

August 2023

Number 90

Yara arts group Newsletter

CHICAGO Ukrainian Institute
of Modern Art:

Aug 24 6 pm Book launch
new poetry, video & music

Aug 26— Oct 22, 2023
THREADS exhibition

CINCINNATI Xavier University

Sept 22— Oct 13, 2023

MARIUPOL exhibition

See: www.yarartsgroup.net

Yara's exhibitions & events in Chicago & Cincinnati

On Thursday, August 24 at 6 PM the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (UIMA), Poets of Queens and Yara Arts Group will celebrate Ukrainian Independence Day by featuring contemporary art and poetry. The event will include the launch of a new book, *Threads: Poems to Inspire Art*, an anthology of work by poets whose work inspired the art in the *THREADS* exhibition at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art till October, 22.

On August 24, **Virlana Tkacz** will read English translations of Ukrainian poet **Serhiy Zhadan**, as well as her own work. Zhadan's poem "Fish" inspired a video by Ukrainian artist **Waldemart Kluyzko** that will be screened. **Ananda Lima** and **Olena Jennings** will read their own poetry. **Julian Kytasty** will play both traditional music and his new compositions inspired by Ukrainian poetry.

On Saturday, August 26 the *THREADS* exhibition will open at UIMA, 2320 West Chicago Ave, Chicago with a reception 1-4 PM and performances at 2 PM. The exhibit features textile art inspired by poetry with artists from Ukraine, Columbia, Philippines and United States.

Xavier University Art Gallery and Yara Arts Group will present *Mariupol*, an exhibition of award-winning photographs by **Evgeniy Maloletka** and **Mstyslav Chernov** (AP) from the first days of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The photos are stark, but powerful. There were no funerals. No memorials. No public gatherings to mourn those killed by Russia's relentless attacks on the port city of Mariupol that became a symbol of Ukraine's ferocious resistance.

The world would have seen none of this, would have seen next to nothing at all from Mariupol as a city under siege, if it weren't for Mstyslav Chernov and Evgeniy Maloletka, who raced into the city when the invasion began. For more than two weeks, they were the only international media in the city, and the only journalists able to transmit video and still photos to the outside world. They received many awards including the Knight International Journalism Award and the Pulitzer Prize, together with their producer **Vasilisa Stepanenko**. Mstyslav Chernov is also the director of the film "20 Days in Mariupol" which won a Sundance Festival Award.

The "Mariupol" exhibition opens on September 22 at Xavier University Art Gallery located on the first floor of the Cohen Center on campus. At 1658 Musketeer Drive, Cincinnati, OH

45207 . It runs till October 13, when it moves to **Princeton University**.

For more information on Yara's exhibitions and events in Chicago, Cincinnati and Princeton see: Yara Arts Group's website.

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The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art,
Poets of Queens, and Yara Arts Group present:

A CELEBRATION OF UKRAINIAN INDEPENDENCE

Threads: Poems to Inspire Art book launch
with artists & poets plus Bandurist Julian
Kytasty

August 24, 2023
6 pm



2320 West Chicago Avenue
Chicago, IL 60622

One more review of Yara's *Radio 477!*



Here is one more review of Yara's show *Radio 477!* at La MaMa last March:

"*Radio 477!* is a special work of theater. It is the re-imagination of a jazz musical revue that was performed in 1929 at the Berezhil Theatre in Kharkiv, a booming industrial city in the 1920s. Photographs and programs from the original production have survived but script and music had been presumed lost or destroyed. The original creators, the director Les Kurbas, along with many other artists became the victims of Stalin's purges beginning in 1933...

Virlana Tkacz, the founder/director of Yara Arts Group came upon the original musical score while doing research in Kharkiv before the invasion. Most of the script was lost but a list of the numbers could be reconstructed from programs, and the photographs from the original Berezhil production provided visual information of the set, costumes and performance style...

The renowned Ukrainian poet/rock star/novelist and anti-war activist, **Serhiy Zhadan** composed the script for the present production incorporating fragments from the original text... **Anthony Coleman**, inspired by Yuliy Meitus 1929 score, composed the music... **Virlana Tkacz** directed the American cast in a Brechtian style revue that mixes commentary on present and past political conditions with dance and song. Some of the text is spoken and sung in Ukrainian...

In the large space of the Ellen Stewart Theatre a dominant original set ele-

ment is replicated: two large arcs lit up with hundreds of light bulbs frame the playing space; the lit-up arcs are first only seen through a scrim on which photographs of the original production are projected. Towards the end of the show the scrim curtain is pulled back to reveal a spiral of lit arcs receding towards the back of the theater.

