

Kneehigh and Bristol Old Vic

# THE FLYING LOVERS OF VITEBSK

**Dock Street Theatre**

May 24, 8:00pm (preview); May 25, 8:00pm;  
May 27, 3:30pm and 8:00pm; May 28, 3:30pm and 8:00;  
May 30, 7:30pm; May 31, 7:30pm; June 2, 3:30pm and 8:00pm;  
June 3, 3:30pm and 8:00pm; June 5, 7:30pm; June 6, 7:30pm;  
June 8, 7:30pm; June 9, 3:30pm and 8:00pm; June 10, 3:30pm

Playwright  
Director  
Composer and Music Director  
Scenic and Costume Designer  
Lighting Designer  
Sound Designer  
Choreographers

Daniel Jamieson  
Emma Rice  
Ian Ross  
Sophia Clist  
Malcolm Rippeth  
Simon Baker  
Emma Rice and Etta Murfitt

**Cast**

Marc Chagall  
Bella Chagall  
Musician  
Musician

Marc Antolin  
Daisy Maywood  
James Gow  
Ian Ross

Assistant Director  
Casting Directors  
Production Manager  
Company Stage Manager

Keziah Serreau  
Georgia Simpson, CDG, and Lucy Taylor  
Aled William Thomas  
Steph Curtis

1 hour, 30 minutes | Performed without an intermission

Sponsored by South State Bank.

These performances are made possible in part through funds from the Spoleto Festival USA Endowment, generously supported by BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America.

## Director's Note

Before his wedding to Bella, Marc says of the guests: "Look at them....If only they knew. This isn't the crisp white start they think it is. My knowing you has already seeped backwards as well as forwards in time so my whole life is pervaded with the colour of loving you."

I feel that I could say the same of my relationship with *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*. It reaches into the future whilst holding onto the past, reigniting parts of my own history that might perhaps have stayed dimmed if this precious show hadn't brought them back into the light.

Written over 25 years ago, *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* premiered with me as the original Bella. Marc was played by the author, Daniel Jamieson. We were a couple, soon to be married and, in those days, the play was called *Birthday*. Made by two people very much in love about two people very much in love, I remember vividly the passion we felt for the piece. It was the 1990s and we were fascinated by Eastern Europe. We had both visited Poland and trained with the Gardzienice Theatre Association. We had heard first-hand stories of communism and martial law, and had had the privilege of witnessing a fearless and ferocious kind of theatre-making that made British theatre look feeble by comparison. We resolved to change the world and set about becoming master and mistress of our own fate. On a visit to Paris, we saw Marc Chagall's "Double Portrait with a Glass of Wine" in the Centre Pompidou. It loomed over us with a mysterious joy, toasting the possibilities of life. Dan wrote me a poem.

"She looks like you" it read, and with those words it all began. It felt as if, through time and form, one couple looked another in the eye. Marc and Bella challenged us to be artists and, looking back, I believe they provoked our creative "birthday." We slipped our happy young feet into the shoes of these incredible people and started to imagine a life far more complex and threatened than our own.

Returning to this show in 2016, many things had changed. Married no more, Dan and I were able to revisit Marc and Bella older, kinder, and wiser. This time we slipped our middle-aged feet into shoes more delicate and, perhaps, a little more uncomfortable. Now the couple from the painting in Paris challenged us to look round corners and dig more deeply into the politics of their lives: personal and historical. They demanded we show a life not only filled with hope, love, and invention, but also one filled with fear, homelessness, and personal compromise. I feel I have grown up with Marc and Bella. *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* swirls around my life like fragments of a beautiful broken mirror, moving through space and time.

Perhaps the fragments are not quite in the same place or order as they once were, or where I thought they would end up, but they are beautiful and precious nonetheless. I carry it in my heart.

– Emma Rice

## Writer's Note

*The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* is first and foremost a love story. From the moment they fell for each other in Vitebsk, Belarus, in 1909, Marc Chagall and his wife, Bella, seemed to share a particular way of seeing the world. Bella was a talented writer and her description of their first encounter is like a Chagall painting in words: "The door opened wider...I felt hot with apprehension...as if something were scorching me. Light spread over the walls, and against them appeared the face of a boy...his eyes, they were as blue as if they'd fallen straight out of the sky."

