

## Troyanovsky translates language of physicality for Chinese theater

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newwave@tulane.edu

When Dmitry Troyanovsky, assistant professor of [theater](#) at Tulane University, spent this summer in China directing a production of *The King Stag* at the Shanghai Theater Academy, his most formidable obstacle was no barrier of language. It was a box of chocolates.



Chaos, comedy and circus come together in *The King Stag*, produced in China this summer at the Shanghai Theater Academy and directed by Dmitry Troyanovsky of Tulane. (Photo from Dmitry Troyanovsky)

One character in the play is portrayed with a candy-eating motif. However, the actress struggled with the role because she could not conceptualize a box of chocolates.

"We take it for granted that everyone in the United States has access to candy in a box," Troyanovsky says.

He spent the past two months as a director in a country that he terms "tremendously hungry for the arts."

"China was such a closed society for so many years that they really want to see

things, produce things, have new experiences,” he says. “They feel like they missed decades of economic and cultural development, and they're trying to catch up.”

This desire for creativity resulted in the adoption of a play that is a difficult sell in the United States due to its expensive production and large cast requirements, Troyanovsky says. *The King Stag*, written by Carlo Gozzi in 1762, fits into a genre of improvisational street theater called commedia dell'arte that was traditionally performed by itinerant players who doubled as clowns and acrobats.

*The King Stag* is a tour de force of spellbinding magic and whimsicality. The plot is a love triangle: Prince Deramo is transformed into a stag while his romantic rival takes the prince's body to woo the object of their mutual affections. Chaos, comedy and circus ensue.

The play was such a hit with adults and children alike that the Children's Theater in Shanghai has adopted the production for next year.

“We were not expecting it, but obviously the elements of magic and circus and colors and the fairy-tale plot would be appropriate to children as well,” Troyanovsky says.

*Johanna Gretschel is a Tulane alumna with bachelor's (2012) and master's (2013) degrees in English.*