



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION



GOVERNMENT
OF THE PRIMORSKY KRAI

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РОССИИ



PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

Programme to promote the art
of the theatre in the Russian Far East

VLADIVOSTOK 2026

October 3, 4

**Primorsky Stage
of the Mariinsky Theatre
(Great Hall)**

PENELOPE, OH PENELOPE

A collaboration between
the Sos Sargsyan Hamazgayin
State Theater (Armenia)
and Chekhov International
Theatre Festival (Russia)



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CHEKHOV INTERNATIONAL
THEATRE FESTIVAL

Playwright, direction and stage design –
SIMON ABKARIAN (France)

Music – **Tatiana Burel** (Russia)

Costume designer – **Tamara Baroian**

Cast:

Dinah – Honoured artist of Armenia **Narine Grigoryan**

Antaeus – **Narek Baghdasaryan**

Elias – **Varsham Gevorgyan**

Nuritsa – **Alla Sahakyan**

Odessa – **Tatev Hovakimyan**

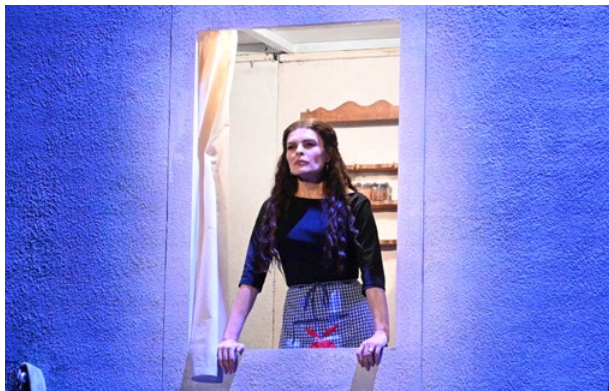
Theos – **Andranik Mikaelyan**

Sophia – **Milena Kazaryan**

Vanakan rock band

2 hours with intermission

The performance is in Armenian
with Russian subtitles



For French director and playwright of Armenian descent Simon Abkarian, the theme of family and war is deeply personal: his family's harmony was shattered by the Lebanese Civil War, after which they were never able to gather together again in one country, whatever country this could be.

"Penelope, Oh Penelope" is a new, unexpected, and original take on the story of Penelope, wife of Odysseus, King of Ithaca, and mother of Telemachus, one of the central characters in Homer's *Odyssey*. Throughout Greek mythology and culture, the name *Penelope* has always been associated with a strong female character and fidelity. In Simon Abkarian's version, Penelope exemplifies devotion not only to Odysseus, for whom she waits 20 years to return from the war, but also to the moral paradigm that is the center of her world. The play focuses on the struggle between two systems of values. Penelope embodies the value of family, loyalty to one's roots and origins, and the right to remain oneself. The opposite pole of the play is Antaeus, who keeps saying that Odysseus is dead and repeatedly proposes to the heroine not because of love for her, but out of a desire to marry the queen. This is a young predator, ready to step over the heads, and for whom there is nothing sacred in the world except material wealth and money.

A distinct theme of the play is Odysseus, who returns home, tired of war, and vows pacifism. The spirit of Anticlea, his deceased mother, plays a special role here, insisting that people should always be able to protect their world, otherwise it will collapse.

According to the canon of classicism, all the events of the play take place on a single day – Saturday. The characters of *Penelope, O Penelope* defend their truth and await Sunday – the day of spiritual resurrection.

The world premiere of the play took place as part of the XVII Chekhov International Theatre Festival in Moscow in 2025. The play features leading actors from the Hamazgayin Theatre, with the title role played by the theatre's artistic director, actress and director, Honored Artist of the Republic of Armenia Narine Grigoryan, known to festival audiences for her productions of *Boule de Suif* (Dumpling), *Buffalo*, and *Mumu*; the latter was a joint production of the Moscow Taganka Theatre and the Chekhov International Theatre Festival.

“In 2021, when our company made its debut at the Chekhov Festival, Simon Abkarian's *Electra* was presented as part of the festival program simultaneously with our production. We were proud to see our compatriot representing France, it was a pleasure to see his work which evoked a great desire to work with him... For me, one of the most important aspects of the project is that we are presenting Simon Abkarian the playwright. His dramaturgy is wonderful, epic and full of subtle psychological insight. Simon also introduced us to the French theater acting school – it was unexpected and incredibly interesting... We couldn't even imagine that audiences would love *Penelope* so much, but now we are confident that the production will have a long and interesting life.”

Narine Grigoryan

*Honored Artist of the Republic of Armenia,
Artistic Director of the Sos Sargsyan Hamazgayin Theater*

“*Penelope, Oh, Penelope* is a very personal story for me. The story of my mother, who waited seven years for my father to return from the war—there was no news from him. I fell deeply in love with the actors of the Hamazgayin Theater and tried to be interesting to them, to be filled with love.

For me, this production is our Armenian response to what stirs the soul of a person of any nationality... The soil for the theater of the future has been plowed, and it is up to us what grains we seed. What to write, what to stage – these are questions I constantly seek answers to. Just as a soldier defends the border, an artist should continue working under any circumstances.

