scene One

*(A bell jingles. Lights up on the inside of a kiosk. A cramped, chaotic space. **EVGENY** has just entered the shop. **DMITRI** stands, a gun pointed at **EVGENY**. A tense beat, then a moment of recognition –)*

DMITRI. Evgeny Evgenievich...?

EVGENY. ...Dmitri Petrovich?

DMITRI. Evgeny Evgenievich?!

EVGENY. Dmitri Petrovich!

DMITRI. Evgeny!

EVGENY. Dmitri!

DMITRI. ZHENYA!

EVGENY. DIMA!

*(**DMITRI** lowers the gun and comes straight at **EVGENY** in a bear hug.)*

DMITRI. DUDE! Home here! Lemme at you! AAAAAH!

*(**DMITRI** bear-hugs **EVGENY**; smacks him around.)*

Hit me, hit me back.

EVGENY. Dmitri.

DMITRI. Don't be such a pussy, hit me back.

EVGENY. I'm not! I'm not a –

DMITRI. A PUSSY?

EVGENY. No.

DMITRI. Then prove it, dude!

(**EVGENY** *does. Poorly.*)

DMITRI. Sorry 'bout the gun! It's just my knee-jerk reaction, Russia being the Wild West it is right now!

EVGENY. Oh yes, so chock-full of dangers!

DMITRI. Things're nuts now. So when I hear that bell ring, I go all *Scarface*. (*Beat.*) but DUDE, has it really been THREE YEARS since ya headed off to Moscow?

EVGENY. It has.

DMITRI. Oh, seems like just yesterday my mom was scrubbing the horseshit out of the floor of your dad's government dacha!

EVGENY. Yes, the days in Father's summer home were blissful to be sure!

DMITRI. You and me, we'd take your pocket change and buy a stick of gum, take turns chewing it.

EVGENY. I'd go first, you'd go last.

DMITRI. And now we're TWENTY-FIVE, it's 1992, and we're FREE! The world is ours.

EVGENY. The yawning abyss of tomorrow is before us.

DMITRI. Heck yeah.

EVGENY. You have absorbed the new Western slang and customs with such speed. And now you are here, a humble small-business clerk.

DMITRI. Oh, I don't just clerk, I OWN.

EVGENY. You are the lowly Widow Petrovich's son, how did that happen?

DMITRI. WELL, as soon as Gorbs lifted that ban on private enterprise, I was like, "Should I do something, should I start a business?" and then I see this new "advertisement" they just put up: "Just do it."

EVGENY. “Just do it.”

DMITRI. And I’m like, “OKAY! Yeah!” so I scour the city doing my recon, looking for opportunities, when I find this shop.

EVGENY. And you buy it?

DMITRI. Better yet, it’s EMPTY! So I clean the blood off the walls and now this is my shop! Something’s finally working out for me for once!

EVGENY. Masha, your kind and wonderful girlfriend, must be so proud.

DMITRI. Hey, I’m just trying to keep up with Mash!

EVGENY. So what do you sell here?

DMITRI. Everything! I got chicken, condoms, lead.

EVGENY. You must get many customers!

DMITRI. Not a one!

EVGENY. STILL, a man with your standing must require protection.

DMITRI. (*Re gun.*) I got all the protection I need.

EVGENY. And tell me, did you ever join the KGB as you had intended?

DMITRI. Not OFFICIALLY, no. But when old Yeltz came in and froze the program, I was like TOP of the waitlist. And I was convinced the Party was gonna seize back control and kick him to the curb.

EVGENY. Oh yes, the coup!

DMITRI. That morning when I turned on the TV and saw *Swan Lake* looping on all four channels? ‘Cause you know when you see *Swan Lake* on the tube, shit’s about to go DOWN.

EVGENY. How unfortunate for you then that the coup failed, Yeltsin retained power, and the KGB is all but dead! The city is so wild with dangerous riff-raff, more than any one man can handle.

DMITRI. But YOU! We haven't even talked about YOU! How are YOU doing?

EVGENY. Great. I am so great.

DMITRI. What're you doing back in St. Pete's? Shouldn't you be in jolly old Moscow, deciding the wheat production for the year?

EVGENY. I would otherwise be.

DMITRI. Except?

EVGENY. Except that Marxist economics turned out to be largely incorrect. They don't need anyone to decide prices anymore. Now they just "let the market decide."

DMITRI. They "let the market decide."

EVGENY. Under capitalism, the prices are set by an "invisible hand."

DMITRI. So they replaced YOU.

EVGENY. Yes.

DMITRI. With a HAND –

EVGENY. Yes.

DMITRI. – that's INVISIBLE?!

EVGENY. Yes.

DMITRI. Well, fuck that. Fuck that hand.

EVGENY. I was done with Moscow anyway. I was so happy to leave the big city of my dreams – to return home – to live with my parents.

DMITRI. Yeah, how's your mom?

EVGENY. (*Knee-jerk.*) Good! (*Stops.*) Well, she is dead.

DMITRI. WHAT. NO. (*Beat.*) And your dad? Your dad's still alive?

EVGENY. He endures in my life, still.

DMITRI. Well, tell your pops, "Sorry about Gorbachev," I know he was big in the Party.

EVGENY. My father has pivoted quite well. He is now a burgeoning capitalist.

DMITRI. Career change, love it!

