

The Nose

A One-Act Musical for Family Audiences
Based on the story by Nikolai Gogol

Book, Music and Lyrics by
Kit Goldstein Grant

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CHARACTERS:

3 men/ 2 women

Man 1

... KOVALYOV. 30s or 40s, Tenor (B2-A4). A mid-level civil servant. Overly serious, yet still earnest. Insecure but ambitious.

Man 2

... CHIEF OF POLICE. 30s to 50s, Baritone/Tenor (C#3-E4), Any Ethnicity. A round, red-faced, thickly-bearded fellow. Cheerfully and unselfconsciously corrupt.

... OLGA'S SERVANT. 20 – 70.

... BORIS, a peasant. 20 – 70.

Man 3

... INSKIWINSKI, a barber. 20 – 50.

... THE NOSE. 30s to 40s, Tenor (B2-E4). A person-sized nose. Aristocratic and nasal. Pompous and superior.

... CLERK. Takes advertisements in a newspaper office. Has seen it all. 40s to 70s.

... DOCTOR. A city doctor with roots in the provinces. 20s to 70s.

Woman 1

... MATROYSHKA. 20s to 30s, Alto/Mezzo (G#3-E5). A spirited young servant. Sensible yet mysterious, and sometimes sarcastic. A tough cookie, but vulnerable.

... RADINKA. A peasant. Broad and coarse. 50s to 70s.

Woman 2

... OLGA BABALOVNA YANKOVA. 110, Alto/Soprano(C#4-B4). Strong character actress needed. A wealthy bad-tempered lady.

... IVAN, a thief. Any age.

Notes:

- Other doublings may be possible at the discretion of the director.
- All roles may be cast as any ethnicity.

Developmental History:

The Nose premiered at the Midtown International Theatre Festival in New York in August 2016, where it was nominated for Best Playwright (Musical).

It has since been seen at the Master Theater in Brooklyn in February 2017, the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa in Summer 2017, The Drama Factory in Cape Town, South Africa in Fall 2017, and the Artscape Theatre Centre in Cape Town, South Africa in December 2018.

A staged reading featuring Drama Desk award-winner Graham Stevens in the title role was produced on October 25, 2015, at the National Opera Center in New York, NY. *The Nose* has also had developmental readings at Theater Resources Unlimited and The Playground Experiment.

Synopsis

Petty bureaucrat Kovalyov has always prided himself on his good looks and laughed at disfigurement in others, but his tune changes when his own nose up and runs away! Disguising itself as a higher ranking bureaucrat with fancy uniform and plumed hat, his nose sets out on a mad dash through Petersburg, and Kovalyov finds that whatever the consequences, he must follow his nose.

TIME & ACTION:

The 1830s. St. Petersburg, Russia.

SETTINGS:

- The Street
- Kovalyov's Room
- Olga's Sitting Room
- A Newspaper Office
- A Doctor's Office
- The Chief of Police's Sitting Room

MUSICAL NUMBERS

00.5 "OVERTURE"	Instrumental
01 "THE STRANGEST THINGS I"	Matroyshka & Company
02 "A PIMPLE ON HIS NOSE"	Inskiwinski, Kovalyov, Police Chief & Matroyshka
03 "THE RUNG"	Kovalyov
06 "THE RUNG [REPRISE]"	Kovalyov
06a "THE ESCAPE" – Underscoring	Instrumental
07 "THE STRANGEST THINGS II"	Matroyshka
08 "WHERE'S MY NOSE?"	Kovalyov & Matroyshka
09 "THE STRANGEST THINGS III"	Matroyshka
10 "ISN'T IT ROMANTIC?"	Nose & Olga
11 "I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY"	Kovalyov & Nose
12 "THE STRANGEST THINGS IV"	Matroyshka
12a "THE CLERK VAMP [Underscoring]"	Instrumental
13 "THE STRANGEST THINGS V"	Matroyshka
14 "TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP [Intro]"	Doctor
15 "TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP"	Doctor & Boris
16 "HAVE YOU HEARD/COMPARED TO PAREE"	Company
17 "BOXES OF SUGAR"	Police Chief & Nose
18 "SMALL FISH"	Kovalyov
19 "DON'T YOU LAUGH"	Matroyshka
20 "I AM KOVALYOV"	Kovalyov & Matroyshka
20a "I AM KOVALYOV [Fight Music]"	Instrumental
21 "THE STRANGEST THINGS [FINALE]"	Company
22 "BOWS"	Company
23 "EXIT MUSIC"	Instrumental

SETUP: 18th century Russia. Kovalyov is a government clerk who thinks a lot of himself and is trying to rise in the ranks – until his nose runs away. It's become a person-sized nose, and is gallivanting all over Petersburg. He is desperately trying to get it back.

SCENE 5

(A newspaper office, with a desk and a bench against one wall. At one end of the bench sits BORIS, holding a boot sole and at the other end, IVAN, holding a boot without a sole. MATROYSHKA joins the scene as RADINKA, and sits in the middle of the others with a box at her feet. A bespectacled CLERK is sitting behind the desk.)

