

# Vladimir Pliss

Playwright

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## BIO

Vladimir Pliss is a contemporary playwright writing in Russian. He was born and previously worked in Russia, where he collaborated with theatre institutions as a sound designer, theatrical composer, and head of music departments. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, he relocated to Israel, where he has been based for the past several years.

Vladimir Pliss is the author of five plays. Three of them form a metatheatrical trilogy (*THE HERITAGE*, *THE READING*, *DOLLS*), while the other two constitute a post-satirical diptych about succession (*THE CHASE*, *THE POST*). Although conceptually interconnected, each play is dramaturgically autonomous and intended for independent production.

## **AUTHOR'S STATEMENT**

I regard my five plays as a mechanism in which each element functions autonomously while simultaneously interacting with the others: they do not form a narrative cycle but constitute a unified authorial system of interpreting existence.

My five plays form a unified conceptual body of work that reflects my personal perspective on contemporary social and theatrical processes. I am interested in examining how a person who finds themselves inside a construction created by someone else — cultural, political, theatrical or ritual — becomes subject to how this construction governs their perception. This is why I work with metatheatre, absurdism, tragicomedy, postsatire and mechanisms of substitution.

My plays include a puppet theatre, a chamber stage, a French mid-20th-century narrative, a post-Russian reality, a Finnish forest lake — however, these locations are not primary; they are facets of a contemplative process in which reality and performance become indistinguishable unless clarified by the narrator.

My plays are not a political statement but an exploration of my personal perception. I would describe these five plays as five autonomous yet interconnected attempts to demonstrate how the structure of authorial contemplation operates, collapses and arises again.

## LOGLINES

### *Metatheatrical Trilogy*

**THE HERITAGE** — A chamber drama about three women and one man who inherit a small café, and the consequences of their attempt to divide what has fallen to them.

**THE READING** — A metatheatrical drama about a rehearsal that turns into a confrontation with violence and power, erasing the line between stage and reality and reconstructing it.

**DOLLS** — A tragic farce about a puppet theatre that cannot withstand reality — and a reality that cannot withstand the puppet theatre.

### *Post-satirical Diptych*

**THE CHASE** — A parabolic post-satire about a journey where every encounter reflects human fears and prejudices, and any interaction becomes a trial before inevitable death.

**THE POST** — An absurdist comedic structure about succession, where a role is passed from a worn bearer to a new one, and a chain of duties and rituals becomes the only possible form of existence.

## SYNOPSIS

### THE READING

The action takes place in a post-Russian reality on New Year's Eve: tanks stand in the streets, a curfew is in force, and explosions, checkpoints, and raids have become part of daily life. A theatre company gathers for a reading of *The Heritage*. Tensions, secrets and old ties surface. The sound engineer is drunk, actors are late and unprepared, the director breaks down. A "moral-sexual enforcement commission" invades the rehearsal, turning it into a deadly farce. Reality and stage collapse into each other until it is revealed that this is a dress rehearsal of an export production for a Finnish festival. The final scene takes place on a Finnish lake at night, where two elderly actors sit in a boat and speak quietly about life.

### THE HERITAGE

In a small French port café of the mid-20th century, the owner, Jean-Paul Dior, has committed suicide due to illness. His will leaves the café, the apartment and the money to four people: Jacques the worker, Ellen the young shop assistant, Sophie the estranged daughter, and Madame Fresier, an older woman who cared for him. Three women and one man gather to decide what to do next. Grievances, unspoken tensions, hidden ties and painful memories emerge. The tension escalates into a sudden act of violence in which the man is killed. The three women wrap Jacques's body in a rug and throw it into the sea.

### DOLLS

In a children's puppet theatre in St Petersburg, the elderly director Afrikan Fyodorovich and the young actress Natasha rehearse a Pushkin-based production. Lack of staff, unfinished props, and the departure of the lead actor to Finland with a production of *The Reading* drive the director to cruelty and rage. Natasha has a three-year-old mute daughter; Afrikan Fyodorovich has a son in emigration. Three armed addicts invade, take them hostage and issue absurd demands. A negotiator disguised as a priest enters; snipers eliminate the criminals. The director dies of a heart attack; Natasha survives. At home she drinks heavily, hears her daughter crying, goes to the child, then returns with a pillow and — cradling it — falls asleep.

## **THE CHASE**

A butcher and his apprentice lose a prize-winning pig destined for the Festival of Repose. Their search becomes an allegorical journey through the City, meeting figures reflecting fear, vice and prejudice projected onto the “unclean” animal. They meet the Observer, the apprentice’s father, who explains that his horse, startled by the pig, bolted, fell into a pit, was fatally injured and had to be shot. Learning the apprentice released the pig, he beats him and proposes a scheme. The Master and Observer go drinking; the apprentice fetches tools. Final image: he drags sleds with grey sacks into the snowy emptiness.

## **THE POST**

At a guarded facility called “the post,” the First prepares to hand over his shift to the Second. The Chief — a female voice — gives orders and instructions. The Second arrives; the First trains him in duties and rituals. A housekeeper, a chronicler and couriers appear. The First orders the Second to take a weapon. At the grave, he commands “fire.” The Second shoots him and covers the body. The chronicler records the event. The new First returns to open the next shift.