

Slovo. Theater Group  
presents...

# MOTHERMOTHERLAND





## **Executed Renaissance: A short history**

**1922:** Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic joins the Soviet Union. A soviet initiative called *Ukrainization* encourages creation in the Ukrainian language and sparks a cultural renaissance. Les Kurbas founds Berezil theatre in Kyiv.

**1925:** A petition from a group of artists for housing support in Kharkiv is accepted by the government and plans for Slovo Building begin.

**1926:** Berezil theatre moves to Kharkiv.

**1929:** Construction of Slovo Building is completed. The building has a kindergarten, solarium, and phones in every apartment. The phones quickly become a tool for soviet surveillance.

**1932-1933:** Holodomor, the great starvation. Somewhere between 3.5 and 7 million Ukrainians are starved to death by soviet forces. Ukrainian writer Mykola Khyvylovy visits the villages and witnesses the famine firsthand.

**May 13th, 1933:** Mykola Khyvylovy invites his friends to his apartment in Slovo Building, walks into the back room, and commits suicide. He does this as a protest to the arrest of his friend and colleague Mykhailo Yalovy; Yalovy's arrest and subsequent assassination being one of the first of what would lead to an entire generation of executed Ukrainian artists and intellectuals.

**1933:** Les Kurbas produces *Maklena Grasa* by writer Mykola Kulish and they are sent into exile.

**November 3rd, 1937:** the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, 1111 prisoners, including Kurbas, Kulish, and Yalovy, are executed in Sandarmokh together.

**Between 1933 and 1941,** almost all Ukrainian artists and intellectuals are assassinated.



## Yuliia Linnik

Yulia Linnik is an actress and theatre producer from Kharkiv, Ukraine. Currently, the actress and PR-manager of Slovo. Theater group. She graduated from the Kyiv National university of theatre, cinema and TV and took a semester of Danish Performing Art High School. During the last year, she has been working as an actress in the Nafta Theatre in Kharkiv, as well as on her individual art projects.

Archival texts and their translations in the performance provided by Yuliia.



## Olesya Zakharova

Olesya Zakharova is an actress and manager of cultural events. She graduated from Kharkiv National University of Arts as a drama theater director. Additionally, she took courses in performative art, modern dance, and physical theater. She is a co-organizer of the festivals «Kurbas.Technologies" and "Bread - Visokopillya" and an administrator at the independent theater "Nafta" in Kharkiv.



## Daria Holovchanska

Daria Holovchanska was studying at Kharkiv National University of Art until February 24th, when she transferred to Akademia Teatralna in Warsaw to finish her last year in Puppetry. She is currently working on a masters degree project about Ezequiel Garcia-Pomeu. Daria previously worked at Kharkiv National Academic Puppet Theater, performing in "Mother Courage and her children" (Katrin) directed by Oksana Dmitrieva. Daria is one of the founders and actresses of TERRA Theater. She is interested in movement theater, object, materials, puppets and masks.

Masks and mirrors in the performance were created and made by Daria.

## Veronika Shuster



Veronika Shuster is a visual artist and performer, who works with the topic of memory and its representation in public spaces. Born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, she earned a Bachelor of Language, Literature and Comparative Studies in National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Kyiv. Coming primarily from the world of ballet and contemporary dance, now Veronika works in the mediums of performance art, physical theater and documentary filmmaking.

Audrey Rose Dégez,

Lili Maritchka Dégez



Audrey Rose Dégez is a producer, director, playwright (*Our Common Thread* (2015), *Empathize Me* (2016)), actress, and the mother of Lili Maritchka from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (USA) and currently based just outside of Paris (France). She studied Performance Studies at

Rutgers University and Acting at l'école internationale de théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris. Scheduled to write a play at Residency Slovo in Kharkiv, Ukraine in September/October of 2022 as the first international resident in Slovo Building, she made the decision to found Slovo. Theater Group after the invasion of February 24th.

Lili Maritchka spent three months developing her impeccable theatrical timing in the grande salle and salle verte of Rue Faubourg Saint-Denis while her mother was learning clown at Jacques Lecoq. Named for her Ukrainian-speaking great-great grandmother Marie Osadchuk and born on February 1st, 2022, she has been a part of Slovo. Theater Group since its inception. She is never happier than when the group moves all together, except maybe when the audience applauds.

