

# At Work in the USSR

BY ANDREW SHEARER

**G**rowing up in Leningrad with a father who was the artistic director of the Leningrad Theatre for Young Spectators and a mother who is a playwright, the question was never if Danila Korogodsky was going into the performing arts, but in what capacity. Danila chose theatre design. And it was a natural choice: "My parents said that as a child I was no problem. They would bring me into the theatre and leave me alone and I'd be drawing all the time."

A graduate of the Institute of Theatre, Music, and Cinema in Leningrad where he was a student of Igor Evanoff, current chief designer at the Kirov Ballet, Danila spent much of his young life studying the different styles of designers in the traditional Leningrad and the more progressive Moscow, making the eight hour train trip back and forth in his studies. Danila discovered that the planned, sleek look of Leningrad contrasted sharply with the unplanned, haphazard architecture of Moscow,

creating artists with different approaches to line and space.

Danila was also part of a movement of Soviet designers that came of age in the 60s and developed a style different from that of the former generation: "For a long time it was a struggle between old times and something new." His generation was more minimalist and experimental, in keeping with the theatrical revolution that was changing the face of theatre stages throughout the world. That radical shift has since mellowed out in the Soviet Union, according to Danila: "Today it's hard to differentiate these two schools. You can be yourself now; develop your own ideas."

Danila spent 11 years as a resident designer for the Theatre for Young Spectators, a 1000 seat theatre in Leningrad aimed at school-aged children, creating for such works as Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. He was honored in 1983 when two of his designs were selected to be included in the Soviet exhibiton at the Prague Quadrennial Exhibit of Stage Design.

Danila is currently a freelance designer in the Soviet Union, enjoying modern Russia's acceptance of entrepreneurial drive. Like freelancers in any country, Danila spends his time on the phone, showing off his work, taking advantage of connections, and aggressively pursuing his desire to create and work in all sizes of theatres across the Soviet Union.

During the last three months of 1988, Danila traveled throughout the United States and taught master classes at Emerson College in Boston at the invitation of an acquaintance. He found the students particularly naive about his homeland, but was heartened by their curiosity and concern: "It feels very good. Who know what will happen next between us?"

■ **Working in the 1,000-seat Theatre for Young Spectators in Leningrad, scenographer Korogodsky has been able to achieve a variety of environments on its 14 meters wide by 7 meters high by 20 meters deep stage. Recent designs reflect stylistic changes: (1, *A Visit to Dona Anna*, 1976, 2, *The Profession*, 1981, 3, *Mother Courage*, 1983).**

● **Travaillant à Léningrad dans un ibeatre de 1000 places, réservé à un jeune public, le scénographe Korogodsky a su réaliser une variété de décors sur cette scène de 14 mètres de large, 7 mètres de profondeur et 20 mètres de hauteur. De récents dessins reflètent des changements de style: (1, *A Visit to Dona Anna*, 1976, 2, *The Profession*, 1981, 3, *Mother Courage*, 1983).**

▼ **Bei seiner Arbeit in dem Leningrader Theater für junge Zuschauer mit 1000 Sitzplätzen hat der Bühnenbildner Korogodsky auf der 14 Meter breiten, 7 Meter Hohen und 20 Meter tiefen Bühne eine Vielfalt von Szenarien zu schaffen vermocht. Neuere Entwurfe zeigne stilistische Veränderungen: (1, *A Visit to Dona Ana*, 1976, 2, *The Profession*, 1981, 3, *Mutter Courage*, 1983).**



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