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Yara arts group Newsletter

Zhadan & Friends 2021: Virtually

Poetry: April 15

Prose: April 20

Jazz: April 22

www.yaraartsgroup.net

Inside this issue:

*Yara's Virtual Events
on Zinoviy Shtokalko* 2

*Virtual Events on
Yara's Forest Song* 3

Our Losses 4

Extracurricular
Activities 4

Zhadan & Friends 2021

Yara Arts Group and the Ukrainian Museum in New York will present "Zhadan & Friends 2021" three virtual events with Serhiy Zhadan, April 15-22, 2021. The events, directed by Virlana Tkacz, are all bilingual and free. Links, programs and more information on www.yaraartsgroup.net

Zhadan 2021: POETRY – Serhiy Zhadan reads his poetry in Ukrainian from his new book *Psalm to Aviation* (coming in May 2021), while American poets Dzviniya Orlovsky, Askold Melnyczuk, Wanda Phipps, Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler and Olena Jennings react to his poems with their own poems in English. Susan Hwang responds with a song. *Live streamed Thursday, April 15 at 5:00 PM, <https://www.facebook.com/yaraartsgroupinc>*

Zhadan 2021: PROSE – "The Orphanage," celebrating the publication of Zhadan's novel by Yale University Press in an English translation by Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler. Zhadan and Wheeler read selections from the book in Ukrainian and English. Julian Kytasty plays bandura to



images by Evgeniy Maloletka and Waldemart Klyuzko. Maria Genkin moderates and interviews the author. *Live streamed Tuesday, April 20 at 5:00 PM, <https://www.facebook.com/yaraartsgroupinc>*

Zhadan 2021: JAZZ -- Zhadan reads from his recently released book *List of Ships* (2020) and forthcoming *Psalm to Aviation* (May, 2021). Yara actors read English translations by Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps, while jazz pianists Anthony Coleman and Fima Chupakhin play. *Live streamed Thursday, April 22 at 5:00 PM <https://www.facebook.com/yaraartsgroupinc>*

April is National Poetry Month in America and for the past six years Yara has created special poetry events with Serhiy Zhadan in April, celebrating his newest work.

After each premiere there are free links to event recordings on www.yaraartsgroup.net



*Posters for virtual events
on Zinovi Shtokalko
by Waldemart Klyuzko*



Yara's Virtual Events on Zinovi Shtokalko

In the fall of 2020, Yara Arts Group and the Ukrainian Museum presented a series of virtual events about the work and life of bandurist Zinovi Shtokalko. Viriana Tkacz presented research on the significance of the bandura in the musical life of New York and Ukraine and Shtokalko's contribution to it. East Village bandurist Julian Kytasty demonstrated some of Shtokalko's genius on the bandura and spoke about his personal experience with the work of Shtokalko. Marko Stech presented information about some of Shtokalko's byliny and poetry. Michael Andrec, a bandurist, spoke about his connection to Shtokalko's music. All the programs began with music. Shtokalko's music always served as foundation for the story.

In the first program presented on September 10, 2020, "Zinovi Shtokalko: Instrumental Music," we learn about Zinovi Shtokalko and his influence on bandura playing. He was a Ukrainian immigrant born near Berezhany in the Ternopil region of Ukraine in 1920. His father presented him with a bandura from Prague, a gift that was originally intended for his older brother who tragically died. He came to the US with the third wave of immigrants in the 1950s, settling in New York in 1952. He played the bandura in the Kharkiv style in which both hands play freely over the instrument. Shtokalko's work popularized the Kharkiv style.

When Shtokalko first immigrated to New York, he went to Surma, a Ukrainian shop in New York's East Village filled with books and Ukrainian folk material. He told Mr. Surmach that he

played the bandura. With Surmach's help, he recorded the only record that would come out during his short life. It had the *duma* "Marusia Bahuslavka" on one side and a "Dance Medley" on the other. The rest of the recordings Shtokalko made for Surmach would only be published as a record set in 1970, two years after Shtokalko's death. But Shtokalko's greatest legacy were the recordings he made himself in his own basement studio that came to be known as "the basement tapes." Kytasty met a close friend of Shtokalko's, Levko Maistrenko, who gave him a copy of those twelve basement tapes. The basement tapes contain a variety of material. They even included drafts of what Shtokalko was working on. They also included the same epic songs sung in different periods in his life.

