

DRAMA - GROUP PERFORMANCE

Alex El'Hazouri, Edward Ryan, Joseph Meagher, Kabir Rajpal and Luca McDonald

The Rise and Fall of the Union

(OnSTAGE nomination 2021)

REFLECTION STATEMENT

“The Rise and Fall of the Union” is a play that we based on the death of the historic Georgian revolutionary and Soviet political leader, Joseph Stalin, who governed the Soviet Union from 1924 until 1953. We knew the history behind this era and saw great potential to create a comedic showcase whilst incorporating a strong yet simple storyline. We decided to explore what happened after the death of this ‘great’ leader.

Our main theme for this piece revolves around corruption – specifically, that when power is awarded, corruption follows. This allowed us to showcase the outrage shared between five out of the six men in the inner circle, as the sixth was about to gain power in place of Stalin. Within our showcase we had to incorporate one common prop that would be used throughout the entire performance. We stumbled upon an old ladder within the school storage which served many purposes in the play. It was leant against our bodies, climbed on, used as a table, a dead body and we even used it as a bomb!

Our group performance allowed us to improve as actors as we learned to understand each other's perspectives. This was primarily through giving each other constructive feedback about our props, characters, costumes, facial expressions, and voice modulations. We gained valuable feedback of our wonderful Drama teacher, Ms Arnott, which allowed us to gain a more experienced perspective of what we were doing right and the areas where we could improve.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw our group maintaining a high motivation through Zoom rehearsals and in-person rehearsals with restrictions at school. This inspired us to achieve more as we saw our teachers and the school staff taking extra initiative and making efforts to ensure we achieved what we started before the June holidays.

Overall "The Rise and Fall of the Union" was a great piece which we were all very proud of. Rather than becoming a burden every time we ran through and performed the play, we wanted to do it again! It is just a shame that within these circumstances we could not perform the piece for the community to enjoy.

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SCRIPT

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

'Georgy' Malenkov - Luca McDonald

Stalin's right-hand man, aged in his early 80s, member of the inner circle. Powerful, authoritative, stubborn and vain.

The Florist - Joseph Meagher

Stalin's florist, aged in his late 20s. Flamboyant, doesn't fit in with the inner circle. A bit slow, can't keep up with the others.

'Vasily' Stalin - Alex El Hazouri

Stalin's son, aged in his early 20s, member of the inner circle. Stupid, spoilt, ignorant - a wild character who lacks intelligence.

'Nikita' Kruschkev - Edward Ryan

Politician/Scientist, aged in his late 40s, member of the inner circle. Intelligent and cunning.

Georgy 'Zhukov' - Kabir Rajpal

Head of the Soviet Army, aged in his early 40s, member of the inner circle. Aggressive nature/personality and voice, threatening build and physicality.

'Beria' - Joseph Meagher

Appointed by Stalin as the leader, member of Inner circle. Seen as the 'villain' within the plot. Authoritative in voice and action, wants to change Soviet Russia into a democracy.

Beria's Goons - Luca McDonald, Alex El Hazouri, Edward Ryan and Kabir Rajpal

Hunchbacks with sinister characterisation; one-dimensional side characters who are supportive and cult-like worshippers of Beria.

KEY:

L - Luca

A - Alex

E - Edward

K - Kabir

J - Joseph

START

(The Soviet Anthem begins to play as the ensemble begins marching on stage from all sides. L marches while hitting ladder on the ground in beat in character as Stalin. K+E grab and hold the ladder in the middle. Stalin begins to step up the ladder and on "Soyuz" Stalin dies and falls back.)

ALL: Soyuz (*red lights snap on and fill the stage*) Nerushimy Respublik svobodnik

Splotila naveki Velikaya **Rus**

Da zdravstuyet sozdanny voley narodov

Yediny, moguchiy Sovetskiy...

L: Soyuz...

ALL: Long Live Stalin!

L: (Falls back and is caught)

(Red lights snap off. Ladder falls down and the cast spread out across the stage in a slight semi-circle. White-light fills the stage fade on.)

J: OH STALIN MY HEART ACHES FOR YOUR SWEET SOUL!

E: He killed Nine million!?

K: (Enthusiastic) He was a great leader!

A: He caused the great famine!?

L: It doesn't matter.

All: I, WANT, HIS, JOB!

L: (*Luca in old man stance*) Privyet, I am Georgy, Stalin's right-hand man and this is the...

