

PRESS RELEASE
Friday 1 March 2019

**PIONEERS OF RUSSIAN DOCUMENTARY THEATRE TEATR.DOC
PRESENT A ONE-OFF VERBATIM PERFORMANCE OF *TORTURE*,
BASED ON THE ON-GOING PENZA CASE.**

- Performed by former political prisoners, human rights activists and journalists
- Royal Court Theatre Bar & Kitchen Thursday 28 March 2019, 7pm



Image: Russians protesting against the detention and torture of the 11 young people in the Penza case outside the Russian embassy in Stockholm (29th January 2019)

The Royal Court Theatre welcomes for the first time Moscow's legendary Teatr.Doc for a one-off performance of *Torture*. An urgent piece of verbatim theatre looking at the use of torture as a weapon in the ongoing Penza Case. *Torture* is directed by Zarema Zaudinova and is written and performed by Alexey Polikhovich, Alexey Sutuga, Yegor Skovoroda,



Maxim Pakhomov and Zarema Zaudoniva. It will be accompanied by a live soundtrack by cellist Alina Anufrienko.

During Russia's 2018 World Cup, the FSB arrested 11 young antifascists and anarchists linked only by playing an online game. Once arrested, these boys vanished for two days. Their relatives, lawyers and human rights activists could find no trace of them. When human rights activists finally located them in an FSB prison they were seen to have bruises, injuries and traces of electric shock. All those involved had signed confessions under torture linking them to a terrorist cell, but later they refused to testify.

Teatr.doc was created in 2002 by playwrights and directors lead by husband and wife artistic directors, Elena Gremina and Mikhail Ugarov. Gremina was introduced to the idea of verbatim theatre through a workshop lead by the Royal Court's late International Director Elyse Dodgson in the 1990s. Teatr.doc's work has led the way for many emerging Russian theatremakers anxious to expose the truth and make sense of their experiences. Constantly attacked by the authorities, Teatr.doc have remained at the cutting edge of Russian theatre for two decades, staging challenging and innovative verbatim theatre.

Russian translator and author John Farndon comments;

"Teatr.doc was born following a remarkable workshop in Moscow on verbatim theatre led by the Royal Court's late international director Elyse Dodgson 20 years ago. So it is hugely significant for Doc coming to the Royal Court with their first show since the sudden deaths of twin leaders Elena Gremina and Mikhail Ugarova last year, leaving the company's very survival in the balance."

In April, 11 young defendants in the Penza case will go on trial in Moscow.

Tickets for the event are free.

See full biographies below.

--ENDS--

For more information please contact AnoushkaWarden@royalcourttheatre.com

Notes to Editors:

Alina Anufrienko (Musician/Composer)

Alina is a musician and composer. She participated in projects in the ensemble of the new academic music of MASM, working with composers Alexey Sysoev, Alexander Manatkov and Kirill Shirokov. Alina worked on Teatr.doc's *When We Came to Power*, which was one of Elena Gremina's last projects.

Maxim Pakhomov (Performer/Co-writer)

Maxim is a documentary filmmaker who worked with Alexander Rastorguev on the project *Reality*, and participated in the filming of *Maidan*.





Alexey Polikhovich (Performer/Co-writer)

Alexey is a former political prisoner from the Bolotnaya case, and a participant in the human rights project OVD-info (launched by volunteers in 2011 as a means of quickly monitoring arrests during mass protests). He played himself in the witness play of Teatr.doc's *Companions* (Bolotnaya case 2) curated by Mikhail Ugarov and Elena Gremina.

Yegor Skovoroda (Performer/Co-writer)

Yegor is a Mediazone editor and journalist. He has covered all the main political trials of modern Russia, and has been press secretary of the Parent Network, an association of the parents of the Penza figures. Yegor is the author of *Dialogues of Killers*, about Russian nationalists in modern Russia - a result of the wiretap of neo-Nazis Nikita Tikhonov and Evgenia Khasis, who in 2009 killed journalist Anastasia Baburova and lawyer Stanislav Markelov. He wrote the documentary play of the same title, based on his book. Its launch took place on the Dozhd TV channel, as a joint project with Teatr.doc. The production is planned for spring 2019.

Alexey Sutuga (Performer/Writer)

Alexey is a former political prisoner, anti-fascist, head of the information campaign in support of the defendants of the Penza case. He made his stage debut for Teatr.doc in *Torture* as well as advising the authors of the play, telling them of the tortures applied to him.

Zarema Zaudinova (Director/Performer/Co-writer)

Zarema is Director and Playwright of Teatr.doc and head of the Department of Pain - the direction of civil theatre in Teatr.Doc. She is also part of a team of organisers for the festival of the documentary *Hunting for Reality*, an editor of documentary dramas and has published drama under the title *Department of Pain (Common Place)*. Zarema wrote and directed the documentary play *Odnushka in Izmailovo*, about Caucasian girls who fled to Moscow to escape from domestic violence, and *Companions*, a testimony about convicts of the Bolotnaya case in which the former political prisoners played themselves.

Under supervision of Mikhail Ugarov and Elena Gremina, Zarema directed *When We Came to Power*, a project about a new civil society in Russia. She also performed in the play *New Antigone*, about the mothers of Beslan whose children died in the terrorist attack in 2004. Zarema worked as assistant director to Mikhail for *24+* and *Jung and Angry*, as well as producing his play *The Man from Podolsk*. She is one of the authors of the play *Misha and Lena*, assembled from the letters and diaries of Mikhail and Elena, revealing how the state was slowly killing these two artists.



Zarema was assistant and deputy for Mikhail Ugarov from 2015 - 2018.

Teatr.doc was created in 2002 by a large group of like-minded playwrights and directors in 2002. But the guiding hands were always husband and wife artistic directors, writers and managers Elena Gremina and Mikhail Ugarov. Gremina kept the theatre alive financially with money from her successful career writing TV screenplays.

Doc were the pioneers of documentary theatre which is at the forefront of cutting edge theatre in Russia. Gremina got the idea from a workshop given by the Royal Court's late Elyse Dodgson about verbatim theatre in the 1990s, and documentary theatre is an umbrella term for plays rooted in facts and includes verbatim interviews, historical documents, or autobiographical narratives. It has captivated many young Russian theatremakers anxious to expose the truth and make sense of their experiences, and Doc has led the way.

Doc's new plays, guided by Gremina and Ugarov, brought a whole new language to the Russian stage, bringing homeless people, poor workers, victims of political attacks into the theatre, much to the horror of traditionalists. And their work challenged the authorities.

"September.doc" dealt uncompromisingly with the social and political forces that led to the Beslan school massacre. And when lawyer Sergei Magnitsky died in prison in late 2009 under highly suspicious circumstances, Doc staged "One Hour Eighteen Minutes," detailing the criminal negligence that led to Magnitsky's death, within six months of the event.

During the Maidan protests in Kiev in 2013, Doc hosted evenings about these and other actions, including Pussy Riot and the authorities began to clamp down on Doc through things such as fire regulations. Moscow's municipal government began targeting Doc until they were forced to move spaces, more than once. The pressure has often been intense, but they have kept putting on challenging theatre with an influence that completely belies the small makeshift theatres they operate from.

In spring 2018, the company's twin leads Mikhail Ugarov and Elena Gremina, both died within six weeks of each other. It was a massive blow to Doc, but such was the fire that they had both lit that their successors including Zarema Zaudinova are determined to carry the flame forward, with plays such as "Torture", the last piece Gremina instigated.