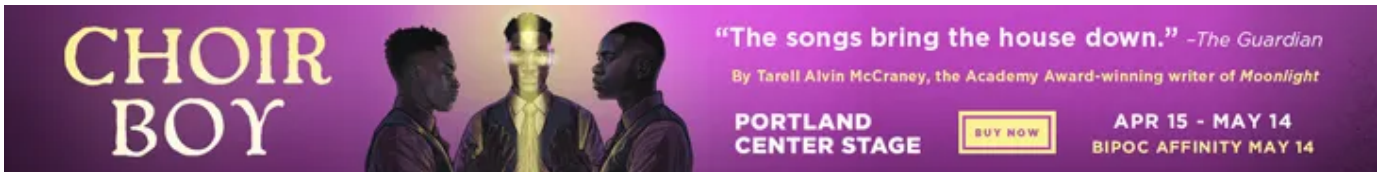




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“There is always room for something beautiful to grow”: Flute magic at Alberta Rose

Local flutist Amelia Lukas curated and performed a multi-media benefit concert celebrating Ukrainian heritage.

APRIL 11, 2023 | ANGELA ALLEN([HTTPS://WWW.ORARTSWATCH.ORG/AUTHOR/ANGELA-ALLEN/](https://www.orartswatch.org/author/angela-allen/))

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Flutist Amelia Lukas and dancer Tiffany Loney at Alberta Rose for “Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine” concert. Photo by Joe Cantrell.

Who hasn't heard Amelia Lukas' (<https://amelialukas.com/>) flute magic around Portland? She plays with Fear No Music, (<https://www.fearnomusic.org/>) Chamber Music Northwest, (<https://cmnw.org/>) and countless other groups showcasing experimental and straight-up music.

To see and hear her on a barebones stage with her several flutes glittering on a plain black cloth as she celebrated her paternal Ukrainian heritage (and benefited Ukrainians) proved a full-on concert deal. She played with several artists of other genres, turning the April 6 performance at Alberta Rose Theatr (<https://albertarose theatre.com/>) into a multi-media event appreciated by an enthusiastic audience, much of it Ukrainian.

Her theme was home, and the 90-minute *Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine* (<https://www.travelportland.com/event/1497202/>) concert approached the subject in imaginative ways. Her black skirt barely sparkling as she announced that this was her first “Natural Homeland” concert in Portland (she did another on Orcas Island (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orcas_Island) in 2022 and a private performance for friends at Revolution Hall's Show Bar (<https://www.revolutionhall.com/show-bar/>)), she noted that “I found sanctuary and home in repertoire, and a level of gratitude for home.”



Flutist Amelia Lukas at Alberta Rose for “Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine” concert. Photo by Joe Cantrell.

Lukas was completely at home on the stage maneuvering through nine pieces and incorporating other artists to enhance and complement her music-playing. Ukrainian-rooted dancer Tiffany Loney, (<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/dir/Tiffany/Loney>) who lives on Orcas Island, danced with a multitude of expressions, and eventually a ring of flowers on her head, to Eve Beglarian’s (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eve_Beglarian) *I Will Not Be Sad in this World* as Lukas played the bass flute.

Ukrainian composer Ludmilla Yurina’s (<https://soundcloud.com/ludmilayurina>) *Gemma*, inspired by cameo-like Ukrainian portraits done on stone that Eastern European and Ukrainian women wear, provided 6 to 7 minutes of C-flute music for Tatyana Ostapenko (<https://tatyanaostapenko.com/>) to paint a real-time onstage portrait projected onto the screen behind Lukas. The painting was

mentioned off later in the concert. Ostapenko is an acclaimed muralist and painter, and her bold, colorful works of Ukrainian women were projected on the stage screen before the performance and during intermission.

Flutist Amelia Lukas and painter Tatyana Ostapenko at Alberta Rose for “Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine” concert. Photo by Joe Cantrell.

