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Dear Elena Sergeevna
Дорогая Елена Сергеевна

by Ludmilla Razumovskaya

(based on the English translation “Dear Miss Elena”
by Zoltan Schmidt and Roger Downey)

November 15-18, 2001
Stover Theatre
Directed by Sergei Tcherkasski, St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy, St. Petersburg, Russia

Movement by Galina Kondrashova, St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy, St. Petersburg, Russia

Scene/Lighting Design by William Elliott

Costume Design by Jenna Durst

Sound Design by Erika Thompson

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**cast**

Elena Sergeevna......................................................... Kim Eddins
Lalya.........................................................................Jamie Collyer
Pasha .....................................................................William Phillips
Vitya......................................................................... Eric Johnson†
Volodya....................................................................... Dan Pasquini
Understudy (Elena) .......................................... Maryalice Phillips†

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**setting**

Act I
The apartment of Elena Sergeevna, a schoolteacher, Russia.

Act II
Several hours later.

*There will be a 10 minute intermission between the acts.*

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**warning**

This production contains scenes of extreme violence and strong language which may not be suitable for younger or sensitive audiences.

† denotes member of Theta Alpha Phi, national theatre honorary.

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**production staff**

Production Manager/TD ........................................... William Elliott
Stage Manager .......................................................... Hanna Miller
Asst. Director ........................................................ Vanesssa Aranegui†
Asst. Stage Manager ........................................... Maryalice Phillips†
Asst. Lighting Designer ........................................Amanda Akins†
Master Carpenter ............................................Vanessa Aranegui†
Workshop Crew ................................................. Cshainoan Ellis, Gerald Durst, Heather Journell, Takeata King Pang, Jennifer Driver, Sara Collins, Crystal Coutrino, Toni Chandler, Eric Pilger, Rebecca Biddinger, Mary Amber Osmun, Ashley Stutzman, and students of TE 101, TE 222, and TE 345
Master Electrician/Light Board Op ..................Rebecca Biddinger
Sound Board Op .................................................. Erika Thompson
Video Editing ...................................................... Shaun Whalen
Research Assistant ............................................. Mary Rodgers
Props Master ................................................... Heather Journell
Props Running Crew ......................... Heather Journell, Erin Lett†, Ashley Stutzman
Electrics Running Crew ..................................Takeata King Pang
Publicity ........................................................... Ken McCoy

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**special thanks**

Mark Miller and Arabian Nights Dinner Theatre; Stetson University Russian Studies faculty and staff; Sands Theatre Center, James Hargrave, Ronnie’s Florist, Daytona; Muse Bookstore, DeLand.

*Dear Elena Sergeevna* is produced by special arrangement with the author, Ludmilla Razumovskaya, and the translators, Zoltan Schmidt and Roger Downey. Their English translation was first performed in 1992 at the Seattle Group Theatre.

† denotes member of Theta Alpha Phi, national theatre honorary.
On behalf of the Stetson University Department of Communication Studies and Theatre Arts, I am happy to welcome Professors Sergei Tcherkasski and Galina Kondrashova to the Stover Theatre production program. After meeting Sergei during his visit two years ago, I was extremely excited by the prospect of his returning to direct a show for us. We are very fortunate that Russian Studies was again able to support his visit, and even more fortunate that he was able to bring his wife Galina, whose expertise in movement has proved indispensable in preparing this production.

The St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy, where they both teach, is a major conservatory training institution in Russia that has over 1200 theatre students—a few more than we have here at Stetson! It is indeed an honor for us to welcome these two theatre professionals to share with us the benefits of their knowledge and experience, and we hope to foster an ongoing relationship between our two theatre arts programs.

- Dr. Ken McCoy, Chair
Department of Communication Studies and Theatre Arts

This play was written near the end of the 1970s by Ludmilla Razumovskaya—an alumna of St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy (then Leningrad Institute of Theatre, Music, and Cinematography), where I now reside as a professor. In those days I was a student at the same institution, and I remember that our theatre world was rife with rumors about the unsuccessful efforts of the most progressive Russian theatres to stage this play. Their attempts were made unsuccessful—indeed, impossible—because of play’s strong social criticism of official Soviet Russian life of that period. I also recall one of the play’s first major productions in Leningrad in the early 1980s—a great encouragement to us all, even though the production was restricted to a censored version of the text. Accompanied by many of my fellow theatre students, I attended a dress rehearsal in support of the author.

When I received the kind invitation of Stetson University to direct a play here and began discussions with Dr. McCoy over our choice, we considered several plays suitable for production with students. After 20 years, I re-read Mme. Razumovskaya’s play and although many circumstances of social life in Russia had changed, making some of the circumstances presented in the play may seem rather dated, I was surprised to find that the play still has a great deal of universal appeal. This is due mainly to the fact that it deals with one of the main moral dilemmas of our time on this earth: whether it’s possible to justify immoral actions in light of the demands placed on us for survival in our imperfect and unjust world.

Although our choice was made in Spring of 2001, the tragic events of September 11 shed unexpected light on the themes of violence and the struggle for ideas of right and wrong. It seemed that this Russian play which was written over 20 years ago might transcend its original political and social environment to arouse important moral issues for a world-wide audience—and of course, that includes those here in central Florida. The fact that Dear Elena Sergeevna has been widely produced on many of the world’s contemporary stages is fast earning it a place as a classic in the repertoire of the 20th century theatre.

I am very grateful to so many people who made this production possible. First on the list are the student actors and technical staff who were involved in the production, who I thank for their enthusiasm, patience, and commitment during the exhaustive rehearsal process—our many urgent and fruitful discussions immensely enriched the process. I am also grateful to the faculty and staff of Stetson’s Russian Studies and Theatre Arts programs for their support and participation. This process was challenging for all, not the least for Stover Theatre Production Manager William Elliott, who was forced to design the scenery through transcontinental telephone conversations and faxes. (Of course, the complete transcript of email conversations between Dr. McCoy and myself would fill three volumes). Finally, I would like to especially thank Dr. Eugene Huskey and Susan Bradford, who were sufficiently encouraged by my previous visit to the Stetson campus in 1999 to bring me back for this project.

-Professor Sergei Tcherkasski
St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy