

# MAKLENA

by Mykola Kulish

translated from Ukrainian by Maria Montague

Night Train Theatre Company

Kharkiv Festival

1919-2019: *Kulish. Kurbas. Shakespeare.*

Ukraine, Summer 2019



## **Night Train Theatre Company**

is an international ensemble dedicated to sharing vibrant and compelling stories from around the world. We use a rich palette of storytelling tools - including movement, music, and puppetry - to develop plays that are bold, immediate, and visually and aurally engaging.

**@nighttraintc**

**nighttraintheatrecompany.com**



*Facing eviction at the hands of a conniving landlord, 13-year-old Maklena fights to lift her family out of abject poverty. When she gets lost in a whirlwind of propaganda, violence, dreams and magical geese, she must face a very real and dangerous choice.*

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Night Train Theatre Company's MAKLENA is the first-ever English language production of Mykola Kulish's masterpiece *Maklena Grasa*, translated by the British theatre director Maria Montague.

MAKLENA is a fresh interpretation of Kulish's 1933 play with puppetry, physical theatre and an original score. This unique take on a Ukrainian classic shows that Kulish's work defies national borders, and remains powerfully relevant more than 80 years since it was written.

After touring the UK to great acclaim, in the summer of 2019 Night Train brought the play back to its birthplace, Ukraine, where the company co-produced an international theatre festival in Kharkiv, "1919-2019: Kulish. Kurbas. Shakespeare."







# THE MAKLENA TEAM

## CREATIVE & PRODUCTION

director/translator **MARIA MONTAGUE**

movement direction - ensemble/puppets **LANA BIBA**

composer/sound design **OLIVER VIBRANS**

set/costume design **NIKKI CHARLESWORTH**

puppet design **NIKKI CHARLESWORTH & EDEN HARBUD**

lighting design **PAVLO KRAVTSIV**

original lighting design **RORY BEATON**

associate producer **BOHDAN TOKARSKY**

tour managers **BOHDAN TOKARSKY & DANIELLE CRAIG**

surtitles **DANIELLE CRAIG & JAROSLAVA BARBIERI**

sound technician **EDEN HARBUD**

**CAST** *alphabetically by last name*

maklena **ALONA BACH**

zbrozhek **MATTHEW COULTON**

zbrozhek's wife **LÉA DES GARETS**

zarembsky **EDEN HARBUD**

padur **ADAM MIRSKY**

anelia **ANDREEA TUDOSE**



*Photos by Oleksii Topyrha.*

# ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

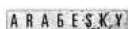
For the past year, Night Train worked closely with Teatr Arabesky and Teatr Na Zhukakh to plan the **"1919-2019: Kulish. Kurbas. Shakespeare."** festival. The three companies collaborated on the artistic, logistical and financial aspects of the festival across time zones from Kharkiv, Ukraine to London, UK and Washington, DC, USA.

The festival marked 100 years since groundbreaking Ukrainian theatre director Les Kurbas began work on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in 1919. In the 1920s, Kurbas was at the cutting edge of theatrical innovation across Europe – particularly in his innovative productions of Shakespeare and works by the great Ukrainian playwright Mykola Kulish.

The festival celebrated the creative conversation between Kulish, Kurbas and Ukrainian-language Shakespeare, through productions by nine different companies, an outdoor exhibition in association with the Kharkiv LitMuseum; a street art mural celebrating the work of Kulish, Kurbas, and Shakespeare; workshops and masterclasses; post-show discussions; and a concert by Misko Barbara.



**Night Train Theatre Company** collaborated with...



**Teatr Arabesky**, an independent company producing experimental theatre. Their signature style features a combination of physical theatre and multimedia.



**Teatr Na Zhukakh**, an independent company producing classical and contemporary plays, and known for its educational initiatives aimed at building links between Ukrainian and European theatre.



LEFT: Assembling the outdoor exhibition at Kharkiv LitMuseum.

Photo by Inga Usenko.

BELOW: Mural in the courtyard of Arabesky Theatre. The street art was painted by members of the Ukrainian Leadership Academy in collaboration with festival volunteers.

Photo from Znaky.



ABOVE, LEFT:  
Festival programme.



LEFT:  
From left: Daria Feldman, Maria Montague, and Svitlana Olesenko appear on air to give a press conference about the festival.

