

STUDY GUIDE

MCC
THEATER



new musical

SPACE КОСМИЧЕСКИЕ DOGS собаки



VAN HUGHES



NICK BLAEMIRE



ELLIE HEYMAN

SPACE DOGS is an epic new musical that tells the mind-blowing true story of Laika and the Chief Designer—a stray dog and the top-secret Russian scientist who sent her to space during the Cold War. Written and performed by VAN HUGHES and NICK BLAEMIRE, it is a sweeping, kaleidoscopic tale of invention, betrayal, international political intrigue, and the immortal friendship that exists between man and dog, as they journey together to the stars.

Show writers VAN HUGHES and NICK BLAEMIRE in collaboration with director ELLIE HEYMAN have created a show that is a visual and auditory feast. VAN and NICK morph into the multitude of characters in the musical tale, play all of the instruments, and man the puppets used to bring the dogs to life. They play the keyboard and guitars, operate two steady-cam cameras, work with a green screen, use new and archival footage and interact with the live audience. History will come to life before your very eyes!

APR 19, 1971

USSR launches first space station

JUL 20, 1969

Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin become the first men to walk on the moon (US)

DEC 21, 1968

Apollo launches as the first fully human crew to successfully orbit the moon and safely return to Earth (US)

JUN 16, 1963

The first woman enters the space race and spends three days in orbit, her name is Valentina Tereshkova (USSR)

MAY 5, 1961

Alan Shepard becomes the first pilot to control a voyage to space, traveling 116 miles into the atmosphere (US)

APR 12, 1961

Yuri Gagarin becomes the first person both reach space and orbit around the Earth (USSR)

BACKGROUND: THE COLD WAR

The Cold War is described as the political rivalry between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and their allies, following the aftermath of WWII. Called “a bloodless war” it was waged between the late 1940s and came to an end in the late 1980s. The Cold War was fought through economic progress and competition for advances in science, patriotic sentiment, the arts and athletics.¹ The end of the Cold War was marked by the resignation of Soviet Union president Gorbachev, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States which included Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.²

COMMUNISM AS A THREAT TO AMERICAN IDEALS

The American Industrial Revolution of the turn of the century really forged the USA as the leading capitalist country in the world. This “model citizen” model became the American Dream - if you work hard enough you too can become a part of the upper class. A broadening wealth gap left certain disadvantaged populations, particularly in urban areas, as cogs in the assembly line, while the upper middle class grew.

The first Red Scare was during the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, which spurred a large wave of communism throughout the Eurocentric world in which poverty rates were high. Labor strikes were becoming common in the United States and unions were seen as threats to capitalism. The large influx of European immigrants in the early 1900s working predominantly in manufacturing and production, created a fear that an anarchist revolution would happen here in America.

The second Red Scare following WWII was known as McCarthyism, which was increased by rumors of “Russian spies” and alleged secret communist societies; this led to widespread censorship in the hopes of increased national unity. Politicians used anti-communist rhetoric to drive a right leaning platform and agenda, which dictated domestic and foreign policy.

THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE USA AND THE USSR

The Cold War served as the backdrop for the competition between the USSR. After WWII, both countries continued to develop their rockets and weapons programs resulting in an arms race and space race.

The use of propaganda escalated as both countries launched visual and verbal campaigns to sway their public and a global audience. The U.S. promoted the idea that Communism was a threat to the American way of life. Films like “I Married A Communist” and “The Red Menace”, as well as magazine articles and poster campaigns depicted America’s doom under the spread of Communism. Likewise, the USSR promoted an anti-Capitalist sentiment by educating their populace in the schools, youth clubs, labor unions and cultural organizations as well as in the media.³

The Space Race outlines the competition between the USA and the Soviet Union to be the leader in Space exploration. The USSR was on the forefront throughout most of this, crowning many “firsts” in history, despite this, the USA leaped ahead by accomplishing the crowning achievement of having the first man land on the moon.⁴

MEET SERGEI KOROLEV, ALSO KNOWN AS THE CHIEF DESIGNER

Sergei Korolev, also known as the Chief Designer to protect his identity, was born on January 12th, 1907 in the Russian Empire. Before becoming known as “the father of practical astronautics,” Korolev studied mechanics from a young age. He attended engineering school and received an accelerated degree with a focus in aviation.

Sources:

¹Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Cold War”. Encyclopedia Britannica, 21 Jun. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War>. Accessed 18 January 2022.

²BBC. (2013, October 31). Soviet Union timeline. BBC News. Retrieved January 18, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17858981>

³Wikimedia Foundation. (2022, January 21). Propaganda in the Soviet Union. Wikipedia. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda_in_the_Soviet_Union

⁴Zich, R., Ellis, K. D., De Sa, N., Brooks, L. E., & Roberts, G. (1993, June). Revelations from the Russian Archives. Library of Congress. Retrieved January 18, 2022, from <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/sovi.html>

JAN 31, 1961

Ham the chimpanzee becomes the first ape to successfully return to Earth alive (US)

AUG 2, 1959

Explorer 6, the first weather satellite takes pictures of the Earth from space (US)

OCT 1, 1958

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA is created (US)

NOV 3, 1957

Sputnik 2 launched with Laika the dog, becoming the first living being in orbit (USSR)

OCT 4, 1957

Sputnik 1 becomes the first satellite to orbit Earth (USSR)