Famously, Marc often painted himself and Bella flying together, as if their shared joy had such force it defied the law of gravity itself. In his painting "Birthday," they appear surprised by their flight, rising towards the ceiling like two astonished bubbles of ecstasy. In "Over the Town," they drift high over Vitebsk as you only fly in dreams, but magically sharing the same floating reverie. There can be few more vivid evocations in art of how it feels to be in love.

The Chagalls' story is also remarkable because it is so interwoven with 20th-century history. Marc was in Paris before the First World War, when modernism was at its height and cubism was just taking off. He briefly returned to Russia to marry Bella and got trapped there by the war, narrowly avoiding conscription into the Tsar's army. They were then swept up in the Russian Revolution and when they did finally make it back to Western Europe, they got caught up in the beginnings of the Holocaust. They just escaped from France to America by the skin of their teeth in 1941. But there is a contemporary resonance to *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* as well, because it deals with the trauma of the refugee experience. In exile, Marc and Bella watched in horror as the Jewish homeland of their youth was systematically destroyed and the Nazis set about murdering the entire Jewish population of Europe. There is a strong sense of their homesickness for a home that no longer exists.

This must surely echo the experience of those who've fled from Mosul or Homs or Rakhine State today. If and when these people can return, will there be anything left of the home they left behind? The theme of exile also gives the show an international flavor, which carries through into the language—many of the songs are in Yiddish, Russian, or French. There is a celebration of the texture of different languages, their beauty beyond meaning. In this way the show invites an enjoyment of moving between cultures as if laying down rugs between houses for a party. Perhaps we don't always need to understand each other's every word to enjoy each other's company.

*The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* is quite unusual for Kneehigh in that it only has two characters—just Marc and Bella—but it has the chutzpah of Kneehigh's grander work on a chamber scale. This intimacy suits what remains, after all, at its heart: the story of two people in love.

– Daniel Jamieson

## Artistic Team

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**DANIEL JAMIESON** (writer) for the last 27 years has worked for Exeter-based Theatre Alibi as an actor, joint artistic director (1995 – 2000), and writer. In 2015, he won an ACA award for his writing for children with the company. His plays for Alibi include: *Falling*, *Hammer and Tongs*, *Goucher's War*, *Cobbo*, *Caught*, *One in a Million*, *The Freeze*, *Shelf Life*, *Little White Lies*, *The Swell*, *Sea of Faces*, and *Birthday*. He has also adapted novels by Charles Dickens, Graham Greene, Michael Morpurgo, and Dick King-Smith for the company. Other theater work includes: *A Box of Photographs* and *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* (Polka Theatre); *Where's the Bear*, *Wish Wash*, *Knitwits*, and *Flathampton* (Northampton Theatres). For BBC R4, Jamieson has written *Lodsell Cod*, *Grooming*, *Jim and Tonic*, *Building Happiness*, and *Charity*. In 2013, Jamieson was Leverhulme artist-in-residence at the University of Exeter's Mood Disorders Centre. He is currently writing a screenplay of *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* and he is excited to be developing a new show with Kneehigh about Marie Curie for 2019.

**EMMA RICE** (director/co-choreographer) was formerly artistic director for Shakespeare's Globe, and for them directed *Romantics Anonymous*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Little Matchgirl*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For the last 24 years, she has worked for Kneehigh as an actor, director, and artistic director. Her productions for Kneehigh include: *946: The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*; *Tristan & Yseult*; *The Red Shoes*; *The Wooden Frock*; *The Bacchae*; *Cymbeline* (in association with Royal Shakespeare Company); *A Matter of Life and Death* (in association with National Theatre); *Rapunzel* (in association with Battersea Arts Centre); *Brief Encounter* (in association with David Pugh and Dafydd Rogers Production); *Don John* (in association with the RSC and Bristol Old Vic); *The Wild Bride*; *Wah! Wah! Girls* (in association with Sadler's Wells and Theatre Royal Stratford East for World Stages), and *Steptoe and Son*. Other work includes: the West End production of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, *The Empress* (RSC), and *An Audience with Meow Meow* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre). She was made an Honorary Fellow of Falmouth University last year for her outstanding contribution to the dramatic arts and *Brief Encounter* is returning to the West End. Her new company, Wise Children, will premiere its first production in autumn 2018 and is the next big adventure of her career!

