

EDUCATION RESOURCE



EVGENY GRISHKOVETS

A H+SS L T SECONDARY/WACE

FAREWELL TO PAPER

**PERTH
FESTIVAL**

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FAREWELL TO PAPER

Russia

Drama

About the performance

Remember a life without smartphones or tablets? When mail meant a handwritten letter and you planned a trip with a map not an app? We're saying goodbye to paper in our lives and it's happening so fast we're not stopping to think about what it actually means.

Enter Russian poet, playwright and theatre director Evgeny Grishkovets with his charming one-man show that gives paper, and everything it represents, a proper send off.

Sitting at a desk surrounded by an old, ramshackle typewriter, books and stacks of paper Grishkovets delivers a passionate and hilarious monologue about the unavoidable disappearance of words such as 'telegram' or 'manuscript'. He recalls childhood memories that would not have happened without ink stains or blotting paper and savours feelings that only come with handling a globe or glimpsing the recognisable handwriting of a loved one.

A tender tribute to once everyday things that are quickly becoming history, *Farewell to Paper* is a funny and poignant lament of the digital age.

Cast and Crew

Artist Evgeny Grishkovets

Tour Director Irina Yutkina

Administrator Alina Lunyova

Technical Director Maksim Chepil

Stage Manager Aleksandr Gryzenkov

Lighting Director Konstantin Vyuev

Sound Director Aleksandra Viueva

Translator & Live Interpreter Kyle Wilson

About the performer

Evgeny Grishkovets

Author, director and actor Evgeny Grishkovets was born in Kemerovo, Russia. After studying philology at Kemerovskiy State University he spent three years in the army, serving in the Pacific Fleet. He returned to University and while there performed in student pantomime theatre and took part in various theatre festivals. In 1990 he established independent theatre company Lozha, which was founded on the principle of collective improvisation. The company staged performances of several of his works over the next eight years, before he moved and settled in Kaliningrad. In 1999 Grishkovets staged his first solo performance *How I Ate a Dog*. The show was awarded a Golden Mask (Russian theatre award) for Innovation and the Critics Prize in 2000. More awards followed for subsequent productions, many of which have toured Russia and festivals internationally. Grishkovets has published books (with one due out this year) that have been translated into 12 languages and he is also well-known for his musical projects *Grishkovets and Bigoudi* (2003 – 2011) and *Grishkovets and Mgzavrebi* (2012 – to the present).

Themes

Sustainability: Sustainable patterns of living meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Do we live in a sustainable world?

Technology and change: What impact has the rapid pace of technological advancement had on our everyday lives? Who has been impacted the most? The least? Why?

Key ideas to explore with students

Identity: The time in which we live shapes our identity as individuals and communities. Explore this concept on a personal level: what experiences have particularly impacted your idea of self? How does this impact your

interactions with others? Extend this thinking out to consider your community. How is community similarly shaped by experience?

Impact of 'progress': Consider this quote from environmental analyst Lester Brown:

The pace of change in our world is speeding up, accelerating to the point where it threatens to overwhelm the management capacity of political leaders. This acceleration of history comes not only from advancing technology, but also from unprecedented world population growth, even faster economic growth, and the increasingly frequent collisions between expanding human demands and the limits of the earth's natural systems.

What does he mean about the 'acceleration of history'? Do you agree? Does the impact of change outweigh the benefit? If so, what can be done?

Language and meaning: Evgeny Grishkovets suggests below that the words 'forever', and 'never' are very strong words in Russian. What do you think he means by this? What are 'strong' words in English? Think about this concept more broadly – what impact does language have on culture and, in turn, on individual experience?

An excerpt from Farewell to Paper

The Russian language has two very strong words. Of course, other languages have them too. No language can get by without them. But I don't know other languages...I do speak some English, but badly. And anyway, I think in Russian. So for me it's in Russian that these words resound with maximum force.

The words are: 'forever', and 'never'.

Actually, one has the naïve sense that 'forever' is somehow -- good, it's gladdening, it inspires hope; whereas 'never' is unsettling, it's off-putting, a dead-end. And yet these words can easily reverse their roles, in any context and in any phrase. Take for instance: 'they met, never to part'; or 'they parted, forever'. So, there you have it: in this case 'never' is good, hopeful – while it's 'forever' that's upsetting, off-putting.

But these words, both of them, always convey something disturbing. They imply time without end, and that disturbs us, we who face an end. Because we're transient we can't fathom or accept infinity. Inherent in those two words is our mortality. If we apply them to our own lives, 'never' in effect means 'never in our lifetime'; while 'forever' means 'unto death'. And that's disturbing.

Note from Evgeny Grishkovets

In many ways this show is interwoven with the process not only of recollection, but also of focusing on epochs that I can't recall, because I didn't live in them. I strive to discern in my life today, in the day-to-day life around me, the signs of times past, or of times that are passing, with which people of my generation do not, for various reasons, wish to part, things that are utterly incomprehensible to anyone younger than us by fifteen to twenty years – not to mention children.

Suddenly, with crisp clarity, I perceived our times as a period of terrifying incoherence; or, to put it more simply, of confusion between the echoes, people, habits, traditions and rules of the twentieth century on the one hand, and on the other, all that is new and distinctly contemporary, and belongs to the twenty-first century.

As I worked on this show, I had an acute sense of those things with which we shall inevitably and very soon part, never to see them again. That to which humanity grew accustomed, with which it has lived for centuries, for millennia even, with which we were born, and perceived as immutable, will in the very near future, in our lifetime for sure, disappear without trace. But I don't wish to speak of this in a tragic tone, because there is no great tragedy...Perhaps there is nothing tragic at all...Or maybe I'm mistaken, and we face not just a tragedy but a grave calamity. I don't know. And I am convinced firmly that no-one knows.

No-one knows what will take the place of our disappearing traditions, our disappearing way of life, the rules and norms of our behaviour that are changing. That's probably why I feel so deep a desire to revisit books I read long ago, to cast about in my memories for the big and the small events, but, above all, for the significant ones; to recall the faces of those who, really, constitute my experience of life. The faces of those who, by their presence in and their influence on my life, persuaded me, and still persuade me, that this show had to be completed, that this tale had to be told, that all of this is not in vain...'

Activity: Letters of Farewell

In this rapidly changing world, what will you miss?
Consider what you would miss if the world keeps changing.

Inspired by *Farewell to Paper*, we're inviting Western Australian students to pen a letter to 'What I will miss'.

Remember a life without smartphones or tablets? When mail meant a handwritten letter and you planned a trip with a map not an app? We're saying goodbye to paper in our lives and it's happening so fast we're not stopping to think about its significance.

Inspired by this humorous lament for a tactile, sensory world that is lost, Evgeny Grishkovets' *Farewell to Paper* gives paper, and everything it represents, a proper send off.

Put pen to paper and hand write an old-fashioned letter to 'What I will miss'. Send it to us at Perth Festival – in an envelope, with a stamp! Our postal address is:

Perth Festival Letters of Farewell
M418 . The University of Western Australia
3 Crawley Ave . Crawley WA 6009

The letters received will be curated, collated and displayed during Perth Festival 2018 as a record of our changing world and a tribute to the things we still value.

Resources

https://www.rbth.com/arts/literature/2017/02/20/grishkovets-sailor-writer-actor_706156