



© Designed by Elena Nikulina for the performances of Vitalik – A Show About a Man by Vitalii Chenskii, produced by Wild Theatre in Kyiv, Ukraine, premiering in 2017.

## Staging Queer Lives in Russia and Ukraine

*An event exploring the representation of queer identities in post-Soviet performance, for theatre-makers, academics and students.*

**Thursday 6 June 2019 (all day) and Friday 7 June 2019 (morning),  
including a film screening on the evening of 6 June.**

**Wolfson College, University of Oxford**

- How do playwrights represent queer lives on stage in contemporary Russia and post-Maidan Ukraine?
- What sources, narratives and traditions do Russian and Ukrainian draw on when telling the lives of queer subjects?
- What resistance is encountered when staging queer lives in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine, and to what extent have artists overcome them?
- How might queer performance in post-Soviet culture be conceptualised – as a national, transnational or local phenomenon?
- What acts of ‘queering translation’ are needed to realise a poetic journey from post-Soviet performance to UK stage?

These are just some of the questions which will be addressed at this event!

# Programme

## Thursday 6 June

- 10-11.15 Welcome, followed by roundtable discussion to consider the presence of queer drama on Russian and Ukrainian stages, in relation to shifting cultural and geopolitical realities, with speakers from the region including the playwrights Maksym Kurochkin and Oles' Barlig (Ukraine), and the theatre critic Pavel Rudnev (Moscow), as well as the scholars Julie Cassiday (Williams College, MA) and Alex Kondakov (Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki).
- 11.15-11.45 Coffee
- 11.45-13.00 A translation workshop using an extract from Darina Borisenko's play *Degenerat* (2018), and exploring issues ranging from accuracy and appropriateness through to 'performability'. Led by Noah Birksted-Breen and including: Alex Thomas; Veniamin Gushchin; Angus Russell; Sarah Vitali; Charlotte Dowling; Fiona Bell with Irina Pavlova.
- 13.00-14.15 Sandwich lunch
- 14.15-16.00 Replicating the actual processes of play selection in Britain, our three colleagues from Russia and Ukraine have been asked each to introduce and recommend a play written in Russian in either country, and involving queer themes or gender issues, which might prove suitable for an eventual staging in London. Rehearsed readings of extracts from these plays will be provided by professional actors, and the plays' merits will be discussed. The concept of 'queering translation' across cultures will be explored, and those present will be invited to nominate one of the plays for further consideration by Sputnik Theatre (London). Texts of the extracts (in Russian and English) will be provided. Led by Noah Birksted-Breen, with Pavel Rudnev, Maksym Kurochkin and Oles' Barlig.
- 16.00-16.30 Tea
- 16.30-19.30 Free time; supper for invited guests.
- 19.30-22.00 Showing of Kirill Serebrennikov's film *(M)uchenik (The Martyr)/The Student*, followed by Q&A.

## Friday 7 June

- 9.30-10.15: What has been the effect in the cultural sphere of the 2013 Russian legislation outlawing ‘the propaganda of non-traditional relationships’?  
Roundtable with Julie Cassiday (USA), Oles’ Barlig (Ukraine) and Alex Kondakov (Aleksenteri Institute, Helsinki) in conversation with Philip Bullock about Russian and Ukrainian responses to Eurovision, drag queens in Russian and Ukrainian culture, and the broader intellectual hinterland of queer performance.
- 10.15-10.45 Coffee
- 10.45-12.00 Showing of Kirill Serebrennikov’s short film *The Phonograph* (2016), which offers a glimpse of Tchaikovsky’s world. Roundtable discussion of what, if anything, is queer about this work – and about the film *(M)uchenik* – as part of a general examination of queer lives and their representation in Russian and Ukrainian theatre, film, ballet and opera.

*Participation at the workshop is by invitation only; the Thursday 7.30pm film performance will be free and open to the general public.*

*This event is being run alongside a related workshop, ‘Found in Translation – Bringing Russian and Punjabi Culture to British Stages’, on 5 June 2019: <https://www.creativeml.ox.ac.uk/found-translation-bringing-russian-and-punjabi-british-stages>*



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bringing Russian  
plays to the UK