(MUSIC: 12a Clerk Vamp)

(The CLERK takes a brown paper parcel from below the counter, sets it down on the desk, and unwraps it with relish. From it, HE takes out a cucumber. HE selects a saltshaker, rubs his hands with glee, and begins salting the cucumber. HE bites it and chews noisily. KOVALYOV enters, still holding the handkerchief over his face.)

KOVALYOV

(Loudly)

Who takes the advertisements here?

(The CLERK looks up. More quietly)

Oh, ah, good morning. I need to place an advertisement in your newspaper.

CLERK

Not so fast, my little troika. All those people want to publish advertisements, too. You'll have to wait your turn.

(The CLERK lifts the cucumber to his mouth, and takes a big bite. It makes a loud crunching noise. HE holds the bitten end out to KOVALYOV.)

Salted cucumber?

KOVALYOV

(Hastily.)

No thank you.

(The CLERK takes another bite of cucumber, and sits happily chewing it at length. (KOVALYOV reluctantly goes to the bench. HE finds no good spot. HE tries to go to a chair near the CLERK, but the CLERK turns him away. For the second time, KOVALYOV goes to the bench. HE sits in the only available place, between BORIS and RADINKA.)

BORIS

(Indicating KOVALYOV's handkerchief.)

So, I see you have come prepared for the stink here.

KOVALYOV

Stink? Does something stink?

BORIS

Does something stink, he says?!

(BORIS, IVAN and RADINKA laugh.)

BORIS

What are you advertising for, you with the cold in your nose?

KOVALYOV

Nose? Oh, er, yes. I mean, no. I am advertising for – well, it's confidential.

BORIS

A secret, eh? Me, I am looking for the rest of my boot.

KOVALYOV

Your boot?

BORIS

Yes. Some scoundrel stole my boot, and only left me the sole.

(HE holds up the sole, right in KOVALYOV's face. KOVALYOV flinches and turns away.)

KOVALYOV

And you?

IVAN

I came across this wonderful boot, which I am selling for almost nothing. It's a fine, well-made boot, in perfect condition – except that it's missing a sole. Only fifty kopeks!

BORIS

That *is* a fine boot.

IVAN

Thank you. That is a lovely sole.

KOVALYOV

(To RADINKA.)

And what is in the box?

RADINKA

Can't you smell it? I'm selling old Snortka here!
(SHE pats the box.)

KOVALYOV

And Snortka is...

RADINKA

He can't smell Snortka!
(SHE cackles with laughter.)
You must have an awful cold in the head, mister, if you can't smell a pig!

KOVALYOV

(Springing up.)

A pig!

RADINKA

A pig! You know, oink oink!
(SHE grunts like a pig.)
And she'd just been rolling around in the mud before I put her in the box.

(KOVALYOV runs up to the desk.)

KOVALYOV

Listen... I must demand... I'm a high government official! - I am not accustomed to – did you know she had a pig?

CLERK

One moment!

(HE pops the rest of the cucumber in his mouth.)

You were saying?

KOVALYOV

This is... this is an emergency – I simply cannot wait any longer, or the scoundrel may escape the city for good, and then how should I ever smell a pig again?

CLERK

And who is the scoundrel? Is it a servant of yours?

KOVALYOV

A servant? That wouldn't be half so bad. No, it's my *nose* that's gone!

CLERK

Hm, strange name. And how much money did this Mr. Nose steal?

KOVALYOV

Not "Mr. Nose" - it's my own nose that's missing! How can I rise in the ranks without such a prominent part of my body? It would be all right if I were a nobody, but I'm too important to wander around without any nose at all – it wouldn't be proper!

CLERK

(Flatly.)

I can't print your advertisement.

KOVALYOV

What? Why not?

CLERK

Because it's simply too absurd. And we print enough lies in our paper already...

KOVALYOV

You think this is false? Do you think I'm *lying*? If you insist, I will *show* you.

CLERK

Why put yourself out?

(Curiosity getting the better of him.)

All the same, if you don't mind...

(KOVALYOV, attempting to avoid being seen by the curious stares of the others in the room, removes his handkerchief.)

CLERK

It's perfectly flat, like a freshly fried pancake.

(Looking closely through his spectacles.)

Really... really... really... flat.

(KOVALYOV puts the handkerchief back.)

KOVALYOV

So now you can't possibly refuse to print the advertisement. Thank you so much, and it's been a real pleasure meeting you.

(HE starts to leave.)

CLERK

Still can't print it.

KOVALYOV

What? After I showed you -?

CLERK

Too absurd. Nobody would believe it. Better to go see a doctor about it, see if he can fix you up.

KOVALYOV

But I want my nose!

CLERK

(Apologetic, HE retrieves another cucumber from under the desk and holds it out to KOVALYOV.)

I am so sorry, sir, to not have been able to assist you further. Salted cucumber?

KOVALYOV

(With dignity.)

I prefer to be addressed as "your honor."

(Getting the final word.)

And *no thank you*.

(HE storms out. BORIS looks at IVAN.)

BORIS

You know, that really is a fine boot. How much?

IVAN

One hundred kopeks.

(HE hands IVAN money. IVAN exits.)

BORIS

Why it even already has my initials written on the back!