When he traveled to Ukraine, Kytasty gave Professor Vasyl Herasymenko, director of the bandura program at the Lviv conservatory, a copy of the basement tapes. The tapes contained a complete repertoire that Herasymenko could use with students. Herasymenko strongly believed in the Kharkiv style of bandura playing. One of his students and a special guest on Yara's program was Dmytro Hubyak from Ternopil, near Shtokalko's birthplace. The basement tapes had a huge impact on Hubyak and his playing. The arrival of the basement tapes in Ukraine laid the foundation for the rebirth of the Kharkiv style of playing the bandura in Ukraine.

In the program, "Zinovi Shtokalko: Singer of Tales," presented September 24, 2020, we learn that Shto-

kalko was also a poet, but it is not until the next episode that we explore his avant-garde poetry. In this episode we learn that he took the storylines from existing traditional songs about Kyivan Rus, but wrote the words to the *bylyny* he sang. One of his epic *bylyny* focuses on Ilya Muromets and most of Shtokalko's version of this song was played at this virtual event. Marko Stech was the special guest presenter at the program who talked about the origins of the *bylyny*.

The next program, "Zinovi Shtokalko: Epic Modernist," presented on October 8, 2020, looked at Shtokalko as a contemporary writer. We learn that as a poet he wrote modern poetry under the pen name Zinovi Berezhany. A collection of his work, *On the Outskirts of Night*, was published posthumously by Ihor Kotsetskyi with a foreword by New York group poet Bohdan Boychuk. Literary scholar Solomia Pavlychko devoted a chapter to Berezhany in her *The Discourse of Modernism in Ukrainian Literature*, and included him in the canon of Ukrainian literature.

During the virtual event, Shtokalko's poems were read, accompanied by the bandura. In a special segment, a recording of a part of the 1998 event in an East Village gallery that Kytasty and Maistrenko arranged to commemorate Shtokalko featured Kytasty playing the bandura while Olha Shuhan read poems by Shtokalko/Berezhany.

Shtokalko was always one to stretch tradition. Kytasty follows in his footsteps, especially his group "The Experimental Bandura Trio."

(continued on page 3)

Virtual Events on Yara's Theatre Pieces based on *Forest Song*

This spring, Yara presented a series of virtual events on Lesia Ukrainka's play *Forest Song*. In 1993, Viriana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps created an award-winning English translation of the Ukrainian verse play. Yara used scenes from this translation in several theatre pieces: the bilingual *Yara's Forest Song* in 1994 and *Fire Water Night* in 2013.

In the first part, **Yara's Theatre Project: *Forest Song***, after a brief introduction on Lesia Ukrainka, Viriana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps talked about their award-winning translation. Then they discussed the concept of Yara's 1994 production with designer Watoku Ueno, choreographer Shigeko Suga and Shona Tucker, who took part

in the first reading of the play. They were joined by Jude Domski and Kateryna Slipchenko, who served as literary managers, as well as Ukrainian translator Oksana Batiuk, who was at the first rehearsals. The artists examined how Ukrainka's text transformed into "Yara's Forest Song."

In the second part, **Yara's Theatre Projects: *Yara's Forest Song***, Viriana showed photographs and video from performances of *Yara's Forest Song* in Lviv and La MaMa in 1994. She also talked with Yara actors: Andrew Colteaux, Karen Angela Bishop, Victoria Linchong and Ian Wen, as well as Oleh Drach, Natalka Polovynka, Andriy Vodychev and Tanya Kaspruk from the Kurbas Theatre in

Lviv about how the bilingual production came together.

