

A PROSPECTUS FOR

# The Nose

By Nikolai Gogol

English translation and commentary by **STANISLAV SHVABRIN**

With artworks and a flipbook by **WILLIAM KENTRIDGE**

Published in March 2021 by **THE ARION PRESS**

Available for the first time anywhere, in a new translation, Arion Press is pleased to announce the release of the classic Russian novella, *The Nose*, by Nikolai Gogol. A novelist (*Dead Souls*) and a playwright (*The Inspector General*), Gogol also wrote a number of outstanding shorter works between 1836-1842. *The Nose* stands as a high-water mark for Gogol's unique blend of observation, cultural critique, and social satire. Often cited by scholars as a key text in St. Petersburg's literary tradition, Gogol's short works exerted a decided influence on a range of writers the world over.

Originally published in 1836 in Alexander Pushkin's magazine *Sovremennik* ("The Contemporary"), *The Nose* tells the story of Major Kovalyov, a St. Petersburg official whose nose develops a life of its own. The absurdity of the tale, in which Kovalyov awakens to find his nose gone, then later comes to find it has surpassed him in social rank, lays bare the anxiety that plagued Russia after Peter the Great introduced The Table of Ranks: a document reorganizing feudal Russian nobility, by placing emphasis on the military, civil service and the imperial court in determining an aristocrat's social standing.

In Gogol's satirical tale, his characters' obsession with rank is depicted as absurd, but the novella tapped into an area ripe for investigation. Social stratification plagued Russian society for centuries—specifically, up through 1917 when Peter the Great's ranking system was formally abolished by the newly established Bolshevik government. By allowing commoners to gain nobility not through heredity but through service on behalf of their country, a large swath of the Russian population was given the opportunity to rise in social status. But along with opportunity came challenges, chief among them, the creation of large bureaucracies within which many of Gogol's characters worked.

Divided into three parts, the novella opens with the barber, Ivan Yakovlevich, discovering a nose as he cuts into a loaf at breakfast. Recognizing it to be the body part of one of his customers, Major Kovalyov, Ivan attempts to get rid of the nose by throwing it into the Neva River but is caught by a police officer, whom he attempts unsuccessfully to bribe.

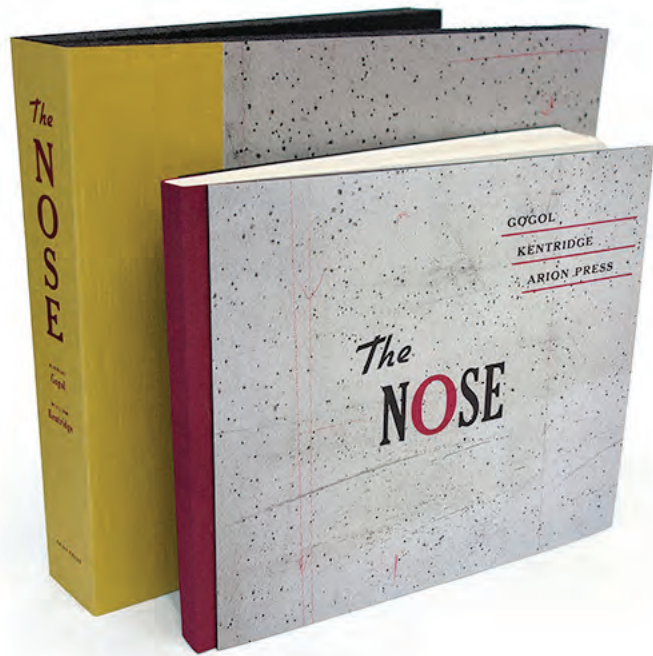
As the story progresses, the point of view shifts to the perspective of Major Kovalyov who awakens to discover his nose has disappeared. As he leaves to report the incident to police, he notices his nose dressed in the uniform of a high-ranking official. Too embarrassed to approach the nose, he considers his next move.

With an unreliable narrator and a dream-like quality that is sometimes described as a precursor to magical realism, *The Nose* is a work to be savored and studied.

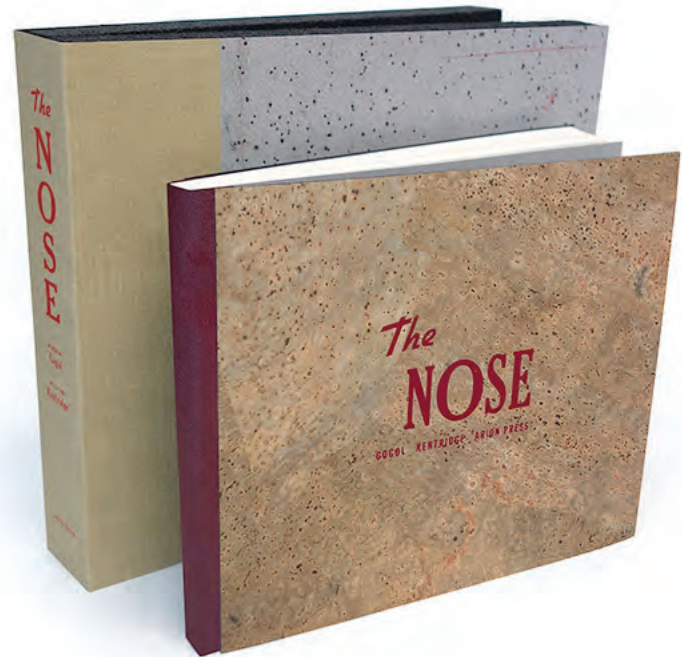
### THE TRANSLATOR

As Stanislav Shvabrin writes in his Introduction, “we are in the presence of a literary phenomenon as unconventional as any enduring work of art should be.” To bring Gogol's text to life in all of its delightfully irreverent, absurdist, and logic-defying splendor, Arion Press worked together with Shvabrin on an original translation that resists the urge to normalize, standardize—“improve”—Gogol. Instead, “it aims at giving the reader a sense of joy—mixed with a dash of bewilderment—that the Russian readers continue to derive from their interaction with this novella.”