Set and graphics are by **Waldemart Klyuzko** with **Evhen Kopiov**, **Margaret Peebles** designed the lights with projections by **Hoa Bai**; costumes by **Keiko Obremski**, and sound design by **Marek Soltis**. The band of musicians, led by **Anthony Coleman** on piano, is present on the side of the performance space...

After the opening performance, DJ **Daria Kolomic**, placed upstage center, spun rock music to accompany the special poetry reading by **Serhiy Zhadan** (in Ukrainian) and **Reginald Dwayne Betts** (in English translation).

An ensemble of nine performers sings, dances, and comments through a collage of short sketches about life in Kharkiv... Time has become fluid and moves between the 1920s when Kharkiv was USSR's exemplary industrial city and 2022 when it is bombed into a ghost town....

Under the direction of **Ms. Virlana Tkacz** and with choreography by **Shigeko Sara Suga**, the cast quick changes from absurd to straight, from non-sense verse to lyrical song and tender moments. The 80-minute non-stop performance is high octane."

Review by Beate Hein Bennet, New York Theatre Wire
For pictures & video see: <https://www.yaraartsgroup.net/radio477>

Mariupol Diaries

Diary of War: Mariupol is a documentary theatre piece based on diaries of people in Mariupol during the siege of the city in the first days of Russia's invasion in 2022.

Daria Kolomic, a DJ and app creator, personally experienced the bombing of Kyiv and began recording voice notes that would become her "Diary of War" podcast, which documents the impact of war on Ukrainians.

Last fall, Daria met **Virlana Tkacz**, as Yara was organizing "Mariupol," an exhibition of photographs by **Evgeniy Maloletka** and **Mstyslav Chernov**, who would win the Pulitzer Prize. Virlana asked if there were any diaries from Mariupol.

... Daria gave her four diaries, all contemporaneous with the photographs. Virlana translated two into English, edited and interwove them. Yara actors read them during the "Mariupol" exhibition.

Since, Virlana has translated all four, including diaries by Yaroslav Semenenko, a member of the Ukrainian National Paralympic swim team, Yevhenia Ivanchenko, a captain in the Mariupol Police, Olena Nikulina, from an old Mariupol family, whose husband is in the Azov Battalion, and Valeria Mykhailovska, who was working in the Czech Republic on Feb 24, 2022 and decided to return to the city to rescue her mother. Virlana interwove the diaries with several poems by **Serhiy Zhadan**.

Diary of War: Mariupol was read at La MaMa Umbria in early August. Now, Yara actors are working on it and hope to have readings during the "Mariupol," exhibitions at Xavier University in Cincinnati and Princeton.

Lesya Verba & Akiko Hiroshima in Radio 477!
photo by Waldemart Klyuzko (above) and his poster for the Mariupol exhibit last fall (below)



Yara Arts Group receives 2023 Village Preservation Award



On June 13, 2023, the annual Village Preservation Award was held at the Great Hall of Cooper Union in New York City. This public event highlights and celebrates those that make the neighbourhoods of Greenwich Village and East Village the most interesting and exceptional in the city.

The Award was presented to Yara Arts Group for 33 years of giving voice and light to often overlooked cultures, from Ukraine to the Far East and beyond. Instead of a speech, Yara artists sang a song in Ukrainian "Kharkiv Kharkiv," which was featured in their show *Radio 477!* at LaMaMa.

Yara's *Radio 477!* is inspired by a 1920s jazz musical, staged in the Kharkiv Berezhil Theatre. **Serhiy Zhadan** wrote the text especially for Yara, which draws the parallel between the destruction of 1920s Kharkiv and today's war. New Yorker **Anthony Coleman** wrote the music for Yara's show inspired by the original music of Yuly Meitus, including the song "Kharkiv Kharkiv."

Petro Ninovskij, a Ukrainian actor who appeared in *Radio 477!* said: "Our play was bilingual, but I had no problem understanding my fellow actors on stage. We all knew what the play was about and what was happening. Even though my lines were in Ukrainian and

they answered in English, we understood each other and so did the audience. The director structures the scenes so that we would."

Director **Virlana Tkacz** believes that culture is a dialogue and it is important to talk to other people about Ukraine. "I was born in America, but I am Ukrainian, because I open Ukrainian culture through our performances to other people." Virlana says: "When I translate a Ukrainian poem for one of our plays, I use the English my actors

speak. Ukrainian poems then sound very alive on stage."

Akiko Hiroshima is a Japanese actress who has participated in a number of Yara performances since 1998. She travelled with Yara to Kyiv and to the villages of Poltava and Polissia, where she sang traditional songs with grandmothers. "The only way to learn the real culture of a country is to visit it. To be with people whose roots lie there for generations, to be there — all this is so important for really getting to know another culture."