Yara's Theatre Projects: *Fire Water Night*, was about Yara's immersive show at La MaMa in 2013. Viriana again showed photographs and video clips and then talked to designers Waldemart Klyuzko, and Zhenya Kopyov about how the various parts of the theatre space were used. Costume designer Keiko Obremski and choreographer Shigeko Suga talked about their work. Then actors Jeremy Tardy, Jenny Leona, Tamar Ilana, Marina Celander, Akiko Hiroshima, Yarko Dobriansky, J. Moliere and Masha Pruss, joined the conversation.

All three parts can be seen for free anytime on www.yaraartsgroup.net

Yara's Virtual Events on Zinoviy Shtokalko

(Continued from page 2)

Kytasty experimented with tuning on the bandura. He tries tunings that don't exist in folklore to see what they would make the instrument do. Kytasty even worked with Yara designer Waldemart Klyuzko to create an experimental bandura performance piece they filmed. It was the grand finale of "Epic Modernist." As the bandura lay on a table, Kytasty dropped ping pong balls on the bandura, creating a spontaneous music piece. The spontaneity reflected Shtokalko's unique style and free spirit.

The final program in the series on October 22, 2020, is about the oral tradition and Ukrainian epic song texts of the dumasy from the 1500s and 1600s. Each duma was created by the performer as it was sung. Many of the dumasy are about captivity and escape

from captivity. In this episode we hear most of the sections of a single duma, "Marusia Bohuslavka," which begins "On a black sea, on a white rock, there stood a dungeon..." The bandura is an ideal accompaniment for the song because it does not overpower the voice. Kytasty provides a beautiful example.

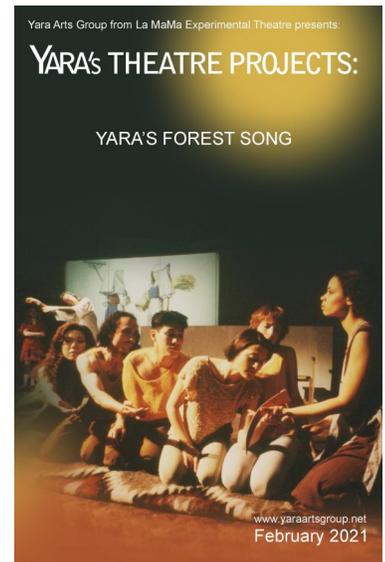
Special guest Andriy Hornjatkevych studied with Shtokalko in 1957. He followed Shtokalko's advice to learn one duma well. Shtokalko set Hronjakevych on the path to make this duma his own. Hornjatkevych picks up "Marusia Bohuslavka," where Kytasty left off. Afterwards, another guest Jurij Fedynskyj continues passionately with the duma. Though he was born in the US, his experience with the bandura brought

him to Ukraine where he now lives in a small village. Finally, "Marusia Bohuslavka" ends with a prayer, which we hear Shtokalko sing in a recording from 1956.

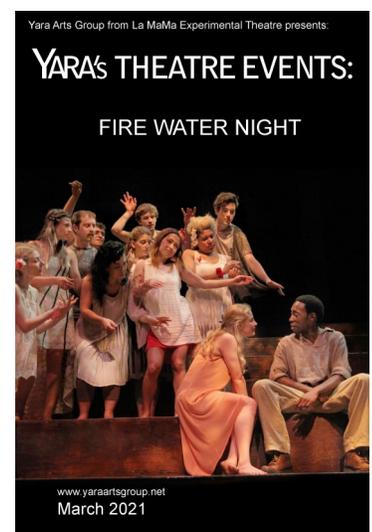
With the appearance of Dmytro Hubyak in this segment this series comes full circle. Kytasty asks Hubyak about how he sees Shtokalko's legacy. Hubyak speaks about the Kharkiv style bandura, which is being revived today in Ukraine. He also states that Shtokalko's influence will only continue to grow.

