



Presents

# THE WHITE CROW

A film by Ralph Fiennes

(127 mins, United Kingdom/France, 2018)

Language: Russian, English & French

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## **THE WHITE CROW**

### **The Cast**

Rudolf Nureyev	OLEG IVENKO
Clara Saint	ADÈLE EXARCHOPOULOS
Alexander Pushkin	RALPH FIENNES
Pierre Lacotte	RAPHAËL PERONNAZ
Xenia Pushkin	CHULPAN KHAMATOVA
Yuri Soloview	SERGEI POLUNIN
Claire Motte	CALYPSO VALOIS
Teja Kremke	LOUIS HOFMANN
Gregory Alexinsky	OLIVIER RABOURDIN
Ravshana Kurkova	FARIDA NUREYEV
Strizhevsky	ALEKSEY MOROZOV

# **THE WHITE CROW**

## **The Filmmakers**

Director	RALPH FIENNES
Writer	DAVID HARE
Produced by	GABRIELLE TANA
Executive Producers	ROSE GARNETT
	JOE OPPENHEIMER
	ANNE SHEEHAN
	PETER WATSON
	MARIE-GABRIELLE STEWART
	LISA WOLOFSKY
	LIAM NEESON
	STEPHANIE COLEMAN
	ANYA RECORDATI
	WAYNE MARC GODFREY
	ROBERT JONES
Producers	RALPH FIENNES
	CAROLYN MARKS BLACKWOOD
	ANDREW LEVITAS
	FRANÇOIS IVERNEL
Co-Producers	MARK COOPER
	MEG CLARK
Associate Producers	SAM GORDON
	LAURA COATES

Director of Photography	MIKE ELEY
Production Designer	ANNE SEIBEL
Costume Designers	MADELINE FONTAINE
Composer	ILAN ESHKERI
Editor	BARNEY PILLING
Casting	ALLA PETELINA
	ELODIE DEMY
	NENAD PAVLOVIC
	ANJA DIHRBERG
Make-Up and	
Hair Designer	LIZZI LAWSON ZEISS

## **THE WHITE CROW**

### **Synopsis**

A young man of just 23, dressed in a black beret and a dark narrow suit, is on an airplane flying from St Petersburg to Paris. It is 1961 and Rudolf Nureyev, not yet the imperious figure of legend, is a member of the world-renowned Kirov Ballet Company, travelling for the first time outside the Soviet Union.

Parisian life delights Nureyev and the young dancer is eager to consume all the culture, art and music the dazzling city has to offer. But the KGB officers who watch his every move become increasingly suspicious of his behavior and his friendship with the young Parisienne Clara Saint. When they finally confront Nureyev with a shocking demand, he is forced to make a heart-breaking decision, one that may change the course of his life forever and put his family and friends in terrible danger.

From Nureyev's poverty-stricken childhood in the Soviet city of Ufa, to his blossoming as a student dancer in Leningrad, to his arrival at the epicentre of western culture in Paris in the early 1960s and a nail-biting stand-off at the Le Bourget airport, "THE WHITE CROW" is the true story of an incredible journey by a unique artist who transformed the world of ballet forever.

## **THE WHITE CROW**

### **About The Production**

It was almost 20 years ago when actor-director Ralph Fiennes first read Julie Kavanagh's biography of the legendary Russian ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev called 'Rudolf Nureyev: The Life'. Fiennes and Kavanagh were friendly, and the writer knew the young actor was fascinated by Russian culture.

"Although I had no great interest in ballet and I didn't know much about Rudolf Nureyev, I was gripped by the story of his early life," Fiennes recalls. "His youth in Ufa in central Russia in the 1940s, his student years studying dance in Leningrad, now St Petersburg, and then culminating in his decision to defect to the West in 1961. That story got under my skin."

Although it was to be another 10 years before Fiennes would make his directorial debut with *Coriolanus* in 2011, he felt the story of Nureyev's early life to be very cinematic even then.

"The story sat with me as a great possibility for a film. I didn't really see myself directing it. It was just the idea," he explains. "It's so dramatic and is about so many things. It has an interior personal dynamic, the drive to realize himself and the ruthlessness that goes with it. It's also within the context of the ideological divide between east and west at the height of the Cold War."

Producer Gabrielle Tana similarly recognised the filmic potential of that particular part of Nureyev's story. Tana had produced both of Fiennes' actor-director projects, *Coriolanus* and *The Invisible Woman* and suggested a dramatic adaptation of Kavanagh's biography should be their next project together. Tana had a very personal attachment to the subject matter. She had been a ballet dancer as a child until she was 17 and had seen Rudolf Nureyev dance with Margot Fonteyn at the Royal Ballet as a young girl. The young Tana had even met Nureyev personally on a couple of occasions as Tana's mother had been friendly with a friend of Nureyev's.

"His life was so fascinating," Tana enthuses. "He was compelling as a person as well as such an exceptional artist. He put ballet on another level. He was a superstar."

Fiennes and Tana were drawn to Nureyev as a performer who wanted to captivate. Before Nureyev, the audience's gaze was primarily drawn to the female ballerinas, with the male dancers effectively on stage as strong, handsome statues.

"He had a spirit in him, something that was stronger than him or anything else," Tana explains. "He was obsessed with dance and obsessed with actually making his profile on the stage as significant as possible. He wanted to be as captivating as the ballerinas were and he reinvented male performance. It became much more dramatic. He wasn't just there to serve the ballerina. He was a dramatic player in her own right. Vaslav Nijinsky did it too, but with Nureyev it was very conscious. He wanted to make sure everybody was watching him."

Fiennes and Tana were not interested in making a biopic of Nureyev's life. "It was that character, that will of Nureyev's that made him realize who he was an artist that really grabbed me," says Fiennes.

"We wanted to make a film about somebody who was exceptional and who broke with convention," agrees Tana. "It wasn't conscious, it was something that was stronger than him. He wanted to be the best at what he was. He wasn't going to be held back or told what to do by anybody else."

### **Working on the screenplay**

Tana and Fiennes turned to renowned playwright and screenwriter David Hare to transform their idea into a reality. Fiennes knows Hare well as he has starred in several of Hare's great stage adaptations of Chekhov and Ibsen and on TV in Hare's political thriller *Page 8*.

"David Hare was our ideal writer," says Fiennes. "David writes what I call 'high- definition', provocative characters who have strong contrasting elements that are challenging for an audience. He writes those big spirits and he writes them brilliantly. Also, David is known for writing things that have a strong political and social context. He has an instinctive understanding of the political climate in our story."

In fact, Hare reveals it was his love of French New Wave cinema of the 1960s, particularly the films of Louis Malle, which initially drew him to the project.

“The French New Wave is what my generation grew up on,” Hare explains. “All those beautiful black and white movies of the 60s are what excited me and made we want to work in film. I read about Nureyev’s time in Paris just before he defected. I wanted to write a movie that was just set in Paris in those months, but Ralph was always adamant it would go back to Russia. That it would go back to both Nureyev’s time in St Petersburg as a student of dance, but also to this incredibly deprived childhood that he had.”

“I feel I have a good connection with David,” Fiennes says of how he worked with Hare. “We batted many ideas back and forth, feeling the temperature and the tone and the shifts of what we wanted to do. It was very inspiring to sit with him and wrangle the challenges of structure and drama. We asked ourselves, ‘What was the essential story we were trying to tell?’ We were clear this was the story of young Rudolf’s defection. I first thought it should be linear. What emerged in our discussion was the three time frame structure: Paris 1961, the Leningrad years from ’55-’61, and the childhood years in the late ’40s. These time frames interweave giving us a portrait of the evolution of this boy and leading us to a point at La Bourget in June ’61. The timeframes come together at this point.”

Writing a three-part structure appealed to Hare. “I’ve always thought three is a great number for a movie. When I did *The Hours*, which had a three-part structure, Guillermo Arriaga was writing *Amoros Perros* and we sent each other emails saying ‘Isn’t a three part structure just joy?’” he recalls, laughing. “Most films have two- part structures. They have an A-plot and a B-plot or they have a main plot and flashbacks to other events and that’s boring because the audience knows. Once the audiences sense what the structure is, they’re bored. The great thing with three is you never which one you’re going to next. You never know which direction the film is going in and that keeps it fresh.

