



PRESS RELEASE: Belarus Free Theatre is delighted to announce the next *Kitchen Revolution* supper club, featuring Oliver Bullough and Peter Pomerantsev

On **Wednesday 28 February**, Belarus Free Theatre will host the next *Kitchen Revolution* supper club, featuring provocateurs **Peter Pomerantsev** and **Oliver Bullough**.

Kitchen Revolution is a series of evenings that combine supper and secrecy, all served with a dash of sedition. The theme of this evening is '**Money, Lies and Videotape: How the kleptocrats of the former USSR bend truth and steal – and how we make it all possible**'.

Guests will enjoy a feast of home-cooked Soviet food and wine served in a private house, including borscht – "the common denominator of the Soviet kitchen, the dish that tied together ... the high table of the Kremlin and the meanest canteen in the boondocks of the Urals, ... the beetroot soup that pumped like a main artery through the kitchens of the east Slav lands", according to the writer James Meek.

Peter Pomerantsev is an author, TV producer and Visiting Senior Fellow at the London School of Economics. He writes for several publications including the Financial Times, the London Review of Books and The Atlantic. His book on Russian propaganda, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, won the 2016 Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize, and was nominated for the Samuel Johnson Prize and the Guardian First Book Award. It has been translated into over a dozen languages.

Oliver Bullough is an author and journalist who specialises in financial crime and the ex-Soviet Union. He writes regularly for the Guardian, the New York Times, GQ magazine and elsewhere, and his next book, *Moneyland, the secret country of the super rich*, will be published later this year.

Oliver Bullough said: *"London's role in laundering the world's dirty money is the skeleton in Britain's cupboard, something we all know about but we don't like to mention. I've spent hours discussing corruption around Russian kitchen tables, and I'm really looking forward to sitting around a table here in Britain to talk about our own role in enabling that corruption. There will be lots to say."*

In the dark days of the Soviet Union, dissidents and intellectuals would gather in each other's homes to talk, argue and dream about one thing – freedom. These whispered conversations, which would have been deemed treasonous if held in public, ultimately coalesced into actions that helped overthrow the repressive Soviet system. This was nicknamed the 'kitchen revolution'.

Decades later and a world away, Britain's hard-won freedoms are being eroded, as too many of us sink into political apathy, and a stultifying conservatism envelops the creative arts. It's time for a new and more public kitchen revolution, time to turn up the volume on the kitchen table whispers of the past, and to encourage everyone to consider how artists should respond when democracy comes under threat.

Natalia Kaliada said: *"I spent my childhood under the Soviet regime, and I still remember my parents' kitchen reverberating with the fierce whispers of dissent. Even when everything is suppressed, it is very difficult to crush that human desire to keep talking, to keep challenging lies, defending truth, and hoping for change. With Kitchen Revolution, we want to remind people how precious and important the freedom to speak really is, and to look at how we might start translating words into real action."*

Belarus Free Theatre is one of the foremost refugee-led theatre companies in the UK and the only theatre in Europe banned by its government on political grounds. In April last year, the company was forced to postpone the premiere of a new show in Minsk, after several of its members were arrested or injured during crackdowns on democratic protests against Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko.

ENDS

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Belarus Free Theatre presents *Kitchen Revolution*

Theme: 'Money, Lies and Videotape: How the kleptocrats of the former USSR bend truth and steal – and how we make it all possible'

Date: Wednesday 28 February 2018

Time: 7pm-10pm

Location: E3

Guests will be given a meeting point, from where they will be escorted to the secret venue.

Prices (including a feast of Soviet food and complimentary wine):

£25: standard price

£45: pay for yourself and someone who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend

£5: concession for those who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend

N.B. Guests self-select the price bracket they feel is most appropriate to them.

Booking: <https://belarusfreetheatre.rit.org.uk/Event/kitchenrevolution>

Please let us know if you have any allergies or special access requirements.

About Belarus Free Theatre

Belarus Free Theatre is an award-winning theatre company founded in 2005 in Minsk under Europe's last surviving dictatorship. Its existence is illegal in a country where only state-sanctioned theatre is permitted. Since 2011, founding members, husband and wife team Natalia Kaliada and Nicolai Khalezin, together with Associate Director Vladimir Shcherban, have been political refugees in the UK; the company therefore now operates between Minsk and London.

BFT's permanent ensemble is based in Minsk, where they campaign, educate and perform every single day of the year, underground. Performers and audiences are under constant surveillance by the authorities. Performances have been raided by the KGB and audience members arrested. In spite of this, BFT is a hot ticket, delivering sold-out performances over 100 times per year in its 60-seat venue.

Described by The New York Times as, "one of the bravest and most inspired underground troupes on the planet", BFT has brought audiences some of the world's most provocative theatre, and has performed over 40 new productions in more than 30 countries over the past decade.

Belarus Free Theatre has enjoyed the support and solidarity of fellow artists including the late Harold Pinter and Vaclav Havel; Sir Tom Stoppard, David Lan, Steven Spielberg, Jude Law, Mick Jagger, Jeremy Irons, Emma Thompson, Joanna Lumley, Vivienne Westwood, Kim Cattrall, Ian McKellen and Samuel West. Belarus Free Theatre is an Associate Company of the Young Vic, the Malthouse Theatre in Melbourne, Australia, and a partner of Monash University also in Melbourne, Australia. BFT also has long-standing partnerships with both the Public Theater and LaMaMa in New York.

BFT's most recent theatre production was *Burning Doors* – which played at the Soho Theatre in London, toured the UK in 2016, and recently completed a tour of the United States. In *Burning Doors*, BFT combined forces with Pussy Riot's Maria Alyokhina to share stories of persecuted artists, living under dictatorship, who refuse to be silenced. The production was awarded 'Best Ensemble' at the 2016 Offie Awards and was listed in The New York Times' Best Theatre of 2017.

In 2015, the BFT celebrated their tenth anniversary with a two-week festival of performances and discussions in London, entitled *Staging a Revolution*, featuring some of their most acclaimed original productions, reinvigorated classics and brand new work. *Staging a Revolution* put ten taboo ideas – including mental health, torture, sex and inequality – centre stage in an effort to inspire and invigorate UK audiences to see themselves as change-makers.

Following each performance, a curated panel of experts, including artists, campaigners, journalists and activists discussed an area related to each taboo topic in order to generate fresh ideas for taking action. This approach (similar to the one that will be taken in *Kitchen Revolution*) is drawn directly from BFT's work in Minsk, where the space for free exchange of ideas and open debate is as valuable as the space in which to see independent theatre.