

MUSIC THEATRE

MÖDRANIHT. SONGS OF WINTER WAR

OPERA APERTA

FREE
REPUBLIC OF
VIENNA
FESTIVAL

1–3 June
Theater Akzent

Mōdraniht. Songs of Winter War is a journey through different styles of music and times, through tragedies as well as rituals to drive away evil spirits. According to Norse mythology, Mōdraniht, the 'Night of the Mothers,' descends upon Europe on 21 December. People gather for a ritual dance to protect their homes from dark forces and to welcome the sun, which must be reborn each year. The project is based on an expedition from the Carpathian mountains in Ukraine (shattered by political upheavals) via the Uzbek Aral Sea (one of the greatest man-made environmental disasters) to the small Cantabrian village of Silió in Northern Spain. This village is home to one of the oldest carnival traditions in Europe, the Vijanera: a winter carnival based on pagan rituals. Powerful and acutely current music theatre!

Duration
approx 100 mins.


barrier-free access

Q & A
2 June, following
the performance



Vijanera festivities in Silió

Dramaturgy, Stage design, Music Illia Razumeiko **Music, Conductor** Roman Grygoriv
Dramaturgical co-creation Marichka Styrbulova **Costumes** Kateryna Markush **Live-electronics**
Valeriia Vynohradova **Video** Ivanna-Kateryna Yakovyna **Producer** Olga Diatel **With** Marichka
Shtyrbulova, Yuliia Vitraniuk, Yuliia Aliksieieva, Sofia Pavlichenko, Oleksandr Chyshii, Kateryna
Hordiienko, Dariia Bohdan, Karolina Muzychenko, Akym Zvarych, Ihor Boichuk, Valeriia
Vynohradova, Anne Benennt **Production coordination** Yuliia Parysh, Iryna Onishchuk **Lighting**
Svitlana Zmicieva **Sound design** Christina Bauer

Coproduction Opera Aperta, proto produkciia, KĬ FEST (Kyiv International Festival) **Supported by**
Goethe-Institut Ukraine, The Ribbon International, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in
Ukraine

executed by the team of the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna

World Premiere May 2026, KĬ FEST (Kyiv International Festival)

The opera quotes music by Franz Schubert, Ludwig van Beethoven, Richard Strauss, and
Asmr Jakupovic.

Between 2020 and 2024, the producer Volodymyr Burkovets and sound engineers Andriy
Nidzielsky and Slava Sobolev were key members of the Opera Aperta team. They have now joined
the Ukrainian Armed Forces to protect Ukraine and Europe in the struggle for freedom against
Russian occupation forces.

HOW DO YOU STAGE AN OPERA IN WARTIME?

Under the daily threat of Russia's war of extermination, the Ukrainian Kyiv-based collective Opera Aperta attempt to answer this question with the creation of a new opera, a rhizomatic theatre form that merges different times and spaces on stage.

On December 21st, the northern hemisphere's longest night, Mōdraniht – Norse mythology's 'Mothers' Night' – descends upon Europe. In mountain villages, residents gather for ritual dances to shield their homes from dark forces and welcome back the Sun, reborn each year.

In macro- and microhistories, *Songs of Winter War* narrates the journey of a human group and artistic ensemble through different musics, texts, temporalities, costumes and spaces, from a 'theatre of war' to an 'inner theatre' of the body.

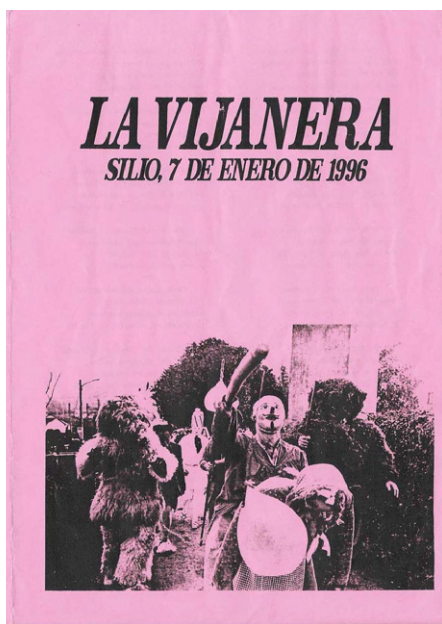
Opera Practica – 'theatre about theatre' – is an endless 'winter journey' towards the imaginary 'east'. It is also a voyage through epochs, wars and geographies. The opera project began

in 2025 with an expedition from the Ukrainian Carpathians to Central Asia and Northern Spain, reflecting on the ecological tragedy of the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan and on the phenomenon of *La Vijanera*, a winter carnival still held in the small Cantabrian village of Silió.

