

In The News

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CULTURE

Oregon flutist puts on Portland benefit concert for Ukraine aid



By **Steven Tonthat** (OPB)

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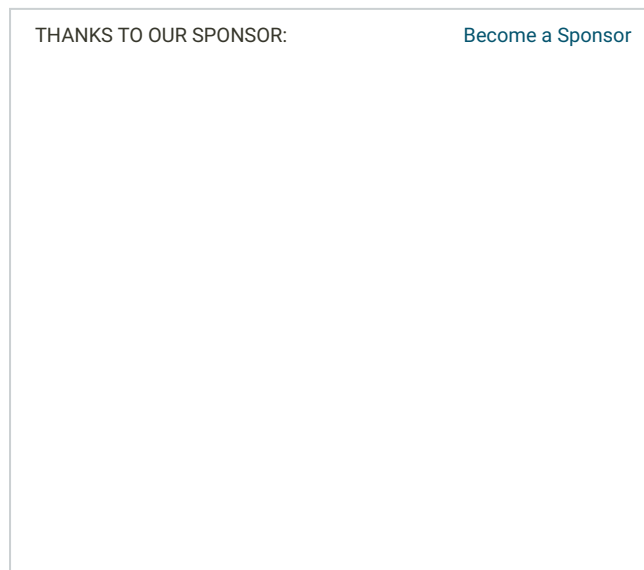
Oregon musician Amelia Lukas performs an early version of her concert "Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine" at Show Bar



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During the pandemic, musician [Amelia Lukas](#) wanted to explore her feelings surrounding Portland’s homelessness crisis and the concept of what it means to have a home. So she started curating a set of music pieces from some of her favorite composers to perform in a concert she called “Natural Homeland.”



“Particularly with regard to sheltering in place and the fact that we were all kind of sequestered in our little bubbles at that time. And so home took on this totally new meaning for me,” said Lukas.

Then Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and Lukas changed the concert to focus on the ongoing conflict.

“Having a big part of my own heritage from Poland, Russia and Ukraine, I was feeling the impacts of that really deeply,” she said. “I really needed to take action and the program itself was just calling to center around this particular issue.”

Three years after she began the project, Lukas will premiere her newly evolved music concert, now titled “[Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine](#),” this Thursday at the [Alberta Rose Theatre](#) in Northeast Portland.

Lukas worked with various nonprofit organizations to put the project together and a portion of the proceeds will go to groups like the [Immigrant Refugee Community Organization](#)’s [Slavic and Eastern European Center](#) and [Ukrainian Care](#).

“Ukrainian Care is an incredible organization based in Oregon City that delivers fresh bread to Ukrainians on the ground in Ukraine,” she said.

“Some piccolo, and the alto flute, which might be my favorite, I’m not sure. And the really exciting one is the bass flute,” she said.

There will also be a visual element.

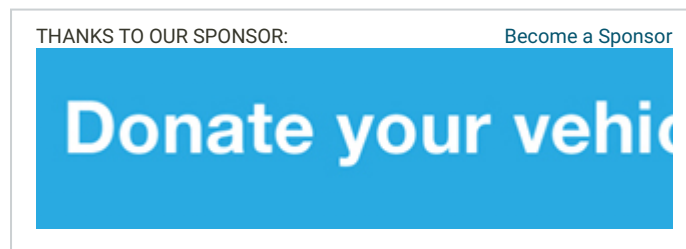
“I was immediately interested in thinking about how I can expand on the beauty of these pieces and enhance the audience experience,” she said. “So bringing in components of videography and poetry and dance, these additional gorgeous elements were really wonderful.”

So Lukas reached out to Portland-based Ukrainian painter [Tatyana Ostapenko](#).

“Aside from being just a stellar painter and being from Ukraine, she has been incredibly outspoken about the conflict there, and has raised incredible funds through her own work to support the cause,” Lukas said.

Ostapenko moved to the United States from Ukraine 25 years ago and has been living in Oregon since 2011.

Her artwork focuses on the strength and resilience of the Ukrainian people, especially women.



“Having lived in the United States for as long as I have, I still find that it’s more relevant for me to use imagery from my native country, from Ukraine to speak about things that I still see as very much existent in the United States and in the Western world,” Ostapenko said.

She will share her artwork at the event and do a live painting during one of Lukas’s performances. The painting will then be auctioned off and all of the proceeds will go to the same local nonprofits benefited by the concert.

In the early days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ostapenko used her art as a way to raise money for relief efforts.



Ukrainian artist Tatyana Ostapenko stands in front of her mural titled "Real Strong and Silent Types," in Portland, Oregon. She will create a new painting during Amelia Lukas's concert "Natural Homeland Honoring Ukraine" Thursday April 6, 2023 at the Alberta Rose Theatre.

Courtesy Tracy Pitts

Ostapenko understands that people can only handle so much news about war in Ukraine, but she also knows that the issue cannot be ignored.

“There’s a relatively large Ukrainian diaspora here in Portland and Oregon, even prior to the influx of refugees due to the war. And a lot of us tend to be quite invisible. So awareness about the Ukrainian community here I think is a wonderful thing,” Ostapenko said.

Since the Russian invasion, there have been a number of benefit concerts across Oregon. In April 2022, the Ukrainian folk group [Dakhabrakha](#) performed at the Patricia Reser

Local choral group [Capella Romana](#) partnered with other choral groups in the state to put on a benefit concert that same month.

