

NORTHLIGHT THEATRE

STUDY GUIDE



PREPARED BY VIVIAN SOLOMON
AND NORTHLIGHT STAFF

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MEET THE TEAM

Daniel Jamieson (playwright) worked with Theatre Alibi in Exeter, UK for more than 30 years as associate writer and adaptor, performer and artistic director. His work as a writer for Alibi includes: *River Land, 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*. In 2015 he won an ACA award for his writing for children with the company. Daniel's play *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* was produced by Kneehigh Theatre and won the Carol Tambor Best of Edinburgh Award in 2017. Since then, *The Flying Lovers* has been produced in the States by Quantum Theater in Pittsburgh, Forward Theater in Wisconsin and Winnipeg Jewish Theater. Daniel has written five plays for BBC Radio 4 and has also written for Polka Theatre, London Bubble, Theatre Royal Plymouth and Northampton Theatres. In 2013, Daniel was Leverhulme artist-in-residence at the University of Exeter's Mood Disorders Centre.

Ian Ross (Music) is a Bristol based multi instrumentalist, composer, and Head of music for The School for Wise Children. He leads the band Eleven Magpies. Theatre for Kneehigh includes: *Brief Encounter, The Red Shoes, Don John, The Wild Bride, Tristan and Yseult, Dead Dog in a Suitcase, The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*. Theatre as Music Director includes: *Girl from the North Country* (Toronto 2019, Runway). Theatre as Composer includes: *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings, The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* (Kneehigh), *Wise Children, Malory Towers, Bagdad Café* and *Wuthering Heights* (Wise Children); *London Tide* (National Theatre). Film as Composer includes: *The Princess and Peppernose* (RSA and Joe Wright) Nominations include: Dora Mavor Award for Outstanding Musical Direction 2020 (*Girl from the North Country*); Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Music in a Play 2023 (*Wuthering Heights*).

Elizabeth Margolius (Stage and Movement Director) A Jeff Award-winning stage and movement director, Elizabeth Margolius most recently won the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best Director of a Musical for Shattered Globe's *London Road*, and she is excited to be making her debut at Northlight. A five-time Jeff Award nominee, Elizabeth's selected directorial credits include work with Drury Lane Theatre, American Stage, Opera Southwest, Peninsula Players, Renaissance Theaterworks, Firebrand Theatre, Chicago Opera Theater, Underscore Theatre, Chicago Folks Operetta, American Theater Company, Chicago Shakespeare Theater (Assistant Director), City Lit Theater, and Bohemian Theatre Ensemble. Elizabeth is a proud member of the American Guild of Musical Artists and the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. elizabethmargolius.com



MEET THE TEAM

Michael Mahler
Music Director

Scott Penner
Scenic Design

Rachel Lambert
Costume Design

Charles Cooper
Lighting Design

Willow James
Sound Design

Leo Bassow
Props Design

Katie Klemme
Stage Manager

Daren Leonard
Associate Director

Jessica Deahr NeVille
Lift Consultant

MEET THE CAST



Jack Cahill-Lemme
as Marc



Emma Rosenthal
as Bella



Elisa Carlson
as Ensemble



Michael Mahler
as Ensemble

[Read full
artist bios](#)

