

YOUTH ACTION THEATRE

Newsletter : May, 1989. KIEV Trip.

Following the 5 day visit of YAT's Advance party to Kiev, May 5th - 10th. The party, Jean Goodwin, Richard Eliot and Eric Yardley had a very successful, very enjoyable but very exhausting trip. As a result we have agreed a "Statement of Intentions" and our exchange goes ahead.

First of all let me say how welcome they made us - there is no doubt, they want us to go. The whole atmosphere is relaxed and friendly but it will be, for everybody, an unusual experience - standards of living are different but there are no real problems except of language. It would help if those going, made some effort to understand the Russian alphabet.

It is not going to be easy for us to organise, it means a lot of work and you must help by completing things by the times stated, passports, visas and payments and so forth. But it is a most important project for YAT to undertake and I want all of you to feel this too. We have been given, almost by accident, one of the first opportunities to break through the Iron curtain and exchange views and see each others way of life. This is important to them - it is important to us. We are, as it were, "ambassadors" - so the impressions we make are important. Let me quote their words in the Preamble to the document we have both signed "...with the aim of further improvement of cultural relations, attraction of youth to the cultural activities, strengthening of mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of the USSR and Great Britain..."

Kiev is a beautiful city - ancient capital of old Russia, now capital of the Ukraine a state the size of France. Moscow and Leningrad get most of the attention and any English in Kiev are most unusual. Many old buildings although most were destroyed in the war by the Nazis - museums, art galleries, etc. Its on the huge Dnieper river where there are beautiful sandy beaches, where you can swim, sun bathe or go boating, The weather should be hot and sunny.

Now to the details. There will be 30 in our party, probably a cast of 20, 5 musicians, and 5 technical, stage staff, admin. So everybody has to be part of the production. Each pays return fare of just under £250 - where this is a problem, we may be able to subsidise. Before the Russians come next March, you must pay a further £50 which will be the pocket money for your Russian - they are not allowed to take hard currency out of their country. You must also provide accommodation, bed, breakfast and evening meal for the same number of days, next March when they come to us. Preferably this should be in your own home but you may arrange for a friend to do it for you in this area. If anybody can take more than one, please say so, even if it means making some financial arrangement. If providing this accommodation gives you a serious problem, you must say so beforehand - but we may be able to help as we have a few volunteers to help us. Most of the Russians will be between 20 & 25, with some up to 30 - perhaps on average, a little older than us.

What you get in return. You will be given 9 roubles a day to spend out there. A rouble is just a little less than a pound. But this is ample for your needs. You will be provided with bed and breakfast accommodation in a hotel. You can buy your other meals in the hotel or any restaurant in town, and food, mainly set meals, not a la carte, are very cheap - a 4 or 5 course meal for 3 roubles.

Travel around the city ,is by bus or Metro, both very cheap, equivalent to 5 p. for any journey, on the Metro all day,if you wish. Or a taxi for 3 or 4 of you at 50 p. per kilometre.

Do NOT change any sterling unless you have to - your 9 roubles a day should be ample - and if you change money, you can't change it back, you can't take it out, all you can do is spend it and there is not a great deal to spend it on. But take a little sterling, just for emergencies - but declare it at the Customs entry and then you can bring it out with you.

We will travel by Air to Moscow and then on to Kiev on Friday 25th. August and return Kiev to Leningrad to Heathrow on Sunday, 3rd. Sept. We will just have a few hours in Moscow and Leningrad between flights. You will need to hand to me when we decide the party, and you should prepare for this now - a photostat of your full passport, 3 passport photographs and a Visa application form completed (we will give you a blank form) You will need to pay your air fare early in July - so beg, borrow but not steal it !

Once the party has been selected, Richard Eliot has volunteered to organise getting the party to and from Kiev.

On Monday, June 5th at Collis School, for all those available, Peter Roberts will hold another Music Workshop based on Blood Brothers which is the Musical which our hosts have accepted. We will explain the parts, how we shall use the 20 in the cast, what musical instruments we require. We need one actor/singer who can double on the saxophone. Copies of the play can be bought at Samuel French for £4.00.

On the following two Mondays, there will be dance and movement Workshops ,not necessarily aimed at Kiev,taken by Gary Coulson. And on Monday June 26th.and Thursday, June 29th. and at any other times, as necessary during this week, we will hold the auditions, and cast the play.

Then we will go straight into rehearsals from Monday July 3rd. and each Monday, Thursday and Friday during July and August and whenever. So make sure that you keep this period free because we must take availability for rehearsals into account.

But all these details will be confirmed and additional information given at the June 5th. Workshop. In Kiev, we will be giving six performances in a large, well-equipped ,750-seater Theatre. It was very obvious that the prospect of seeing this English musical in their Theatre, was to be a tremendous thrill for them.

If you are able to raise personal sponsorship to reduce your own costs - fine. I will continue to seek group sponsorship and and response will be spread overal and I am more than hopeful, that this will happen.

Anybody under eighteen must produce full parental permission to undertake the trip.

Finally, following the Kiev trip, I hope all of you who have shown interest whether you get chosen or not, will remain with Y.A.T. On our return, we will begin rehearsals for our Autumn production which will be a straight play and it will be presented at Hampton Court Theatre from 22nd. October to 28th. October and will be directed by David Lewsey. I hope those who go to Kiev and those who don't, will be available to be in the cast.

With our present members and the new members joining us I want our group to go from strength to strength and broaden its activities.

ERIC.