

Yara Arts Group's performances of



MARIUPOL:

Diaries of War and the Tree of Life

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Performance created by Virlana Tkacz & Yara Arts Group
with "Diary of War" Project collected by Daria Kolomic, poetry by Serhiy Zhadan, translated by Virlana Tkacz & Wanda Phipps, Victoria Amelina translated by Larissa Babij, and written by Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps.

Music by Julian Kytasty,
Sound landscape: Maksym Lozynskyj, Sound Marek Soltis
Production Design by Tom Lee with Waldemart Klyuzko
Costumes: Andreea Mincic, Choreography: Oksana Horban
Direction by Virlana Tkacz.

Performers:

Petro Ninovskyi as Yaroslav
Diana Kuzminova as his wife, Nastya
Marina Celander as his cousin, Yulia
Silvana Gonzalez as Olena
George Drance as Maksym
Susan Hwang as Yevhennia
Hanna Datsko as Valeria
Darien Fiorino as her boss
Daria Kolomic as Alla Horska

Stage manager: Anastasiia Panchenko

Yara’s performance, “Mariupol: Diary of War and the Tree of Life,” features

The “**Diary of War**” Project, collected by Daria Kolomic. We selected excerpts from four Mariupol diaries, which Virlana Tkacz translated with Wanda Phipps and intertwined for the performance. These diaries are by **Yaroslav Semenenko**, a member of the Ukrainian National Paralympic swim team; **Olena Nikulina**, from an old Mariupol family, whose husband defended Azovstal and is currently a Russian captive; **Yevhenia Ivanchenko**, a captain in the Mariupol Police; and **Valeria Mykhailovska**, who was working in the Czech Republic and decided to return home to Mariupol to rescue her mother.

Poetry

“Search,” “Pillager” and “Take only what is most important” by **Serhiy Zhadan**, translated by Virlana Tkacz & Wanda Phipps and “The Sea” (Untitled) by **Victoria Amelina**, translated by Larissa Babij, as well as “Tree of Life” by **Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps**.

Selected quotes from “Our City Was Gone” the Human Rights Watch report on Mariupol are used in the sound track and a longer quote from Evgeniy Maloletka’s forthcoming book also appears in the text.

Music: is composed by Julian Kytasty and includes a traditional song: “Chorna rillia” (“The Black Earth” is plowed and seeded with shells and corpses) which is sung by Hanna Datsko.

Projections, created by Tom Lee with Waldemart Klyuzko, include images of the mosaics and drawings by Alla Horska, as well as photographs of Mariupol from postcards and museum exhibitions.

SERHIY ZHADAN is one of Ukraine most celebrated writers. In 2022 he received the Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thought, the German Peace Prize and nine other international literature prizes. His books include: *The Orphanage*, *Mesopotamia* and *What We Live for, What We Die For: Selected Poem* and *How Fire Descends* (all available in English from Yale University Press). Serhiy was born in Luhansk, Ukraine's easternmost region and lives in Kharkiv. He has worked with Yara Arts Group since 2005, including the award-winning show *1917-2017: Tychyna, Zhadan & the Dogs*. He is also the front man for the band, Zhadan & the Dogs.

VICTORIA AMELINA (1986-2023) a Ukrainian writer and poet, was killed last summer as a result of a rocket attack on a pizza restaurant in the Donetsk Region.

ALLA HORSKA (1929-1970) was a visual artist who in 1965 formed the Club of Creative Youth with Vasyl Symonenko and Les Taniuk. She was known for her flare in organizing silent protests, such as the day in 1965 when she brought tulips and together with 15 others converged on the Shevchenko’s statue in Kyiv on a day in May Ukrainians commemorate the return of his body to Ukraine. In the summer of 1967, she created three mosaics in one building in the center of Mariupol. They were “The Tree of Life” and “The Falcon” for a restaurant on the fourth floor, and “The Bounty of Ukraine” on the first floor. In March 2022, Evgeniy Maloletka captured the image of the third behind empty shelves in a supermarket. The first two were boarded up during Soviet times and rediscovered during renovations in 2008. Photographs from July 2022 show their partial destruction.

THE COMPANY

MARINA CELANDER (Yulia & the Tree of Life) is a theatre artist, singer and movement artist. Her performance creations *Tree She*, *Sea She* and *Stone She*, were shown at various festivals in NYC and

Brooklyn. *Stone She* was presented at LaMama Moves 2022, a meditation on our state of the world and what we do as women to find our witchery to overcome and heal. Marina is thankful to perform with Yara Arts Group again.

