

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release



Company: Spitfire Company

Director: Petr Boháč

ZOO Playground 1, August 7 to 27

(Not 14 and 21), 5:45 PM, 50 min

**THE LAST OF
THE SOVIETS**

An absurdly humorous Russian TV evening news broadcast in which the spectres of contemporary Russia and the Soviet past appear in a terrifyingly matter-of-fact manner. Inspired by the works of the Belarusian Nobel winner Svetlana Alexievich. All the performances are dedicated to a Belarusian prisoner of conscience.

The Czech Republic's Spitfire Company is making its fifth visit to the Edinburgh Fringe. Four highly successful previous runs saw the company pick up a Herald Angel award (for 'One Step Before The Fall' in 2013) and three nominations for the Total Theatre Awards. This year the company is returning with the multi-genre project *The Last of the Soviets* inspired by the works of Svetlana Alexievich, in particular her books *Secondhand Time*, *The Unwomanly Face of War*, *Chernobyl Prayer* and *Boys in Zinc*, which reflect on modern Russian history in the form of the Chernobyl tragedy in Ukraine, the Soviet-Afghan War and the Great Patriotic War. The poetic stylings of the show – evocative of live cinema and dripping in cruel black humour – bring to mind the best work of the world-renowned surrealist artist and filmmaker Jan Švankmajer.

The leads are taken by the Russian performers Inga Mikshina-Zotova and Roman Mikshin-Zotov, who have been living and working as artists in Prague for many years. Their authenticity and ability to sharply elucidate the shared Russian present and Soviet past bring veracity and a scarcely believable shot of dark humour to the production. The show is framed within a news broadcast of an official Russian TV station which, as the amount of information intensifies, degenerates into an absurd encounter with contemporary Russian reality.

Postcards to Palina Sharenda Panasyuk

Given the topicality of the subject, the Spitfire Company artists have decided to dedicate all their shows at the Fringe Edinburgh to the Belarusian prisoner of conscience Palina Sharenda Panasyuk, sending her a postcard from each performance. Alexander Lukashenko and his dictatorial government arrested Palina Sharenda Panasyuk in January 2021 and have held her ever since. His regime has sentenced her to 24 months in prison for allegedly insulting the President, insulting a public official and using or threatening to use violence against a public official. Her sentence was increased by an extra year in the subsequent out-of-court trial. She is being held in degrading conditions, in inadequately heated rooms and without enough food. She was brutally beaten and forcibly taken to a psychiatric ward this June. Thanks to international media coverage of the case, she was transferred to one of the penal colonies, but her exact location is unknown. Her husband and two children managed to flee to Poland, where they were granted temporary asylum. Each performance of *The Last of the Soviets* will, therefore, remind us not only of the current totalitarian regimes in Russia and Belarus but also of the case of Palina Sharenda. To mark the occasion, the Spitfire Company has prepared postcards for the audience to leave a message for Palina's children or Palina Sharenda herself. After the performance, all the postcards will be sent to Poland or the listed incarceration address.

Previous Spitfire Company appearances at the Fringe

The company's very first show at the Fringe, *One Step Before the Fall*, picked up a Herald Angel Award in 2013. The multi-genre project explored the motifs of struggle, exhaustion, signs of Parkinson's and

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collapse. Two years later Spitfire earned a Total Theatre Award nomination for Antiwords, inspired by the works of Václav Havel. The company received the same nomination in 2017 for The Narrator, a delicate piece centred on the subject of the loss of a child. For their most recent Fringe appearance in 2019, Spitfire brought the rap musical Miss America, about a woman who falls in love with a city where she is an alien, namely the Scottish capital.

Director, concept: Petr Boháč

Cast: Inga Mikshina-Zotova, Roman Mikshin-Zotov

Technical support: Martin Hůla, Filip Horn

Production managers: Veronika Ilíková, Barbora Faifr Repická

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