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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 2017

**The World Premiere of Blanka Zizka's *Adapt!* brings  
an Immigrant's Journey Center Stage.**

**The production will run from March 22 – April 22, closing The Wilma Theater's  
2016/2017 Season.**

It's the summer of 1977 and 22-year-old Lenka is fleeing authoritarian Czechoslovakia for the art and beauty of New York City. At the start of her journey, Lenka is confronted by an Old Woman from an extinct Slavic tribe who guides her through a dream-like world where the past and future meet and multiple realities collide. From a refugee camp to Central Park, Wilma Artistic Director Blanka Zizka presents a kaleidoscopic look at a young immigrant's journey in a surreal world full of surprises, accompanied by a musical landscape ranging from traditional folkloric songs through Czech protest ballads to the pop sounds of the late 20th century. Major support for *Adapt!* is provided by **The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage**.

***Adapt!* begins on Wednesday, March 22, 2017; and opens on Wednesday, March 29, 2017.** For critics and members of the press interested in attending Press Night on Wednesday, March 29 at 7:30pm, contact Alison Ehrenreich at [aehrenreich@wilmatheater.org](mailto:aehrenreich@wilmatheater.org) or 215.893.9456 x102.

The impulse to write *Adapt!* arose in 2011, when Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paula Vogel invited Blanka Zizka to participate in one of her workshops. As part of the development of the Wilma's 2014 world premiere of *Don Juan Comes Home From Iraq*, Vogel led six writing workshops for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. "Early on, Paula asked us to remember a moment of alienation in our lives and write about it," explains Zizka. "The veterans recalled their first days in Iraq or Afghanistan, or their return from the war back to the US. I recalled my emigration. Paula asked us to write a scene. I ended up writing a play."

*Adapt!* is set in a moment of displacement. Lenka, the protagonist, has cut herself off from the world she knew, but hasn't yet learned what the new world will bring. In Zizka's writing, the exploration of this precarious existential moment has gradually taken on the form of a surreal dream. Although the focus of the play is Lenka's personal experience, immigration politics inevitably made it into the play: for Zizka, the political is always personal.

"I did not think that *Adapt!* would be so timely, politically," says Zizka, "but I was a refugee. Lenka is a refugee, so this play is even more personal and more relevant than when I first started writing."

To play the main role of Lenka, Zizka chose 21-year-old Czech actress Aneta Kernová. “I realized it was necessary for Lenka to be played by someone who could convey the sense of identity that comes from speaking the Czech language, from belonging to a small nation with a long history of occupation and oppression. I went to Prague last year and saw several young actresses. Aneta’s physical freedom and absolute authenticity made her the clear standout.” *Adapt!* will be Kernová’s United States theatrical debut.

*Adapt!* will foster vital conversations with our community around the piece’s exploration of homeland, loss, ideology, and the cost of maturity. The Wilma will encourage these conversations with a lobby exhibit, *Portraits of People on the Move* by Jennifer Baker. Originally presented alongside *Adapt!* choreographer Silvana Cardell’s dance piece *Supper, People on the Move*, the exhibit tells the stories of individual Philadelphia immigrants. Each portrait encapsulates a single immigrant’s journey, from Argentina to Pakistan to Honduras to Italy to Albania to Haiti.

*Adapt!* hinges on live music. Lenka’s songwriting boyfriend Marek (Jered McLenigan) will perform the protest songs of Karel Kryl, newly translated into English and arranged by Stew (*Notes of a Native Song*). Old Woman (Greek actress Aneza Papadopoulou) and company will sing haunting laments, composed by Ukrainian musician Mariana Sadovska. Orwellian pigs chant in grotesque masks designed by Phantom Limb Company’s Erik Sanko. Set designer Matt Saunders and costume designer Oana Botez, who previously collaborated on the Wilma’s production of *Angels in America*, reunite to bring the dream-like, surrealist world of *Adapt!* to the stage.

Zizka has directed over 70 plays at the Wilma since the late 1970s, but *Adapt!* is her first time telling a story as a playwright.

### **About Blanka Zizka:**

Blanka Zizka has been the Artistic Director of The Wilma Theater since 1981. She has directed over 70 plays and musicals for the Wilma, most recently directing Andrew Bovell’s *When the Rain Stops Falling* in October 2016. In April 2016, Zizka was awarded the Vilcek Prize for Excellence in Theatre, which is awarded annually to immigrants who have made lasting contributions to American society through their extraordinary achievements in biomedical research and the arts and humanities. In the fall of 2011, Zizka received the Zelda Fichandler Award from the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation, which recognizes an outstanding director or choreographer transforming the regional arts landscape; and she was a Fellow at the 2015 Sundance Institute/LUMA Foundation Theatre Directors Retreat.