HANNA DATSKO (Valeria) is from Lviv and received a BFA in acting from Lviv National University. In Lviv she worked with Kurbas Theatre and Lesia Ukrainka Theater and performed at festivals internationally. Now, she lives in New York and is the lead singer for Barva Band and performs with Ukrainian Village Voices. She is glad to be working with Yara Arts Group.

GEORGE DRANCE (Maksym) has performed and directed in over 25 countries on five continents. He is Artistic Director of the critically acclaimed Magis Theatre Company. Theatre credits include: Metropolitan Opera, The Public, ImprovBoston, American Repertory Theatre, and La MaMa ETC - including Ping Chong + Company, *The Trojan Women Project* and as a close collaborator of Ellen Stewart. Television credits include: *The Daily Show*, and *Blacklist*. He is an Artist-in Residence at Fordham Lincoln Center.

DARIEN FIORINO (DHL Boss) is an actor and a graduate of Harvard University in museum studies. He was in Yara’s *Winter Songs on Mars* and *1917/2017: Tychyna, Zhadan, and the Dogs* at La MaMa, as well as *Virtual Forest Song* and *A Thousand Suns*. Other notable roles include Hank Williams in Leigh Fondakowski’s *Spill* and Iachimo in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*.

SILVANA GONZALEZ (Olena) is a Mexican actress and classical ballet dancer who graduated from NYU Tisch with a Founders Day Award and BFA in Theater. Her theater credits include Ondine in *A Thousand Suns* with Yara, Hera in *FauxBia! The Musical* at Carnegie Hall, Milenia at *The Lucille Lortel*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Cynthia in *WarLovers* at Theater Row, and Louise Overbee in *Love/Sick..* Silvana is a member of the NYC theater company Something From Abroad and honored to be working with Yara again.

SUSAN HWANG (Yevhennia) tells stories and makes things that are collapsible, like songs and times. Her instruments take up space (accordion, Janggu—traditional Korean drum, piano) but other physical objects she can’t play, wear or eat intimidate her. She founded, curates and hosts The Bushwick Book Club – a monthly live performance series and podcast presenting new work by local musicians, artists and chefs inspired by literature. Susan plays accordions because they are pretty and lighter than pianos (barely). She plays drums because it's healthy for a girl to hit things.

DARIA KOLOMIEC (Alla Horska & “Diary War” Project) is a Ukrainian cultural activist and producer recognized in Time’s Next Generation Leaders 2022 with a list for her impactful activity in the cultural diplomacy field. After the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Daria started her “Diary of War,” project. What began as personal voice notes to navigate her shock and despair evolved into a collection of 41 unfiltered, uncensored accounts from individuals across Ukraine and was released as a podcast. These narratives encapsulate the raw emotions, choices, and reflections of those enduring the impact of war on their homes, streets, and lives. Four of these stories were chosen to tell the story of Mariupol in our performance.

DIANA KUZMINOVA (Nastya) is an actress from Kyiv, Ukraine. She graduated from The Karpenko-Kary National Theatre, Cinema and Television University in Kyiv, where she acted in numerous theater productions, TV shows and movies. Diana is also a voice over and dubbing actress for different projects, including Netflix and Disney productions.

PETRO NINOVSKYI (Yaroslav) is a 3rd year Juilliard acting student in the MFA program. He graduated from The Karpenko-Kary National Theatre, Cinema and Television University in Kyiv, Ukraine, where he participated in a number of theater productions, TV shows and movies. He appeared in Yara’s *Radio 477!* last year.

VIRLANA TKACZ (director & co-translator) heads the Yara Arts Group and has directed over forty original shows at La MaMa in New York, where Yara is a resident company. Many of them were inspired by the texts and culture of Ukraine, as well as those of Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and the Buryat Republic in Siberia. Yara's shows usually premiere at La MaMa, but also perform in Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Bishkek, Ulaanbaatar, and Ulan Ude. Virlana received an NEA Poetry Translation Fellowship for her work with Wanda Phipps on Serhiy Zhadan's poetry. Recently, Yale University published their second book of Zhadan's selected poems *How Fire Descends* which was a finalist for the PEN America Poetry in Translation Award this year. Last year she created "*Radio 477!*" with Serhiy Zhadan and Anthony Coleman. Her production of *1917-2017: Tychyna Zhadan & the Dogs*" won the 2018 New York Innovative Theatre Awards for best musical.

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 the New York State Council on the Arts. Her books include *Mind Honey* (Autonomedia), *Field of Wanting: Poems of Desire* (BlazeVOX [books]), and *Wake-Up Calls: 66 Morning Poems* (Soft Skull Press). She curated several reading series at the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church and has written about the arts for Boog City, Time Out New York and Paper Magazine.