The Shtokalko programs kicked-off Yara's Festival of World Epic Songs which included Kyrgyz, Buryat and Finnish epics, as well as African American spirituals.

by Olena Jennings



Program covers for
Yara's virtual events on
"Yara's Forest Song"
and "Fire Water Night"



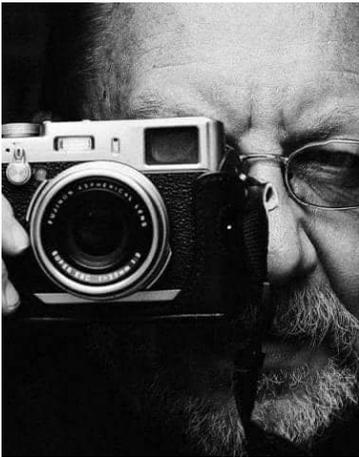
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Check out
Yara's website

www.yaraartsgroup.net



Viktor Marushchenko (above) who took the best photo of "In the Light" (photo on far right)

Serhiy Proskurnia (below) introducing me to Roman Cherkashyn, one of the last Kurbas actors, (photo right)



Our Losses

Viktor Marushchenko (Feb 1, 1946 – Sept 28, 2020)

Viktor Marushchenko was a great photographer who I met on my first trip to Ukraine. He took one of my favorite pictures of our show *In the Light* — the one in Kyiv at the Franko Theatre with Larysa Nedin and Jason Bauer with a projection of Les Kurbas between them. Victor Marushchenko continued coming to our shows and taking photos. When we ran our "round us" series in 2002 at RA Gallery in Kyiv next to his photo school I saw many of his exhibits and we often chatted. A generous, insightful man with a great eye and a big heart. He will be missed.

Serhiy Proskurnia (Nov 28, 1957 – Feb 1, 2021)

Serhiy Proskurnia was my first guide into theatre and its history in Ukraine. Serhiy arrived in New York in November 1990 with an invitation for Yara to bring our show about Kurbas to UkSSR. This was a totally crazy idea. Then Serhiy made me make it happen - this very first cultural exchange that resulted in a co-produced theatre production in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Lviv. "In the Light" opened during the week in August 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine declared independence. Things were always unbelievable when Serhiy was around and amazing.

by Virlana Tkacz



Extracurricular Activities

Elzara Batalova who appeared in Yara's *Kupala* in Ukraine, presented Elzara Batalova / Ahtem Seytablayev - "Şarq oyunu" (Танец талисман) a love story clip that is beautifully told in black & white photos https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8e-II-yDCDE&fbclid=IwAR0wDgE4rNdeQEdYHFVgg0QtykcXhYWIV_zjBi1NT8vtuJMomjOj6x0XZJE

Laura Biagi who appeared in Yara's *Circle* received an Excellence in Teaching Award from The Theatre School at DePaul University. Laura writes: "Thank you, my beloved students and dear colleagues, Teaching and educating is my passion, personal and social transformation, my fuel."

Allison Hiroto, who appeared in Yara's *Flight of the White Bird, Circle and Koliada: 12 Dishes*, is the proud mother of baby Margaux, born April 2020.

Wanda Phipps, Yara's dramaturg, has a new book of her poetry coming out this spring. *Mind Honey* will be published by Automeia.

Jeremy Tardy, who appeared in Yara's *Fire Water Night* and *Dark Night Bright Stars*, was recently in the film *Voodoo Macbeth*. Here is the trailer <https://www.facebook.com/tardyj/videos/10224804080747001>

Virlana Tkacz, Yara's director, will have a book of her own poetry published by Lost Horse Press later this year.

The official US Embassy in Kyiv greeting celebrating **Taras Shevchenko's** birthday this year mentions Yara's show *Dark Night Bright Stars*, which was about the meeting of Shevchenko and African American tragedian Ira Aldridge in 1858. Yes! It was a great show thanks to **Jeremy Tardy, Sean Eden, Mykola Shkaraban, Maria Pleshkevich, Shona Tucker, Barak Tucker, Julian Kytasty, Wanda Phipps, Watoku Ueno, Zhenya Kopiov, Keiko Obremski, Waldemart Klyuzko, Nadia Sokolenko and Nadia Tachyn.**

<https://www.facebook.com/usdos.ukraine/videos/786638651966457>