9 PARTICIPATING COMPANIES. 6 FULL PRODUCTIONS.



**Maklena Grasa**  
Mykola Kulish  
(Luhansk Drama  
Theatre)

**Romeo and Juliet**  
William Shakespeare  
(Teatr Arabesky)



**Romeo and Juliet**  
William Shakespeare  
(Teatr Na Zhukakh)



**OTAKI (L)**  
Mykola Kulish  
(Kimnata T) / **Kulish:**  
**Dialogue through**  
**Space and Time (R)**  
(Teatr Inakshe)



**Tastes of Renaissance**  
**Short Performances**  
5 Kharkiv-based  
companies

photos by Inga Usenko







Night Train company members were especially moved to get to see Luhansk Drama Theatre's production of *Maklena Grasa* at the Kharkiv Pushkin Theatre.

*"After Luhansk Drama Theatre's performance, we joined the cast onstage and embraced our counterparts, who had come to Arabesky the night before to watch our own production of MAKLENA. We stood in a circle on the Pushkin stage and discussed with the Luhansk-based artists (now displaced to Severodonsk) what it was like to rehearse this play in the conflict zone, as well as the artistic decisions that the company made to transpose Maklena's longing to join the Communist Revolution to a desire to join the Maidan. It was a magical moment of connection with a theatre company from across the world who were as intimately familiar with Kulish's Maklena Grasa as we were."*

– Alona Bach, Night Train co-founder and actor who plays Maklena

*Top and right, a historic moment when two casts of Maklena Grasa united on one stage. Above right, Night Train (R) and Luhansk (L) counterparts pose together.*



# STUDENT WORKSHOPS

Night Train held workshops in **Lecoq technique**, **English Through Theatre** and **French Through Theatre** in association with the Alliance Française. These workshops focussed on building students' confidence and developing skills in collaboration and languages, and served over 100 participants – including theatre students, soldiers, and learners of English and French.

We also held a **mutual skill-exchange workshop** with company members of Teatr Na Zhukakh. The workshop – conducted alternately in English, Russian, and Ukrainian – demonstrated how theatre can transcend and bridge linguistic and cultural borders.

## *from Teatr Na Zhukakh...*

"An amazing joint workshop! Different languages, our different nationalities and backgrounds – none of this was a barrier to us connecting as people and as artists!"

– Yevheniy Zhytnikov, Actor, Teatr Na Zhukakh

"It was brilliant during one session to explore two such different schools of theatre! Olha [from Na Zhukakh] and Matt [from Night Train] are totally different in the way that they lead their workshops, but so similar in their search for honest, precise and expressive theatre!"

– Dmytro Ternovyi, Co-Founder of Teatr Na Zhukakh

## *from our students...*

"The workshop was very warm and welcoming. Despite the mixed level in English amongst participants, the team led the workshops in a way that ensured everyone felt comfortable and could actively take part. I think that such workshops are incredibly important for theatre makers in Ukraine, because they offer hands-on experience of different 'worlds' in performing arts, and help to broaden the outlook of all involved."

– English Through Theatre workshop participant

"I wanted to thank you and your colleagues for such a brilliant lesson! It was amazing! Two hours went by without our noticing, thanks to your incredible positivity and energy! [...] Thank you so much Léa for inspiring us and for making me go back to the theatre!!!"

– French Through Theatre workshop participant



**from our festival sponsor, International Renaissance Foundation...**

**It was a great honour for the International Renaissance Foundation to support the "1919-2019: Kurbas. Kulish. Shakespeare." festival.**

The goal of IRF Social Capital Programme is to strengthen the organisational and advocacy competence of local civic initiatives and create conditions for civic dialogue, understanding and reconciliation. The festival met these goals perfectly.

With five theatres from Kharkiv, Luhansk Drama Theatre and Night Train participating, Kharkivites had the opportunity not only to watch the festival's performances, but also to discuss them and engage with new theatre spaces and companies. Meanwhile, the exhibition at the Literature Museum bridged the past and future of Ukrainian culture by thoughtfully reflecting on the legacy of Kulish and Kurbas and the relevance of their work today in Ukraine. The workshops that the actors from London delivered were fantastic, because they allowed participants to collaborate with each other even without knowing the language.

But what I enjoyed the most was the atmosphere at the festival and at the performances. It was full of creativity, love and harmony (it even reminded me Woodstock sometimes). To my mind, festivals like this one promote networking and cooperation, and are worth supporting – especially in Eastern Ukraine. I sincerely hope that the festival will be held every year.

– **Olena Rozskazova**, Head of the IRF regional office in Eastern Ukraine (Kharkiv)



# PERFORMING IN UKRAINE

Over the course of our travels we performed MAKLENA a number of times:

- 2 performances at **Teatr Arabesky** (Kharkiv) as part of “1919-2019: Kulish. Kurbas. Shakespeare.” festival.
- 1 performance at **Molodyy Theatre** (Kyiv).
- 1 preview performance at the **PinchukArtCentre** (Kyiv) in partnership with Yellow Blue Strategy.

