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# J ROBERTSON

they | them

## RESEARCHER & STORYTELLER

My years of experience as a professional theatermaker, historian and teacher have taught me that history is full of untold stories that can help us understand our shared human experience. I believe the performing arts have the potential to transform research into creative experiences that inspire and educate far beyond the classroom.

## EDUCATION

**University of Oxford** (Clarendon Scholar, University College)

- DPhil (PhD) in Modern Languages (Russian) Exp. Completion, May 2025
- Dissertation: "Stages of Captivity: Creativity & Colonization in the Professional Gulag Theaters of Vorkuta and Magadan" supervised by Polly Jones & Dan Healey

**Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** (Glasgow, UK)

- M.A. in Classical & Contemporary Text (Acting) - 2016

**Princeton University** (Princeton, NJ)

- B.A. in Slavic Languages & Literatures, summa cum laude - 2015
- Certificates: Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies; Theater

## CREATIVE PROJECTS

**Songbird** (Writer/Performer | In Development 2024-25)

- A new play centering the life and music of queer Soviet cabaret icon and Gulag theater star Vadim Kozin in the context of anti-LGBT campaigns in Russia today.

**Sandra Lezenbaum: Love in Concert** (Writer/Producer/Performer | Oxford 2024)

- A One-Woman Drag Spectacular straddling cabaret, stand-up comedy, improv and group therapy.

**MADMAN** (Writer/Producer/Performer | NYC - Off-Broadway 2018, Princeton 2019)

- Adapted from my Princeton thesis, this solo show weaves together my queer autobiography with Nikolai Gogol's surrealist classic "Diary of a Madman"
- Winner of "Best Emerging Artist" at the United Solo Festival (2018)

**Dragademia: Show & Tell** (Founder/Producer/Performer | Oxford 2023-24)

- A variety event showcasing local drag artists with an in-depth panel discussion of drag as artistic practice, life experience, and political statement.

**The Sound of Liberty Podcast** (Writer/Producer/Performer | 2018)

- A narrative podcast that is part intergenerational family mystery, part Cold War thriller, and part sketch show, in which I perform as over 50 unique characters.

## RESEARCH & TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Teaching Fellow in Russian History** (Dept. of History, University of Warwick, 2024-25)

- Lead on Socialist Bodies: Dreams and Realities of the Physical in Soviet Russia

**Undergraduate Lecturer** (Modern Langs. Faculty, Oxford Jan 2024)

- "Gulag Worlds: Solzhenitsyn, Shalamov, Life & Culture Behind and Beyond the Barbed Wire"

**Summer Course Instructor**, Worldview Scholar Programme (2023)

- For this I created an original course: "Russia from the Outside In: A Decolonial History of Repression, Expression & Empire"

**Freelance Russian Language Instructor** (2018-Present)

**REEEC Summer Research Laboratory Associate** (University of Illinois 2022)

**Asst. Instructor to Prof. S. Morrison** (Princeton Global Seminar Moscow 2019)

**Editor/Research Asst./Translator for Profs. Deborah Kaple, Caryl Emerson, Olga Hasty, and R. N. Sandberg** (Princeton University 2017-2024)

## PUBLISHED WORK

J. Robertson, "They watch Faust, hew coal and conquer the tundra!': Professional Gulag Theaters and the Cultural Colonization of the Soviet Periphery" (Scholarly Article Pending Publication, 2025)

Jake A. Robertson, "Tragedies & Triumphs: Culture and Power in the Gulag Operas of Vorkuta and Magadan" Chapter in Precarious Identities: Theatre of Refuge and Risk in Russia and East Central Europe (Co-Edited Volume, Iowa University Press, 2026)

Jake A. Robertson and D. T. Kozlova. "Khudozhestvennaia kul'tura GULAGa kak fenomen v amerikanskoi i rossiiskoi istoriografii". Sotsial'no-kul'turnye protsessy na territorii Komi kraia: Istorii i sovremennost' (Sbornik statei) (Syktyvkar, 2014)

## ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

**Narrating the Gulag Workshop** (Organizer/Presenter/Performer | Oxford 2025)

**Na stsenu! From the Footnotes to the Footlights** (Founder/Producer/Performer | ASEES Convention, Boston 2024)

- The first live theater event in the conference's history, 'Na stsenu!' is a showcase of research-based creative projects by an international cohort of scholar-artists.

**Rethinking Soviet & Post-Soviet Research Project** (Organizer)

- Decolonizing and Decentering Slavonic Studies at Oxford and beyond.
- Recipient of The Oxford Research Center for the Humanities (TORCH) Critical-Thinking Communities Grant (2023)

**Oxford Reimagining Performance Network** (Convenor 2022-2023)

**Kruzhok: Slavonic Work-in-Progress Group** (Founder/Convenor 2022-2024)

- Interdisciplinary, interdepartmental initiative providing academic and mental health support and community-building for Oxford graduate students

## **SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS**

**Clarendon Fund Scholarship of Oxford University & University College (2021-2025)**

**Oxford Research Grants:**

- University College Grants: Old Members' Trust (2022, 2023), Keasbey (2023, 2024)
- Modern Langs. Grants: Ilchester Grant (2022, 2023), Graduate Travel (2022)

**BASEES Postgraduate Research & Development Grant (2024)**

**Title VIII Research Grant (U.S. Dept. of State, 2022)**

**St. Andrew's Society of New York Scholarship (2015-2016)**

**Princeton Institute for International & Regional Studies Fellowship (2014)**

## **HONORS & AWARDS**

**Best Emerging Artist (United Solo Festival, NYC 2018)**

**Moses Taylor Pyne Prize (2015)**

- Princeton's highest undergraduate distinction, two conferred yearly

**Nicholas Bachko Jr. Scholarship Prize in Slavic Langs. & Literatures (2014)**

**Phi Beta Kappa Member Class of 2015 Montgomery Raiser 1992 Thesis Prize (2015)**

**Lewis Center for the Arts Award in Theater (2013 & 2014)**

**Shapiro Prize for Academic Excellence (2012 & 2013)**

## **LANGUAGES & SKILLS**

**Russian - Advanced**

- Princeton in Petersburg Language Intensive (2012)
- American Councils Russian Language & Area Studies Program (2013)

**Georgian - Intermediate**

- Oxford School of Global & Area Studies Georgian Programme (2021-2023)

**Other Relevant Skills:**

- Theatremaking: Professional Actor (Off-Broadway, The Globe, Regional US & UK)
- Public Speaking, Workshop and Group Event Facilitation, Improv Performance, Comedy/Sketch/Lyric Writing, Clowning