“The whole art of it, both in the writing and in the cutting room is to make it look inevitable, even though it is by no means inevitable, which way you’re going to tell the story.”

Like Tana, Hare had actually met Nureyev. But by then Nureyev was the most famous dancer in the world and “*THE WHITE CROW*” was not going to be about *that* Nureyev.



“The film is about the moments during which he becomes the most famous dancer in the world for two reasons. The first being his dancing and the second being that he was the first significant Soviet citizen to defect,” says Hare.

“The Nureyev I met was already regarded as a monster. Famously difficult, famously imperious. You certainly couldn’t look at anybody else when you were in the room with him. I had to throw that memory away because that’s not what he was when he came to Paris. He was always on an extraordinarily tough course because of the poverty of his background.”

Hare underlines Nureyev was an autodidact who always considered himself running to catch up.

“He felt not only was he working class, a peasant who knew nothing as he put it, but that he started dancing very late. I give him a line when he goes to the choreography school and says, ‘I’ve got to do six years work in three’ and as a result of that he had a voracious curiosity in art. He wasn’t interested in just being what he would call a ‘stupid dancer’. Traditionally and particularly in that period in the 1960s dancers were expected just to obey, not to think. They were expected to move their limbs in ways the choreographers told them to. Part of Nureyev’s genius was he refused to accept that. He wanted the dancer to have a status and not just be a puppet. That’s why he moved choreography on.”

“He himself felt the male part in classical ballet was boring,” Hare continues. “Traditionally, the man stood there and took up various, heroic poses while around him this beautiful little girl would dance and twinkle and star. It was a merging of sexuality and merging of gender that happened with Nureyev. He, at least to my eyes, is clearly a bisexual dancer. When you see film of him dancing, there is a bisexual element to it. But there’s an employment of the feminine that is really creatively rich. It’s not unmanly and it’s not unheroic, but it is just much more expressive and much less wooden than traditional Soviet ballet.”

Hare started by talking to the people who knew him best. “Clara Saint is still alive and managed his move to the West. She was my key witness to who he then was,” Hare explains. “French dancer Pierre Lacotte, who was at La Bourget airport and who also helped him, was also extremely helpful. He could not have been more vivid in his descriptions of how Nureyev was then. Almost like a child, in some ways quite childish and in others devastatingly mature.”

Hare's aim was to put Nureyev's defection into a context that underlines what an enormous gesture it was for Nureyev to make and the implications it had for the Cold War. His long-standing working relationship with Fiennes helped immensely.

"Ralph just understands my work incredibly well," Hare explains. "He can feel a scene. When he looks at a scene on the page, he knows exactly how he's going to do it and what he's going to do with it. As he's an actor he understands how the dialogue relates to what I think the action of the scene is. If I wrote a scene, he knows what the scene is. I never had to explain a scene to Ralph."

They were able to produce the screenplay they wanted to. "'Ralph and I worked alone,'" says Hare. "Nobody brought any pressure to bear or interfered with us. They let us write what we want."

### **Bringing Nureyev to life**

Authenticity is key to Fiennes' work as a director and he was keen to cast Russian dancers and actors and have them speak Russian to each other on screen.

"From the very beginning Ralph's stipulation was that the dialogue would be in Russian," David Hare explains.

"Ralph Fiennes is really the best loved Western actor in Russia. If you walk down a street in Moscow or St Petersburg with Ralph, it's like walking with a Bollywood star in Mumbai. They love him to bits. The reason the Russians love him is they know he's the only major actor in the world who's interested in Russia. He speaks Russian, he's really committed to Russian work and to being as authentic as possible in the film. To him, it seemed completely ridiculous to have a whole lot of English speaking actors and give them accents. For me it's completely wonderful as it means I get all these great Russian actors to speak my dialogue."

Finding his Nureyev was Fiennes' first big challenge.

"We employed two casting directors in Russia to do a big sweep which ended up with four or five candidates and I identified this young Ukrainian dancer, Oleg Ivenko, from the Tartar State Ballet company," Fiennes explains. "I felt he had a latent acting ability and he is a strong ballet dancer who has a physical proximity to Rudolf Nureyev."

“When I did the screen tests I could see Oleg picked up immediately on direction,” Fiennes continues. “ If I demonstrated something, he got it very quickly. A couple of times I would say ‘No, this is what I want’ and I would demonstrate an attitude or a feeling and he very quickly got it. There was something about the way he sat in front of the camera, some ‘X factor’ that made me think ‘That could be Rudi’.”

Fiennes, who been nominated for multiple awards for his acting work and won the BAFTA for best supporting actor for Schindler’s List, then worked intensively with Ivenko to help him develop an understanding of screen acting. The young dancer had never acted.

“I pushed him to understand the best screen acting is rooted in being really present and in the moment,” Fiennes explains. “ You’re reacting and listening, so the thing to get him to feel is ‘don’t show me you’re angry or shy or irritated or whatever; just feel it, be it. Have it inside. If you really have it or are close to having it, it will reveal itself.

“It sounds quite simple, but it’s hard to be really present and the beauty of his work is that he is very present. It’s an uncluttered performance. He was very generous and allowed me to steer him a bit, but he has a real pure screen acting instinct. In the end I felt we were comfortable with each other quite quickly, there was a good working relationship.”

Ivenko himself gives a dancer’s insight into what made Nureyev special: “Rudolf had an incredible energy that he translated on to the stage,” Ivenko explains. “He worked really hard at the top of his ability. He entered the stage and lived his life onstage. Quite often, dancers are like robots, they perform a combination of movements, but he came out and lived it. He gave his energy to the audience who could not help applauding him because the energy he emanated was just incredibly powerful. Everybody felt it, all his partners, the entire corps-de-ballet that danced next to him. They all sensed it was something extraordinary. He could do impossible things. It was mind-blowing. Even now, some young ballet dancers can’t repeat what he could do.

“He was inspired by paintings, art, books and people who inspired him to act, to achieve. It was all connected in him. He listened to his inner voice and what was interesting to him personally. He followed this line and stuck to it. This is what is interesting about him.”

Renowned Ukrainian dancer Sergei Polunin, who was a former principal at the Royal Ballet, stars in the film as Yuri Soloviev, Nureyev's roommate in Paris. Polunin was the subject of the documentary *Dancer* in 2017, also produced by Tana. Tana had got to know Polunin thanks to her research for "THE WHITE CROW". He has since gone on to appear in films including 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox's *Murder On The Orient Express*. He describes the advice he tentatively offered to Ivenko, who he knows a little.

"It's a different level of energy," Polunin says of acting. "When you're dancing you completely lose yourself inside of it and it's a much bigger energy. When you do an acting scene it's very subtle and you have to be very controlled. Even a thought can affect what you see on the camera, so you have to be very careful how you send that energy. In dance, you just lose yourself inside of it and you don't really remember much; you just go for it."

Fiennes cast the acclaimed Russian actor Chulpan Khamatova as Xenia Pushkin. Xenia is the wife of Alexander Pushkin (played by Fiennes himself) who is Nureyev's mentor and teacher at the Leningrad Choreography School. Khamatova was thrilled to be part of the production.

"For me, Nureyev is a very important person," says Khamatova. "Not only is he a great dancer, he changed his life and he was ready to do it and ready to turn his life 180 degrees. The time before Nureyev changed his life, for me, is the most important time in his whole life."

While researching the screenplay, Fiennes and Hare had seized on the significance of the years Nureyev had spent in Leningrad (now St Petersburg), as a student of the Vaganova ballet school, formerly the Leningrad Choreographic School, where fought to study under Pushkin, and also as a member of the city's sensational Kirov Ballet Company. Far from his own family in Ufa, central Russia, the Pushkins took Nureyev under their wing and into their home. When he was injured they helped him back to health. As former dancers, they wanted to help heal him. There was also a rumoured brief affair between Xenia and Nureyev.

"The Pushkins were a very giving, generous and sympathetic couple who took great interest in wellbeing of the dance students," is Fiennes take on their relationship.