**SOPHIA CLIST** (scenic and costume designer) works from a background of sculpture, making participatory and interactive work. Recent projects include: *Journey to the Impossible* (Little Soldier, The Bike Shed Theatre); *Get Happy* (Told by An Idiot, Beijing Comedy Festival, Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg); *Parallelist* (Clay Gold and Laura Moody, Aldeburgh Festival); *Stretch* (Sophia Clist with Nick Burge, Exeter Cathedral); *And The Horse You Rode In On* (Told by An Idiot, Barbican, Brighton Festival, Drum Theatre Plymouth); *16 Singers* (Katherine Morley, Dance Umbrella, The Egg); *Life Forces* (Jane Mason with Phil Smith); *Grandmothers* (Encounters Arts); *Phenomenal People* (Fuel); and *In This Place* (Pentabus Theatre). Associate artist of Theatre-Rites from 1997 – 2007, Clist co-created the company's award-winning dance-theater production of *Mischief* with Arthur Pita—Sadler's Wells. Clist is currently working with Improbable on *The Paper Man* (Norfolk and Norwich Festival, La Strada, Graz).

**MALCOLM RIPPETH** (lighting designer) is an associate artist at Kneehigh, whose productions include *The Tin Drum*, *946: The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*, *The Wild Bride*, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, and *Tristan & Yseult*. He is the recipient of a WhatsOnStage Award and a Village Voice OBIE for his work on Kneehigh's *Brief Encounter* (West End and Broadway), and has recently been nominated for Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle and New York Drama Desk Awards for his work with the company. His other work includes: *Twelfth Night*, *The Little Matchgirl*, and *Romantics Anonymous* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Titus Andronicus* and *The Empress* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Decade* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Headlong); *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Calendar Girls* (West End/Australia/Canada); *The Dead* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin); *The Birthday Party* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *Spur of the Moment* (Royal Court Theatre); *Wallflower* (Quarantine); *Pleasure* (Opera North); *Idomeneo* (Garsington Opera); *In Parenthesis* (Washington National Opera); *Le Premier Meurtre* (Opéra de Lille); and *Alcina* (Santa Fe Opera).

**SIMON BAKER** (sound designer) is an associate artist at the Old Vic (London), Kneehigh, and part of Emma Rice's new company, Wise Children. He is a recipient of several awards including an Olivier for *Matilda*. His most recent work includes: *Pinocchio* (National Theatre); *Girl From The North Country* (West End); *Groundhog Day* (Broadway); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Caretaker*, *Master Builder*, and *Future Conditional* (Old Vic); *Grinning Man* (West End and Bristol Old Vic), *Romantics Anonymous*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Matilda* (Worldwide); *946: The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*, *Rebecca*, *The Wild Bride*, *The Umbrellas Of Cherbourg*, and *Brief Encounter* (Olivier and Tony nominations), and *Steptoe and Son* (Kneehigh); *The Light Princess* (Olivier Nomination); and *The Amen Corner* (National Theatre).

**ETTA MURFITT** (co-choreographer) is an associate artist at Kneehigh and has choreographed *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, *Midnight's Pumpkin*, *The Wild Bride*, *Steptoe and Son, 1946: The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase (and other love songs)*, and *The Tin Drum*. Murfitt has recently become an associate of Shakespeare's Globe. She is also the associate artistic director of Matthew Bourne's New Adventures and Re: Bourne (their education arm). She has created, performed in, and collaborated on many productions with New Adventures including *Nutcracker!*, *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *The Car Man*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Red Shoes*.

