



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Darren DeLuca  
darren.deluca@gmail.com  
603-489-7624



ARLEKIN PLAYERS THEATRE | *Zero Gravity (zero-G) Lab*  
Announce the World Premiere of  
**WITNESS**

A Bold New Documentary Theater Piece that Bears Witness to  
the Immigration Stories of Jewish People

*Online | Virtual*

Previews December 10 – 12, 2021 at 7:30PM ET

World Premiere Monday, December 13, 2021 at 7:30PM ET

Performances December 10, 2021 - January 23, 2022

Hosted on [zerogravity.art](http://zerogravity.art)

[Tickets On Sale Now](#)

*Where do unwanted people go?*

**Needham, MA - Thursday, November 4, 2021** – Arlekin Players, an award-winning, artist-driven theater company rooted in traditions of classical and contemporary Russian theater and dedicated to imaginative storytelling and new forms of theater, is excited to announce the World Premiere of **WITNESS**, the newest virtual theater piece from their groundbreaking Zero Gravity (zero-G) Virtual Theater Lab. This bold and complex documentary theater piece bears witness to the migratory experience of Jewish people in the face of antisemitism and will be the first production of Arlekin's 2021-2022 season; previews will take place December 10 – 12, 2021 at 7:30PM ET with the World Premiere on Monday, December 13, 2021 at 7:30PM ET.

**WITNESS** was created through interviews and the use of historic materials, primarily sourced from the archives of the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#). It has been woven together into a dramatic documentary script by playwright Nana Grinstein (Moscow), with additional writing by dramaturg Blair Cadden and Arlekin's artistic director and **WITNESS** director Igor Golyak. The piece is inspired by the journey of the MS St. Louis, which left Hamburg in 1939 with over 900 Jewish people on board and headed to Cuba only to be turned away, leaving the passengers stranded with nowhere to go and no escape. **WITNESS** shares these stories through an interactive virtual theater experience at the nexus of film, theater and video games.



IMAGE: A virtual environment from **WITNESS**, scenography by Anna Fedorova, virtual design by Daniel Cormino (Courtesy Arlekin Players)

“We have been in an intense period of experimentation with virtual theater through the two productions we created during the pandemic ([State vs Natasha Banina](#) and [chekhovOS /an experimental game/](#)). We were able to reach audiences in over 40 countries which was incredible. **WITNESS** is the next step in our exploration, and for this show we are experimenting with a new combination of tools that may have not been used previously in the virtual theater medium.” says Golyak. “We are creating **WITNESS** at a time when Jewish refugees around the world are having conversations around kitchen tables about the lack of safety, of belonging, of finding a home in the face of rising antisemitism. These are questions that Arlekin’s resident company of actors, and our larger community, are asking: “Will my children be safe? What’s the next pit stop? When do we start packing?” Because we are producing **WITNESS** virtually, we are able to invite audiences from across cultures and time zones to an interactive experience where they can encounter the stories of Jewish people migrating, fleeing persecution, and to engage in these questions with us. That’s an extraordinary opportunity”.

Set on a boat in the digital space, **WITNESS** includes multiple languages, stunning visuals, intimate stories, and critical moments of live choice by the audience throughout a live, interactive performance that will never be the same twice. The creative team includes artistic partners and technical experts collaborating across five countries; the cast features the Arlekin resident acting company with Gene Ravvin in the lead role, joined by a diverse group of voice actors, alongside Boston favorites Lauren Elias, Anne Gottlieb and Nathan Malin.



Images from the process of making **WITNESS** at Arlekin's (zero-G) Lab  
(Courtesy of Arlekin Players Theatre)

WITNESS is supported in part by The Fooksman Foundation, Aximmetry, the official software of (zero-G) Lab, Genesis Philanthropy Group, and producing sponsor .ART Domains, whose founder Ulvi Kasimov says, "We are proud to continue our partnership with Arlekin's (zero-G) Lab as they innovate in the virtual theatre space with a powerful and timely new production, *WITNESS*, and we are delighted to see that a theatre experience that is taken into the digital space can reach a new scale of creative expression, being transformed and enhanced in a way that is worthy of its great history."

Tickets for **WITNESS** may be purchased 24/7 at [www.zerogravity.art](http://www.zerogravity.art).