All: INNER CIRCLE!

K: (*Kabir tough-guy stance*) Hello, I'm Zhukov, Head of the Soviet Army and I'm the biggest and the baddest threat there is. Watch out (*points hand at audience and cut throat action*).

E: (*Ed intellectual stance*) Hello, I'm Kruschkev and I'm the brains of the inner circle.

A: (*Alex dumbass stance*) Hello... Hello, I'm Vasily and I'm... Stalin's son.

All: And soon I'll be leader of the soviet union.

J: (*Joe flamboyant stance*) And heyyy I'm Freddy and I'm the Soviet florist! I mean I wouldn't mind leading the soviet union...

All: FLORIST?

J: Uuhhh, any of you read that letter lying in his pile of piss?

K: Letter?

L: Letter?

A: Letter?

E: Letter?

Together: LETTER!

A: You pick it up.

L: No, you pick it up.

E: No, you pick it up.

J: It would be my pleasure.

E: No I'll pick it up!

A: No I want to pick it up!

L: No I'll pick it up!

(Everyone begins pushing each other to pick up letter while kicking the ladder horizontally. Zhukov, who has been standing back, barges into the front and picks up the letter.)

K: Oi morons! Give it here.

(Zhukov begins walking across the front stage reading the letter and the rest of the cast forms in a line behind him, leaning forward and changing direction to face Zhukov.)

K: Oooooo...

All: Oooooo...

K: Ahhhh...

All: Ahhhh...

K: Hahahaha!

All: Hahahaha!

K: Yours Sincerely, Stalin. *(Pauses)* Nah it's nothing. It's bullshit.

(Everyone sighs in dissatisfaction, bend down and J+A pick up the ladder.)

K: Oh it just said that prick Beria would be next in charge.

(Cast sigh in relief then swoop their heads towards K in realisation.)

ALL: BERIA!

(Ladder gets dropped. J jumps in front as Beria and the rest of the cast hunch their backs as his goons and stand in a line behind him.)

J: The old man is finally gone. It is the era of ME. BERIA! MUAHAHA!

All: MUAHAHA! MUAHAHAHAAA! *(While laughing, Kabir and Ed move backwards, creating a semi-circle shape)*

J: Hit it!

(Alex and Luca pick up the ladder in time with the music while Beria and the other goons begin dancing. Beria does squatting Russian dance.)

All: There lived a certain man in Russia long ago.

All: He was big and strong. In his eyes a flaming glow. *(Lifting ladder as a weight while singing. Then placing rungs in front of faces for "eyes" line.)*

Goons: Most people look at him with terror and with fear.

(L+A lift back up the ladder and Joe begins walking backwards, still grooving. As Joe passes the ladder L+A turn sideways and at end of the line bring the ladder down to chest level.)

All: But to Moscow chicks, he was such a lovely dear.

(J places elbows on ladder and places hands on chin, while K+E go either side of him, pretending to be girls and flirtatiously place a hand on either side of his shoulders. Following this, A+L bring the ladder down, J jumps over it and they turn it vertically clockwise. The goons form in a straight line, standing in the rungs of the ladder behind J.)

J: That's enough! It's time to begin my grand plan and rebuild the Soviet Union!

Goons: *(Sticking their heads out, with surprised look.)* Ooohh!

J: We need a name for this new union.

(With each line, the character steps out to create a triangle with J at the front.)

E: Something Catchy

A: Something Fresh

K: Something Sexy

L: Something Spicy

All: THE BERIA UNION!

J: It will be evil!

(As the cast say their next line they step forward next to J to form a straight horizontal line.)

E: Horrifying!

A: Disgusting!

K: Naughty!

L: Wicked!

J: The Beria Union will be a

All: DEMOCRACY! *(Quiet chanting, gradually getting faster and louder)* Democracy, democracy, democracy, democracy, democracy, democracy, democracy...

(While chanting Joe and Kabir pick up the ladder and centre horizontally. After chanting everyone breaths in, changes to their main characters and the ladder is lifted to make a table.)

ALL: Democra-what?! *(Everyone turns their head to face Alex who stands in the middle)*

A: Beria plans to transform the Soviet Union into a democracy!

K: But Russia has not been a democracy since... *(thinking pose)* never.

E: Beria will not want us Soviets around!

L: We're going to lose our jobs!

K: I've killed thousands of democrats. They're going to take away my family. What will I do?

A: If we go away from stalinist Russia, what will be the point of me? Stalin's son?

