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Rozinsky Relives Childhood in Play

BY NINA DIAMOND PERRY
Special to the Tribune

In his new play, *The Great Musician*, Edward Rozinsky introduces us to a poor little boy in turn-of-the century Russia who wants to be a musician. A violinist, the great musician of the play's title, comes to the youngster in a dream and gives him philosophical advice, hope and encouragement.

Perhaps Rozinsky, too, had a dream like this, during his childhood in Odessa, Russia. It is certain, however, that *The Great Musician* represents another kind of dream for Rozinsky and his Chamber Theater, a new 200-seat professional children's theater in Coral Gables, which opened in January. Rozinsky the theater professor, playwright, director, producer and actor has wanted to run his own theater for almost as long as he can remember, he says, for the same reasons as any other artist. "There's so much to say," he explains. "When you work for other people you're limited to what they want to put on."

The Great Musician is a world-premiere, the first of Rozinsky's own plays to be produced at the Chamber Theater. It opened March 10 and runs through April 8 with a rather unusual cast. The only human being is the actor who plays the title role. The rest of the characters are portrayed by puppets, "rod puppets" to be exact, one of Russia's children's theater traditions that Rozinsky says "add meaning to the story." In this case, it's the "effect of a big man next to little puppets," he says, that stresses the dream experience of the young boy.

Rozinsky wrote *The Great Musician* 10 years ago, shortly after arriving in the U.S., a Jewish immigrant fleeing Russia. "I was inspired by people being able to express their feelings and religion," he recalls with awe. "I felt Jewish like never before."

Back in Odessa, where Rozinsky was born in 1941, being Jewish was more a matter of culture and tradition than religion. "We were not allowed to buy or own religious items, so we celebrated Chanukah without a menorah. The synagogue's kosher bakery would bake *matzah* for people who brought in their own flour, so we had *matzah* on Passover," he remembers. You could go to the synagogue — the one



synagogue in all of Odessa — but if you were noticed going a lot you'd risk being harassed by people at school or work. There was no formal Jewish education, and parents had to be careful when they taught their children.

Despite the turmoil of every day life, the Rozinskys were "a joyful family," he says. "They entertained themselves by singing and dancing." His father played the piano, and that side of the family, with its talented craftsmen and tailors, had quite an artistic streak. Rozinsky's father was a tailor, his mother graduated college as an English teacher and then worked as a secretary. At the age of 6, little Edward knew exactly what he'd do with his life. He entertained his family by doing Charlie Chaplin impressions, and they loved it. "That made me feel like I was doing something important," he remembers. "And the next year, when I was 7, I began taking dance lessons."

Rozinsky left Odessa in 1968 and went to Leningrad where he graduated in 1975 with a master's degree from the Leningrad Conservatory of Dramatic Arts. He worked in theater there

entertainment

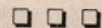


Playwright Edward Rozinsky

until he emigrated to New York in 1979. Then in 1983, he moved to Miami where he joined the faculty of the University of Miami's drama department. His parents and younger sister and her family are still in Odessa and have applied for refugee status in the U.S. Rozinsky, however, is no longer alone in America. His ex-wife and older son, Igor, 25, a graphic designer, were finally allowed to leave Russia six months ago. She's in New York, and Igor is here in Miami where he does the artwork for his father's Chamber Theater, studies at Miami Dade Community College and lives with Rozinsky, his second wife and their 5-year-old son.

It's been a demanding year for Rozinsky. "I don't live at home," he quips. "I live at the theater!" And he's still teaching, at UM, the New World School of the Arts, and the Coconut Grove Playhouse. With his Chamber Theater

now in full swing as a repertory company, with shows on rotating schedules, he looks to the future with plans for an International Children's Festival, more of his own plays and works by others including local playwrights, plus a desire to bring innovative children's theater to both children and adult audiences including classical fairytales of other cultures. Like his puppet child in *The Great Musician*, Edward Rozinsky, has a dream that he's determined to live.



The Great Musician, written and directed by Edward Rozinsky run March 10-April 8 at the Chamber Theater, 235 Alcazar Ave., Coral Gables. Phone: 444-2464. Performances on weekends, and available for bookings at schools. Tickets \$6 for kids, \$8 for adults. Group rates available.



RAUL RUBIERA / Miami Herald Staff

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By BEA MOSS
Herald Staff Writer

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The first production is a musical about the adventures of veterinarian *Doctor Ouch-It-Hurts*

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Time: All shows are at noon and 3 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

Call: 444-2464 for information.

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Future plays will include *The Sheepdog that Danced Ballet*, about a dog who goes to obedience school; *The Great Musician*, a tale of a young boy who dreams of becoming a great violinist; and *The Lottery Ticket*, a story of a poor tailor who dreams of a better life.

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LIFE STYLES



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The play is an adventure of the veterinarian, Doctor Ouch-It-Hurts, and his assistants, Vania, a dog, and Tania, a parrot. The action takes place in Africa, where they are all summoned by local monkeys who have been taken ill. This captivating and funny play of conflict between good and evil employs music, dance and mime.

THE SHEEPDOG THAT DANCED BALLET



This is a charming play about an old English sheepdog who has to go to obedience school because he misbehaves. While he is in class, he becomes bored and hears ballet music coming from the studio next door. The music touches his soul, and he longs to dance ballet. In the play he succeeds.



A musically gifted young boy from a poor family once heard a talented traveling musician playing his violin. The boy dreams of becoming a great violinist. He is visited the great traveling musician, who advises him on how to become a successful artist. The delightful story will be performed by puppets, with the exception of the great traveling musician, who will be played by a live actor.



This is a mimodrama play for a single actor and all events and circumstances are expressed with body movements and music. It tells the story of a poor tailor who dreams of a better life that could be his when he has sudden luck by winning the lottery. The reality that this is not to be, becomes evident, and the tailor is destined to resume his duties of patching clothes for all other poor people.



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Performances for birthday parties are also planned.

"This is not just a theater," Rozinsky said. "It's an institution for kids."





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