For the past three years, Zizka has been developing practices and programs for local theater artists to create working conditions that support creativity through continuity and experimentation. The result of this vision, the Wilma HotHouse resident acting company, was piloted with the fall 2015 production of *Antigone* and formally launched in January 2016. During recent seasons at the Wilma, Zizka has directed the U.S. premiere of Tom Stoppard’s *The Hard Problem*, back-to-back productions of *Hamlet* and Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*; Richard Bean’s *Under the Whaleback*; Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*; Tadeusz Slobodzianek’s *Our Class*; Sarah Ruhl’s *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*, which received eight Barrymore awards; and *Macbeth*, which included an original score by Czech composer and percussionist Pavel Fajt. She closely collaborated with Dael Orlandersmith on her plays *Raw Boys* and *Yellowman*, a Wilma co-production with McCarter Theatre that was later performed at ACT Seattle, Long Wharf, and Manhattan Theatre Club. Zizka has collaborated with many playwrights, including Yussef El Guindi, Doug Wright, Sarah Ruhl, Tom Stoppard, Paula Vogel, Linda Griffiths, Polly Pen, Laurence Klavan, Lillian Groag, Jason Sherman, Amy Freed, Robert Sherwood, and Chay Yew.

## **Cast and Design Team:**

The cast of *Adapt!* is led by Czech actress Aneta Kernová as Lenka and Greek actress Aneza Papadopoulou as Old Woman. The actresses are joined by Wilma HotHouse company members and affiliates Krista Apple (*The Hard Problem, Rapture, Blister, Burn*), Ross Beschler (*The Hard Problem, Antigone*), Keith Conallen (*When The Rain Stops Falling, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*), Sarah Gliko (*Constellations, When The Rain Stops Falling*), Anthony Martinez-Briggs (*When the Rain Stops Falling, An Octoroon*), Jered McLenigan (*Constellations, Antigone*), Campbell O'Hare (*An Octoroon, Rapture, Blister, Burn*), and Steven Rishard (*When the Rain Stops Falling, The Hard Problem*).

A full artistic team will work to bring Playwright and Director **Blanka Zizka's** world to life, including both local and international collaborators. Set Designer **Matt Saunders** (*Constellations, When the Rain Stops Falling, An Octoroon*) is joined by Projection Designer **Christopher Ash**, Costume Designer **Oana Botez** (*Angels in America*), Lighting Designer **Thom Weaver** (*Rapture, Blister, Burn; Don Juan Comes Home from Iraq*), and Sound Designer **Daniel Perelstein** (*The Hard Problem, Don Juan Comes Home from Iraq*). **Erik Sanko** of New York's Phantom Limb Company will design original masks for the ensemble. Original music is composed by **Mariana Sadovska**, choreography is by **Silvana Cardell**, and song translations and arrangement are by **Stew** (*Notes of a Native Song*). The team is rounded out by Dramaturg **Walter Bilderback**, Resident Stage Manager **Patreshettarlini Adams**, and Production Manager **Clayton Tejada**.

The Honorary Producers for *Adapt!* are Linda and David Glickstein. Major support is provided by **The Pew Center for Art & Heritage** with additional support from the **National Endowment for the Arts** and the **Vilcek Foundation**.

## **An Actress's Notebook: Journey through the Creation of Adapt!**

*Adapt!* cast member and Wilma HotHouse Affiliated Artist **Krista Apple** takes you into the rehearsal room and onstage in her **behind-the-scenes blog** on the process of creating a world premiere. Explore the nuance and excitement of the first weeks of rehearsal with playwright/director Blanka Zizka, get a sneak peek at the out-of-this world journey of *Adapt!*, and share Krista's thoughts on her 10<sup>th</sup> production at The Wilma Theater. Read the blog at [WilmaTheater.org/blog](http://WilmaTheater.org/blog).

## **Special Events and Opportunities:**

**Lobby Talks:** March 22 – April 22, Post-Show

As the first audiences to see *Adapt!*, we invite you to join artists and staff in the lobby following the performance for informal conversation about the play. What resonated with you? How does Lenka's journey relate to larger issues in the world today? Grab a beer or a glass of wine and share your thoughts with us.

**IN THE WILMA LOBBY: Portraits of People on the Move :** March 22 – April 22

During the run of *Adapt!*, The Wilma Theater will remount Jennifer Baker's exhibition **PORTRAITS OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE**, originally presented as a companion to Cardell Dance Theater's "Supper, People on the Move," choreographed by Silvana Cardell. The exhibit features first-person stories and photo portraits of individual Philadelphia immigrants from Argentina, Pakistan, Honduras, Italy, Albania, Iraq, Haiti, and elsewhere -- journeys undertaken for many different reasons, traversing many different landscapes, and completed with many different consequences. Join us for an opening reception of the exhibit before the first performance of *Adapt!* on **Wednesday, March 22 at 6:30pm**.

**Beer Night:** Friday, March 24, 7pm

Join us for a pre-show beer tasting in our lobby from 7 to 8pm sponsored by Sly Fox Brewing Company—complimentary for ticket-holders to that evening's performance!