“Often, they would invite students and give them tea or food in their one- room apartment in the Vaganova school, this amazing classic building. From photographs you can see their apartment was full of elegant furniture and beautiful things.”

“We’re pretty sure, I can’t prove it but nobody will disprove it, Nureyev had an affair with Pushkin’s wife,” says Hare. “He was in the extraordinary situation in which the three of them were living together in a tiny apartment. The apartments in Leningrad at the time were absolutely minute even if you were as prestigious a figure as Pushkin.”

“THE WHITE CROW’ suggests one of the reasons Nureyev left was because the situation with the Pushkins had become oppressive as Nureyev realized he was homosexual.

“By that point he knew he was homosexual or predominantly homosexual as he did sleep with women his interests were homosexual,” says Hare. “That is one of the powerful reasons why Nureyev thought of the West as freedom.”

Perhaps most importantly, the Pushkins introduced Nureyev to the city’s vibrant social and intellectual circles. Fiennes and Hare met with twins Leonid Romankov and Liuba Myasnikova (Romankova) who knew Nureyev from that time and recalled the many times the dancer had joined them and other students, in the Russian tradition of a Sunday meal full of laughter and drinking, where everyone exchanged ideas and dreams around the table. Indeed, the real twins feature in the scene, watching actors play their younger selves.

“They were extremely helpful as they had the clearest memories of Rudi in Leningrad in the 1950s which was part of his life,” says Fiennes. “In ‘THE WHITE CROW’, Rudi is embraced by Liuba and Leonid as this shy, interesting young boy who is curious. Rudi comes into this world that is new to him. These young people believed they were living in a world of change.

“The Soviet Union at that time looked like it would change and become a bit more liberal,” Fiennes continues. “I talked to many people who lived through that time. Liuba for one said, ‘At that time I didn’t feel oppressed, I felt free in myself’. Her twin brother Leonid might say something different. In trying to understand this time, I came across contrasting views by some people for whom the system was clearly not great and others who accepted the system.”

The filmmakers were very keen to avoid cliché in their portrayal of the Soviet Union in the late 1950s.

“I loathe this phrase ‘the leap to freedom’ which is used in relation to Nureyev and it’s completely untrue,” says Hare. “It forgets two things. First of all, it wasn’t the bad times in Russia. On the contrary, things weren’t as bad under Khrushchev as they were under Stalin. There was a tremendous feeling of optimism, that the only way things could now go was towards a loosening and more individual freedom.”

Fiennes points to the nuanced character of Strizhevsky (Aleksei Morozov), the KGB officer assigned to keep an eye on Nureyev in Paris. “Strizhevsky tries to control Rudi and doesn’t want him to interact with Westerners. David and I felt strongly we wanted Strizhevsky to be intelligent and complex and we wanted his perspective to be understood. Through Aleksei Morozov’s brilliant performance, this believable and rounded person is brought to life.”

Hare agrees: “I tried to show in the relationship between Nureyev and the KGB man that it was a relationship; they talked. The KGB man was around, everyone knew what he represented, but it was possible to have a personal relationship with him. He points out the great problem of all dictatorships; that he is going to be in worse trouble than Nureyev will be. He says to him, ‘You think I bear down on you? I have someone bearing down on me’ by which he means to say he’s not the oppressor, he’s trapped in the system- give him a break! Nureyev won’t yield to that argument and in the scene before Nureyev makes his decision, the KGB man produces the strongest argument which did weight with Nureyev which is to say, ‘If you defect to the West, it won’t just be you who suffers, it will be your family. It will be your mother, it will be your sisters. They will suffer. Your family will be pariahs’. That was true and he did inflict terrible suffering on his family.”

Fiennes himself plays Alexander Pushkin, Xenia’s husband and Nureyev’s inspirational teacher. “He was a revered ballet teacher in Leningrad,” Fiennes says of Pushkin. “He taught Nureyev and many other great ballet dancers. He taught using a seemingly very gentle, almost non-instructive technique where he allows the student to make the mistake and identify it and fix it. He speaks about the logic of the steps and the logic of the movement. I loved David Hare’s portrayal of Pushkin.”

The off-screen relationship between Fiennes and Ivenko was therefore mirrored on-screen in the partnership between Nureyev and Pushkin. It is a symbiosis not lost on Tana, despite knowing the challenge it would present Fiennes to direct- for the third time- a film in which he also appears on the other side of the camera.

“I always felt Ralph should play the part and I thought there was something very beautiful in the notion of the director working with his star in that way, “ says Tana. “I think that was meant to be. On the last two films that Ralph and I did together, he was both starring and directing in *Coriolanus* and *The Invisible Woman* and it pained me physically to have to watch him do what he was doing. I didn’t want him to have to go through that pain again, but I did feel that this was something that was more contained, even though he was going to have to speak Russian. I felt that it would be beautiful if he did it, and it’s very special.”

When Nureyev arrives in Paris with the Kirov in 1961, he breaks down the barriers between the French and Soviet ballet companies to make two good friends in dancers Claire Motte (Calypso Valois) and Pierre Lacotte (Raphaël Personnaz). As the Pushkins did for him in Leningrad, they open the doors to French cultural and café life to Nureyev.

“When Pierre first saw Rudolf Nureyev dance he immediately understood he had something phenomenal in front of him,” Lacotte suggests. “He realized he couldn’t be that kind of dancer himself, but he was so generous, and he wanted the best for Nureyev.”

Calypso Valois says of Claire Motte: “They remained friends all his life. She had the best intentions towards him, and always very caring. They were equals, it wasn’t because she just admired him; it was a mutual admiration. She was in her home country, and he was exiled so I think she was very caring and supportive.”

Crucially, they introduced him to their friend Clara Saint, played by Adèle Exarchopoulos. Twenty-one year old Saint is a devoted ballet fan who has been recently bereaved. (Her boyfriend and his brother, the sons of novelist and then -French Culture Minister André Malraux, had been recently killed in a road accident.) Saint’s reacts to seeing Nureyev dance, she loses herself in his performance, and the fog of her grief is temporarily lifted.

“She sees this boy dancing and for a few moments she forgets she’s just lost the most important person in the world,” Exarchopoulos explains. “They build this natural complicity together. She helps him in his curiosity of Paris. They get closer and closer. Of course, we all ask ourselves, what was the ambiguity in the relationship? But for me it’s about friendship, real friendship.”

Exarchopoulos has her own opinion of why many people, including Saint, put up with Nureyev’s often boorish behavior.

“I don’t think you forgive him just because he has talent,” she muses. “You forgive because you have to smell this boy to understand him. He will never let people and convention get to him. Freedom is more important to him than anything.”

Exarchopoulos met the real Clara Saint during production. Unlike Motte, Saint had lost touch with Nureyev after his dramatic defection.

“It is always weird to meet someone and say, ‘I’m telling your story’ because it’s a big responsibility,” Exarchopoulos recalls of meeting Saint. “She told me about her memories, she showed me pictures, she told me about her childhood because what is the most interesting thing when you play a character is to know all the secrets that aren’t in the script. What inspired me the most was her humility. She never tried to interject.” Fiennes was impressed by the naturalism Exarchopoulos brought to the role of Clara.

“Adèle has a strong quality of a deep interior life that makes me want to lean in,” he explains. “I wanted an actress who had inner strength. Adèle’s got an inner strength about her. She is quite different from the real Clara, but that difference is a good thing. Adèle has an amazing instinct for truth on screen. She’ll never do anything that’s phony or false.”

### **Recreating the Three Eras**

Ralph Fiennes’ quest for authenticity extended to the locations in which “THE WHITE CROW” was shot. “The story primarily takes place in two extraordinary cities, Leningrad (St Petersburg) and Paris. We really fought, Gaby really fought, for us to have the budget to shoot in these places,” Fiennes explains. “Paris is expensive, and Russia has its own demands in terms of practicality and permissions. But we all felt that we must shoot in these places. We needed that veracity.”



