







# IGROUSHKA



**TITLE:** IGRUSHKA

**STORY BY:** DANIEL LEVIN, IGOR KARASH

**WRITTEN BY:** DANIEL LEVIN

**ILLUSTRATION BY:** IGOR KARASH

**BASED ON:** IGOR STRAVINSKY'S BALLET PETROUCHKA

**CIRCA:** 1914, 1918, 1937, 1961, AND 2000

**LOG LINE:**

At the turn of the 20th century, a famous composer leaves Russia amid turmoil and uncertainty. The music and artistry he leaves behind will live on without him, but will not forestall the century's woes.

**SHORT SYNOPSIS:**

1914, St. Petersburg, Russia. The Little Girl's family is ready to leave their opulent downtown apartment for a trip abroad. The trunks are packed and the cab is waiting downstairs. The Little Girl is hugging her rustic Petrushka puppet. She takes one last look outside the big window as her father, the Composer, urges her on. Outside the apartment building workers convert a makeshift theatrical stage into a gallows.

*Flashback to a few months before.* The same square is decorated for the Shrovetide Fair and a popular festival is underway. The makeshift theatrical stage is decorated with the portrait of a bearded man, the same portrait that hangs in the Composer's apartment. The Composer and his family arrive at the fair in a Russian sleigh. He drops off his wife and daughter at the festival and hurries off to the Imperial Theater where he conducts the holiday performance of the ballet Petrushka.

The Little Girl and her mother enjoy the fair and stop at a puppet show where together with the common people they watch a Petrushka marionette performance. Suddenly, a popular uprising begins. Rebels smash vendor stalls and bourgeois shops. The Imperial Cossack guard attack from the other side of the fair. The Little Girl, her Mother, and the puppeteers with their marionettes are attacked on both sides and are pushed into the streets.

At the Imperial Theater, where the Composer is conducting, the ballet quickly spins out of his control. Dancers led by Petrushka, dressed in a red shirt, stage a revolt. Petrushka's love, the Ballerina, runs away from him and ends up with the fat Moor. Petrushka loses himself in the struggle. He imagines he is leading the revolting masses. Rebels, Cossacks, and the police storm the theater. Outside, people leaving the theater collide with the revolting crowds running from the fair. The Little Girl and her Mother hide inside the puppet theater. They witness Petrushka being arrested. Cossacks shoot into the crowd. The snow turns red with blood. As the Ballerina escapes the theater with the Moor in a car, the Composer finds his family and takes them home. The Little Girl clutches the Petrushka marionette she was able to save.

*Flash-forward.* The Composer and his family leave their apartment overlooking the sad square, while rebels are being hanged on the gallows outside. The Petrushka marionette is left alone in the empty apartment.





1918. A Proletarian's family moves into the upscale apartment vacated by the Composer's family. The Proletarian and his Wife wear hardline revolutionary uniforms. Their Daughter, 15, dreams of being a ballet dancer. The new tenants replace the old portrait of a bearded man with a new one of a different bearded man. The Daughter comes across the Petrushka marionette.

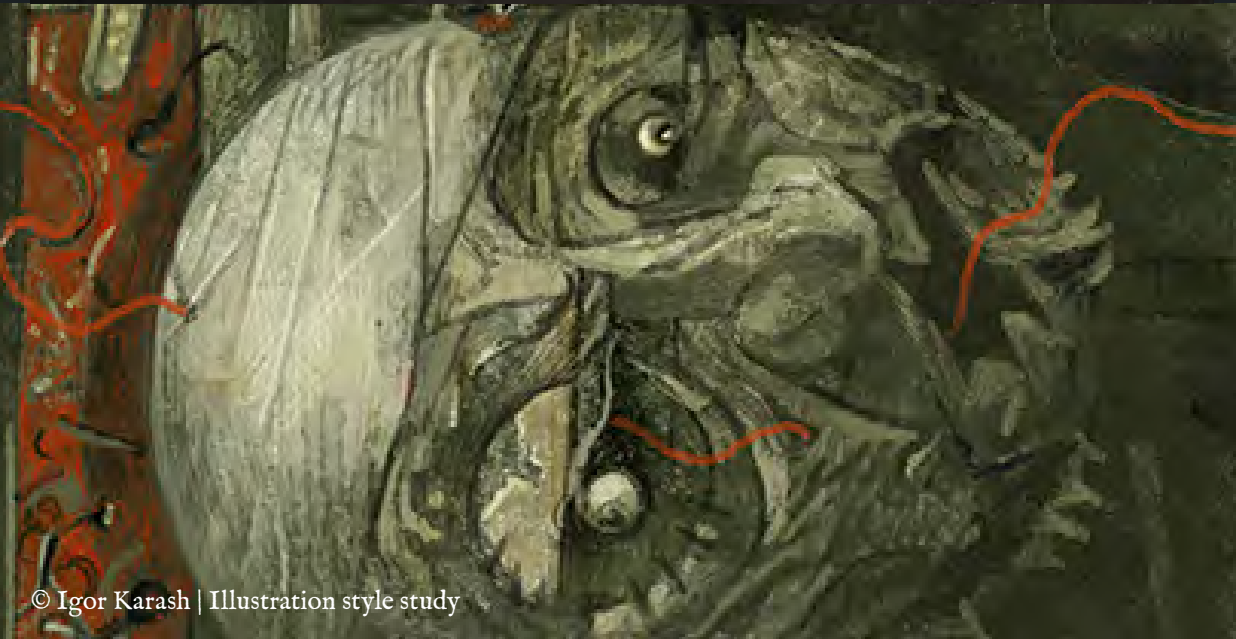
*Flash forward a few months.* On the stage of the Workers' Theater (formerly the Imperial Theater), the Proletarian's Daughter and the now aged and tired Petrushka, who is wearing the familiar red shirt, perform the experimental dance of machine progress. The audience is poor workers, hungry, tired, and dirty. The Proletarian and Wife sit in the front row and glow with satisfaction.