Culture is a very important, if not the most important, phenomenon. And we must continue to defend it for the sake of today and tomorrow, because life never stops.”

Simon Abkarian

SIMON ABKARIAN

French actor, director, and playwright of Armenian descent. Born in France, he spent his childhood in Lebanon, and after the outbreak of the civil war, he moved to the United States. In Los Angeles, Abkarian joined the Armenian theater troupe under the direction of Gerald Parazian. In 1985, he returned to France and became an actor at Ariane



Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil. His work on stage has been recognized with several of the highest theater awards in France. In 2001, he won the Molière Award as Best Actor for his role in the play *Beast on the Moon* (*Une Bête sur la Lune*). In 2003, Abkarian made his directorial debut with William Shakespeare's tragedy *Titus Andronicus*. His production *Electra. The Lower Depths* (*Électre des bas-fonds*), in which he acted as playwright and director, brought him particular success. In 2020, at the 32nd Molière Awards, the play won the award as Best Performance in a State Theater, and Abkarian himself received prizes as Best Director and Best Living French-Language Author.

In film, he frequently collaborates with auteur directors such as Cédric Klapisch (*Everyone's Looking for His Cat*), Atom Egoyan (*Ararat*), Fatih Akin (*The Scar*), and Robert Guédiguian (*The Army of Crime*). His commitment to dramatic cinema is underscored by his role in the movie *Get: The Trial of Viviane Amsalem*. His participation in major international projects brought him worldwide recognition. One of his most celebrated roles was Alex Dimitrios in the James Bond film *Casino Royale*. He has appeared in Hollywood films such as *Zero Dark Thirty* and *Deliver Us from Evil*, as well as in genre films, from the action film *Overdrive* to dubbing the animated films *Persepolis* and *Zarafa*. In total, he has appeared in over 70 films. In May 2026, the Cannes International Film Festival premiered the first part of Antonin Baudry's large-scale duology, *De Gaulle: Tilting Iron*, in which Simon Abkarian plays the leading role.



SOS SARGSYAN HAMAZGAYIN STATE THEATER

Founded in 1991 by the outstanding Armenian actor, People's Artist of the USSR, and People's Artist of the Republic of Armenia, Sos Sargsyan. Under his leadership, in difficult times for Armenia and Armenian theater, the best directors and actors started staging performances at the theater. In 2000, Hamazgayin experienced a generational change – the troupe was joined by talented young graduates of S. Sargsyan's workshop, who today form the core of the theater and the pride of the Armenian stage. In 2003, the theater received state status. In 2015, following the passing of Sos Sargsyan, the Hamazgayin Theater was named after the master.

For thirty-five years, this theater company, with its unique theatrical style, performed on the stage of the State Institute of Theater and Cinema. In January of this year, it finally found its own home in the center of Yerevan.

Since 2021, the troupe has been led by the talented actress and director, Honored Artist of the Republic of Armenia Narine Grigoryan, who has managed to preserve established theatrical traditions while bringing a contemporary theatrical language and new forms to the stage.

The S. Sargsyan Hamazgayin Theatre has toured throughout the world, including Russia, France, Belgium, the USA, Canada, Syria, Iran, Lebanon, India, Tunisia, and other countries. It has participated in numerous international theater festivals, including the Chekhov International Theater Festival and the Pacific International Theater Festival with the play *Boule de Suif (Dumpling)*, directed by N. Grigoryan.

The productions of Hamazgayin Theatre have repeatedly won the *Artavazd* National Theater Award.



CHEKHOV INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

The Chekhov International Theatre Festival is one of the major events in Russia's cultural life. Founded in 1992 by the International Confederation of Theatre Unions, the Festival is held biennially and serves as a gateway for Russian audiences to the world of contemporary performing arts.

Over more than three decades, the Festival has grown into a remarkable panorama of world theatre, presenting 650 productions from 60 countries and showcasing the work of 460 distinguished directors and choreographers. Its activities extend far beyond Moscow. In partnership with its regional support foundation of the same name, the Festival regularly presents productions from its programmes in cities across Russia. To date, Festival productions have been seen by audiences in 30 Russian cities.

Co-production has become one of the Festival's key areas of activity. Forty-one international co-productions, created in collaboration with leading Russian and international theatre artists, have been presented at some of the world's most prestigious theatre festivals and venues, making a significant contribution to the international recognition of the Russian theatre tradition.

Today, the Chekhov International Theatre Festival continues to evolve while preserving the traditions established by its founder, Valery Shadrin, who served as its Director for more than 30 years. Since 2023, the Festival has been led by its General Director, Karina Tsaturova. Under her leadership, the Festival continues to strengthen international cultural cooperation, expand its global network of artistic partnerships, and maintain its position as one of the world's leading international theatre forums, bringing together outstanding theatre companies, directors, choreographers, and artists from across the globe.



**T H E A T R E
O F N A T I O N S**

artistic director of the theatre national
artist of Russia **Evgeny Mironov**

O R G A N I Z E R S

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