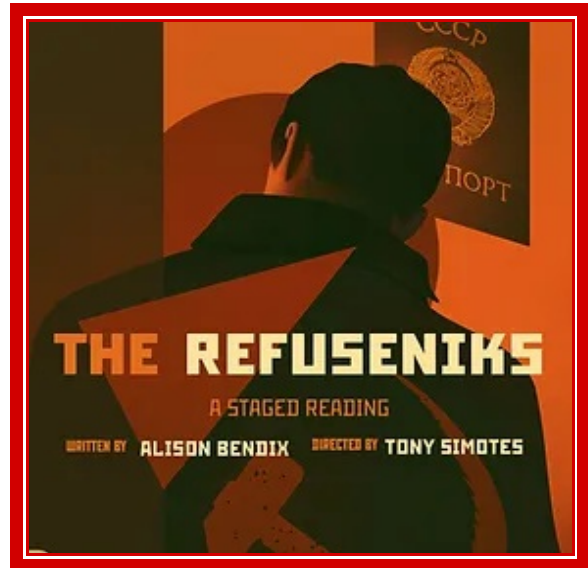


The Adams Theatre, Adams, MA

The Refuseniks (a staged reading), by Alison Bendix. Directed by Tony Simotes.
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“You can have one visa.”

It is rare for me to review a reading so this is not exactly a review but more a comment on an event that brought so many artists back together for the first time in eight years, and in the still under development roof of The Adams Theatre on Park Street in Adams, Massachusetts. Under the fine direction of Tony Simotes, founding member, and former artistic director, of Lenox’s Shakespeare and Company a troupe of eleven players performed a staged reading of a play by Alison Bendix, related in some way to actor William Bendix. Bendix’s play, in two long acts, deals with a world-class physicist, Yuri Alexandrov, turned heroic freedom-activist leader in Moscow in 1978.



He battles the Soviet regime and his devious KGB handler in his quest for exit visas for dissidents, including his own family, to emigrate from Russia. Refused permission to leave the country, they are known to one and all as “refuseniks.” He endangers his Jewish family and followers as his bold, courageous scheme leads him to an agonizing choice that causes him to face life-imprisonment and death. Simotes has chosen many of his former cohorts from Shakespeare to take on leading roles.

Rocco Sisto played Yuri Alexandrov; Annette Miller played his ancient mother; Lynn Silver was his wife, Leya; their son Ari was played by Elliot Trainor. Inhabiting other roles in this reading were Ryan Winkles as Dmitri Melygin, Alexander Soronovsky as Viktor Gitelson, Taube Brahm as Riva Gitelson, Greg Boover as Sergei Petrov, Caroline Calkins as Natalya Halkin, Jonathan Croy as 1st Militia and Christopher Beaulieu as 2nd Militia.

Simotes moved his cast on, off and around the stage with ease and clarity. Music stands downstage and chairs upstage, along with a few curious projections by Joe Wheaton, made the production. Original music and sound were created by Sovronksky. It was a slightly more elaborate and professional staged reading than many I’ve attended.

It’s an interesting play and a fabulous company, well worth the drive to Adams and the time spent in this soon-to-be wonderful theater makes it even better I’m glad I went to see it.

+ 08/19/2024 +

The Refuseniks has one more performance at The Adams Theatre, Sunday, August 11 at 12:00 noon.