The filmmakers had initially hoped to shoot all the Leningrad scenes in St. Petersburg, but the budget dictated only a week would be possible. Assisted by Natalia Smirnova's Russian production services company Globus Film (Fiennes had met then while filming *Onegin* in the country in 1998) the production captured St Petersburg's stunning exteriors in the late summer of 2017. They also filmed inside the Hermitage museum, the place in which Nureyev comes to absorb the city's treasures, including the Rembrandt Room. It was the first time the museum's authorities had allowed a film crew in since Alexander Sokurov's *Russian Ark* in 2002.

"It was because we were about an artist looking at art and that we weren't going in as tourists," Tana explains. "We were going in to pay homage to what a museum is all about. We had an amazing team there that helped get access and everything felt like it was actually not so difficult when we were there on the ground."

The production had a similar experience at the Louvre in Paris where it filmed the early morning scene in which Nureyev is captivated by Géricault's painting 'The Raft Of The Medusa', as part of six days in the French capital. It also captured the stained-glass interior of the Sainte-Chapelle, interiors and exteriors of the Paris Opera House, known as Palais Garnier, as well as the streets of the swinging city and the moonlit banks of the Seine.

"It's an aspect of Nureyev that moved me," Fiennes explains, as an artist himself. "I love going to art galleries when preparing a role, to have other things come in to your head that aren't specifically about learning your lines or in his case, practicing your steps. You want to bring in thoughts and feelings from other sources. You want to expose yourself to other intuitions."

Production on "THE WHITE CROW" then moved to Serbia to recreate the remaining interiors on sound stages and quiet theatres. Fiennes and Tana had previously shot *Coriolanus* in Serbian and they had strong industry connections in the country.

"We shot a lot of the film in Serbia where we had fantastic government support, amazing crews and were particularly blessed by the production services company, Work in Progress," says Fiennes.

French production designer Anne Seibel recreated interiors including the Vaganova school in Leningrad, the Mariinsky Theatre in the city where the Kirov performed and Paris-Le Bourget airport on Serbian sound stages. She singles out the airport set as her favorite.

“I used Ralph’s storyboard of those scenes to make the set useable for Ralph to do his scenes,” she explains. “For example, the stairs are not in the place they should be but to make it easier for the action I changed the position of them.”

Seibel appreciated the precise nature of her director. “He knows what he wants,” she says of Fiennes. “He’s an artist and I could feel that he really loved this film and I felt from the beginning that he wanted to create something beautiful. For me it was like creating a piece of art.”

Seibel worked closely with French costume designer Madeline Fontaine, who has previously worked on period pieces such as Pablo Larrain’s *Jackie*.

“The first thing you do when you start on a project like this one with a lot of extras is to go around to fashion houses and search for what you can find,” Fontaine explains. “Sometimes in these places you find some special pieces which could be used for some actors and then you can start to find your way to the characters, to the colors and to the specificity of the characters.”

Make-up and hair designer Lizzi Lawson Zeiss was part of their close-knit team. Like Seibel and Fontaine, she benefitted from the extensive research Fiennes had undertaken.

“What I love about him is his attention to detail is consummate,” she says. “You never relax because if you miss something or if something changes he notices it instantly. His work ethic is extraordinary.

“What we did with our Russian cast was to keep them with a very 1950s look,” Lawson Zeiss reveals. “Then with our Parisian cast, we’ve made them true 1960s, so each part tells a completely different story.

“With Rudi, if you look at all the photographs of him his hair was constantly changing, evolving, getting haircuts. He went backwards and forwards. We decided he would have one haircut that would always be one length, but within that we would dress it in different ways. When we see him in 1955 we try to make him look a bit more boy-ish, bring it all forward. Then as he starts to get

into the story more, we change it. We had to decide on one haircut that would take us through to 1961 and then find things to do within that to suggest change or moments.

“What was interesting was when he got adopted by the Pushkins, there’s definitely a change in him,” Lawson Zeiss muses. “They took him in, they housed him, and they fed him and treated him like a son. Xenia was buying clothes for him and feeding him properly, and obviously you start to see some changes in him. He becomes a little bit smarter, a little bit more put together.”

Lawson Zeiss opted to tone down Ivenko’s stage make up. “Nureyev’s makeup was always quite strong and very, very theatrical and when we tried to do this it just looked like it was way too much, so we’ve just refined it a little bit,” she explains. “It’s still very theatrical and has an essence of Rudi’s make-up but it’s not quite as brutal.”

Music also played a vital part in signaling the different eras to the audience.

“For the early era of the Soviet Union I wanted to do something that was very classical Russian, so I drew from my own Russian heritage,” says music composer Ilan Eshkeri. “I also drew from my knowledge of Tchaikovsky in particular, because we know Nureyev loved his work as do I.”

Eshkeri wrote all the incidental music for “THE WHITE CROW” including a piece of violin music that was used throughout the Soviet scenes which was performed by world-renowned violinist Lisa Batiashvili.

“For Paris, I wanted to do something that was startlingly different, but using the same players and the same instruments, a solo violin for Nureyev and also a full symphony orchestra,” he explains. “I thought, ‘We’re in Paris, we’re in the 60s, and this is a melting pot of artistic ideas, talent, philosophy and all these things are going on’. It’s exciting and needs to be the cutting edge.”

Eshkeri decided to compose a modern (for the time) minimalist style of classical music that was harmonically a world apart from the more traditional, classical, romantic style. “When they arrive in Paris you get this piece of music and it just is bright and bold and contemporary,” Eshkeri says. “For me that is Nureyev. He’s slapped in the face with this whole other world.”

When it came to the Leningrad scenes of the 1950s, it was decided not to use any music at all. “Sometimes when you’re writing music for a movie that’s a really important part of the job,”

Eshkeri explains. “Working out when not to have music is as much my job as working out where there needs to be music. Sometimes deciding to not have music is more difficult.”

Fiennes, who worked with Eshkeri on both *Coriolanus* and *The Invisible Woman*, says he is wary of too much music.

“I don’t like films where music is poured all over the film to somehow boost emotion and drama. I feel uncomfortable if I feel that I’m being maneuvered by the music in the film, but I recognize there’s a place for music,” he says. “Rudolf loved music. He taught himself to read music and play the piano, so it seemed to me that we shouldn’t be shy of it.”

We first hear the theme Eshkeri wrote for Nureyev when he is standing in the Louvre looking the ‘Raft of the Medusa’. “We see this boy soaking in this painting,” says Fiennes. “The music runs alongside it and inside it.”

As is usual for him when working with Fiennes, Eshkeri joined the production much earlier than a composer usually would on any other project. “One of the reasons I love to work with Ralph is we start really early in the process,” he explains. “I felt immediately there was a very emotionally complicated story to tell. Complex emotion is something music can express. Emotions that are conflicting or things that words cannot describe and in fact I often think, isn’t that the point? When you’re looking at a film and the performances and script are strong, and it’s filmed beautifully, what is the music trying to do? It’s trying to give you that something extra where words and dialogue can’t go. There was a great opportunity to do that in this film.

“When Ralph and I would meet and talk before I’d written anything or as I was writing, we would always speak about feelings and emotions at great length, especially about what we believed Nureyev was going through at this moment in time, what this very complicated, fascinating, conflicted and artistic character was going through. Just so he could dance.”

### **Working with Ralph Fiennes**

Doing double duty as actor and director meant Fiennes relied heavily on his first-class technical collaborators including cinematographer Mike Eley, ballet and choreography consultant Johan Kobborg and script supervisor Susanna Lenton.

“I realized early on he was composing incredible shots and we were in sync with each other,” Fiennes says of Eley. “I would have an idea of what the scene was, where possible angles might be, so we did a lot of advanced prepping and location work and when we came to shoot, a lot of the work was done. We looked at plans and talked about blocking scenes in advance so that on the day for the most part I just knew Mike was doing it and it was looking great. Part of me was able to not worry. I quickly realized I was blessed with this extraordinary cinematographer who was following through on everything we had discussed. He was very open to any suggestions and was also bringing his own poetry and vision. It was one of the great creative relationships I’ve had.”

When it came to recreating the ballet scenes, Fiennes drew on some high-level support. “I was out of my comfort zone shooting ballet,” Fiennes admits. “I’ve not grown up with ballet, so I had to immerse myself as much as I could. It was certainly a challenge.”