A handful of artists participated in *Natural Homeland*, but Lukas remained front and center throughout the show—an ever-gracious, modest new-music champion and polished instrumentalist. She was the central and magnetic force: She can manage anything technically complex or acrobatically challenging with the flute and keep the music and people around her in motion.

Not every piece had Slavic connections, though the first was irrefutably Ukrainian. “Plyve Kacha” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=te6RSa1OMaQ>) is a traditional Ukrainian folk tune that has morphed into a sort of second national anthem paying tribute to those who died in 2014 in Maidan,

known as the Heavenly Hundred.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Heavenly_Hundred_Heroes) Lisa Lipton (<https://www.lisaclarinet.com/about>) accompanied Lukas on bass clarinet. They performed a haunting call-and-response routine, and the backtrack of flutes—all of which Lukas played and pre-recorded—created a choir behind them.

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Another backing track came with Ian Clarke's (<https://ianclarke.net/>) piece, *Within*. Clarke is a British composer and flutist with whom Lukas studied in a master class during her days as an undergrad at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She played the C flute, the piccolo and the alto flute on this composition, and noted that the piece was in part a tribute to her Celtic (Irish, Scottish and French) maternal side.



Flutist Amelia Lukas at Alberta Rose for “Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine” concert. Photo by Joe Cantrell.

Oregon composer and indigenous scholar David Bernstein’s (<https://cascadiacomposers.org/imminent-premiere-by-david-bernstein-composer-of-the-year/>) *Four Blossoms on a Single Stem* called for three flutes, and its chamber-music-like longing beauty spoke to the Oglala Sioux’s Black Elk’s (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Elk) vision of homeland loss. “When life is shifting there is always room for something beautiful to grow,” Lukas said before she played. She has a way of finding poetry in many things, including tragedy—and, lucky for her, Bernstein was in the audience.

A speedy composition by Carlos Simon, (<https://www.carlossimonmusic.com/>) *Move It* (which Lukas performed (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWHtFr3Y3Mg>) as part of FNM’s pandemic series), tracked an accelerated 5-hour train trip photographed from Kharkiv to Kyiv. Written during

~~the~~ pandemic, it captures the anxiety of Ukrainians leaving their homes as their homeland zooms by. Ryan Lynn, owner and luthier of Eastside Guitar Repair, (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ryanlynn>) helped Lukas with the program's technology and videography. Once again, Lukas builds community when she performs.

Flutist Amelia Lukas at Alberta Rose for "Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine" concert. Photo by Joe Cantrell.

If I were forced to be a ruthless critic, I would argue that the concert could have been shorter. The pieces were generally brief, and ended with Claude Debussy's *Syrinx* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEyKM13yf_4) on the bass flute, but nine compositions make a large dose of music to digest when an audience is trying to take in history and context at the same time. What would I cut? Not sure. You'd have to put a stun gun to my head to make me choose.

The concert was a benefit for the Ukrainian community with many of the proceeds going to the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization's Slavic and Eastern European Center, and to Ukrainian Care. (<https://irco.org/who-we-are/slavic-and-eastern-european-center.html>)

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Angela Allen writes about the arts, especially opera, jazz, chamber music, photography. Since 1984, she has contributed regularly to online and print publications, including *Oregon ArtsWatch*, *The Columbian*, *The San go Union-Tribune*, *Willamette Week*, *The Oregonian*, among others.

She teaches photography and creative writing to Oregon students, and in 1999, served as Fishtrap's Eastern Oregon Writer-in-Residence. A published poet and photographer, she's a member of the Music Critics Association of North America and a recipient of an NEA-Columbia Journalism grant. She earned an M.A. in journalism from University of Oregon in 1984, and 30 years later received her MFA in Creative Writing/Poetry from Pacific Lutheran University. She lives in Portland with a scientist husband and often unwieldy garden. Contact Angela [through her website](http://www.angelaallenwrites.com/) (<http://www.angelaallenwrites.com/>).

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