AUG 2, 1959

after the US announced that they were going to launch a satellite into space, the USSR announces they were also developing their own satellite

In June 1938, after a brief entry into the workforce, he was falsely accused, charged and imprisoned at the age of 31 for claims of being an “anti-Soviet organizer.”⁵ Korolev spent his sentence in the Gulag, a prison system which used forced labor and was notorious for their brutal work and living conditions. Known as the “Main Camp Administration,” the Gulags imprisoned 18 million people during their short history, spanning the 1920s through the 1950s.⁶ After almost six years of imprisonment, he was released and Korolev was eventually recruited into the Red Army in order to develop rocket motors for military aircraft.⁷ He became an important figure in the Soviet Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Program which led to his designation as the Chief Designer of the Soviet Space Program. He led the development of the R-7 Rocket and Sputnik 1, launching Laika, Belka & Strelka, and Yuri Gagarin (first human to reach orbit) into space.

Sources:

⁵Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. “Sergei Korolev”. Encyclopedia Britannica, 10 Jan. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sergei-Korolev>. Accessed 18 January 2022.

⁶History.com Editors. “Gulag.” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 23 Mar. 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/russia/gulag>.

⁷Wikimedia Foundation. (2022, January 2). Sergei Korolev. Wikipedia. Retrieved January 18, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Korolev

MEET THE SPACE DOGS!

The Russian Space Program rescued at least four dozen female street dogs to test the possibility of human space flight in the early days of the program. Why dogs, you ask? Because of the relationship between dogs and humans, they were accustomed to long periods of inactivity and because they were easier to

train, the program decided to use dogs on early tests. The dogs were put through intensive training and eventually fitted with a flight suit that monitored their vital signs and collected their waste products. These humble creatures paved the way for human spaceflight.

THE DOGMONAUTS!

There were many dog all-stars in the program. Let us introduce you to a few key players.

TSYGAN and **DEZIK** were the first dogs to achieve a sub-orbital flight in 1951.

LAIKA, which means “barker” in Russian, becomes the first dog to reach space and orbit the earth in 1957 aboard Sputnik 2.

BELKA and **STRELKA** were the first dogs to fully orbit around the earth in 1960. Fun fact, Strelka’s puppies were given to JFK as a gift.



Please be advised that **SPACE DOGS** is a **HIGH SENSORY PRODUCTION** that includes lighting effects that may trigger those with epilepsy, including strobe lights and lasers. Haze is also used in this production. Some elements of the show are not limited to the stage; please be assured that any props that are proximate to audience members are thoroughly disinfected between performances.





NATIONALISM AND HOW INTERNATIONAL RIVALRIES PLAY OUT TODAY

THE OLYMPICS

- Trading out missiles for medals. Every two years, the winter and then summer Olympics, nations compete for bragging rights and flex their nationalism by sending athletes around the world to compete.
- Host nations are given the opportunity to flex their country's wealth and attract international visitors and viewing audiences for the spectacles.

WORLD CUP

- Soccer has always been a staple in European rivalries. During the World Cup, the nations from all over the world go head to head in non-violent combat.

WORLD'S FAIR

- The world's fair (or EXPO) is the Olympics of science and culture, and happens every five years. It is being hosted in Dubai, the world's most recent hub of international wealth and innovation from October 1, 2021 through March 2022.

ACTIVITY: TRANSFORMING HISTORY

Space dogs is a highly collaborative piece of theater. The show features actors who play their own instruments, projections, live feed cameras, puppets, dioramas, moveable set pieces and much more. The show takes a piece of history and adds all these elements to create this very unique multimedia experience. Now it is time for you to work together to create your own spin on a moment in history!

In groups (of 2-5 or in small groups) find and decide on a moment or period of history you'd like to explore. Each group will come up with a concept for ONE of the elements used in creating the show, from the list below. Collaborate with your team to create a cohesive concept! Be creative and imagine if there was nothing that's too impossible to achieve.

After deciding on the historical moment, your groups will select one of the categories below. You can choose how you will respond to the prompts. You can answer by using text descriptions, images, audio, drawings, or any combination of responses.

THE DIRECTION: Find a hero or central figures for the story. Whom will this story follow? What are the themes? What will the central conflict be? Whom is the show for? What is the tone or mood that the show will take? You can bullet point these, find other existing shows it would be similar to for reference, art that inspires it, etc.

THE WRITING: How do these characters speak? Are they poetic? Conversational? Direct? Is it a comedy? Are they very serious? How do they interact with their environment, each other and audience? Create dialogue between characters. You can write an example of an important scene, monologue, song or rap, that would take place at the climax of our story.

THE SET: What does the world look like? Are you keeping the set in the original time period or are you placing the show in a different context to say something about the themes? What elements can you include to help tell the story? Draw up or find reference images to create a vision board.

THE LIGHTING: What does the air of this world feel like? Is it hot? Cold? Does the fog linger in the morning? Is it dry? What colors will assist in the tone? Is the world violent? Peaceful? Sophisticated? Draw, color or create a mood board full of images to portray the types of lighting you want to explore.

THE COSTUMES: What are your characters wearing? Are they dressed accurately to the time period and location of the play? Does your character's costume change throughout their journey? Create a vision board for one of the characters. Draw, create or find reference images for what one of the characters could be wearing through the story.

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