During the show the Proletarian's Daughter, the new Ballerina, collapses from hunger. She is too hungry to dance. Petrushka leads her off stage and into the hall of the theater where hungry people burn the planks of hardwood floors to keep warm. The theater Director, Comrade Moorsky, the erstwhile Moor, whisks the Ballerina into his office where he has a large table set with delicacies. As she devours the food, Moorsky keeps his hand on the Ballerina's knee.

The two leave the theater in Moorsky's car, the Ballerina still eating a French roll and the Director still fondling her knee. Petrushka sees the seduction unfolding, pulls out a pistol, and runs after the car while firing, trying to save the Ballerina from Moorsky. Members of a CheKa detail escorting arrested monarchist performers and theatergoers snatch Petrushka off the street and push him behind the theater building along with the others. All are summarily executed.

1937. Back at the same old flat, the CheKa police arrest the Proletarian, his wife, and their daughter, the Ballerina. All are escorted out of their apartment just as new tenants move in. The new tenants are Moorsky, the Workers' Theater director, and his wife, the Dance Master. Both wear Proletarian uniform. Immediately upon arrival they replace the portrait of the old bearded man with the new one of a mustachioed man. The Dance Master comes across the Petrushka marionette and finds it useful.

At a theater workshop, the Dance Master shows the marionette to prop-masters explaining how Petrushka's costume must function. Other prop-masters assemble





the Petrushka's Proletarian Wife's costume out of loose parts that resemble the Ballerina. Moorsky is happy. He pats the Dance Master on her shoulder even as he pats corps-de-ballet dancers on their bottoms.

At the show's premiere, the new Petrushka only vaguely resembles his old self. A blank, idiotic stare has replaced his zeal for life. His wife, the Ballerina, has also been remade to conform to new ideals. Together they dance to the music of their new happy life. They build factories, procreate, and work together at the Temple of Happiness. Moorsky, the Dance Master, and the Politburo in the front row all applaud and so does the mustachioed man in the Imperial box. The audience is filled with dutifully happy faces just like the ones worn by Petrushka and the Ballerina. All cheer and applaud, except a handful that are not so cheerful. The CheKa police take the sullen ones out and replace them with new cheerful faces that are all the spitting image of one another.



1961. The now-old Composer returns to St. Petersburg, now Leningrad. He makes an attempt to conduct a rehearsal of the ballet Petrushka, but is unable to recognize his own work. The dull, dehumanized Petrushka and the Ballerina mean nothing to him, nor does the Temple of Happiness or the radiant new life with factories and collective farms the dancers build together on the stage. The Composer flees the Workers' Theater and attempts to find his old apartment overlooking the large square. He runs up the stairs and finds his old apartment door now adorned with a dozen nameplates and doorbell buttons. The Composer enters his old apartment, which is now a maze of communal rooms with half a dozen families crammed together. The dark hallway is full of junk and drying laundry. At the end of the hall the Composer meets a little girl, poorly dressed, clutching his daughter's rustic Petrushka marionette. Outside the large window workers build a makeshift stage with a large portrait of a round face with no hair or mustache.

2000. *Epilogue.* The once-upscale bourgeois apartment is now old and decrepit. The walls and furniture are dusty and covered with cobwebs. New owners in ostentatious gold chains and pink jackets move in, replace the mustachioed portrait with the one of a man with a clean face and toss out the old garbage, including the Petrushka marionette.







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Born in Russia and raised in Texas, Daniel graduated from USC School of Cinematic Arts in Los Angeles with a Master of Fine Arts in film directing. His graduate thesis film *Moment Théâtral* (2007) received the prestigious Jack Nicholson Directing Award. Most recently Daniel produced the animated feature film *Purim: The Lot* (2013), which is now out in wide release on home video and VOD. He directed the documentaries *Kaltag*, *Alaska* and *Kamchatka: The Salmon Country* in association with the WWF. Daniel's short film *Bagatelle* premiered at the AFI in Los Angeles as part of the highly selective Texas Filmmaker's Showcase and won the Grand Prix at the Sochi International Film Festival, Russia. The film has been supported by grants from Kodak, Panavision, the Austin Film Society, the city of Houston, and others. Daniel lectures on filmmaking at universities and colleges around Houston, Texas.



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Igor Karash is an illustrator based in St. Louis, Missouri, originally from Baku, Azerbaijan. Igor's illustration work spans a diverse range of picture books, classic literature, novels, and concept art for theater and film. Igor illustrates and designs to transform the reader and viewer experience by creating a unique visual language for each narrative. Igor's work has been recognized by numerous prestigious illustration competitions including the House of Illustration, the Folio Society, and the AOI Awards in London. Igor's work has been featured in Luerzer's Archive 200 Best Illustrators Worldwide, *American Illustration* 34, 38 & 39, *Creative Quarterly*, *Graphis*, and *3x3 Magazine*. Igor's illustrator profile is a part of the *TASCHEN The Illustrator* (100 Best Illustrators Around the World) edition curated by Steven Heller and Julius Weidemann, 2019.