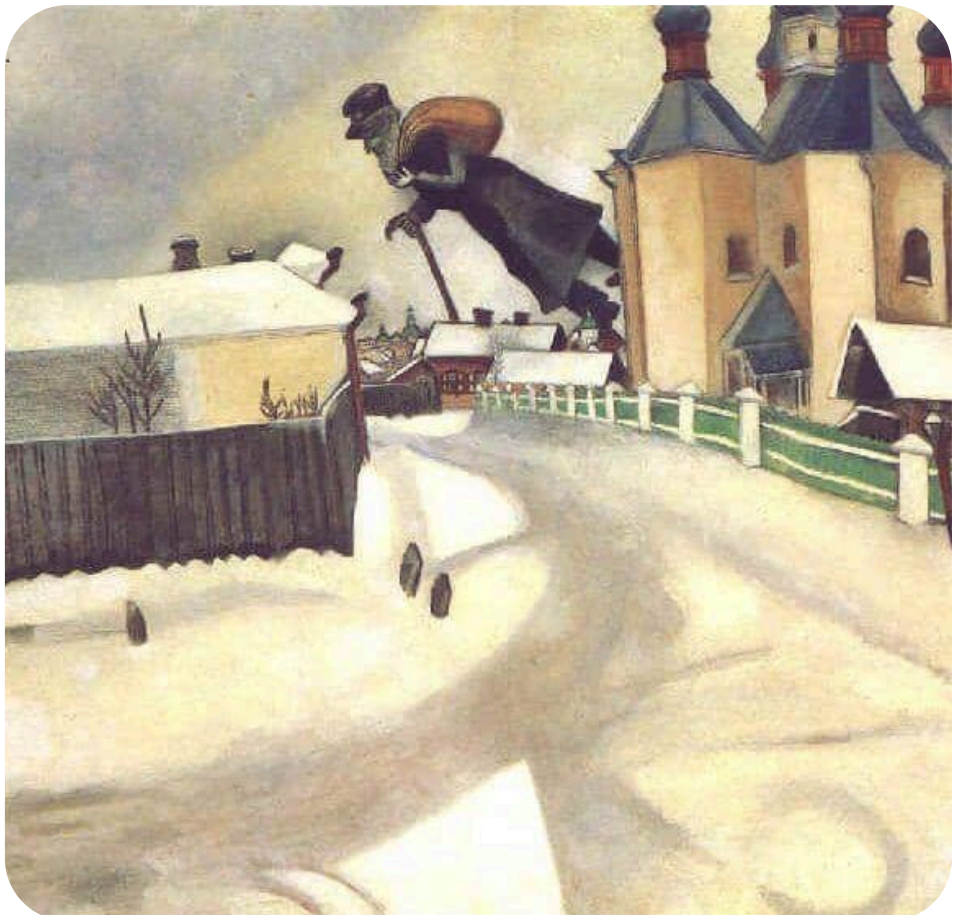


SETTING: VITEBSK

The city of Vitebsk has a long history of war violence dating all the way back to the 1500s. Notably, it was almost destroyed by Russia in 1708 in The Great Northern War. Later in 1772, it was annexed by Russia and while under their rule, was proclaimed to be a part of many unions until it was officially a part of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924. Before World War II, Vitebsk had a large Jewish population. Out of about 58,000 people living there, 36,000 of those people were Jewish. So when World War II came, Vitebsk was deeply affected. Nazi Germany made their way into the city, occupying it. They built prisons and concentration camps, destroying the city. 58% of Vitebsk's Jewish population was able to escape this massacre. But the remaining locals died to the inhumane conditions of the Vitebsk Ghettos. Marc Chagall's artwork was an inspiration to many citizens of Vitebsk during this time as it gave a creative insight to what they may have been experiencing living through war. During the post war period, Vitebsk was rebuilt and honored Marc Chagall in its first annual Marc Chagall festival in January of 1991. In 1997, Marc Chagall's childhood home was made into a museum and remains a popular tourist attraction today.



Map of Belarus



Over Vitebsk, Marc Chagall 1913

SETTING: THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, THE WORLD WARS, AND ANTISEMITISM IN THE USSR

The Russian Revolution occurred in two parts. The first part, known as the February Revolution, began in 1917 due to widespread public dissatisfaction with Tsar Nicholas II's handling of World War I. Riots forced Nicholas II to resign his position on the throne, leading to the establishment of a temporary government. But as economic problems continued, so did the riots.

The Bolshevik Revolution was the second phase, and began when a group of Marxists called the Bolsheviks seized control of the government in 1917, led by Vladimir Lenin. They believed that the working class should run the government, and their official doctrine was atheism. In 1918, the Bolshevik Party was renamed the Communist Party. Following World War I, a civil war resulted in the Communist Party gaining control over most of the Russian Empire.

VIDEO

Soviet military
advance in Vitebsk



The Communist Party's goal of a worldwide communist revolution in the interest of the working class conflicted heavily with the views of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party, which was on the rise in Germany. Hitler hatefully placed blame for Germany's problems, and the Bolshevik Revolution as a whole, on Jewish people, and advocated for their removal and extinction. Anti-semitic beliefs had also long been present in the USSR, where a series of violent riots and attacks against Jewish people beginning in the 1800s sparked fear and escalated tensions. These anti-Semitic riots extended into the early 20th century and are now known as pogroms.

Nazi Germany maintained a fragile peace with the Soviet Union until June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa. The invasion targeted Jewish people that were living in the Soviet Union. It included brutal tactics including mass shootings, starvation, and forced relocation. The Soviet Union suffered millions of casualties in the war, but emerged a global superpower in the end.

MARC AND BELLA CHAGALL

The relationship between Marc and Bella Chagall is often described as “love at first sight,” and the motif of the “flying lovers” in his work helped to cement their romance as one of art’s great love stories.