Daria Kolomic, a Ukrainian cultural activist, shared her thoughts on this year's *Village Preservation Award*. "When I first came to New York, I tried to find those organizations that support Ukrainian culture. I am sure that most Americans learn about Ukrainian theatre, poetry, music and our rich Ukrainian culture thanks to Virlana Tkacz. I think this award is absolutely deserved!"

Article by **Katya Diumina**

Ukrainian Literature events in the fall

November, 2023

Later this fall, we will present a Ukrainian Literature Festival, celebrating new publications and mourning the losses suffered by the community of writers in Ukraine.

Yara will be joined in this week-long series of events by Bowery Poetry Club, Ukrainian Institute of America, Razom for Ukraine, New York Public Library, the Bohemian National Hall and others. Check Yara's website for details and updates.

October 3, 2023

[How Fire Descends](#)

New and Selected Poems by Serhiy Zhadan

Translated by Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps

Foreword by Ilya Kaminsky

You can preorder our book from Yale University Press. Be the first to get your copy

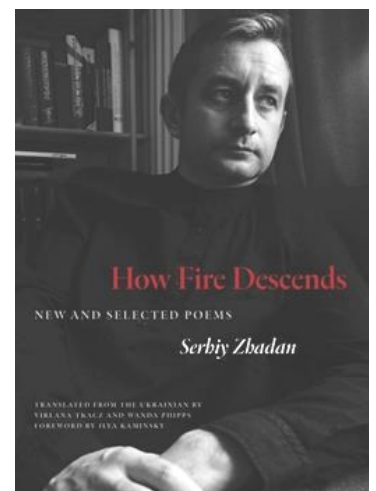
<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300272468/how-fire-descends/>



Susan Hwang
in *Radio 477!*

Photo by *Theo Cote*

Below
Cover of Yale's new book
of Zhadan poetry



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Check out
Yara's website
www.yaraartsgroup.net

Yara's Youtube Channel

Have you seen Yara's YouTube channel? Recently, we uploaded two new playlists: Poetry in Performance which includes 15 extremely short videos (most around 3 minutes). Each features one Yara artist reading one Ukrainian poem in English translation — from Shevchenko and Lesia Ukrainka to Zhadan and Kateryna Babkina. Our Ukrainian Culture in America playlist features our first season that included Pawlo Humeniuk—1920s folk fiddler, Vasile Avramenko — 1930s folk dancer, Zinoviy Shtokalko—1950s bandurist and poet Oleh Lysheha who visited America in 1990s.



Extracurricular Activities

Katya Diumina, who has worked with Yara since she arrived in New York last fall from Mykolaiv, will be entering Hunter College this fall.

Silvana Gonzalez, who appeared in Yara's *Virtual Forest Song*, *A Thousand Suns* and *Radio477!*, was in *Hamlet: A Telenovela* at the Kraine Theatre in July.

Akiko Hiroshima, who says she appeared in more Yara's shows than anyone else, writes: "I just returned from traveling with the two bands I sing for. I performed for the Obon Festival in Los Angeles, and Lollapalooza in Chicago, then at the Levitt Pavilion in Westport, CT. Happy to be back home."

Susan Hwang, who appeared in Yara's *Scythian Stones*, *Capt John Smith*, *Slap* and *Radio 477!*, performed as Debutante Hour with **Maria Sonevitsky & Mia Pixley** at Joe's Pub this August.

Daria Kolomicc, DJ who appeared in Yara's *Radio 477!* and *Undesirable Elements: Ukraine*, is now rocking stadiums in Ukraine. She has lectured on Ukrainian activism in US and was interviewed about this on YouTube. She will be back in the fall to work on Yara's "*Diary of War: Mariupol*", which she collected during the first days of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine.

Yevhen Kopiov, who is Yara's resident light director in Ukraine, volunteered for the National Guard and was wounded in Bakhmut this February. He is now recovering at home.

Petro Ninovskij, who appeared in Yara's *Radio 477!*, is starting his 3rd year at the Julliard Acting MFA Program. This fall he will be working on Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

Virlana Tkacz, Yara's

director, was one of two master artists at a session of the Directors' Symposium at La MaMa Umbria this August in Spoleto, Italy. Her sessions were entitled "Ukraine: Using Art & Cultural History as Inspiration for Theatre Today."

Lesya Verba, who appeared in Yara's *A Thousand Suns*, *Undesirable Elements: Ukraine* and *Radio 477!* was in *Beckett's Women* this July at Here. She performed Beckett's short play "Not I" in Ukrainian.

Serhiy Zhadan, Ukrainian poet who has worked with Yara since 2002, released his new book of poetry — "Skrypnykivka" in August. In October Yale University Press will publish *How Fire Descends*, the second volume of his selected poems translated into English by Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps which will include several poems from his newest book.

*Daria Kolomicc, DJ
in Radio 477!*

Photo by Pavlo Terekhov