JULIAN KYTASY (composer & performer on bandura) is a third generation bandurist following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. He was associated with the New York School of Bandura (NY Bandura) from 1980 and curated the Bandura Downtown series since its inception. He worked frequently with Yara 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.

TOM LEE (production design) is a puppet artist, designer and director based in Chicago. He began his career with Yara Arts Group at La MaMa with projects in Ukraine, Siberia and the U.S. He is a student of Japanese master puppeteer Koryū Nishikawa V with whom he created *Shank's Mare* (2015) and *Akutagawa* (2023). In addition to his original work for puppet theatre, his performances include *War Horse* (Broadway), *Florencia en el Amazonas & Madama Butterfly* (Metropolitan Opera) and *The Queen of Spades* (Lyric Opera Chicago). He is co-director of the Chicago Puppet Studio and Chicago Puppet Lab. . www.tomleeprojects.com

WALDEMART KLYUZKO (production design and graphics) is an artist from Kyiv, Ukraine, who has collaborated with Yara Arts Group since 2010, most recently creating the set for *Radio 477!* He was nominated twice for innovative theatre design for NYIT Awards, for Yara's *Raven* based on Oleh Lysheha's poetry (2011) and *1917-2017: Tychyna, Zhadan and the Dogs* (2017). He co-curated with Virlana Tkacz the *Kurbas* in Kyiv, *Kurbas* in Kharkiv and the *Kurbas: New Worlds* exhibition at the Mystetsky Arsenal in Kyiv.

ANDREEA MINCIC (costume coordinator) is a visual artist and theater designer originally from Romania. New York has been her home for almost two decades and during this time she had the chance to create set and costume designs for a lot of Downtown and Off-Broadway theaters. Some of her favorite collaborators are Alex Tatarsky, Tom Lee, Mallory Catlett, Tina Satter, Susan Marshall, Kevi Augustine, James Scruggs, The Builders Association, Big Dance Theater, This is her first collaboration with Yara Arts Group.

OKSANA HORBAN (choreography) is a dance artist from Kyiv, Ukraine where she studied pantomime at Kyiv Circus Academy. She graduated BFA Dance program from Montclair State University and performed works by Elizabeth Streb, Ohad Naharin, Earl Mosley, Moses Pendleton, Larry Keigwin, Maxine Steinman, Paul Taylor and others. She currently dances with Momix and this is her second project with Yara Arts Group.

MAKSYM LOZYNSKYJ (sound recordings) is a singer, songwriter, producer, and actor. He has been a member of Yara Arts Group at La Mama for over 10 years and has been involved in a number of

productions. He graduated from Berklee College of Music with a master's in music production and has recently scored music for a short film here in America titled "Lines of A Woman."

MAREK SOLTIS (sound) has worked as a sound engineer, and owner of Multiharmony Corp since 2000, which serves corporate and musical clients. Marek has been audio and video engineer in Bohemian National Hall since 2008 and sound engineer on Fox five Good Day New York show since 2016. He has worked as a technical director and engineer on multiple ethnic festivals throughout New Jersey and New York, featuring Estonian, Slovakian, Czech, and Ukrainian artists.

ANASTASIA PANCHENKO (stage manager) is a student who worked with Yara Arts Group on the reading of *Blind Sight* summer 2023 and on *Mariupol: Diaries of War and the Tree of Life* at Howl Happening this spring. She also appeared in a documentary performance *Are We There Yet?* with nine other teenagers from Ukraine at the New York Theatre Workshop last year. She volunteers for Razom and Svitanok.h

YARA ARTS GROUP was established in 1990 and is a resident company at La MaMa, the acclaimed experimental theater 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. Yara Arts Group is a resident theatre company of La MaMa Experimental Theatre in New York. **Yara Arts Group 306 East 11th St #3B, New York, NY 10003 USA (212) 475-6474 www.yaraartsgroup.net: @yaraartsgroupinc Instagram: @yara.arts**

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Mariupol the exhibit of photographs from Mariupol by Evgeniy Maloletka and Mstslav Chernov that inspires this project was first shown in the US by Yara Arts Group at the Howl Arts Archive across the street from the New Museum in New York City in November 2022. It was also shown at Princeton at the Bernstein Gallery last fall. We thank Marci Shore a professor at Yale for hosting a talk by Evgeniy Maloletka in November and the students of Yale's Ukrainian House. In March of 2024 the exhibit enveloped the first performance of Yara's *Mariupol: Diaries of War and the Tree of Life* at Howl Happening.