

Though I am not fluent, I can speak, understand, sing, dance a little, and write in Russian. From age 7 to 17 I studied at a summer Russian language and culture immersion camp with students from around the country in Minnesota through the Concordia Village Language Programs. I cherish these unforgettable life changing summers that have played a vital role in making me who I am as an artist, actor, student, woman and dialect coach. The program included various activities and “daily life” components in which we embraced the Russian culture 24/7. Our teachers were a mix of ex pats (Russian Jewish teachers and other teachers from top US schools) and American teachers studying/teaching at the Blake Schools, Andover, Harvard, Oberlin and Middlebury, etc. Our teachers also served as our cabin counselors or “mamas” and “papas”. We lived in cabins whose addresses were famous dates in Russian history (October, 1917) and named after Russian cities - large, small, existing and pre-existing (Novgorod, St Petersburg, Moscow, Riga, Volgograd, Leningrad, etc). We gathered in “families” (to learn about patronymics, etc.) named after famous Russian leaders, composers, characters, artists and writers (Chekhov, Turgenev, Vysotsky, Andropov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Pushkin, etc.) and learned about their lives, works, struggles through discussions and performances.

We acted out The Siege of Leningrad, scenes from Chekhov and Tolstoy, and portrayed characters from the Russian Revolution and Solzhenitsyn! We participated in many Russian holidays and even used Russian money to buy our chocolate and matryoshka dolls. We survived all the lines one endured in the Former Soviet Union to finally buy a little something which we had to purchase in Russian, of course.

We learned Russian folk songs, ate Russian food, sang drinking songs (yes, at 11!), embraced cultural traditions and dances in addition to studying the language and taking exams that allowed many to skip levels of Russian in HS and college. The program culminated in a 3 week peace trip to Russia (December 1988- January 1989) which ended in a homestay in Novosibirsk with a family. It has been such a gift to share so much of what I discovered there and since with such gifted actors and killer productions.

As a side note, a few years after I had attended these life changing intensives I learned that my real great grandfather was Jewish and from Belarus. I didn't grow up Jewish or aware of any Russian heritage. It was so beautiful and meaningful to discover and piece together that these sounds and music, the rhythms, the food, the Russian essence and more are a part of my history, blood, bones and soul.

In undergrad, I majored in Dramatic Arts/Acting Track and minored in Russian Language at Macalester College. During that time and since then I have played many Russian parts in theatre and coached the Russian dialects for individual actors, and productions for Theater J, Adventure Theatre MTC, Washington Shakespeare Company, The Actors Salon in Washington, DC and for the University of Maryland's Graduate Opera program in College Park, MD.

I also have coached the Russian dialect (and actual Russian and a Russian song) for Lars Mikkelsen/VIKTOR PETROV (a Danish actor) for Netflix's "House of Cards" in seasons 3, 4 and 5. I coached the accent adjustments for Russian actor (though now a US citizen) Alexander Sokovikov for 5 episodes to sound less Russian and more cosmopolitan/westernized/educated/traveled, as his character was an ambassador. I also assisted the show runner Beau Willimon and Writer Tian Jun Gun with recordings of the Russian chants for a scene, made recordings, rehearsed and cast the 3 BG actors who played Russian reporters and asked questions in Russian in an episode directed by James Foley, taught and coached 3 principal actors a Russian song for a scene in Chapter 29, assisted the Art Department in confirming translations for signage in a few scenes set in Russia during season 5, arranged the translations of a few scenes with my Russian collaborators Michael Idov and Ilya Katsnelson and provided resources and coached Kevin Spacey during his ADR when his character/FRANCIS UNDERWOOD was supposed to speak a little rough Russian. During Season 3, I also was cast to do principal work as RUSSIAN WOMAN in the Russian delegation for a few weeks and had a little scene (which I helped to write) with Reed Birney. And most recently I was cast as ANDOLOV'S EX-WIFE in "Billions" where John Malkovich plays ANDOLOV.