**A Forum for What?: American Theater and Politics Today:** Monday, April 3, 7:30pm

At a moment when our country is experiencing great political uncertainty and change, what role should the theater play in our political landscape? During the run of *Adapt!*, the Wilma will assemble a panel of American theater-makers from Boston to DC to dig into these questions, and more. In this panel discussion, discover what responsibility we have as an industry to participate in politics and what the limits of our scope are.

"Once written, a play is only half done, and it is never complete and itself until it has been performed in a theatre. Theatre is an art form so social that, more than any other art form, it depends on having a public existence, and that means it is at the mercy of cultural conditions." - Vaclav Havel, "Second Wind," 1968

**Directors Gathering Dialogue:** Tuesday, March 28, Post-Show

Immediately following the performance, a member of Directors Gathering will moderate an audience-led conversation with playwright & director Blanka Zizka.

**Soundtrack to Immigration: An Evening of Music from *Adapt!*:** Thursday, April 6 at 7:30 PM

In partnership with HIAS Pennsylvania and Intercultural Journeys, the Wilma presents an evening of music and tales, exploring an immigrant's journey. Enjoy a rich array of music from the world premiere of *Adapt!* with the stories of Philadelphian immigrants. This event is open to the public with suggested donations at the door of \$10 with all proceeds donated to HIAS Pennsylvania.

**Young Friends Night:** Friday, April 7, 7pm

For audience members 40 and under, this performance includes a complimentary pre-show food and drink reception at the Wilma from 7pm to 8pm.

**Coffee Chat:** Wednesday, April 12, Post-Show

Chat with literary staff about *Adapt!* and enjoy complimentary Saxbys Coffee after Wednesday's matinee performance.

**Open Captioning:** Saturday, April 15, 2pm

**For event updates please check The Wilma Theater website at [www.wilmatheater.org](http://www.wilmatheater.org).**

**Tickets:** As we bring our deeply subsidized Wilma WynTix ticketing initiative into its third year, prices will operate on a tiered system as each production enters its run. For *Adapt!*, the first two weeks of performances are \$25 for general admission, and \$10 for students and theater industry members with valid ID. For the third and fourth weeks, general admission tickets are \$35, student tickets are \$10, and theater industry tickets are \$15. For the fifth-week extension, general admission tickets are \$45, student tickets are \$10, and industry tickets are \$15. Tickets are available at the Box Office by visiting [wilmatheater.org](http://wilmatheater.org), calling 215.546.7824, or visiting the theater at 265 South Broad Street in Philadelphia.

**Mission:** The Wilma Theater creates living, adventurous art. We engage artists and audiences in imaginative reflection on the complexities of contemporary life. We present bold, original, well-crafted productions that represent a range of voices, viewpoints, and styles.

## **FACT SHEET:**

**What:** *Adapt!*  
A World Premiere  
written and directed by Blanka Zizka

**Where:** The Wilma Theater  
265 South Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

**When:** March 22 – April 22, 2017

**Summary:** It's the summer of 1977 and 22-year-old Lenka is fleeing authoritarian Czechoslovakia for the art and beauty of New York City. At the start of her journey, Lenka is confronted by an Old Woman from an extinct Slavic tribe who guides her through a dream-like world where the past and future meet and multiple realities collide. From a refugee camp to Central Park, Blanka Zizka's *Adapt!* is a kaleidoscopic look at a young immigrant's journey in a surreal world full of surprises, accompanied by a musical landscape ranging from traditional folkloric songs through Czech protest ballads to the pop sounds of the late 20th century. Major support for *Adapt!* is provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.

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### **Cast:**

Krista Apple as Lenka 35/Goddess/Men  
Ross Beschler as Napoleon/Ilya/Reagan/Men  
Keith Conallen as Father/Men  
Sarah Gliko as Mother/Goddess/Men  
Aneta Kernová as Lenka  
Anthony Martinez-Briggs as Hot Dog Vendor/Men  
Jered McLenigan as Marek/St. Bernard/Men  
Campbell O'Hare as Young Woman/Hana/Goddess/Men  
Aneza Papadopoulou as Old Woman  
Steven Rishard as Pavel/Men

### **Artistic Team:**

Director/Playwright: Blanka Zizka  
Set Designer: Matt Saunders  
Costume Designer: Oana Botez  
Lighting Designer: Thom Weaver  
Projection Designer: Christopher Ash  
Sound Designer: Daniel Perelstein  
Composer/Musical Director: Mariana Sadovska  
Song Translations and Arrangement: Stew  
Choreographer: Silvana Cardell  
Fight Choreographer: Ian Rose  
Hair/Makeup: David Bova  
Mask Design: Phantom Limb Company  
Prop Master: Kimitha Cashin  
Casting Director: Nell Bang-Jensen  
Dramaturg: Walter Bilderback  
Stage Manager: Patreshettarlina Adams  
Production Manager: Clayton Tejada

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