

NISELecture 3

19 November 2015, 18h00 (doors open at 17h30)

Flemish Heritage Library Hendrik Conscience, Antwerp (Belgium)

Nottebohm Room (entrance via Hendrik Conscienceplein 4)

Ostap Sereda

Identity Formation in Eastern European Borderlands

Identity, Cultural Politics and Musical Theater in Kyiv during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

The lecture is in English. Afterwards there is room for questions and discussion. The event is concluded with a reception (which ends at 20h30).



Kyiv city theater in the 1870s

The *Flemish Heritage Library Hendrik Conscience* in Antwerp organises academic lectures in cooperation with several partners.

The *NISELectures* are an initiative by NISE (*National movements and Intermediary Structures in Europe*), the international platform of academics and institutes for the comparative study of national movements. The lecture series is intended to present new developments in theory formation of nationalism.

This lecture forms part of a Research Foundation - Flanders project within the *International Coordination Programme* framework, carried out by the *University of Antwerp, Centre for Political History-Power in History*.

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The lecture looks at the problematisation of selected key topics of the 19th-century Eastern European history and at critical reflection on the notion of a borderland as contested polycentric and culturally diverse space. The conceptual repertoire of cultural and urban history, comparative and case studies on the regions that once belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, then were partitioned by Habsburg and Romanov monarchies, and nowadays constitute Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine shall help to go beyond either traditional linear nation-state-centered paradigm or reduction of borderlands to the peripheral zones framed by imperial centers. Instead, the local agency and responses to imperial policies, national inventions of tradition, and complicated trajectories of cultural transfers will be in the focus of the lecture. The competing projects of nation-building, in particular attempts of educated elites at shaping new “high” cultures, and the growth of urban sphere will be reconsidered through the prism of cultural politics.

The lecture will focus, in particular, on one of the most contested and rapidly growing provincial centres of the late Russian empire, the city of Kyiv (Kiev, Kijów). A close reading of such traditional sources as press and governmental documents reveals the dynamics of a polyphonic urban public sphere, the interaction between the imperial government and various segments of urban society, and the role of musical theater as an important site of urban sociability and as a cultural contact zone. Notwithstanding the direct intervention of imperial authorities into the cultural politics in Kyiv, local actors exercised considerable influence on the implementation of imperial policy in the city. Study of the theatrical repertoire and public discourse demonstrates the problematic relationship between the issues of genre and national representation. The theatrical politics in Kyiv became an arena for negotiations between the imperial political interests, the national representational strategies of various urban publics, the artistic aspirations of leading cultural figures, and the popular demand for entertainment.



Performers in the Ukrainian operetta
Rizdviana nich from Mykola Lysenko (Kyiv, 1874)

Ostap Sereda (°1970) is an historian affiliated to the *Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU)*. He worked before at the *I. Krypiakevych*-institute of the *Ukrainian Academy of Sciences*. He was also guest researcher at the *Central European University* in Budapest, the *European University Institute* in Florence and at *Harvard University*. Ostap Sereda published on political and cultural identity formation in imperial border regions.