

Chagall In New York



Three Weeks Sold Out in New York



Created at Theater for the New City in Manhattan, *Chagall In New York* played to sold-out audiences throughout its three-week run.

The production included acclaimed actors Ilia Volok (Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol, Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull) and Austin Pendleton (My Cousin Vinny, Finding Nemo), alongside an exceptional New York cast.

A story of love, loss, exile, and artistic rebirth that captivated audiences.

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1943. Having fled the Nazis, Marc Chagall arrives in New York believing he has finally found refuge. But when the sudden death of Bella, his wife and muse, robs him of all desire to paint, an unexpected meeting with Virginia Haggard slowly gives him reason to live... and to create again.

In the darkest of times, imagination becomes our greatest act of resistance.

Written by David McDonald

More Than a Historical Drama

Chagall in New York is inspired by one of the least-known chapters in Marc Chagall's extraordinary life. But this is not a conventional biography. It is an intimate human drama about grief, resilience, and the remarkable power of love to restore hope.

At its heart are three relationships: a husband devastated by the loss of his wife and muse; a devoted daughter determined to save her father; and a young woman whose quiet strength helps awaken one of the twentieth century's greatest imaginations.

Together, they transform a story drawn from history into a deeply personal journey of healing and renewal.

Although set during the Second World War, Chagall in New York ultimately is not a play about history. It is a play about what remains possible when everything we love appears to have been lost.

Synopsis

In 1943, Marc Chagall arrives in New York having escaped Nazi-occupied Europe. Safe at last, he believes his ordeal is finally over. But when Bella, his beloved wife, muse, and artistic partner, dies suddenly, Chagall finds himself unable to paint. Consumed by grief, he withdraws from the world, convinced that the source of his creativity has been lost forever.

As the war rages overseas, Chagall struggles to find meaning in exile while his devoted daughter, Ida, desperately tries to bring him back to life. Hope arrives in the form of Virginia Haggard, a young Englishwoman whose warmth, intelligence, and quiet determination gradually rekindle both the artist's imagination and his capacity to love again.

Inspired by one of the least-known chapters of Marc Chagall's life, Chagall in New York blends history with imagination to tell a deeply human story of grief and renewal, of love rediscovered after unimaginable loss, and of the extraordinary power of art to triumph over despair.



Bella: The Woman Behind the Paintings

Before she became one of the most recognizable figures in Marc Chagall's paintings, Bella Rosenfeld was his first reader, closest collaborator, and greatest source of inspiration. Again and again, she appears soaring above villages, suspended between memory and dream—a symbol of love that transcends gravity, distance, and time.

When Bella died suddenly in New York in 1944, Chagall stopped painting for months. It was not simply the loss of his wife. It was the loss of the creative partnership that had shaped his artistic life. That grief lies at the emotional heart of Chagall in New York.

Virginia: The Woman Who Refused to Walk Away

After Bella's death, Marc Chagall retreats into grief. He rejects visitors, abandons his paintings, and lashes out at anyone who tries to reach him. Watching her father retreat ever deeper into despair, Ida Chagall becomes determined to save him. She introduces him to a young Englishwoman named Virginia Haggard.

Their first meetings are anything but welcoming. Chagall is impatient, suspicious, and openly hostile. Virginia refuses to be intimidated. Compassionate yet fiercely independent, she meets every outburst with quiet strength, humor, and honesty. Neither is willing to yield.

What begins as conflict slowly gives way to respect, friendship, and ultimately love. Together, Marc, Ida, and Virginia discover that grief is not overcome by forgetting the past, but by finding the courage to imagine a future. Their extraordinary relationship becomes the emotional heart of Chagall in New York.



Ida, Bella and Marc



Marc and Ida



Virginia



The Return of Imagination

Through Virginia's unwavering kindness and Ida's determination, Chagall slowly returns to the world. As his heart begins to heal, so too does his imagination.

The paintings return.

So does the laughter.

And from unimaginable loss emerged one of the most remarkable second acts in the history of modern art.

Why I wrote Chagall In New York

I have never believed that art exists simply to reflect the world. At its best, art reminds us of what the world—and we ourselves—are still capable of becoming.

I was drawn to Marc Chagall not because he was one of the twentieth century's greatest painters, but because of what he chose to do when history seemed determined to extinguish hope. Faced with exile, grief, and unimaginable loss, he answered not with despair, but with imagination.

That choice has become increasingly meaningful to me. We live in an age that often feels overwhelmed by division, fear, and cynicism. Yet I believe imagination is far more than creativity. It is the uniquely human capacity to envision a reality better than the one before us—and then begin bringing it into being.

Chagall in New York was written in the hope that audiences leave the theater not simply moved by one man's story, but reminded of something within themselves. In the darkest of times, imagination becomes our greatest act of resistance.

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Script available upon request

Professional four-camera production
available upon request.