Lukas wanted to continue to keep the attention on Ukraine going into 2023. She started by changing the title of her program and then added more musical pieces from Ukrainian composers, like [Ludmila Yurina](#).

“Ludmila’s piece is called [Gemma](#), after the unique pieces of jewelry that women in Eastern Europe wear,” she said. “This piece for me speaks to the people that we feel are ‘home.’”

[Evghenia Sincariuc](#), co-founder and board member of Ukrainian Care, worked with Lukas to put the word out about her concert and spoke about the need for art to act as a place for conversation.

“Through art you get that energy, the power to unite people. It doesn’t matter if people speak your language, people come from your country or not. So we become citizens of the universe,” Sincariuc said.

She also said that the concert is also important to the local Ukrainian community as a show of solidarity for [war refugees](#).



Evghenia Sincariuc (first row, right). Pictured beside is her mother-in-law Olga Safina (middle) and friend Olena Pasyvenko. Standing behind them are Olena's son Glib Pasivenko and Evghenia's daughter, Alisa Safina. They are wearing traditional Ukrainian vyshivanka.

Courtesy Irina Negrean

“Bringing them hope that they’re not alone and people and like a lot of local people in our Portland community, they don’t need support personally. They need the support for the country, so the war will be over and they can return back home,” she said.

Ultimately, Lukas wants people to walk away from her concert feeling good about the power of the arts as a unifier.

“I really would love for there to be a sense of just leaving feeling a little bit lighter, a little bit more connected to community and to the possibilities in which they can support Ukraine and ways in which they can process through some of their own feelings around this crisis.”

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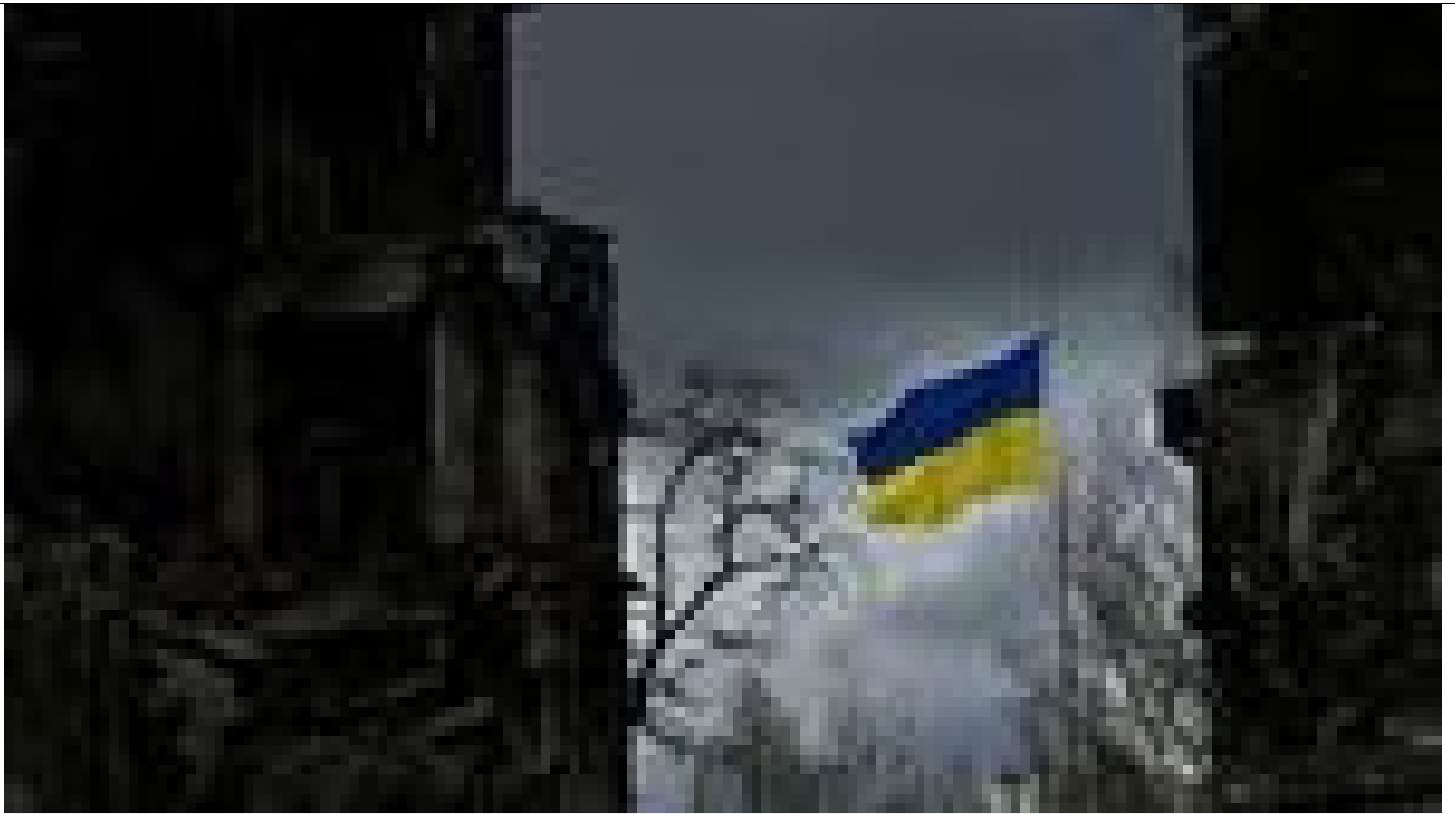
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