This work is the final instalment in Opera Aperta's 'ecological trilogy'. Opening with the creation of the archaeological opera *Chornobyl'dorf* [*Chernobyl Village*] in 2020 and continuing with *GALA-24. Opera del Mondo* [*GALA-24: Opera of the World*] in 2024, the trilogy's common thread was the ecological catastrophes of recent decades caused by the colonial regimes of the USSR (Chernobyl and the Aral Sea) and Russia (the Kakhovka Dam explosion).

One of the video fragments used in the performance features the face of Andrii Onoprienko, a veteran of the Russo-Ukrainian War. The Russians destroyed his face and took his eyesight. Despite this, Andrii is now a leading performer at the Veterans' Theatre in Kyiv.

THE VIJANERA



La Vijanera poster, 1996

'On the last day of the year, certain villages celebrate a festival called *La Vijanera* or *La Viejanera*. This consists of a series of dances which we may describe as wild. At the break of day, those who play an active part in the proceedings – shepherds as a rule – take to the streets clad from head to toe in animal skins with any number of copper cowbells hanging from their waists.

Disguised in such wild and original costumes, they run and jump and thrash about as if possessed by a furious madness and make an insufferable, deafening commotion as they go.



La Vijanera poster, 1985

They spend the whole day given over to this most violent activity, and the hero of these festivities is he who has displayed the greatest energy and agility in his

movements and is the last to succumb to exhaustion. As evening falls, the revellers gather at the boundary of the neighbouring village without stepping over the line that separates them, and there they await the dancers from that village, if a similar festival has been held there.



La Vijanera poster, 1995

The two sides stand facing each other and call aloud “What do you want, peace or war?” If those questioned reply “peace”, both groups advance, mingle in fraternal embrace and begin the final dance forthwith. If, on the other hand, the answer is “war” they hurl themselves on one another and beat each other senseless until their bodies, already

exhausted and broken by the day’s exertions, fall to the ground so battered and bruised that the intervention of peaceful villagers is required to bear them home. And thus concludes this festivity, which today is celebrated in but a handful of villages.’

Hermilio Alcalde del Río* in: *Las pinturas y grabados de las cavernas prehistóricas de la provincia de Santander* [The Paintings and Engravings of Prehistoric Caves in the Province of Santander], Santander, Blanchard and Arce, 1904.

* Spanish archaeologist and prehistorian (1866–1947)



La Vijanera poster, 2010

BIOGRAPHY

Opera Aperta is a contemporary opera laboratory based in Kyiv. Together, they explore new ways in contemporary music and composition, as well as instrumental theatre, media operas, and performative and interdisciplinary art forms.

Opera Aperta was founded in 2020 by **Roman Grygoriv** and **Illia Razumeiko**, whose artistic collaboration began in 2007. Among their important milestones is the co-founding of the international festival Porto Franko, which developed into one of the largest events for performing and contemporary arts in Ukraine between 2016 and 2018. From 2015 to 2020, Grygoriv and Razumeiko also worked as composers, playwrights, performers and artistic directors of the NOVA OPERA ensemble.

During this time, they collaborated with director Vlad Troitskyi to create a biblical opera trilogy: the requiem opera *IYOV* (2015), the circus opera *Babylon* (2016) and the ballet opera *ARK* (2017). Their diverse portfolio also includes synthetic music theatre works such as the sound opera *Impossibilities* with Taras Prokhasko, and the trap opera *Wozzeck* with the poet Yuri Izdryk.

The aim of Opera Aperta is to establish a modern opera house in Kyiv that will serve as a multidisciplinary platform for contemporary and baroque opera, dance theatre and experimental stage forms.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Owner, Editor and Publisher Wiener Festwochen GesmbH, Lehárgasse 11/1/6, 1060 Wien, T + 43 1 589 22 0, festwochen@festwochen.at | www.festwochen.at **General Management** Milo Rau, Artemis Vakianis **Artistic Direction** (responsible for the content) Milo Rau, Artistic Direction **Translation** p.5: Ian Barnett **Picture Credits** Cover: © Anna Sorokolit; p.3: Cultural Association of Friends of the Vijnara of Silió; p.5–6: Depiction of Coplas © Cultural Association of Friends of the Vijnara of Silió **Produced by** Print Alliance HAV Produktions GmbH (Bad Vöslau) **Design** SIRENE Studio **Layout** Valerie Eccli

15 MAY –
21 JUNE 2026

REPUBLIC
OF GODS



MAIN SPONSOR



PUBLIC FUNDING BODY



PRESENTING PARTNER



HOTEL PARTNER

MAX BROWN
HOTELS

CATERING PARTNER



MEDIA PARTNER

DERSTANDARD