



THE MAGIC OF LIGHT

A young artist discovers his cultural
and spiritual light in dark times

created by Virlana Tkacz, Julian Kytasty and Tom Lee

Puppeteer and performer Tom Lee

Musician and performer: Julian Kytasty

Directed by Virlana Tkacz

Music composed & performed on bandura by Julian Kytasty

Puppetry by Tom Lee

Assistant puppeteers: Michele Stine and Zlata Godunova

singer: Tia Pinson

Production designed by Tom Lee & Andreea Mincic

Shadow puppet design & video by Linda Wingerter

Puppet design & carving by Kevin White

Lighting design by Kat C. Zhou

English translations by Virlana Tkacz & Wanda Phipps

Stage manager: Erin Gray

Assistant director: Olenka Tsyhankova

Sound: Madeline Barr

Wardrobe Finnegan Chu

Research: Nadia Sokolenko

Graphics by Waldemart Klyuzko

***The Magic of Light* was created in rehearsals by Julian Kytasty, Tom Lee and Virlana Tkacz and includes the following:**

“Ой колись була в степу воля,”/ Once there was freedom” trad. Ukrainian song
from “Енеїда” Івана Котляревського, 1798*

“Як три брати з Азова втікали”/ How Three Brothers Escaped from the Fortress
Called Azov, epic song as performed by Ostap Veresai *

from “Щиголь туру має”/The Wedding of the Birds, trad. Ukrainian song
“The Tsar’s Ems Decree,” 1876*

“Межи трьома дорогами”/“Where Three Roads Cross” trad. Ukrainian song

“Земля плачється і ридається”/The Earth Weeps and Cries, trad. Ukrainian song*
from “Світло” /“Light” by Serhiy Zhadan*

*translated by Virlana Tkacz & Wanda Phipps

Special Thanks to Oleksandr Savchuk and Katia Shraga

THE PUPPETS

PORFIRY MARTYNOVYCH (1856-1933) studied at the Imperial Academy of Arts from 1873. He created the drawings for the Magic Lantern projections for Ostap Veresai's concert at the Salt Palace in 1875. After his father died, Martynovych went back to the Ukrainian countryside to draw the people and memorize epic songs.

OSTAP VERESAI (1803-1890) blind epic singer who performed at the Salt Palace Concert in 1875, singing the epic "Three Brothers from Azov," the core text of our piece.

PAVLO TARASENKO, THE BEEKEEPER, worked for Martynovych's father, and inspired Martynovych, becoming the subject of two of his famous drawings in 1875.

MYKHAILO YEGOROV, born 1860, studied at the Imperial Art Academy where his fellow student, Martynovych, painted his portrait. Mykhailo graduated from Academy 1879 and in 1883 received two silver medals and was named Class Artist.

OLEKSANDR RUSOV (1847-1915) professor of economics and statistics who worked on the Kyiv census. He was interested in Ukrainian ethnography and published the works of Shevchenko.

MYKOLA LYSENKO (1842-1912) was a Ukrainian composer, pianist and conductor who organized the concert for Ostap Veresai at the Salt Palace. His wife Olha was a pianist.

DENYS MARTYNOVYCH, father of Porfiry, and a court clerk.

GOTTFRIED WILLEWALDE (1819-1903) teacher at Imperial Art Academy, painter of battle scenes and horses, loved by his students.

PAVEL PLESHANOV (1829-1882) academic painter, who only explained the rules of academic painting and checked sketches.

Plus, crowds, complainers, proclaimers and a calling bird.

THE COMPANY

JULIAN KYTASTY (bandurist, composer) is a third-generation bandura player. He is both a keeper of traditions and an innovator who has opened new paths for his instrument. He has worked frequently with Yara Arts Group creating and performing music for theatre pieces, poetry performances, and festivals. His work on Yara's *1917-2017 Tychyna, Zhadan, and the Dogs* earned him a NY Innovative Theater award for best original score. He continues to teach bandura to a new generation of students in North America and Ukraine, record, compose and arrange music for bandura, and engage in collaborative projects.

TOM LEE (puppeteer, production design) is a puppet artist, designer and director who began his career at La MaMa. As a puppeteer: *Madama Butterfly & Florencia en el Amazonas* (Metropolitan Opera), *War Horse* (Broadway), *Le Grand Macabre* (NY Philharmonic), *Queen of Spades* (Lyric Opera). With Japanese Master Puppeteer Koryū Nishikawa V: *Shank's Mare* (2015) and *Akutagawa* (2024). Co-director Chicago Puppet Studio and Chicago Puppet Lab. 2025 3Arts Chicago Awardee. Tom Lee is the 2025/2026 Northwestern University Astere E. Claeysens Artist-in-Residence. www.tomleeprojects.com

VIRLANA TKACZ (director, co-translator) heads the Yara Arts Group and has directed 40 original shows at La MaMa Theatre in New York, as well as in Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Bishkek, Ulaanbaatar, and Ulan Ude. Favorite productions include *Blind Sight*, *Dark Night Bright Stars* and *1917-2017 Tychyna, Zhadan, and the Dogs*. She received a NEA Poetry Translation Fellowship for her translations with Wanda Phipps of Serhiy Zhadan's poetry. Yale University Press published their second selection as *How Fire Descends* (2023).