E: If I become a democrat, I will lose my dignity.

L: After 40 years in service, I never thought I would see Russia divided by democracy.

J: The soviet union always supported my floristry business. A democracy will give me too much competition.

A: Wait why is there a florist here?

J: Stalin was my biggest customer!

L: But Stalin never bought flowers?

J: Well, he was still my biggest customer!

(Everyone pauses and stares at Joe)

E: Anywayyyyyy! We must act now to get rid of Beria. To maintain communism.

J: I've got an idea we could...

All: Shut up florist!

K: I've got it.

(L takes the ladder and places it upright on the ground. K+L stand next to either side of the ladder with their hands on their chest's as guards. A+E+J move back and slowly creep up on K+L)

K: We sneak into his office tomorrow night. Vasily flanks left, I'll flank right and Krushchev down the middle. We creep up onto the guards, weapons drawn to kill, and we...

L: But wait!! We can't do that. Vladimir is on guard tomorrow. We can't kill Vladimir, he's a great guy.

All: *(Murmuring in agreement)*

J: I've got it comr...

All: Shut up florist!

A: I've got it, we take Beria to the bar.

(L grabs the ladder and places it horizontally on the ground. Everyone moves to stand in the rungs.)

A: We drink some vodka *(Everyone drinks a shot in unison)*. And we make Beria so drunk that he dies.

All: Oooooo...

E: No that won't work. Beria doesn't drink vodka, he only drinks whiskey.

All: Whiskey!?

(Everyone in unison moves their heads forward to put their fingers down their throats to imitate trying to vomit)

J: Comrades, actually Beri...

All: Shut up florist.

E: I've got an idea. *(L picks up the ladder)* We start bushfires across Russia causing so many problems for Beria that he will hop in a plane.

(Standing in a straight line with Ed at the front and the ladder being held across horizontally as wings. Cast follows Ed as he moves from side to side - imitating a plane.)

E: And escape away to Hawaii with his democratic brother Scomo.

All: Ahh Scomo! *(Nodding in agreement)*

K: You idiots! It's impossible for bushfires to happen in Russia, it's too cold. Think about it.

All: *(Murmur in agreement)*

J: I've got it, all we have...

All: Shut up florist!

L: Okay I've actually got it. I'm taking out my nuclear warhead device and currently entering in my secret codes. *(Quietly)* 1, 2, 3, 4. And now with just a press of a button, I can evaporate the town of Vyborg where Beria resides. 3... 2... 1. Lift off.

(While speaking, J+A pick up the ladder to form a missile and K+E turn backwards to create buildings. With "Lift off" J+A lift the ladder over to blow up K+E causing them to fall while screaming)

A: But Beria has already moved to a secret location and is actually nowhere near Vyborg.

L: Ahh 3rd time this week. Well, what can we do?

(Cast begins transitioning back to the boardroom table positions, pondering on ideas)

K: Well we can't kill his guards.

A: We can't give him vodka poisoning.

E: We can't start bushfires in Russia.

L: And we can't nuke another city...

J: I've got it! I've got it!

All: Shut... Fine. (*Swoop heads and all look at Joe*)

J: Well Beria is actually deathly allergic to sunflowers. One sniff and he's dead.

All: Oooohhhhh...

E: Well, why didn't you say that earlier?

L: You really gotta speak up more.

A: Wait, don't sunflowers need sun?

K: There is no sun in Russia. Idiots.

E: If only we knew someone with flowers...

All: Hmmmmm... (*Everyone looks up and to the right*)

(*J+A drop the ladder to initiate a transition into Beria and his goons*)

J: The plan is in motion. Tomorrow is the inauguration. Nothing can stop me now. Muhahaha!

A: Muha... ha...

(Everyone stares at Alex who is embarrassed)

J: (To Alex) Down. (J sits down on A who goes down in a table shape) COMRADES!
I need to be looking fab tomorrow...

All: MAKEUP TIME!

(*Joe getting pampered, toes, hair, feet*)

J: Make sure my curls look fluffy.... yet smooth

L: Comrade, we have to organise the details of tomorrow's inauguration.

J: Of course.

A: Drapes? Red?

J: RED!? Red is the colour of the past my friend, the Beria Union will be joining our democratic brothers in Blue.

K: Flowers? I've got daisies and sunflowers ready?

(Pause, everyone looks at Kabir)

L: SUNFLOWERS?