#### **Performance Schedule**

**Friday, December 10 at 7:30pm ET** Preview Performance  
*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Saturday, December 11 at 7:30pm ET** Preview Performance  
*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Sunday, December 12 at 7:30pm ET** Preview Performance  
*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Monday, December 13 at 7:30pm ET** Opening Night (World Premiere)  
*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Friday, December 17 at 7:30pm ET**  
*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Saturday, December 18 at 1pm ET | 8pm IST**  
*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

Co-presented by [Gesher Theatre \(Israel\)](#) & [Cherry Orchard Festival Foundation](#) (New York)

Sponsored by the [Consulate General of Israel to New England](#)

**Saturday, December 18 at 7:30pm ET**

*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

Sponsored by [Jookender](#)

**Sunday, December 19 at 1pm ET | 8pm IST**

*Special post-show talkback moderated by Amir Tadmor*

Co-presented by [Gesher Theatre](#) (Israel) & [Cherry Orchard Festival Foundation](#) (New York)

Sponsored by the [Consulate General of Israel to New England](#)

**Friday, January 14 at 7:30pm ET**

*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Saturday, January 15 at 7:30pm ET**

*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Sunday, January 16 at 3pm ET**

*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Sunday, January 16 at 7:30pm ET**

*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Friday, January 21 at 7:30pm ET**

*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

**Saturday, January 22 at 7:30pm ET**

*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

Co-presented by [Action for Post-Soviet Jewry](#) & [The Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at New England Historic Genealogical Society](#)

**Sunday, January 23 at 1pm ET**

*Post-show talkback with members of the cast and creative team*

Special performance to support [Shalva](#) (Jerusalem)

Sponsored by [.ART](#)

With additional support from [Consulate General of Israel to New England](#)

**Sunday, January 23 at 5pm ET**

*Special Post-show talkback moderated by Dr. Barbara Wallace Grossman*

Co-presented by [Jewish Arts Collaborative](#) and [The Vilna Shul](#)

**Credits**

Co-presenters, partners and sponsors include producing sponsor [.ART](#), Aximmetry, the official software provider for (zero-G), Fooksman Family Foundation, Genesis Philanthropy Group, National Endowment for the Arts, Action for



Post-Soviet Jewry, Consulate General of Israel to New England, Cherry Orchard Festival Foundation, Gesher Theatre (Israel), Jewish Arts Collaborative, Jookender, National Endowment for the Arts, The Vilna Shul, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, The Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at New England Historic Genealogical Society.

**Igor Golyak**, Director, is the founder and artistic director of Arlekin Players Theatre & Zero Gravity (zero-G) Virtual Theater Lab, “Best Director” Elliot Norton Winner 2020. His most recent projects, *chekhovOS /an experimental game/* and *State vs. Natasha Banina*, became international virtual theatre sensations, both earning *New York Times* Critic’s Picks. Arlekin, an award-winning company of Russian immigrants, has performed all over the world, including Moscow Art Theatre, and festivals in Yerevan, Armenia, New York City, Chicago, Lviv, Ukraine, Monaco, the US, Canada and UK. Golyak recently directed Actors’ Shakespeare Project’s critically acclaimed production of *The Merchant of Venice*.

**Nana Grinstein**, Playwright, is based in Moscow and is known for her documentary theater projects including the celebrated “Coming Out”, a play based on interviews and correspondences with real people. In addition to writing plays, she speaks and presents regularly about documentary theater, memory work in devising theater, and other topics at prominent theaters in Russia.

**Anna Fedorova**, Scenography & Costume Design, is a regular collaborator with Igor Golyak and Arlekin Players. She has worked in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Poland, Japan and Greece. She received the Theatre Spring 2017 prize for best scenography and costume design.

**Blair Cadden**, Dramaturg/Assistant Director, is a Boston-based director, deviser, dramaturg, and teaching artist. A recent graduate of the MFA directing program at Boston University, Blair previously co-founded and served as Artistic Director of 5th Wall Productions, located in her hometown of Charleston, South Carolina. Some favorite directing credits include *Red Bike*, *Time Stands Still*, and *Polaroid Stories* (Boston University); *Spring Awakening* (5th Wall Productions); and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (Flowertown Underground). At Arlekin, she has served as dramaturg for *The Seagull* and assistant director for *chekhovOS /an experimental game/*.

**Sara Stackhouse**, Producer, is Managing Producer at Arlekin Players Theatre & Zero-Gravity (zero-G) Virtual Theater Lab where she co-produced *chekhovOS /an experimental game/* and the international tour for *State vs Natasha Banina*. She is Founder and Principal at BroadBand Collaborative (Boston) and the Creative Director of The Mama Project (South Africa). She was Founding Executive Producer at Actors’ Shakespeare Project, Chair of Theater at Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Supervising Producer, INSIDE This Old House/Time Warner, and Project Manager for cellist Yo-Yo Ma where she was on the producing team for the award-winning series *Yo-Yo Ma: Inspired by Bach*.

