

Youth Action Theatre's

exchange with
Theatre Podol, Kiev, U.S.S.R
1989 - 1990

Sponsored by Thames Television Plc

23rd. December 1989

Short Report on Visit of the Advance Part from Theatre on Podol, Friday, December
15th. to Wednesday, December 20th. 1989

The party consisted of Vitaly Malekhov, Artistic Director, Yuri Kurasov, Deputy Director and Interpreter and his wife, Olga and Vladimir Moroz, Director of sponsor Company.

Although late, the party arrived safely at lunchtime on Friday, 10th. Dec. and were taken for lunch to a nearby pub. This was followed by a first visit to the shops in Kingston. Later the party attended the performance of The Fly On The Wall Company at Hampton Court Theatre. This was the first sight of the theatre in which the company would be performing in March.

On Saturday morning, the party was taken to London to walk round the main central sights and to see a few of the shops. At 2.30 p.m. they were taken to Covent Garden where seats had been booked at the matinee performance of the Musical "CATS". Only four seats were obtainable, so they were left alone to see the performance, have a further look around the Covent Garden area and then make their way back to Teddington where Vitaly and Vladimir were staying with the family, Osorio. That evening, Martine Osorio hosted us all for an evening meal. Sunday morning had been ear-marked for a meeting to arrange the details of the visit of the main party in March. Vladimir and Olga not being involved in these negotiations had expressed a wish to visit Madame Tussaud's and this was arranged. The meeting settled most of the details for the main party visit, numbering thirty, the same number as we had taken to Kiev. But there were problems in booking sufficient places on flights on the dates arranged. The party would now leave Moscow on Monday 12th. March (SU 582) leaving at 07.45. This would mean returning on Tuesday 20th. March (08.55, SU244) but no seats were immediately available and the party has been placed on a waiting list. The alternative would be to stay until Thursday, 22nd. March (11.40, SU 581). This should be settled by January 20th. The party would be hosted in private homes and a meeting of possible hosts would be arranged in January.

Six performances would be given and the play to be performed would be Boris Pasternak's version of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" but as the Soviets estimated the length of performance at 4 hours, they were asked to shorten it to a maximum of 2½ hours.

At mid-day the meeting adjourned to Hampton Court Theatre when all technical and staging matters were discussed on site.

This was followed by a private tour around Hampton Court Palace on the opposite side of the road to the Theatre. Tea at a private house in the Hampton home of Mr. and Mrs. Lewsey was followed in the evening, by the attendance of the whole party as guests at the Christmas dinner of Youth Action Theatre, held at The Winning Post, on the Great Chertsey Road.

A visit to Stratford on Avon had been arranged for Monday and two cars set off on a very wet journey. But this was something that the Artistic Director, very much wanted to do. As soon as we arrived, we visited Shakespeare's birthplace and other historic places. An interview in the early evening had been arranged with Alan McCormack, Assistant Director on the production of Coriolanus. This proved to be a very worthwhile discussion. First, he very generously showed us around the setting for this play explaining all the intricacies and the way this very political play, had been tackled. After, he took us for coffee where the representatives from Kiev were able to talk about possible links in the future. This appeared to interest Mr. McCormack and he undertook to discuss with Terry Hands and possibly further contact could be made in the future.

Afterwards, Graham Sawyer, a personal friend and manager at Stratford Theatre, had arranged seats for the party at the evening performance.

More useful contacts were made the following morning, when the Mayor of Richmond upon Thames, Councillor Geoffrey Pope and his wife received the party at York House, Twickenham. Also present was Councillor Woodriff who, not only is the Chairman of the Overseas Twinning Sub Committee but also speaks excellent Russian. There was a suggestion that it might be possible for Kiev to be linked with Richmond upon Thames. Councillor Woodriff completed the visit by showing the visitors round the civic building giving an excellent little talk on how our local political system, works.

As we had an appointment in the evening at the National Theatre, the Soviets decided to have a final look round London on their own and meet us later on the South Bank. At the National, Kevin Cahill, Head of Education had agreed to meet us and two of his assistants, Carol Winter and Jane in charge of Interaction sat us in their office and another very fruitful discussion took place. First, a detailed explanation of the National, its hierarchy and how it works, was given, then a more personal discussion as to possibility of assistance being given during the visit of the main party in March and an exchange of addresses and mementoes. Finally, a tour of all three Theatres was given and the visitors were amazed to see backstage and all the facilities available at the Olivier, Cottesloe and Lyttleton theatres.

We then travelled home to a final celebration meal at the Osorio's and early Wednesday morning, the party was taken to catch their flight from Heathrow. It was generally felt to be a very successful visit and the organisers are very grateful to all those who participated.