

 THE QUESTORS
Studio



The
Queen
of Spades
& I

by Sylvia Freedman



Playing dates July 21st-28th

1990



PUSHKIN/TOMSKY	Joe Purcell
RAESVKY/NARUMOV	Roger Lewis
THE BARON/HERMANN	Robert Goldsborough
YEKATERINA/LISA	Fiona Nicholson
NATALIA/PRINCESS	Sheree Clapperton
GONCHAROVA/THE COUNTESS	Pam Gower

Other small parts are played by members of the cast.

The play runs about 2 hours, including an interval of 15 minutes.

Director	Rodney Figaro
Design	Tony Godel and Rodney Figaro
Lighting Design	Colin Abdey
Sound	Nigel Worsley
Costumes	Lindsey Udell
assisted by	Mary Anderson Harriet Bowes Pauline Nixon Liz Pritchett
Wigs & Hair	James Miller and Sharon Robbins of "GREASEPAINT"
Russian Adviser	Felicity Cave
Dance Director	Cynthia Coatts
assisted by	Sylvia Eedy
Cards Adviser	Chris Eedy
Stage Manager	Gillian Leary/ Aruna Reddy
Deputy Stage Manager	Corinne Tite
Assistant Stage Managers	Leigh Mellor Kris Collier
Construction	Peter Collins Tony Godel Peter Kendrick Doug King Tom Morton Harriet Simon Chris Sydenham



Our thanks to the following individuals and companies for their assistance and generosity:

Caroline Coombes (sewing) - Julia Cruttenden of "GREASEPAINT" - The Central School of Speech & Drama (Snow-bag & "snow") - The Royal National Theatre (chairs) - The Richmond Shakespeare Society (black masking) - Jackie Dover (draperies) - David Morley Antiques, 371 Richmond Road, East Twickenham (props) - Food from Sainsbury's (cherries & ginger ale) - Safeway plc (tobacco) - Jennifer Tudor (research) - Stuart Dollin (music) - Cabaret Casino Associates (dealing shoe) - Waddingtons Games Ltd (playing cards) -

and Sylvia Freedman for her help and advice.

ALEXANDER SERGEEVICH PUSHKIN (1799-1837)

Alexander Pushkin, born in a wooden home in German Street, Moscow, just before the turn of the century, was of legendary ancestry. Through his father he was a worthy representative of the noble, if violent, breed of Pushkins; through his mother he was descended from Abraham Hannibal, the "Negro of Abyssinia" who had been the favourite of Peter the Great.

During his schooldays his precocious gifts as a writer became apparent. As a young man, he led a dissipated life until his exile for subversive writings. On his return he again offended and was placed under house-arrest at his parents' country estate where his father assisted the secret police in spying on his son.

In December 1825 there was an uprising led by young aristocrats and officers. Pushkin was ready to join them, but at the last moment turned back, overwhelmed by superstitious omens, and so was saved from the fate of many of his friends, death or permanent exile. Pushkin freely confessed to the new Tsar Nicholas I how close he had come to joining the uprising.

The Tsar decided to supervise Pushkin's writings personally, so that his work received state and police censorship. A copy of his blasphemous poem 'The Gabrieliad' was passed to the authorities, and Pushkin was interrogated.

In 1831 Pushkin married Natalia Goncharova, the beautiful young daughter of an impoverished Moscow family, whose father had gone mad. They had four children.

Pushkin's wife started a scandalous flirtation with Baron Georges d'Anthes, a young French officer, whom Pushkin challenged to a duel. To avoid fighting, d'Anthes proposed to and married Natalia's older sister, Catherine. Despite the marriage, the affair continued, and on 27 January 1837 Pushkin and d'Anthes fought a duel, in which Pushkin was mortally wounded.



DUELLING was forbidden in Russia, but no Russian gentleman would refuse a challenge, as a matter of honour. Sensitive to every slight, real or imagined, Pushkin was ready to fight a duel on the least provocation. Not all of Pushkin's fourteen duels were over women. A game of cards or billiards, a request for a mazurka, a complaint that he was speaking too loudly during a performance at the theatre, all led to challenges. Sometimes, friends would intervene and prevent the duel. On one occasion the duel was fought in such a blizzard that neither Pushkin or his opponent could see one another, but they still kept firing.

Because of the scandal concerning Pushkin's wife and the Baron d'Anthes, the Tsar must have known of the last and fatal duel before it took place, but for personal and political motives he took no steps to prevent it.

PUSHKIN'S WORKS:

Pushkin began writing poems as a schoolboy, and it is as a poet that he primarily saw himself. His poetry ranges from love poems and lyrical works, blasphemous and revolutionary pieces, to narrative poems. Amongst his major works are his verse novel, **EUGENE ONEGIN**; the historical play, **THE BRONZE HORSEMAN**; the novella, **THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER**; his four little tragedies, **MOZART AND SALIERI**; **THE STONE GUEST**; **THE MISERLY KNIGHT**; **THE FEAST DURING THE PLAGUE**; and a large number of short stories, including **THE QUEEN OF SPADES**. Many of his stories remain unfinished. Dostoevsky has said : 'It can be said undeniably that if Pushkin had not existed, there would have been no talented writers to follow him.'

AFTER PUSHKIN'S DEATH, his body lay in state at his house. Crowds of people of all ages - women, old men, children, students, some in sheepskins, some in rags - came to pay their respects to their national poet.

His body was taken to church for the funeral. An observer found it touching to see the vast crowds trying to pay their last homage. That day over twenty thousand people passed through the church in reverent silence and sorrow. On the day the funeral was due to take place, crowds gathered round the church which was not big enough to contain them. 'It was only here that we realised for the first time what Pushkin meant to Russia.'

National mourning for Pushkin assumed the character of a political demonstration and the Tsar ordered the body to be taken to the Svyatogorsk Monastery in the country during the night under police escort. Even in death Pushkin was still under police surveillance.



The ground was so frozen that it was impossible to dig a grave. In the end, they could only cover the coffin with snow. Natalia did not join in the general mourning, follow her husband's coffin or attend the requiem service at the church. None of Pushkin's relatives was present at his burial.

Natalia became the Tsar's mistress. Seven years after Pushkin's death she remarried. The two sisters, Catherine and Natalia, never spoke again.

Today Pushkin is revered in Russia. Every Russian seems able to quote his poems. There are always fresh flowers at the base of his statues in Moscow and Leningrad.

SYLVIA FREEDMAN was born in Liverpool and brought up on the Isle of Man. She has degrees from Cambridge and London Universities and came to London to practise as a solicitor, before turning to writing. She is the author of an historical biography "POOR PENELOPE: LADY PENELOPE RICH, AN ELIZABETHAN WOMAN" (Kensal Press) and "THE WHITE DEVIL AND THE FAIR WOMAN WITH A BLACK SOUL" published in *JACOBEAN POETRY AND PROSE* (Macmillan).

Her first play, "THE VOYAGE HOME", was performed at the Tabard Theatre and transferred to the King's Head. Her second, "THE QUEEN OF SPADES AND I" was premiered at the Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond last year and is published by the Playwrights Press. Since then she has completed "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET" (commissioned for the Derby Playhouse) and her new subversive comedy, "ACCOMODATING EVA" has been taken up for West End production in early 1991. She is currently working on a musical and another stage play.