“I met Carlos Acosta briefly to see him dance,” he recalls. “He said to me ‘Oh you’re doing a film about Rudi? Well, remember that while we jump for a living we can’t jump continually’. I realized you had to be very aware of a dancer’s stamina. Unlike an actor you can’t do 40 takes, not that I do 40 takes - I can do seven to 10 takes with an actor and that’s okay, but you can’t easily do the same with a dancer.”

The leading Danish ballet dancer and choreographer Johan Kobborg joined the project to work with Fiennes on the ballet scenes. They included some historically correct excerpts danced by Ivenko.

“Choreographing and dancing for film are very different processes,” Kobborg points out. “You are trying to convey that same live energy, but you have to keep that fire going for let’s say 10 to 12 hours a day, just for filming a few minutes of dance. By using different angles of placing the camera you can tell a story. You can tell the same story in so many, and it gives a lot of room for interpretation. It also has to work for both the connoisseur and the person who sees ballet for the first time. Finding that balance was interesting.”

Fiennes has worked with script supervisor Susanna Lenton on his previous two films as director. “When I’m in a pressurized situation, we’ll make eye contact and she’ll help me with the performance. She has a brilliant instinct for film acting and we developed our own shorthand.”

“With the right people around you it is manageable, without that it wouldn’t be,” he admits. “Also, we had a fantastic cast of actors who were very accommodating and that’s what you hope. It’s very odd for a cast for the director to be directing one moment and then acting the next. You’re grateful for their patience and tolerance. Generally, there’s a spirit of support. There’s a collective spirit of wanting it all to work out for the best and I felt that support from everyone.”

“He surrounds himself with people who love him, and he needs that because otherwise the task before him would be absolutely impossible,” David Hare points out. “Unless the atmosphere were totally supportive, I don’t think it would be possible for him to do what he does.”

Fiennes’ cast are effusive in their praise of their director.

“Ralph Fiennes is so precise in his directions and so in love with the characters and his work. We could do 20 or 30 or 40 takes of the same sequence and every time he will ask you something different, something precise, but it doesn’t mean what you have done is not good. He just wants to explore,” says Raphaël Personnaz (Pierre Lacotte).

“I felt completely supported. I had the feeling that I was in his hands and because he is an actor, a great actor, he can help with the small details,” contributes Chulpan Khamatova (Xenia Pushkin).

Calypso Valois (Claire Mott) points out the unique advantage of working with a director who is also an actor too. “Ralph has so much empathy for us. He is always positive and underlining what’s positive. Of course, when he wants something he will let us know. He will say, ‘this is really good, but we need to add this or that’ and he is very soft, not pushing us, he is very caring with his actors,” she says.

It’s a quality Adèle Exarchopoulos also noticed in Fiennes. “He’s really subtle and precise. When he comes to see you, you can see in his head that there’s all the scene, all the emotion, all the details. It’s fascinating to see how involved he is. He’s really helpful and he’s ready to listen.”

She laughs as she remembers her initial reaction when she was first asked to read with Fiennes for the part.

“To be honest I was like, ‘I’m going to read with Voldemort!’”

## **Remembering Rudolf Nureyev**

Rudolf Nureyev was one of the greatest ballet dancers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and a key figure in the cultural battles of the Cold War. But when he was researching the project, director Ralph Fiennes realized many younger people had never heard of Nureyev. It put an interesting spin on how he portrayed the period of his life covered by “THE WHITE CROW”.

“It is a portrait of the artist as a young man with all his jagged edges and his loneliness and his imagination and his mischief,” smiles Fiennes. “There’s an unpleasantness and a ruthlessness to him, but it’s youth looking to realize itself. And I find that very moving.”

It’s meant for people who don’t know,” says David Hare of “THE WHITE CROW”. “The events took place a very long time ago and people don’t know the story of Nureyev. I wanted to tell that story and spread some respect for the incredible dedication you need to be brilliant in an art form and how hard you have to work to be that good. It’s very rare to see that represented on film and I love the way Ralph has done that.”

Of Nureyev’s behavior during the time depicted in the film, Hare says it would not be countenanced now. “He would be sent on an anger management course!” he laughs. “In Nureyev’s defense, everyone will say the ruthlessness was as much with himself as it was with other people. I didn’t want to pull back on the selfishness. Unless you represent the selfishness you’re not really telling the story of Nureyev. He isn’t yet calcified. He isn’t somebody who is expected to behave badly so that means when he behaves badly, his bad behavior really upsets people in a profound way.”

Finally, Fiennes does not believe Nureyev had any intention of defecting from the Soviet Union to the West.

“They could have hung on to him. He could have been a big Soviet star,” Fiennes muses. “I don’t think he had a plan to defect, he had an interest and a deep curiosity in a world elsewhere. But the Soviets were convinced he would leave and their paranoia made them sit on him and by squeezing him they made him jump out of their hands.”

THE WHITE CROW was developed by BBC Films and Gabrielle Tana (*The Duchess, Dancer, Philomena*) who also produced with Carolyn Marks Blackwood through Magnolia Mae Productions together with Ralph Fiennes through Lonely Dragon Productions, and François

Ivernel (*The Queen, Slumdog Millionaire, The Iron Lady*) through the French branch of his company, Montebello Productions. American artist and filmmaker Andrew Levitas (*Lullaby, Georgetown, The Art of Getting By*) is a producer and financier through his companies Metalwork Pictures and Rogue Black respectively.

Hanway Films is handling worldwide sales on the project. BBC Films, Hanway Films and The Fyzz Facility co-financed the film.



## **THE WHITE CROW**

### **About the Cast**

**Oleg Ivenko (Rudolf Nureyev)** is an accomplished ballet dancer. Born in Ukraine he studied for 10 years at the Kharkov Choreography School (1996-2006) before moving to the Belarusian State Choreography College for four years. Since 2010 Oleg has been a member of the Musa Dzhaliil Tatar State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre Company.

Oleg's repertoire of roles includes Basil in DON QUIXOTE, Solor in LA BAYADERE, Colin and Alain in FUTILE PRECAUTION, Shurale in SHURALE, Jester and Neapolitan Dance in SWAN LAKE, Prince, Harlequin and Chinese Dance in THE NUTCRACKER, Happy Dwarf in SNOW WHITE, Blue Bird in SLEEPING BEAUTY, Mercutio and Benvolio in ROMEO AND JULIET, Conrad Ali in LE CORSAIRE, Franc and Friends in COPPELIA, Nuradin in GOLDEN HORSE, Student in ANYUTA, Pierre Gringoire and Akteon in LA ESMERALDA.

Oleg's career as a ballet dancer has awarded him critical acclaim, winning several international competitions across both ballet and theatre.

In 2010, he participated in the 5th International Festival of Choreographic Colleges and Schools in Kazan and received diplomas at the International Competition in Varna and the International Competition of Ballet Dancers in Arabesque. In 2012, Oleg took part in Russia Culture's TV competition show The Big Ballet, showcasing the best seven Russian ballet couples from the country's leading theatres. That year, he was also a prize winner at the 12th International Ballet Dancers' Competition and Special Prize winner at the Union of Theatre Workers of The Russian Federation.

One of the most important annual events in the world of ballet is the Yuri Grigorovich International Competition - Young Ballet of the World and Oleg has won twice, first in 2012 as an II Prize winner and again in 2014 as a Grand Prize winner. In 2012 Oleg won the Prize Winner of the Krasnoyarsk International Ballet Competition Grand Prix of Siberia. And in 2016 he was the Prize Winner of the IX Korean International Ballet Competition.

**Adèle Exarchopoulos (Clara Saint)** is a French actress whose career began in 2005 when she starred as the lead role in MARTHA, a short film by Jean-Charles Hue. At the age of 13 she had a

role alongside John Hurt in Jean Birkin's BOXES, which screened in Un Certain Regard at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

As her career began to take off she appeared in a number of films including LES ENFANTS DE TIMPLEBACH by Nicolas Bary, CHEZ GINO by Samuel Benchetrit, TURK'S HEAD by Pascal Elbé, THE ROUND UP by Rose Bosch, CARRÉ BLANC by Jean-Baptiste Leonetti and DES MORCEAUX DE MOI by Nolwenn Lemesle.

