

# The Nose



The idea for *The Nose*, Dmitri Shostakovich's first opera, came to the composer one afternoon when he was sitting in for his brother, noted psychiatrist Leonid "Chipper" Shostakovich, who was undergoing a root canal in Murmansk. (Don't ask.) Dmitri was only supposed to jot down the ramblings of the patient, Betty-Sue Khrushchev, as she kvetched about her daily troubles. But he quickly found himself fixated on Betty-Sue's nose, which bore a striking resemblance to Ivan Yakovlevich, a barber he once knew. Suddenly inspired, the composer shoed Khrushchev out of his brother's office and began to sketch out musical ideas for a satirical opera. Shostakovich finished the work in 1928 and it was staged soon thereafter. Initial reviews were mixed, however the opera was an instant hit with otorhinolaryngologists the world over. *The Nose* never specifically refers to Betty-Sue's unique honker, but it does include a fine supporting role for a barber named Ivan Yakovlevich.