**Arlekin Players Theatre**, founded by Artistic Director Igor Golyak, was created in Boston in 2009 and has since toured to New York, Chicago, and Hartford, as well as to international festivals in Russia, Armenia, Ukraine, and Monaco. Arlekin received world-wide acclaim, including two New York Times Critic’s Picks, for their groundbreaking virtual theater projects during the pandemic, including of [State vs Natasha Banina](#) and [chekhovOS /an experimental game/](#) featuring Mikhail Baryshnikov as Anton Chekhov. Arlekin has received multiple awards for its work including four 2020 Elliot Norton Awards from the [Boston Theater Critics Association](#) for its recent productions of *The Stone* and *The Seagull*. Arlekin takes strong pride in their emphasis on self-identity; they are a company of immigrants performing works that play on the ideas of cross-culture, home, and traditions, challenging

the idea of nationality, and finding common themes that unite us all. In 2020, Arlekin launched its [Zero Gravity \(zero-G\) Virtual Theater Lab](#) to explore new theater possibilities for a new time. The company makes its home in Needham, MA. For more information, visit [www.arlekinplayers.com](http://www.arlekinplayers.com) and [www.zerogravity.art](http://www.zerogravity.art).

### **Cast & Creative Team**

#### **Audio Cast**

WITNESS includes an audio-only Act featuring a versatile group of voice actors including Aiki Arzoumanian, Boris Berdnikov, Christian Brunner, Nana Ghukasyan, Igor Golyak, Anne Gottlieb, Luz Lopez, Nael Nacer, Juan Paniagua, Robert Pemberton, Alex Petetsky, Oldren Romero, Elizabeth Sarytchev, Olga Sokolova, Gene Ravvin, and Richard Snee.

#### **Live & Filmed Cast**

EMCEE: Gene Ravvin

LEAH: Lauren Elias

LADY LIBERTY: Darya Denisova

LIESL JOSEPH/WOMAN WITH CHILD: Rimma Gluzman

GISELA KLEPL: Polina Vikova

YOUNG LIESL & GISELA: Esther Golyak & Elizabeth Sarytchev

FRITZ BUFF: Alex Petetsky

FIRA: Julia Shikh

MARIK: Misha Tyutyunik

MARIK'S ASSISTANT: Jenya Brodskaja

ANNA: Anna Furman

OLGA: Olga Aronova

VIKA/BRIDE: Vika Kovalenko

JOSEPH: Nathan Malin

RACHEL: Anne Gottlieb

GROOM/RELIGIOUS JEWISH MAN: David Gamarnik

FIRST JEWISH MAN: Boris Furman

SECOND JEWISH MAN/JEWISH HUSBAND: Boris Berdnikov

AMERICAN WIFE: Blair Cadden

CHILD: Elizabeth Sarytchev

CHILD: Jacob Golyak

ISRAELI SOLDIER: Esther Golyak

Ensemble: Nana Ghukasyan, Kendyl Trott, Polina Vasserman

#### **Creative Team**

Conceived and Directed by Igor Golyak

Produced by Sara Stackhouse

Playwright, Nana Grinstein

Additional scripting, Blair Cadden & Igor Golyak

Dramaturg/Assistant Director, Blair Cadden

Scenography & Costume Design, Anna Fedorova

Virtual Design, Daniel Cormino

Sound Design, Viktor Semenov

Director of Photography/Editor, Anton Nikolaev

Camera Assistant, Austin de Besche

Technical Director, Johan Folke  
Studio Sound Consultant, Clive Goodwin  
1st AD, Blair Cadden  
Stage Manager, Kendyl Trott  
Wardrobe Manager, Marissa Wolf  
Wardrobe Assistant, Natasha Mitlina  
Properties Master, Irina Vilenchik  
Properties Assistant, Olga Aronova  
Hair & Makeup, Anna Furman  
Web Developer, Anatoly Kryvonos  
Assistant Technical Director, Brian Farrell  
Consultant, Athomas Goldberg  
Puppetry Consultant, Evgeniy Ibragimov  
Research Consultant, Irina Astashkevich  
Box Office & Front of House, Marianna Golyak  
Graphic Design, Mark Abair  
Graphic Design, Sandra Cohen | Bird Graphics  
PR, Darren DeLuca Public Relations &  
Keith Sherman & Associates  
Intern, Emma Resek

**Available press materials can be found [here](#).**

**Press Contact: Darren DeLuca | [darren.deluca@gmail.com](mailto:darren.deluca@gmail.com) | 603-489-7624**

**###**