ANDREEA MINCIC (production designer) loves making things using her hands when designing. Previous collaborations with Tom Lee Mariupol: *Diary of War and the Tree of Life*, *Monkey - A Kung Fu Puppet Parable*, *The Poacher*, *The Return*, *Scarlet Ibis*. Recent work in NY: *Nothing Doing* (UTR), *Atlas Drugged* (Skirball),

Material (Whitney Museum), *Our Class* (BAM, CSC), *Sad Boys*, (Playwrights Horizons). <https://www.andreamincic.space/>.

KEVIN WHITE (puppet designer and carver) is a Brooklyn-based Puppeteer and Puppet Maker. He works for the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre in Central Park. His work has been commissioned by Harvard University (Le Corbusier), St. Ann's Warehouse, The Puppet Kitchen, Nickelodeon, Google, The Historic House Trust of New York City, and The Metropolitan Opera, to name just a few. Kevin has received grants from The Jim Henson Foundation and Brooklyn Arts Council for his show *The Wayfaring Stranger*. He is happy to be working with Tom Lee on this project.

LINDA WINGERTER (shadow puppet design and video) is a third-generation puppeteer and master of multiplane shadow puppetry and mechanisms. Based in Ithaca, NY, Linda leads Stringpullers Puppet Company and has collaborated with Tom Lee on *Akutagawa*, *Resonant Path* and the upcoming *Left Hand of Darkness*. IG @pollysonic

KAT C. ZHOU (lighting designer) designs for theater, dance and opera. Her work has been seen at Irish Repertory Theater, WP Theater, Out of the Box Theatrics, the Guthrie Theater, Huntington Theatre Company, Cape Playhouse, American Modern Opera Company. MFA: Boston University (lighting), AB: Harvard College (mathematics). katzhousedesign.com, IG: @katzhousedesign

WANDA PHIPPS (co-translator) is a founding member of Yara and has been translating Ukrainian poetry with Virlana Tkacz since 1989. Together they have received the National Theatre Translation Award for their translation of *The Forest Song*, as well as numerous grants from New York State Council on the Arts. Her books include *Mind Honey* (Autonomedia), *Field of Wanting: Poems of Desire* (Blaze VOX), and *Wake-Up Calls: 66 Morning Poems* (Soft Skull Press).

MICHELE STINE (asst. puppeteer) is an actor, clown, and puppeteer. They spend their time digging through trash and alleys for materials, much to her mother's dismay. Michele has performed with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Rough House Theatre, Filament

Theatre, Chicago Puppet Studio, Lifeline Theatre, Emerald City Theatre, Theatre SUMM, and some other companies too. They were a part of the 2024/2025 Puppet Lab Cohort through the International Puppet Theatre Festival. Michele has spent over fifteen years working as a theatre educator in Chicago, Illinois; working with young people to develop strong storytelling skills and creating dreams out of cardboard and glue.

ZLATA GODUNOVA (asst. puppeteer) was classically trained at the National Academic Theatre of Drama and Musical Comedy in Ukraine. She recently acted in *Threepenny Opera* at Hunter College, and *A Chorus Line* on Theatre Row. She works as a puppeteer at the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater in Central Park. Her next project is *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*, March 26-29 at Hunter College. zlatagodunova.com

TIA PINSON (singer) is a Flint, MI Native who wishes to experience and spread light, love and compassion through exploration, art and storytelling. As a teaching artist with a degree in Music Theatre Performance, she continues to search for ways to encourage youth to find their creative voice as they discover their confidence through expression. She has been seen on various stages in Chicago including Rough House Theater's House of the Exquisite Corpse V: Blood and Puppets.

ERIN GRAY (stage manager) is a theater worker, director, interdisciplinary artist, and gardener based in Brooklyn, New York. Erin is the creator of The Living Room, a zine and art collective which produces live and print collaborations.

OLENKA TSYHANKOVA (asst. director) is a writer and artist from Lviv. She was a stage manager for Yara's *Slap!* this winter. Olenka graduated from Bard College in 2024.

NADIA SOKOLENKO (research) is a theatre researcher, manager and curator in Ukraine, who has worked with Yara since 2002.

WALDEMART KLYUZKO (graphics) is a visual artist in Kyiv who Yara has worked with Yara since 2010.

The calling bird puppet was fabricated by Averly Sheltraw. Curtain fabrication by Caitlin McCleod. Additional pencil drawings by Zachary Sun. Assistant to designers Jacky Kelsey. Special thanks to Chicago Puppet Studio and Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival, Blair Thomas, Artistic Director. Special thanks to the artists who helped us develop earlier versions of this project: Caitlin Nugent and Nadia Othman.

YARA ARTS GROUP was established in 1990 and is a resident company at La MaMa, the acclaimed experimental theatre in New York. Yara has created over 40 pieces based on extensive research in Eastern Europe, Siberia and Asia, in Yara's signature style of multilingual dialogue and songs supported by evocative visuals.

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Yara Arts Group is a resident company of La MaMa Experimental Theatre, where The Magic of Light was first performed. We express special thanks to Mia Yoo, Beverly Petty, Kiku Sakai, Denise Gerber, Mark Tambella, Erick Alonzo and John Issendorf for their support.