In 2013 Adèle landed the lead role in the Palme d'Or winner BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOUR. She accepted the award at the 66th Cannes Film Festival alongside director Abdellatif Kechiche and actress Léa Seydoux becoming the youngest person in history to receive the award. Adèle and the film received international attention and critical acclaim as an un-missable coming-of-age love story. As the film entered multiple film festivals and launched into award season, Adèle went on to win the César Award for Most Promising Actress and the Trophée Chopard for Female Revelation of the Year.

Adèle became a regular attendee on the international film festival circuit with projects such as I USED TO BE DARKER by Matthew Porterfield which screened at Sundance, INSECURE by Marianne Tardieu, which was part of the ACID section at the Cannes Film Festival, THE ANARCHISTS by Elie Wajeman, which screened during Critics' Week at the Cannes Film Festival the following year, ORPHAN by Arnaud De Pallières, which showed at both Toronto and San Sebastian international film festivals, and RACER AND THE JAILBIRD by Michaël R. Roskam, which screened at the Venice International Film Festival.

**Raphaël Personnaz (Pierre Lacotte)** studied at the Conservatoire du XXème arrondissement in Paris before beginning his career on TV in the late 1990s. He first appeared on the big screen in 2000 in Pierre-Olivier Scotto's LE ROMAN DE LULU. He then starred in multiple roles including Sam Karmann's À LA PETITE SEMAINE, LA PREMIÈRE FOIS QUE J'AI EU 20 ANS by Lorraine Lévy, and LA FAUTE À FIDEL by Julie Gavras.

His career took off in 2010 when he played the part of Duc d'Anjou in Bertrand Tavernier's LA PRINCESSE DE MONTPENSIER, which screened in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. Raphaël's stellar performance led to international critical acclaim and he won the Swann d'Or for Male Revelation at the Cabourg Film Festival in 2011 as well as receiving a César nomination for

the Rising Star Award. In 2012 he went on to play the role of Al in TROIS MONDES by Catherine Corsini, which screened in Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival, and then in the same year starred as Guillaume in AFTER by Géraldine Maillet.

In 2013, Raphaël played the role of Marius in the TRILOGY OF PAGN: MARIUS, FANNY and CESAR directed by Daniel Auteuil and starred in Bertrand Tavernier's QUAI D'ORSAY alongside Thierry Lhermitte. After being shortlisted in 2011, Raphaël's impressive body of work earned him to be the 2013 recipient of the Patrick Dewaere award.

This pivotal moment of his career launched Raphaël to new heights, from playing the part of François Bizot in Régis Wargnier's LE TEMPS DES AVEUX to then collaborating with François Ozon on UNE NOUVELLE AMIE before playing Franck Magne in Frédéric Tellier's L'AFFAIRE SK1. During the same period, 2014-2015, he could be seen at the Hébertot theatre for the CARTE DU POUVOIR directed by Ladislav Chollat.

In 2016 he filmed IN THE FORESTS OF SIBERIA adapted from Sylvain Tesson's book and directed by Safy Nebbou.

Ongoing theatre projects include SCÈNES DE LA VIE CONJUGALE staged by Safy Nebbou and VOUS N'AUREZ PAS MA HAINE, staged by Benjamin Guillard, for which he won the Molière for Best Actor in a Monologue in 2018.

**Chulpan Khamatova (Xenia Iosifovna Pushkin)** was born in 1975 in Kazan, Tatar ASSR, in what was then the Soviet Union. She studied at the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts under Alexei Borodin.

Chulpan performed on the stages of several Moscow theatres, including the Russian Academic Youth Theater (Dunya Raskolnikova in CRIME AND PUNISHMENT and Anne Frank in ANNE FRANK'S DIARY), the Theater of the Moon, the Anton Chekhov Theater (Katya in POSE OF THE IMMIGRANT), the Open Theater Julia Malakyants (SILVIA).

In 1998 she was invited to join the troupe of the Moscow Sovremennik Theatre. She debuted in the role of Patricia Holman in THREE COMRADES. She also starred on stage in THREE SISTERS (Irina), MAMAPAPASYNSOBAKA (Andria), THE STORM (Katerina), THE

NAKED PIONEER (Masha Mukhina) and ANTHONY AND CLEOPATRA (Cleopatra), as well as the role of Masha in the new version of the play THREE SISTERS.

In 2008, Chulpan appeared in STORIES OF SHUKSHIN at the Theatre of Nations, in nine of 10 stories. In cinema, Khamatova started acting during the third year at the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts, when Vadim Abdrashitov asked her to play Katya in the film THE TIME OF THE DANCER.

Chulpan Khamatova is one of contemporary Russia's most celebrated actresses in theatre and cinema, People's Artist of Russia and a two-time laureate of the State Prize of the Russian Federation. Chulpan has played over 50 roles in Russian and European cinema, with the award-winning German production GOODBYE LENIN! bringing her international recognition in 2003. Chulpan is the leading actress and deputy artist director of the Moscow Academic Theatre Sovremennik, and actress of the Theatre of Nations and Gogol Centre.

**Sergei Polunin (Yuri Soloviev)** trained at the Kyiv State Choreographic School, before joining the Royal Ballet School aged 13 on a scholarship from the Rudolf Nureyev Foundation. He became a first soloist at the Royal Ballet in 2009 and was promoted to Principal in 2010, aged 19. Sergei left the Royal Ballet in 2012 to dance as a Principal for the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Music Theatre and as Guest Soloist with the Novosibirsk State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre.

His Royal Ballet roles included DANCES AT A GATHERING and RHAPSODY, Solor and Bronze Idol (LA BAYADÈRE), Des Grieux (MANON), Hans-Peter/Nutcracker and the Prince (THE NUTCRACKER), Prince Florimund (THE SLEEPING BEAUTY), Prince (CINDERELLA) and Lensky (ONEGIN). He created the role of Jack/Knave in Christopher Wheeldon's ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND and returned to the Company as a guest artist in 2013 to dance Armand (MARGUERITE AND ARMAND) with Tamara Rojo. In 2011 he danced the Slave Master at the PHANTOM OF THE OPERA 25th Anniversary performances at the Royal Albert Hall. Roles with the Stanislavsky Ballet included Prince Siegfried (SWAN LAKE), Albrecht (GISELLE), Frantz (COPPÉLIA), Basil (DON QUIXOTE), Solor and Crown Prince Rudolf (MAYERLING).

In December 2017, Sergei returned to the London Coliseum with Project Polunin presenting SATORI, a mixed multimedia dance program. These performances featured FIRST SOLO, a new short ballet starring Sergei and created by award-winning choreographer Andrey Kaydanovskiy, SCRIABINIANA, the London premiere of Kasyan Goleizovsky's ballet suite, and concluding with the world premiere of SATORI, choreographed by Sergei and directed by Gabriel Marcel del Vecchio with an original score by multi-award-winning composer Lorenz Dangel.

Sergei has performed in two music videos directed by David La Chapelle - THERE MUST BE MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS (Freddie Mercury and Michael Jackson) and Hozier's TAKE ME TO CHURCH (over 23 million views on YouTube). His short film credits include CAN I MAKE THE MUSIC FLY? directed by Bruce Weber for Dior. Sergei is the subject of 2017 biographical documentary, DANCER, produced by Gabrielle Tana and directed by Steven Cantor.

Sergei's film credits include RED SPARROW, MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS and THE NUTCRACKER AND THE FOUR REALMS.

His awards include the Prix de Lausanne, the Sixth Lifar International Ballet Competition, Young British Dancer of the Year, the Youth America Grand Prix, Critics' Circle Outstanding Male Performance (Classical and Rising Star) and nominations for Critics' Circle Best Male Dancer and a Golden Mask.

Daughter of the legendary 80's duo Elli & Jacno, **Calypso Valois (Claire Mott)** is a French actress, singer and songwriter. Passionate about art in all its many forms, Calypso Valois originally started her artistic career as an actress. After taking acting classes in Paris, she quickly got to work with prominent and high profile film directors such as Olivier Assayas on SOMETHING IN THE AIR and PERSONAL SHOPPER, Michel Gondry on MOOD INDIGO and Catherine Corsini on SUMMERTIME.

