

Rebecca Davis – Journey in Russia
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**Practicing Arts Management in Russia:
Marketing a Broadway Musical in Moscow**
Делайте менеджмент искусства в России

It is true that I received my Fulbright grant to study dance and choreography in Russia. Nevertheless, after four years of business school and plans to pursue an entrepreneurial career in the US upon my return, one has a tendency to perceive business-related opportunities while studying abroad. That is the case I find myself in as I begin volunteer work at the Moscow theater company *Stage Holding Russia*.

**Starting a Theater Production Company in Russia –
Начинает работать в России театральная фирма**

Stage Holding Russia is a subsidiary of the multinational company *Stage Holding*. The Russian office was opened one year ago, and its first major project is the staging of a Russian variant of the most famous musical ever created, *Cats* (*Кожки*).

The company has put together an international team of managers, artists, and funders from Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands. The musical will debut in Moscow in March 2005 and is expected to run for at least a year before traveling to Saint Petersburg, Novgorod and other major Russian cities.

I was fortunate to become part of this project through connections I made in Russia back in 2002. At that time, I worked for the company *LINK*, which produced the first Russian musical production ever, *Nord-Ost*. My former employers moved to Stage Holding earlier this year, and in fact, they are responsible for founding the Russian office. When the General Director, Dmitry Bogachev, and the Chief Marketing Officer, Sergey Gromov, learned that I was spending the year in Russia on a Fulbright scholarship, they were willing and anxious to once again use my services and knowledge in business and the English-language to help launch the marketing campaign. My first step was attending the major press conference held by Stage Holding Russia last week in Moscow.

Meet the Press – Знакомство с прессой

Held in the high-class, sleek *Theater-Center on Strasnou* in central Moscow, the press conference for Stage Holding Russia gathered an impressive group of panelists, including: Derk Sayer, CEO of *Independent Media* and corporate sponsor; Carmen Pavlovic, International Business Development Manager of *Stage Holding UK*, and Dmitry Bogachev, General Director of *Stage Holding Russia*. In total, over 70 journalists from Russian and foreign newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and TV stations attended the two hour conference.

The part that interested me the most was the questions asked by the Russian journalists during the Q&A period. At an analogous conference in the US, you might expect questions, such as, “Did the actors get along on the set?” or “How many weeks did it take the dancers to learn the new choreography?” However, at this conference, the questions were much more philosophical while revealing a great deal about the skepticism of “arts management” in Russia today. Some of the questions were, “Why do you think Russians will attend a musical theater show that was famous in the US and Europe a long time ago?” “How come there were no famous stars cast in the lead roles?” “How much money does it take to launch a show like this?” and “How can you possibly translate the lyrics when the syntax of the Russian and English languages is so different?”

These questions challenged the panelists because they question the legitimacy of an emerging industry in modern day Russia: arts management. In the eyes of many Russian artists’, musical theater, and especially American or English musical theater, is not deemed to be “true theater.” In the eyes of many Russian business managers and potential investors, the size of the musical theater market in Moscow has yet to be proven a worthwhile risk. Thus, the managers of Stage Holding Russia are faced not only with the task of creating a successful musical both artistically and financially, but they also carry the burden of forging a new sphere of Russian business amidst a radically changing economic environment.

“Volunteering” – Помощь бесплатно

How can a Fulbright student studying classical ballet in St Petersburg help a Moscow company launch a wildly successful Russian-version of a Broadway musical?

After the press conference, I brainstormed with Dmitry Bogachev about the best marketing communications to reach the English-speaking populations in Moscow and St Petersburg. We developed a PR campaign in which I report on the challenges and successes of arts management and international business using Stage Holding Russia as a primary example. Now I am preparing articles to submit to the *American Chamber of Commerce*, *The Saint Petersburg Times*, and the magazines *Where* and *In Flight*. I will also be giving a lecture on international arts management at *The American Center* in Moscow in February. Soon I will start exploring the opportunities for B2B block ticket sales and cross-promotions with international tourist agencies.

Ballet Shoes and Business Cards – Балетные тапочки и бизнес-карточки

Once again, I find myself immersed in a balancing act of business and classical ballet. I spend my mornings practicing my craft (classical ballet) in the dance studios at *The Saint Petersburg Conservatory*, the afternoons in more dance classes and private training at various theaters in the city, my evenings in rehearsals for my own choreography, and my “late” evenings in Internet cafes conducting marketing research and writing PR articles. This balancing act will always be a part of my life, so it’s a good thing I love it!

To Learn More About Rebecca Davis' studies and travel experiences, visit The Rebecca Davis Dance Company website at www.rebeccadavidance.com or email davis@rebeccadavidance.com

To Read About Rebecca's dance experiences at The St. Petersburg Conservatory, join "The Journey in Russia" listserv. Sign up for the listserv at www.rebeccadavidance.com.

*To see more photos of Rebecca training in Russia:
<http://www.rebeccadavidance.com/studio.html>*



Press Conference in Theater-Center on Strasnom