(HE sighs in contentment, hugging boot and sole. It suddenly dawns on him.)

MY BOOT!

(Ad lib as BORIS runs out after IVAN. The set begins to change to a DOCTOR's office. MATROYSHKA enters.)

(MUSIC: 13 THE STRANGEST THINGS V)

MATROYSHKA

THE STRANGEST THINGS ARE RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYE-YI-YIES
BUT TO PRINT THEM IN THE PAPER LOOKS LIKE LIE-YI-YIES.
WHEN A CLERK WILL EAT A CUCUMBER AND COOLLY TELL YOU
"NO,"
THEN IT'S OFF TO THE DOCTOR YOU GO.

YOU SEE A DOCTOR, I THINK IT'S UNDERSTOOD
THAT SMELL OR SIGHT OFF,
HE'LL HELP YOU RIGHT OFF -
THAT IS IF THE PHYSICIAN IS GOOD...

(MATROYSHKA exits, the DOCTOR enters, and the next scene
begins.)

SCENE 6

(A doctor's office. A DOCTOR enters as the set changes, brushing his teeth and humming the chorus of "TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP.")

(MUSIC: 14 TURPENTINE, LARD AND SOAP [INTRO])

(HE goes to a basin which has appeared, and, in time with the last note of the music, spits. BORIS enters, panting and bent over, clutching his boot and sole.)

BORIS

Doctor, I need your help. I was eating cucumbers – salted cucumbers – and then I had to go running to give someone a black eye - and now I feel like I'm about to be sick to my stomach.

DOCTOR

Have you tried rubbing turpentine on it?

BORIS

On my stomach? Aren't you going to give me drops?

DOCTOR

You want drops, go to the chemist! Me, I know better.

(HE sits BORIS down in a chair.)

(MUSIC: 15 TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP)

DOCTOR (CONT'D.)

THERE WERE PLENTY OF USEFUL THINGS
I LEARNED WHILE AT MEDICAL SCHOOL
BUT WHEN I WANT TO CRUSH A
DISEASE, HERE IN RUSSIA,
I FOLLOW BABUSHKA'S RULE:

(During the chorus, the DOCTOR collects turpentine, lard and two boxes of soap, and thrusts them into the BORIS's unwilling arms. BORIS is forced to drop his boot.)

TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!
TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!
THE THREE THINGS TO TRY WHEN YOU'VE GIVEN UP HOPE:
ARE TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!

IF YOU SWALLOWED YOUR OYSTERS RAW

BORIS

It was actually cucumbers –

DOCTOR (CONT'D.)
AND YOUR STOMACH YOU'RE LIKELY TO LOSE

BORIS

Well, that part is true enough.

DOCTOR (CONT'D.)
THERE ISN'T A QUESTION:
TO CURE INDIGESTION
THERE'S ONLY THREE THINGS TO USE:

(HE begins slathering BORIS's stomach with the three substances with one hand.)

TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!
TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!
THE THREE THINGS TO TRY WHEN YOU'VE GIVEN UP HOPE:
ARE TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!

(Clutching turpentine, lard and soap, BORIS exits. The DOCTOR examines the boot and sole BORIS left behind, then shrugs and hangs them up in his cabinet. KOVALYOV enters.)

KOVALYOV

Doctor, I have come to you because I have lost my nose.

DOCTOR

Sit in the chair!

(HE approaches KOVALYOV, and looks at the empty space on his face. HE lifts KOVALYOV's chin, lowers his chin, and gives him a flick of the fingers where his nose was.)

KOVALYOV

Ow!

DOCTOR

Don't wiggle so! Turn right!

(KOVALYOV turns his head right.)

DOCTOR

Turn left!

(KOVALYOV turns his head to the left.)

DOCTOR

Very good.

(The DOCTOR again flicks his fingers where KOVALYOV's nose was.)

KOVALYOV

OW! ... Well, Doctor?

DOCTOR

I have discovered the problem. You have lost your nose.

(The DOCTOR takes two toothbrushes from his pocket, carefully selects one, and begins brushing his teeth again.)

KOVALYOV

Can't you help me? You must have some extra noses in jars. Even if you could just paste one on –

DOCTOR

(Pausing his brushing)

I'm saving those. But don't worry – I have the remedy for you:

(The music starts up again.)

IF YOUR NOSE WENT AND WALKED AWAY
THEN EV-E-RY MOMENT IS CRUC.*
SO QUELL ALL YOUR URGES
FOR PHYSIC AND PURGES:
I'VE GOT A UNIQUE SOLUT.†

(The DOCTOR begins brushing his teeth with two brushes at once,
and sings indistinctly.)

DOCTOR

TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!

KOVALYOV

What is it? What is the solution?

DOCTOR

(Indicating the ingredients with his elbows, while brushing.)

TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!

KOVALYOV

I still don't understand you.

DOCTOR

(Gargling, pretty much incomprehensible.)

THE THREE THINGS TO TRY WHEN YOU'VE GIVEN UP HOPE:
ARE TURPENTINE, LARD, AND SOAP!

(Scene/Song continue – End of Excerpt.)

* As in "crucial"

† As in "solution."