

ukrdrama.ui.org.ua

Author	Liudmyla Tymoshenko (en) / Людмила Тимошенко (ua)
Play	
Original name / translated	ФОКУС-ПОКУС (ua) / НОCUS-POCUS (en)
Translator	John Freedman with Natalia Bratus
Language of translation	English
Copyright of original text belongs to	Liudmyla Tymoshenko tymoshenko.ludmyla@gmail.com
Copyright of translation belongs to	John Freedman jfreed16@gmail.com

Here you can read only a fragment of text. In order to get access to the full text or to receive permission for staging the text, please, contact the copyright owners of the text and translation.



ukrdramahub
портал сучасної української драматургії

The project is implemented with the support of the International Relief Fund of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany and the Goethe Institute within the project "Theatrical windows. Work in progress" implemented by the NGO "Teatr na Zhukah" (Kharkiv).

Hocus Pocus

By Liudmyla Tymoshenko

Translated by John Freedman with Natalia Bratus

In 2014, everyone talked about the energy of Maidan. The energy field that existed there. The energy of a space that united millions of people. The energy of a time that would change everything, and of the day that would come when everyone would talk about “before and after.” The energy of the place. Maidan was a Place Of Energy. Everyone was electrified by this energy and was able to continue the struggle right up until the batteries ran out. They held for a long time, like the old Nokia phones used to do. Several days running with no sleep. But not without food, because someone always had something – tangerines, tea, sandwiches. Sometimes you'd get sandwiches with red fish, sometimes baloney, sometimes there was just sausage without bread, sometimes bread without sausage. All of it was equally delicious, because it united diverse people. Maidan was not for the poor against the rich, and it wasn't vice versa. Mercedes and Porsches were parked at the square. Women in mink coats and diamonds got out of them and joined the crowd. They brought tea, buttered sandwiches, and made Molotov cocktails. Ordinary people came by public transport, but they did the same thing. They joined the crowd and helped change the course of history.

What is etched in my memory are a million tangerines. The air smelled of New Year's Eve, and everyone laughed at the clumsy artificial Christmas tree that Yanukovich installed in the middle of Maidan despite the protests. This Christmas tree resembled a dunce hat on a clown, and there were lots of memes going around on the theme of “Yanukovych in a dunce hat.” We all laughed and I laughed, too. There were a lot of us, and we believed in our victory because the things we wanted were so obvious it seemed ridiculous to think they wouldn't come about. We didn't want to go back to Soviet times. We didn't want to be part of Russia. We wanted to live a decent European life. But then we stopped laughing. That was the day that Serhiy Nihoyan, a young man of Armenian origin with a kind, velvety gaze, died. He was a Maidan security guard, and I saw him in the news feed. He was reading an excerpt from Shevchenko's poem, “Caucasus.” He knew a lot about the Caucasus, because his family had moved to Ukraine, fleeing the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Now a sniper's bullet killed Serhiy in the center of the Ukrainian capital on January 22 at six o'clock in the morning, right at the very time that a temporary truce had been established between the protesters and the Russian-backed Berkut storm troopers.

This was the first point of no return, after which the peaceful Maidan turned into a bloody massacre. Snipers shot people from the roofs of government buildings, one after another, day after day. The news showed dozens of dead bodies lying on mats along Khreshchatyk Street, covered with white sheets revealing burgundy spots that bloomed like roses. I had just been watching a video from

Maidan, where the coffins of dead heroes were being taken out on a stage, and my heart was breaking with pain and tears, when a relative from Moscow called me on Skype.

The final day of the Winter Olympic Games was under way in the Russian city of Sochi, and my relative looked very happy. He was picking his teeth with a toothpick he had just used to eat a big green olive.

“Hey! Did you watch the closing of the Olympic Games?” he asked.

“No,” I said, “We’re not up to that right now.”

“Why is that? We chocked up a lot of victories. We won a lot of medals.”

My relative looked as if he, his wife, and his two children had won most of these medals. I told him about snipers, coffins, and our grief.

“Well,” he sighed in annoyance, “our president will finish with the Olympics and then take you guys on. What the hell are you guys doing down there anyway?”

That was my last conversation with my relative from Moscow. After a while, the International Olympic Committee conducted an investigation and concluded that, during the preparation and running of the Winter Olympics in Sochi, the Russian authorities had established a system that let athletes use banned drugs, and enacted clever measures to conceal the doping. This all happened with the direct participation of Russia's official sports organizations, the leadership of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency, and the FSB of Russia. This was the first wave of brazen tricks, wherein a country decided that the whole world would never notice how deftly it could move its hands while playing a shell game. You have a hand full of shit, but – abracadabra! – now you're as pure as the Holy Spirit. But the international sports community caught a whiff of this stench and it took away the medals.

I once was quite struck by a certain fact. In the old days, magicians doing tricks with a snow-white pigeon that sits in a cage and suddenly disappears were actually just killing the bird. The circus performer showed the cage with the pigeon in it, then collapsed it in his hands. When he opened it back up, there was nothing there: the bird was crushed in a false bottom. The audience cheered and clapped, and the magician pulled a new pigeon out of his sleeve and placed it in the empty cage. After the show, he counted his money and prepared pigeon soup.

Abracadabra! And Crimea is gone.

Hocus Pocus! We lost segments of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Hocus Pocus, and a Malaysian Airlines Boeing 777 passenger plane, known as flight MH17, was shot down July 17 near the city of Torez, in the Donetsk region, filled with 298 civilians and crew members flying on vacation from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. They all perished. An international investigation concluded that the plane was shot down by a Russian-made Buk anti-aircraft missile system belonging to the 53rd anti-aircraft missile brigade from Kursk (Russia), and, on May 24, the authorities of Australia and the Netherlands officially accused Russia of causing the crash.

This should have been the second point of no return, because tricks like this have long been outlawed. But Putin, in his efforts to “take us on,” kept pulling more pigeons out of his sleeve, and goading the audience with shouts of: “Look, it's alive!” The Russian audience continued to applaud. Cabbage soup and pigeon meat became a delicacy, while the rest of the world froze in a mute stupor. The magician repeatedly went on tour to summits, shaking the limp hands of his silent colleagues, presidents who posed for photos with koala bears and crushed pigeons.

Such impunity robs one of resources, robs one of energy, and creates a sense of futility that there is no way to resist. Points of No Return are transformed into cages with an infinite number of false bottoms that collapse and destroy living worlds an infinite number of times. Rockets flying at Kyiv; people tortured in Bucha; Mariupol, wiped off the face of the Earth; the dried-up corpse of a cat on a child's bed in an abandoned apartment... It's a good thing my grandmother didn't live to see these times. She wouldn't have felt sorry for the cat, even though she was kind. In the early 2000s, she received payments from the German government for having been forced to work as a gastarbeiter in a factory in Leipzig during World War II. She used that money to install gas in her home. It was genuine relief, because it was getting harder and harder to go to the barn every day to get coal and wood. Now my dad lives there. This year, he converted her gas stove back to a stove using firewood and coal, because it is hard living in a house with no electricity or gas. My grandmother would not have survived this – that's not why she endured working in a Leipzig factory as a young sixteen-year-old girl.

/.../

Here you can read only a fragment of text. In order to get access to the full text or to receive permission for staging the text, please, contact the copyright owners of the text and translation.