E: Don't you know the number 1 rule?

All: No sunflowers!

K: I'm sorry my leader.

J: So remind me, what do I need to say to finally put the Beria Union in place?

A: Of course, well after you put your hand on Tolstoy's War and ... I mean put your hand on the Bible, repeat these words: "I, Beria, do sincerely swear"

J: I, Beria, do insincerely swear....

E: That I will corruptly execute my role as Leader of the Beria union.

L: Along with anyone who gets in my way!

J: Yes execution, blah blah blah, let's skip to the end.

K: And will to the best of my ability

J: And will to the best of my ability, Preserve

All: Preserve!

J: Protect

All: Protect!

J: And Defend

All: Defend!

J: The democracy of Beria

All: For the people!

(Transition to main characters)

E: If only we knew someone with flowers...

All: HmMMM *(Everyone looks up-left)*

J: Uhh well since I'm a florist, I do have a few at the shop.

K: Wait, you're actually a florist? I thought you must be a spy.

E: I thought he was KGB.

A: I thought he was a...

J: No, no, no. Just a florist.

L: Alright enough, tomorrow Beria has his inauguration. We must commence operation: DEATH BY SUNFLOWER

E: We only have a small window of opportunity, to kill him.

A: Wait, so the bedroom window or the courtyard window?

K: You imbecile. It's not an actual window, it's the time frame we have to kill him.

A: So we're not going through the Bedroom window?

E: UGH don't worry, so he's being inaugurated at the Red Square.

(When disagreeing, the cast pull the ladder to each side in a tug-of-war motion.)

L: No no no, I'm pretty sure it's at the Kremlin.

E: No, it's at the Red Square.

A: I'm positive it's at the Kremlin.

K: No, It's definitely at the Red Square.

L: Fine let's put it to vote. Majority wins.

E: All in favour that the inauguration is at the Red square?

(Ed and Kabir put their hand up, Joe puts his hand up since others have their hand up.)

E: Ha! The Red Square it is.

K: Due to the Red Square's unique surrounding buildings, we'll have to cover all exits -

A: AND Windows!

(All look at Alex and pause)

K: So. Beria will be positioned in the square's centre, meaning we have to sneak past all guards.

(Luca and Ed stand as guards on either side of the stage. Alex and Joe tap their inside shoulders, prompting them to turn towards the stage and point guns at one another. Meanwhile, Alex and Joe sneak around their outside.)

K: And sneak onto the stage, *(pause)* each with a sunflower.

All: *(Slow and Sharp)* Locked and Loaded. *(With the accented words everyone grabs a sunflower from their back and pulls it out in front of them)*

(At first, everyone is menacing, ready for action. However, gradually they begin to look around more, confused and relaxing their tense pose, realising that there is nobody there.)

A: So why is there nobody here at the Red Square?

L: *(Mockingly)* Because Krushkev isn't as smart as he thinks he is.

E: *(Angrily)* You watch yourself old man!

A: Wait, so it's at the Kremlin? *(Tapping Georgy on the arm)* So we were right?

E: *(Quietly)* First time for everything.

K: Enough we need to get to the Kremlin before he says his final line.

All: CUT, TO THE KREMLIN!

(Move to backstage. J stands in the middle at the back turned away. Everyone else forms a small semi-circle in front of him.)

L: Looks like we've made it here just in time.

E: Does everyone know the plan?

(All look towards Alex)

A: Yes I do. Wait, which window am I going to again?

K: You moro...

L: Shut up! Here comes Beria now.

(Split to either side of Beria)

J: I, Beria, do sincerely swear.

(J begins walking forward. Cast go one at a time towards him in slow-mo and get pushed off each time.)

J: That I will preserve (*push K*). Protect (*push E*). And Defend (*push A*). (*Push L*) The democracy of Beria.

(Picks up the ladder from the ground and places it vertically as K+E grab the front, allowing J to climb up.)

J: For... The... P...

A: WAIT! Comrade, smell this daisy.

J: Ooo a daisy (*Sniffs*)

(J chokes, parallel to Stalin's death at opening and then steps off the ladder, and comes to the front falling over)

J: Not... a daisy. (*Dies*)

A: (*Cunningly*) Sunflower.

K: He was a great man.

E: And an even better Russian.

A: Oh Beria, my heart aches for your sweet soul.

L: It doesn't matter!

All: I, WANT, HIS, JOB!

(Lights snap off)

THE END.