## Cast



**MARC ANTOLIN** (Marc Chagall) has appeared in numerous stage works, including *Romantics Anonymous* (Sam Wanamaker Playhouse); *Peter Pan* (National Theatre); *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Trial* (Young Vic); *Taken at Midnight* (Theatre Royal Haymarket/Chichester Minerva); *Amadeus*, *Singin' in the Rain*, and *The*

*Music Man* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *From Here to Eternity* (Shaftesbury Theatre); *Matilda* (Royal Shakespeare Company Courtyard Theatre/Cambridge Theatre); *Into the Woods* and *Hello, Dolly!* (Regents Park Open Air Theatre); *Billy Liar* (UK Tour); and *Imagine This* (New London Theatre). His film credits include: *London Road*, *Coconut Shy*, and *Love Actually*; his television credits include *More Than Love*.



**DAISY MAYWOOD** (Bella Chagall) has appeared in numerous stage works, playing such roles as: Fran Kubelik in *Promises, Promises* (Southwark Playhouse); Humpty in *wonder.land* (National Theatre); *Medea* (National Theatre); Bebe in *A Chorus Line* (London Palladium); Maria in *West Side Story* (Royal Shakespeare Company/

Sage Gateshead); Dainty June in *Gypsy* and Peggy Sawyer in *42nd Street* (Leicester Curve); Meg in *The Phantom Of The Opera—25th Anniversary* (Royal Albert Hall); ensemble in *Les Miserables—25th Anniversary* (O2/Queens Theatre). Her television credits include the role of April Compton in *Doctors*, BBC; and film credits include *London Road*, CUBA pictures.



**JAMES GOW** (musician) is a multi-instrumentalist and composer with a BA in music from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Outside of the theater, he plays with or alongside several bands including Still Blue Life, Cocos Lovers, Molly's Lips, Eleven Magpies, and Three Cane Whale. Gow has also appeared in *Dead Dog in a Suitcase (and other love songs)*, *Tristan & Yseult*, and *Brief Encounter* for Kneehigh.



**IAN ROSS** (musician/composer/music director) is a multi-instrumentalist, associate artist of Kneehigh, and composer. He leads the band Eleven Magpies. As a performer, Ross has toured extensively with Kneehigh over the last 10 years in shows including *The Red Shoes*, *Don John*, *The Wild Bride*, and *Tristan & Yseult*. As a composer, he has worked on *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare's Globe) and *The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (Kneehigh). Ross is very excited to be joining Emma Rice on her new adventure, *Wise Children*, in 2018.

## Producers

**KNEEHIGH** (co-producer) has, for 35 years, created vigorous, popular, and challenging theater, with joyful anarchy. We have performed everywhere from village halls to castles, disused quarries to conventional stages all over the world. From our breathtaking barns in Cornwall, we create theater of humanity on an epic and tiny scale. Led by Mike Shepherd, we work with an ever-changing bunch of talented and like-minded performers, artists, makers, and musicians and are passionate about the creative process. Other Kneehigh works presented at Spoleto Festival USA include: *The Red Shoes* (2011), *Don John* (2009), and *Tristan & Yseult* (2006). We're often asked how we make our shows and we've created an exclusive website to give you a glimpse behind the scenes. The Cookbook is crammed full of videos, documents, pictures, and plans, providing you with some of the magic ingredients that go into our shows. More details at [kneehighcookbook.co.uk](http://kneehighcookbook.co.uk).

**BRISTOL OLD VIC** (co-producer) is the oldest continuously working theater in the United Kingdom. Our mission is to create pioneering 21st-century theater in partnership with the people of Bristol, inspired by the history and magical design of the most beautiful playhouse in the country. We are led by artists who see the world with distinctive clarity and whose ability to articulate what they see allows us to understand and engage with our world afresh. The company's program includes original production, artist development, and outreach; its work connects on a local, national, and international level. In 2016, Bristol Old Vic marked its 250th birthday, celebrating with a season of work from the theater's history as well as its future. Work also began on the final phase of the building's capital development, which will deliver a new foyer and studio theater in 2018 designed by Stirling Prize-winning architects Haworth Tompkins.