In addition to her on-screen work, Calypso is known for her music career. Following an early duet with the iconic French singer Etienne Daho and EPs with her band Cinema, more recently she released her debut solo album CANNIBALE, which received rave reviews and made her one of the new leading figures of the French electro-pop scene.

This year, Calypso filmed the highly anticipated TV series adaptation of VERNON SUBUTEX, based on Virginie Despentes' bestselling novel. Commissioned by French channel Canal Plus, the series will see her star alongside Romain Duris and Céline Sallette.

**Louis Hofmann (Teja Kremke)** was born in 1997 in Cologne, Germany. He began acting from the age of nine and received the Best Young Talent New Faces Award in 2012 for his lead role in the German-language adaptation of the classic Mark Twain novel THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER, directed by Hermine Huntgeburth. He reprised the role in the 2012 sequel THE ADVENTURES OF HUCK FINN. In 2013 he appeared in Vanessa Jopp's comedy A NEARLY PERFECT MAN.

His role as Wolfgang in the 2015 film SANCTUARY directed by Marc Brummund earned him the 2015 Bavarian Film Prize for Best Newcomer and the 2016 German Actors' Award in the newcomer category. His first international role as a German prisoner of war in the Oscar nominated Danish-German coproduction LAND OF MINE earned him the Best Supporting Actor prize at Denmark's Bodil Awards in 2016. That same year he received the Special Jaeger-LeCoultre Award at the German Film Prize.

In 2016 Louis played Phil in THE CENTRE OF MY WORLD, a coming-of-age romantic drama directed by Jakob M. Erwa and was cast as Jonas Kahnwald in Baran bo Odar's DARK, the first German series to be made by Netflix, which was released December 1<sup>st</sup> 2017.

He was honoured with a European Shooting Stars Award at the Berlinale 2017.

**Olivier Rabourdin (Gregory Alixinsky)** is a theatre, TV and film actor. Born in 1959 Olivier began his career as a fisherman in the 1985 in the film THE SATIN SLIPPER, directed by Manoel de Oliveira and winner of the Sergio Trasatti Award at the Venice Film Festival. In 1999 Olivier accepted a role in Luc Besson's THE MESSENGER: THE STORY OF JOAN OF ARC.

As Olivier's career progressed he starred in a number of French language films including 2017's ACTRESSES by Valerie Bruni Tedeschi, presented as part of the official selection at the 60th Cannes Film Festival and winner of the Prix Spécial du Jury Award in the Un Certain Regard section. Olivier was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the César Awards for his portrayal of

Christophe in the 2010 film *OF GODS OF MEN* directed by Xavier Beauvois, Grand Prix of the Cannes Film Festival in the official selection. He was the lead character in Robin Campillo's *EASTERN BOYS*, winner of the Orizonti price in the 70th Mostra of Venezia and of the International Film Festival of Santa Barbara 2014. He also played Abel Daedalus in Arnaud Desplechin's *TROIS SOUVENIRS DE MA JEUNESSE*, a Directors' Fortnight SACD prize winner at the Cannes Film Festival 2015.

Olivier's first English language part came in the role of Jean-Claude in Pierre Morel's *TAKEN*, which he later reprised in *TAKEN 2* by Olivier Megaton. Further notable film credits include playing Paul Gauguin in Woody Allen's Academy Award winning *MIDNIGHT IN PARIS* and starring alongside Nicole Kidman and Tim Roth in Olivier Dahan's *GRACE OF MONACO*.

Olivier's TV credits include *ROSEMARY'S BABY*, starring alongside John Hurt in *THE LAST PANTHERS*, playing the lead character in the French series *GUYANE*, and *FORGIVING EARTH* by Hugo Blick.

## **THE WHITE CROW**

### **About the Crew**

#### **Ralph Fiennes (Director/Alexander Pushkin)**

Ralph Fiennes made his feature film debut as Heathcliff in WUTHERING HEIGHTS in 1992. His film credits include SCHINDLER'S LIST, THE ENGLISH PATIENT, THE CONSTANT GARDENER, THE END OF THE AFFAIR, THE READER, QUIZ SHOW, OSCAR AND LUCINDA, ONEGIN, SPIDER, SUNSHINE, STRANGE DAYS and THE HURT LOCKER. He played Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter series and the role of 'M' in SKYFALL and SPECTRE.

Fiennes' most recent film credits include, HOLMES AND WATSON, THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL, A BIGGER SPLASH, KUBO AND THE TWO STRINGS, HAIL CAESAR! and THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE. He has completed filming OFFICIAL SECRETS with Keira Knightley. Fiennes made his feature film directorial debut in 2011 with CORIOLANUS in which he also starred in the title role. In 2013 he directed and starred in THE INVISIBLE WOMAN.

His television work includes David Hare's trilogy PAGE EIGHT, TURKS & CAICOS and SALTING THE BATTLEFIELD. He played T.E Lawrence in A DANGEROUS MAN: LAWRENCE AFTER ARABIA and also appeared in PRIME SUSPECT and REV. Fiennes' work at the National Theatre includes MAN & SUPERMAN, OEDIPUS, THE TALKING CURE, SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR, FATHERS AND SONS and TING TANG MINE. His extensive work at the Royal Shakespeare Company includes TROILUS & CRESSIDA, KING LEAR, LOVE'S LABOUR LOST, Henry VI in THE PLANTAGENETS, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, KING JOHN, THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER and Ibsen's BRAND which later transferred to the Haymarket Theatre.

For the Almeida he has appeared as Richard III, Coriolanus, Ivanov, and Hamlet all directed by Jonathan Kent. HAMLET was presented at The Hackney Empire and then The Belasco Theater on Broadway where Fiennes received the Tony Award for Best Actor. Fiennes returned to



Broadway in 2006 and received a Tony Nomination for his role in Brian Friel's THE FAITH HEALER following a run at The Gate Theatre Dublin.

In 2016 Fiennes played Solness in THE MASTER BUILDER directed by Matthew Warchus at the Old Vic theatre and RICHARD III at the Almeida, for which he received the Evening Standard Best Actor Award. In 2018 Ralph will appear as Antony in ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA at the National Theatre.

Fiennes has been the recipient of many significant awards and nominations for his work on film and in the theatre. He was nominated for Academy Awards, Golden Globes and BAFTAs for his roles in both THE ENGLISH PATIENT and SCHINDLER'S LIST, winning the BAFTA for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for the latter. He was also nominated for BAFTAs for THE END OF AN AFFAIR and THE CONSTANT GARDENER. He was nominated for the BAFTA for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer for CORIOLANUS. Most recently he was nominated for a Golden Globe and a BAFTA for his leading role in THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL. Fiennes has also been honoured with the Variety Award for Film Achievement, The Richard Harris Award by the British Independent Film Awards and The Empire Film Legend Award.

### **Gabrielle Tana (Producer)**

Gabrielle Tana is a film and television producer based in London and New York. She founded Magnolia Mae Films with partner Carolyn Marks Blackwood in 1996.

Prior to forming Magnolia Mae Films, Gabrielle produced Michael Di Giacomo's ANIMALS, starring Tim Roth, John Turturro and Mickey Rooney, Goran Paskaljevic's SOMEONE ELSE'S AMERICA, starring Tom Conti and Miki Manojlovic, and Nannette Burstein and Brett Morgen's Academy Award-nominated documentary ON THE ROPES.

Through Magnolia Mae she has previously worked with Ralph Fiennes who directed and starred in both the Academy Award- nominated THE INVISIBLE WOMAN and the film adaption of

CORIOLANUS. Fiennes also starred in the Academy Award-winning THE DUCHESS, directed by Saul Dibb and also starring Keira Knightley.

Also through Magnolia Mae, she produced PHILOMENA (four Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture, plus a BAFTA win for Best Adapted Screenplay).