## **Characters and cast, in order of appearance:**

Yuliia.....Yuliia Linnik,  
Lesia Zakharova, Daria Holovchanska, Audrey Rose Dégez,  
Lili Maritchka Dégez, Veronika Shuster

Mykola Khyvylovy.....Daria Holovchanska

I's Mother.....Veronika Shuster

Mother&Daughter.....Audrey Rose Dégez, Lili  
Maritchka Dégez

I.....Yuliia Linnik, Lesia Zakharova, Daria Holovchanska

Lesia.....Olesia Zakharova

Dasha.....Daria Holovchanska

Veronika.....Veronika Shuster

Audrey.....Audrey Rose Dégez

Lili.....Lili Maritchka Dégez

Dr. Tahabat.....Lesia Zakharova

Andrusha.....Daria Holovchanska

The Degenerate Sentinel.....Yuliia Linnik

The fascist dictator.....Audrey Rose Dégez

Khyvylovy's Mother.....Veronika Shuster, Audrey Rose Dégez

Mothermotherland is a devised performance that explores motherhood, motherland, and Ukrainian and American experience through the lens of Mykola Khyvylovy's autobiographical short story "I am (a Romantic)". Written in 1924, the short story follows I, the head of the secret police (the Cheka), who must decide, with the help of his comrades: Dr. Tahabat, Andrusha, and the degenerate Sentinel, whether or not to execute his own mother to protect his idea of a commune beyond the hills. This performance was co-written and co-directed by all members of Slovo. Theater Group. The performance was devised in the styles of Les Kurbas (theatre of movement and gestus), Jacques Lecoq (physical theatre), and post-documentary theatre. In this piece, there are multiple realities existing and overlapping with one another; there are the actors and their personal experiences, the actors playing themselves and their personal stories, there are the characters of "I am (a Romantic)", and there is Mykola Khyvylovy.



Directions to Mothermotherland  
(quotes from *I am (a Romantic)* italicized)

1. Begin at Yuliia's Story.
2. Take the first left to Meet Mykola, he'(wa)s a writer, he'(wa)s from Kharkiv. [Excerpt Khyvylovy's *Blue Études* tr. Yuliia Linnik]
3. Follow Khyvylovy another 2 miles to I am (a Romantic): Utopia, my mother, and a dream. *The storm is coming. Darkness. My mother - simplicity, silent grief, and boundless kindness (This I will remember)... Then I take her lovely head, sprinkled with silvery grey, and rest it on my bosom. Mother, are you asleep?*
4. Rest stop at What we remember; Childhood, our stories, your stories, his-story-history. What do you remember?
5. Next left to Meet the comrades. Dr. Tahabat, Andrusha, and the degenerate sentinel. Meet I: *Night and day I am disappearing into the Cheka. Dr. Tahabat, this doctor, high of forehead and white in his baldness, with his cold reasoning, and a stone instead of a heart - is he not both my irresistible master and my beastly instinct? Andrusha sits near me with a distracted look and from time to time glances anxiously at the doctor. Andrusha, my poor Andrusha... here against his feeble will. The sentinel: if the doctor is an evil genius, my evil will, then the degenerate is an executioner. Was it not to him, to this sentinel of the black tribunal that I composed hymns in moments of great tension?*
6. Straight ahead to the First tribunal in the dark palace of the princes. *The city is dead. Our counterattacks are in vain. All men are animals. F\$ck Fascist Hypocrites who hate homosexuals. Will you push the red button?*
7. U-turn at Don't forget to wash your hands.

8. Straight ahead for another 15 miles to I saw an execution. Let's talk about executions. No, let's talk about milkshakes and ballets and bullets and — Khyvylovy's mother. Yes, let's talk about her.
9. Right turn at the fork to « A letter from Khyvylovy's mother to Mykola Khyvylovy ». Post date unknown. Tr. Yuliia Linnik.
10. Take exit 13 for A Grande Finale: Text from Khyvylovy's suicide note. Post date: May 13th, 1933. Tr. Yuliia Linnik.
11. Arrive at The City. Sounds from Kharkiv. Sounds from Pittsburgh. *The city is dark. The electric power plant has gone out of order. The city is dead. The city is...*
12. Right turn to I am not a refugee, I am runner. Yuliia went running in Chicago. She was listening to a song in her headphones. We are listening to a song in her headphones.
13. Continue straight for A Moment of Rest. We just all need a moment of rest.
14. Left turn into Second Tribunal. *There will be a storm. There will be hundreds of executions. I is a Chekist, but also a human being?*
15. Another 1111 kilograms to the executions.
16. 13 steps to *Mother says that I (her rebellious son) have absolutely tortured myself to death.*
17. 9 months ahead for This is maternity. Audrey and Lili's story.
18. 8 years to *Then, in a daze, enveloped with the flames of an intolerable joy, I put my arm around my mother's neck and pressed her head to my breast. Then I raised my post and pressed the barrel to her temple.*
19. Hi, how are you? Are you ok? You have arrived at your destination. You are safe. Yuliia is (marked as) safe?



Slovo. Theater Group was founded in April of 2022  
to fight against oppression of Ukrainian culture by  
promoting Ukrainian culture abroad.



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