EVGENY. He has half a dozen fearsome men in his employ. Torsos like tanks, ankles like Balanchine. He sends them all over the city to shake down new small-business shops for protection money.

DMITRI. Smart man. Stores're popping up like white caps! And what do you do all day now?

EVGENY. Well, at first, I wandered the streets of Petersburg, from dawn 'til dusk, shouting, "JOB, JOB!" and nothing emerged. But then – my father put me into his employ!

DMITRI. Doing what?

EVGENY. Well, funny thing, I actually DID come in to... (*Small.*) shake you down.

DMITRI. (*Didn't hear.*) What?

EVGENY. What?

DMITRI. Sorry, I didn't –

EVGENY. I just said I actually did enter to, um – offer my protection and – shake you down for a significant – or even perhaps a token sum of – money.

(*Beat.*)

DMITRI. So you – you came in HERE to shake me down for / money?

EVGENY. Yes.

DMITRI. Oh, well then, you're doing it all wrong. You wanna do a shakedown, you gotta GET IN CLOSE. Show 'em what you're packing. Flash that Beretta and watch the money start to flow!

EVGENY. What if you were only given a small cudgel?

DMITRI. Zhenya, you're not shaking me down.

EVGENY. (*Hangs head.*) I am so bad at this.

DMITRI. Growing up, you never had to shake anyone down. And you KNOW nobody was gonna mess with the son of Evgeny Evgenievich, SENIOR! You gotta get your reps in. You gotta watch more of those American gangster films. *Die Hard. Rambo.*

EVGENY. I should not have even approached you. You who sees no customers and yields no profit.

DMITRI. The margins aren't that bad –

EVGENY. It was so presumptive of me to even approach your weak and failing business –

DMITRI. It's not like I DON'T have a client –

EVGENY. I might as well have paid a call to the almshouse –

DMITRI. My business isn't failing, dude. IT IS CLEARLY A FRONT!

EVGENY. For what?

(**DMITRI** *rips off a sheet that's been covering something in the corner.*)

DMITRI. Ta-da!

EVGENY. Surveillance?

DMITRI. YUP! I salvaged the equipment when they were clearing out ye olde KGB offices.

EVGENY. If you are a front, should you be telling me this?

DMITRI. Probably not. But I've been dying to tell SOMEONE.

EVGENY. What does Masha think of this cloak-and-dagger scheme?

DMITRI. Oh, she doesn't know. SHE thinks I'm on the straight and narrow, SHE thinks I gave up on my dream. Like a CHUMP.

EVGENY. When you have not.

DMITRI. NOPE!

EVGENY. And you are successful?

DMITRI. I even got me a CLIENT.

EVGENY. ONE client?

DMITRI. First customer's always the hardest.

EVGENY. Who would entrust you with such a mission?

DMITRI. Can't tell you. But trust me, it's someone VERY HIGH LEVEL. A FUCK TON of stairs.

EVGENY. So who are you monitoring?

DMITRI. Read it.

(DMITRI hands EVGENY a folder. He reads it.)

EVGENY. "Yekaterina Mikhailovna Shevchenko."

DMITRI. Yup! Some schoolteacher.

(EVGENY looks at the picture in the file more closely.)

EVGENY. Wait a minute, I know her.

DMITRI. You do?

EVGENY. She is Katya M.

DMITRI. Who?

EVGENY. The singer! She is famous!

DMITRI. For what?

EVGENY. “My Name is Vasha”? “Country Girl City World”?
“Gulag”?

DMITRI. Oh! “Gulag”! She’s that singer with the really
pitchy voice. Don’t tell me YOU liked her music.

EVGENY. Of course! Her music was so bold and
provocative. So dangerous. You couldn’t just listen to
her music out in the open, you had to find a bootleg or
attend a secret listening party, huddled together in the
dark. It made me feel like we were living through the
Siege of Leningrad and her voice was the seal blubber
keeping us alive. (*Beat.*) She defected and now she is
back. Nobody ever comes back. So why has she?

DMITRI. You think I know?

EVGENY. You are monitoring her. You head up (*Re folder.*)
“Operation Katyusha.”

DMITRI. Nah, I just put on these headphones and listen.
Here –

(**EVGENY** puts on the headphones. He listens.)

(*In another space, KATYA appears. She is also
alone, a private moment. Maybe she’s getting
ready for the day, washing her face. We hear
the sound of her simple movements alongside*
EVGENY *It’s intimate and entrancing.*)

(**EVGENY** takes off the headphones.)

EVGENY. Hire me.

DMITRI. What?

EVGENY. Let me sit here for you, timid.

DMITRI. You want to be my servant?

EVGENY. More like an employee.

DMITRI. I'm not really in the mood to pay a whole other "EM-ployee."

EVGENY. Even a meager wage would suffice. Or pay me in-kind with a mere bagatelle. Then I can return home, victorious, having "shaken down" establishments as per his command! And you will have more time to build your budding surveillance business, find a second client!

DMITRI. Well, I do like the sound of "shop servant..."

EVGENY. I would be whatever you need me to be.

DMITRI. All right, what the heck! You're HIRED! ...Shop servant.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

www.concordtheatricals.com

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and anything theater-related, follow us on our social media channels.

@ConcordShows and **@ConcordUKShows** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

concord
theatricals