

# La MaMa

Experimental Theatre Club  
and Yara Arts

presents

## The Magic of Light

Projections bring Ukrainian epics  
to life 150 years ago

Created by Virlana Tkacz, Julian Kytasty and Tom Lee



The Downstairs  
66 East 4th Street, NYC, 10003  
March 7-16, 2025

# ***The Magic of Light***

Projections bring Ukrainian epics  
to life 150 years ago

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

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

Assistant puppeteer: Zlata Godunova

Intern assistant to designers: Caitlin Nugent

Assistant to designers: Jacky Klesey

Stage manager: Erin Gray

Assistant director: Olenka Tsyhankova

Sound: Nadia Othman

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,” trad. Ukrainian song

from “Енеїда” Івана Котляревського, 1798\*

“Як три брати з Азова втікали”/ How Three Brothers Fled from Azov,  
epic song as performed by Ostap Veresai \*

from “Щиголь тугу має”/Wedding of the Birds, trad. Ukrainian song

“The Tsar’s Ems Decree,” 1876\*

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

“Земля плачеться 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 designer) 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. [www.tomleeprojects.com](http://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 include *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.andreeamincic.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). katzhoudesign.com, IG: @katzhoudesign

**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).

**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 @zlata-god

**CAITLIN NUGENT** (intern to designers) is a London based performer currently working for La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club NYC as an intern in design. She graduated from Kingston University London in 2024 and has felt immense joy making miniature books for this production.

**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.

**JACKY KELSEY** (asst. to designers) is a soft sculptor informed by a background in drawing and puppetry. Based in Chicago, they have experience as a seamstress, upholsterer, costume maker, and puppeteer. These niche skills inform their sculptural work, which deals with themes of body, comfort, and queer identity.

**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 OTHMAN** (sound) is an Egyptian-American audio engineer and musician based in NYC. Her work ranges from mixing and designing for live productions to electronic product development at Death By Audio. [nadiaothman.com](http://nadiaothman.com)

**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 since 2010.

The calling bird puppet was designed and fabricated by Averly Sheltraw. Curtain fabrication by Caitlin McCleod. Additional support provided by Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival, Blair Thomas, Artistic Director

**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.

Yara Arts Group 306 East 11th St #3B, New York, NY 10003 USA (212) 475-6474 [www.yaraartsgroup.net](http://www.yaraartsgroup.net): @yaraartsgroupinc Instagram: @yara.arts

Yara Arts Group is a resident company of La MaMa Experimental Theatre and expresses special thanks to Mia Yoo, Beverly Petty, Kiku Sakai, Denise Greber, Mark Tambella, Erick Alonzo and John Issendorf.

*The Magic of Light* was made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, as well as the Self Reliance Foundation, and friends of Yara Arts Group.



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**A full program with information on this  
production can be found on the  
*The Magic of Light*  
page of the La MaMa website.**

**In addition you can scan the  
QR code Poster located in the theatre  
lobby for access to the digital program.**

# LA MAMA



## RESTORE A BUILDING REMAKE A WORLD



*Rendering: 74 East 4th St.*

La MaMa's historic, landmark building at 74 East 4th Street underwent an urgently needed complete renovation and restoration to preserve the historic façade, create building-wide ADA accessibility, and provide much needed performance, exhibition and community space for decades to come.

La MaMa, founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961, has been on east 4th Street since 1967. La MaMa embraces every person in its community and is legendary as the place where new artists of all nations, cultures, races, and identities are given opportunities. It is the place where art begins.

To learn more about the renovation, or to make a donation please visit [www.lamama.org/remakeworld](http://www.lamama.org/remakeworld)



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We thank our supporters who are indispensable to La MaMa as we continue to expand and strengthen our artistic community. You help make space for artists to create and share new stories, present diverse perspectives, and keep us all connected in our 63rd Season!

## 63rd Season General Operating Support:

Doris Duke Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Radio Drama Network, and The Shubert Foundation



## Public support provided by:

National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Governor, and the New York State Legislature, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.



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#### **CultureHub**

March 6-9, 2025

The Club and Community Arts Space

#### **The Magic Light**

March 7-16, 2025

The Downstairs

#### **Metamorphoses**

March 7-23, 2025

Ellen Stewart Theatre

#### **Above Ground**

- not exactly a comedy

March 13-23, 2025

The Club

#### **La MaMa Kids:**

**Travels to the South Pole**

March 15, 2025

Community Arts Space

#### **Infinity**

March 20-23, 2025

The Downstairs

### COMING SOON

#### **Swallows**

March 28-April 6, 2025

The Downstairs

#### **Sur**

March 29-April 6, 2025

Ellen Stewart Theatre

#### **La MaMa Kids:**

**Distance Learning**

April 5, 2025

Community Arts Space

#### **La MaMa Moves! Dance Festival**

April 10-May 4, 2025

All 4 La MaMa Venues

#### **Class Dismissed**

April 18- May 4, 2025

Ellen Stewart Theatre

#### **EXAM**

May 8-11, 2025

Ellen Stewart Theatre