Shvabrin is Associate Professor of Russian and Russian Program Director at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles and has researched, published and lectured on the history and culture of Russian diasporas, comparative verse theory, as well as the poetics and politics of national memory. Apart from his scholarly and editorial work on Vladimir Nabokov, he has written on Georgy Ivanov, Andrei Kurbsky, Mikhail Kuzmin, and Marina



The Limited Edition



The Variant Edition

Tsvetaeva. He is the author of *Between Rhyme and Reason: Vladimir Nabokov, Translation, and Dialogue* (University of Toronto Press, 2019; Jane Grayson Best First Book Prize on Vladimir Nabokov). This is his second project with the press, having provided the transliteration for Arion's 2018 edition of Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, in Nabokov's translation.

### THE ARTIST

For this edition, Arion Press chose to collaborate with artist William Kentridge, who directed and designed a visually dazzling 2010 Metropolitan Opera production of Dmitri Shostakovich's adaptation of *The Nose*. This is his second project with the press, following *The Lulu Plays*, published in tandem with his 2015 production of the Alban Berg opera, *Lulu*, also for the Met.

Kentridge's method combines drawing, writing, film, performance, music, theater and collaborative practices to create works of art that are grounded in politics, science, literature, and history. His work has been seen in museums, galleries, and theaters around the world including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Musée du Louvre in Paris, Whitechapel Gallery in London, and La Scala in Milan.

In 2016 Kentridge founded the Centre for the Less

Good Idea in Johannesburg: a space for responsive thinking and making through experimental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts practices. The Centre hosts an ongoing program of workshops, public performances and mentorship activities.

Kentridge is the recipient of honorary doctorates from several universities including Yale and the University of London, and in 2012 he presented the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University. He was a recipient of the Kyoto Prize in 2010, and in 2015 he was appointed an Honorary Academician of the Royal Academy in London. In October 2017, he received the Princesa de Asturias Award for the arts. He is represented by Marian Goodman Gallery (New York, Paris, London) and Goodman Gallery (Johannesburg, Cape Town, London).

### THE EDITION

Arion's elaborate presentation of the novella draws inspiration from the exuberant typography and inventions of early 20th-century Russian avant-garde book artists. The books are hand-sewn with linen thread over linen tapes, oblong in format, 9-1/8"h x 10-3/4"w, 88 pages plus 28 unnumbered pages for the artworks. The original drawings were composed on tear sheets of the *Illustrated London News*, a 19th-century tabloid embraced by generations of





Trial Proof.

W. Kentridge

Trial Proof of "Surveying His Escape", photogravure with chine collé and kozo inset, by William Kentridge.

artists for its intricate, engraved illustrations. Kentridge's altered and collaged images have been reproduced in full-color by offset lithography on specially tinted backgrounds. Fourteen are interspersed throughout, and two additional are tipped-in by hand as a frontis- and a tailpiece.

The typeface for the text is Monotype Gloucester, cast onsite in 12-point for the commentary and a generous 18-point for Gogol's text. Cheltenham and various selections from the press' historic type collection are composed by hand for display. Text pages are printed by letterpress on mouldmade 160 gsm Magnani "BFK Rives". All copies are signed by the artist and presented in foam-lined clamshell boxes which open to reveal the book nested on the right and a playful flipbook companion volume "His Majesty Comrade Nose" embedded on the left. The flipbook, excerpted from his 2008 multi-channel video installation "I Am Not Me, The Horse Is Not Mine", depicts Kentridge in the guise of the socially climbing Nose, ascending a ladder and tumbling down in pieces ... over and again.

The edition is limited to 250 copies for sale with 26 lettered *hors commerce*. Of these, 190 Limited edition copies are bound with maroon cloth spines and paper sides imprinted in 2 colors over a background appropriated from the richly textured cork paneled walls of the artist's Johannesburg studio. 20 Variant plus 40 Deluxe edition

copies are bound with leather spines and actual cork paper sides with foil-stamped titling.

### THE PHOTOGRAVURE

The Deluxe edition includes a photogravure "Surveying His Escape" printed in warm black ink on 300 gsm Somerset with gampi chine collé and kozo insets. As shown above, the prints depict the roguish nose on the lam in a Waste Land setting. The image area is 9¼"h x 13¼"w on paper 14¾"h x 18¼"w. The prints were editioned by Lothar Osterburg in Red Hook, New York, and all are signed by the artist. The gravures are valued at \$3,750, suitable for framing.

### PRICING

Limited Edition: \$875 with Subscription (\$1,250 retail)  
Variant Edition: \$1,400 with Subscription (\$1,750 retail)  
Deluxe Edition (includes signed photogravure):  
\$4,400 with Subscription (\$5,500 retail)

To order, call 415-668-2542 or email [sales@arionpress.com](mailto:sales@arionpress.com)

### The Arion Press

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