Marc and Bella Chagall, 1923



*Bella and Marc with their only child
Ida, born 1916*

1887 Marc Chagall is born in Vitebsk

1895 Bella Rosenfeld is born in Vitebsk

1906 - 1909 Marc moves to St. Petersburg where he studies art and begins pursuing a career

1909 Marc and Bella meet

1911 - 1914 Marc moves to Paris and his artistic career progresses

1914 World War I begins. Marc’s first personal show opens in Berlin

1915 Bella and Marc marry in Vitebsk and move to St. Petersburg

1916 Ida, Marc and Bella’s daughter, is born in Vitebsk

1920 Forced out due to the Russian Revolution, the family moves to Moscow

1922 They leave Moscow for Berlin

1923 Marc and family settle in Paris for nearly 20 years

1939 World War II begins. Vitebsk is immediately occupied by the Nazis and the Jewish population is eradicated

1941 The Chagalls are forced to leave Occupied France and seek exile in New York

1944 Bella dies in New York

1948 Marc returns to Paris

1952 Marc marries Valentina Brodsky

1985 Marc dies in Saint Paul-de-Vence, France

MARC CHAGALL'S ARTWORK

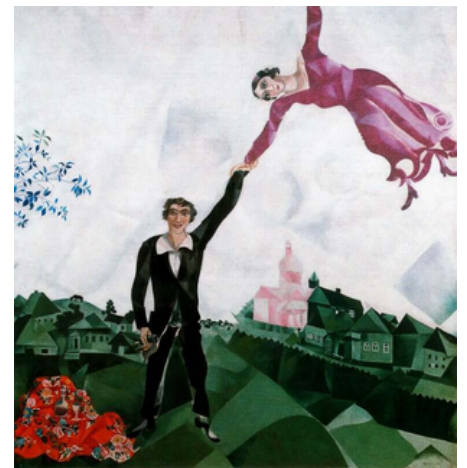
Marc Chagall's art style was vibrant and included lots of color and intricate designs. When studying art in Paris, his eyes were open to more popular art styles at the time like Cubism, Symbolism, and Futurism. He included some of these art style's traits into some of his paintings.



The Fiddler

Chagall often referenced his childhood in Vitebsk in his paintings. The painting titled "The Fiddler" is a great example of Chagall illustrating his love for his home town Vitebsk. In it, his religion and culture is symbolized by the man playing the fiddle and the rustic village in the background. It is believed by Jewish people that it is possible to reach communion with God through music and dance, the fiddle being a popular and vital instrument for ceremonies and festivals during the time period. This painting is the inspiration behind the title of the popular musical "Fiddler on the Roof" which are both based around the same context as the Russian Revolution

Once Marc Chagall married Bella, a lot of his paintings would be in reference to his love for her. In the painting "The Promenade", Marc Chagall is walking joyfully with his wife Bella Chagall wistfully floating in the air, similar to a flagpole. The background of this painting also includes a pink political building . This painting is inspired by the exhilarating sense of freedom Jewish people felt after the Bolshevik revolution since it finally meant that Jewish people had the same rights as anyone else in the state.



The Promenade



Chagall discovered in St.Petersburg that set and costume designing would be a highlight of his career. When in New York, he designed costumes and set designed for the ballets "Aleko", "The Firebird", "Daphnis and Chloe", and the opera "The Magic Flute". He worked with his daughter, Ida during the making of the costumes for "The Firebird" ballet; his most innovative costume designs to date. He often combined different fabrics to his costumes and included intricate designs in his costumes.

Bonus Reading: [Inside the Fantastical Costume World of Marc Chagall](#)



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

“STAINED GLASS” MASTERPIECE

Marc Chagall is known for his attention to detail and use of color in his artwork across a lot of different mediums. One of them being stained glass windows. Today, we can apply these methods to our own works of art!



1. Grab a blank sheet of paper and fold it in half



2. Crumple up the paper then reopen it, notice all of the little fractured shapes.



3. Take a pencil and outline every shape on the paper.



4. Color in all of the shapes.

BONUS: Try alternating the different colors so that no two shapes with the same color are touching.



SOURCES

[Marc Chagall: Guggenheim](#)

[Marc Chagall: Britannica](#)

[Bella Rosenfeld Chagall: Jewish Virtual Library](#)

[Bella Rosenfeld Chagall: MasterWorks](#)

[Vitebsk: Wikipedia](#)

[The Soviet Union and The Eastern Front: Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)

[A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Belarus: History.Gov](#)

[Russian Revolution: Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)

[Russian Civil War: Army Heritage Center](#)

[Invasion of the Soviet Union: Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)

[Marc Chagall: MarcChagall.net](#)

[Chagall - Fusion of Design: Costume, Performance and Visual Art](#)

[5 Successful One-Day Art Lessons for the Middle School Classroom](#)