Following their successful collaboration on PHILOMENA, Tana has worked with Baby Cow Films to develop their film slate, and recently as executive producer on two Baby Cow features – MINDHORN and STAN AND OLLIE, starring Steve Coogan and John C. Reilly as legendary comedy duo Laurel and Hardy.

In addition to her work in film, Tana co-founded Project Polunin in 2016 with world famous ballet dancer Sergei Polunin. In 2017, they mounted major productions at the London Coliseum and Sadler's Wells Theatre. Tana also produced DANCER, a feature documentary portrait of Polunin.

### **David Hare (Writer)**

David Hare is a playwright and film-maker. He has written over thirty stage plays, which include PLENTY, PRAVDA (with Howard Brenton), THE SECRET RAPTURE, RACING DEMON, SKYLIGHT, AMY'S VIEW, THE BLUE ROOM, VIA DOLOROSA, STUFF HAPPENS, SOUTH DOWNS, THE ABSENCE OF WAR, THE JUDAS KISS, THE RED BARN and THE MODERATE SOPRANO. For film and television, Hare has written over twenty-five screenplays which include LICKING HITLER, WETHERBY, DAMAGE, THE HOURS, THE READER, DENIAL, and the Worricker Trilogy: PAGE EIGHT, TURKS & CAICOS and SALTING THE BATTLEFIELD.

Most recent work includes the new BBC/Netflix series COLLATERAL and the play I'M NOT RUNNING opens at the National Theatre in October. In 1997 the French government honored him as an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres, and in 1998 the British knighted him for services to the theatre. In a millennial poll of the greatest plays of the 20th century, five of the top 100 were his.

### **Lizzi Lawson Zeiss (Make-up & Hair Designer)**

Lizzi Lawson Zeiss is a Make-up and Hair Designer with nearly 20 years' experience in film and television. Most recently, her work as Hair Supervisor for BLADE RUNNER 2049 resulted in a nomination at the Hollywood Makeup Artist and Hair Stylist Guild Awards.

Previous notable film credits include the Academy award-nominated TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY, starring Gary Oldman and Colin Firth, THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR starring Chris Hemsworth, Charlize Theron, Emily Blunt and Jessica Chastain, BEL AMI starring Robert Pattinson and Kristin Scott Thomas, Madonna's directorial debut W.E., Golden Globe nominated KINKY BOOTS starring Chiwetel Ejiofor, directed by Julian Jarrold and Academy Award nominated THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA.

Zeiss' most recent work in television includes BBC One's LOVE, NINA starring Helena Bonham Carter and HUNTED for the BBC, both directed by S.J Clarkson. Other Television credits include FINGERSMITH starring Sally Hawkins for BBC One and THE SHELL SEEKERS starring Vanessa Redgrave.

### **Anne Seibel (Production Designer)**

Anne Seibel is a French production designer. She attended Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris and has a degree in Architecture. She is the head of the art direction department at the prestigious French film school La Fémis.

Anne began her career working as an Art Director on US productions that filmed abroad in France. Most notably, she worked on Clint Eastwood's HEREAFTER, Steven Spielberg's MUNICH, Sophia Coppola's MARIE ANTOINETTE, and David Frankel's THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA.

Anne also designed MIDNIGHT IN PARIS for Woody Allen. The film was his most successful in 25 years and Anne was Academy Award- nominated for Best Achievement in Art Direction. She also designed TO ROME WITH LOVE and MAGIC IN THE MOONLIGHT for Allen.

More recently she has designed Agnieszka Holland's ROSEMARY'S BABY, Jean Pierre Jeunet's CASANOVA for Amazon, Aditya Chopra's last Bollywood movie BEFIKRE and Eleanor Coppola's first feature film PARIS CAN WAIT.

### **Johan Kobborg (Ballet Advisor and Choreographer)**

Johan Kobborg has enjoyed a distinguished career as a principal dancer with the Royal Danish Ballet, the Royal Ballet and as a guest with most major companies around the world. More recently he has distinguished himself as a choreographer with leading companies including the Royal Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Zurich Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, San Francisco Ballet, Lithuanian National Ballet and Royal New Zealand Ballet.

Johan was born in Copenhagen 1972 and trained at the Funen Ballet Academy before being admitted to the Royal Danish Ballet School in 1988 at the age of 16. He joined the Royal Danish Ballet in 1989, and then the Royal Ballet in 1999 where he joined as a Principal.

Johan left the Royal Ballet in June 2013 after a final performance of MAYERLING to pursue his choreography and freelance performing opportunities. From December 2013 until April 2016 Kobborg was Artistic Director of the Romanian National Ballet.

Commissions for The Royal Ballet have included a production of LA SYLPHIDE in 2005 and a suite of dances for Bournonville's NAPOLI, in 2007. He also staged LA SYLPHIDE for the Bolshoi Ballet, which was telecast around the world in September 2012. In 2012, Johan and Ethan Stiefel also created a new production of GISELLE for the Royal New Zealand Ballet. More recently in 2017 Johan created a brand new production of DON QUIXOTE for the Leonid Yacobson Ballet in St Petersburg.

As for awards, Johan has won the Dance Critics Circle award for best male dancer and was nominated for two Laurence Olivier Awards in London: one for his Royal Ballet production of LA SYLPHIDE and another for his performance in Fleming Flindt's THE LESSON. In 2009, his cast for the Bolshoi Ballet production of LA SYLPHIDE was nominated for the Golden Masque Award in Moscow as the best performances of the year. In 2014 his Bucharest production of LA SYLPHIDE received the Performance of the Year award in Romania. In 2013 Queen Margaret of Denmark personally awarded Johan the high honour of the Order of the Dannebrog.

### **Madeline Fontaine (Costume Designer)**

Madeline Fontaine is an award-winning French costume designer, internationally known for her work in film and television.

In 2016, the critically acclaimed JACKIE gave Madeline her first Academy Award nomination and she won the BAFTA Award for Best Costume Design.

Madeline has also been a regular winner and nominee at the French César Award, earning recognition for her work on LA FABULEUX DESTIN D'AMELIE POULAIN, UN LONG DIMANCHE DE FIANCAILLES, SERAPHINE, MIC MACS A TIRE-LARIGOT, CAMILLE REDOUBLE, THE YOUNG AND THE PRODIGIOUS T.S. SPIVET, YVES SAINT LAURENT and UNE VIE.

### **Ilan Eshkeri (Composer)**

Ilan Eshkeri is an award-winning British- French composer whose work uses multiple disciplines in various fields of art. Composer, songwriter, producer and conductor, Eshkeri's work is performed in concert halls, theatres, galleries and commissioned for film, television and video games.

In 2017, Eshkeri created the ballet NARCISSUS AND ECHO, choreographed by famed dancer Sergei Polunin with set designs by photographer David LaChapelle. Eshkeri was also commissioned by Burberry for its game-changing autumn fashion show in London, where he conducted his choral symphonic suite RELIQUARY, which subsequently reached No. 1 in the classical chart. He also created music for the European Space Agency's British astronaut Tim Peake's Principia mission to the International Space Station.

Eshkeri has collaborated with many artists, including Annie Lennox on a live orchestral show of her songs, David Gilmour on his solo record ON AN ISLAND, written a song for Sinéad O'Connor, and worked with rock bands and pop stars including KT Tunstall, Tom Odell, Ash and The Cinematic Orchestra. He has also collaborated with avant-garde electronic artist Amon Tobin, re-composing the electronic music for symphony orchestra, performed at the Royal Albert Hall. Eshkeri composed a symphonic tone poem about a Korean artist for the Louvre in Paris, and conducted the work to projected visuals of the art to thousands in the gardens of the Louvre. He has collaborated with infamous British art duo Jake & Dinos Chapman, legendary naturalist David Attenborough, as well as fashion brands, dancers and astronauts.

Among his extensive catalogue of over 50 film and television scores are multiple Academy and BAFTA award-winning films such as STILL ALICE, THE YOUNG VICTORIA and SHAUN THE SHEEP. Eshkeri has been nominated for an Ivor Novello award, as well as nominated for a BAFTA for THE SNOWMAN & THE SNOWDOG, where he co-wrote the hit LIGHT THE NIGHT.