But performances of MAKLENA were only one aspect of our travels. Night Train’s mission as an international theatre company is to build bridges across borders through storytelling, and cultural exchange was at the heart of all we did as we collaborated with, learned from, and exchanged ideas with Ukrainian artists and audience members in Kharkiv and Kyiv.

Night Train’s translators and tour managers Bohdan Tokarsky and Danielle Craig, as well as producer Daria Feldman from Teatr Arabesky, were instrumental in coordinating the logistics of the tour and using their language skills to help forge connections between our team and the Ukrainian and Russian speakers we worked with. From fellow performers to language students to festival volunteers to our musically gifted taxi driver in Kyiv, the interpersonal connections that we made whilst in Ukraine were amongst the highlights of the trip.

*BOTTOM LEFT: Night Train company members with Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko, after the performance at Molodyy Theatre in Kyiv. BOTTOM RIGHT: Night Train’s arrival in Kyiv with driver and musician Pan Mykhailo.*







Perhaps one of the most poignant excursions during our time in Ukraine was to the **Berezil Theatre** in Kharkiv, where *Maklena Grasa* premiered at gunpoint in 1933. We were familiar with the tragic story of the play's origins, having produced a short video about the play's history last year, and it was an extremely moving experience for us to stand on the very stage where the premiere took place. Theatre expert **Yana Partola**, who led our tour, was also kind enough to take us into the Berezil's archive, where we paged through albums of photographs and notes from the original production.



# AUDIENCE CONNECTIONS

"As soon as you hear: 'My geese, my geese my goosey-geese, take me on your wings...' , it becomes clear to you that you won't be the same person when you leave the theatre."

– review from 5X culture initiative, Kharkiv

"The performance was extraordinary – the acting, the lighting, the puppetry... and the music. I've felt this sense of flight, when after an artistic event you leave with such strong impressions in your mind and soul. And the world around seems to reflect these impressions..."

– Daryna Bakulina, Donetsk

"It wasn't simply a new interpretation of *Maklena Grasa* – this British theatre company have really given us a new perspective on this Ukrainian classic! It's been a long time since I have taken so much pleasure from the theatre: a great production, powerful performances from the actors, fresh elements of puppetry and physical theatre, and it was a treat to hear impeccable English from native speakers..."

– Nina Lisna, Kharkiv



Audience at Molodyy Theatre, Kyiv. Photo by Oleksii Tovpyha.

# THANK YOU / ДЯКУЄМО

We are deeply indebted to a host of supporters of our tour to Ukraine, including but not limited to:

- our collaborators at Teatr Arabesky, Teatr Na Zhukakh, and Molodyy Teatr, especially Daria Feldman, Svitlana Oleshko, Dmytro Ternovyi and Dariia Nazarenko.
- Marta Jenkala, Rory Finnin and Cambridge Ukrainian Studies, who have supported this project from the earliest stages.
- Ukrainian Institute London, Ukrainian Religious Society of St. Sophia, Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain and Ukrainian Cathedral London.
- Valentyn Onyshchenko, Kateryna Busol, Alina Sviderska, Anastasia Sosis and Patrick Morris.

This project could not have happened without our sponsors: **International Renaissance Foundation, DAR Foundation, Ukrgasbank** and **Vesuvio Pizza**.



We also extend our sincere thanks to the 87 supporters of our UK/USA crowdfunding campaign, including:

Anne Applebaum  
Ronna Bach  
Romain Becker  
Olga Biba  
Stanley Bill  
Lena Bovay  
Juliette Chatinières  
William Coppock  
Patrick Dobbs  
Rory Finnin  
Xavier des Garets  
Nigel Gazzard  
Leah Gimbel  
Hélène Goble

Clémence Grandchamp  
Michael Greenwald  
Natalie Jaresko  
Elisa Kahn  
Mags Keast  
Olesya Khromeychuk &  
Uilleam Blacker  
Orysia Lutsevych  
Joel Mackler  
Irena Makaryk  
Lydia Matiaszek  
Posey Mehta  
Ray Montague  
Olivia Munk

Sean O'Connor  
Kitty Parker Brooks  
Marina Pesenti  
Gary Richards  
Lesia Scholey  
Luba Shephard  
Artem Shevaley  
Anna Solovei  
Carolina Stern  
Virlana Tkacz  
Constance Uzwyshyn  
Paul Watkins  
Ursula Woolley

In addition to the generous supporters of the Night Train crowdfunder, a further 84 people donated to the crowdfunder held in Ukraine by our festival partners. In total, crowdfunding supporters helped us raise over £7,000 in order to make this tour and festival happen. We are hugely grateful to everyone who backed this project!

