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## With Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine, Flautist Amelia Lukas Took Audiences on a Visionary Journey

The concert, held last week at the Alberta Rose Theatre, was a fundraiser and a multimedia epic.

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**Amelia Lukas Presents Flute and Multimedia Concert Supporting Ukraine** Amelia Lukas, a classical and contemporary flautist, presents “Natural Homeland: Honoring Ukraine”, a tribute to Ukraine and its sense of home, in a multimedia benefit concert at The Alberta Rose Theatre, in Portland, OR. on April 6, 2023. © John Rudoff 2023 (John Rudoff/Photo Credit: ©John Rudoff 2023)

**By John Rudoff**

**April 12, 2023 at 10:59 am PDT**

“I will not be sad in this world”: Classical and modern flautist Amelia Lukas had a tall order, as she presented a complex multimedia benefit concert Thursday about “shelter, safety, and home” in the shadow of Russia’s assault on Ukraine where millions have none of those.

During the last few years of the pandemic and the worsening homelessness crisis here, Lukas assembled musical reflections on having a home (or not having one). Russia’s 2022 destruction of much of Ukraine’s civilian life displaced a third of Ukraine’s total population, and Lukas, of mixed Polish, German, and Ukrainian ancestry, pivoted towards the added dimensions of sudden violence and displacement. This concert, to benefit both refugees and those still in Ukraine, resulted.

There were eight pieces, seven with an array of flutes (bass to piccolo), and one with Lisa Lipton on the bass clarinet. They varied from sonorous and reflective, to briefly lighthearted, to angular and jumpy. These are difficult pieces; they aren't the easy-listening Rampal flute genre of the 1990s, but they reward attention not with mere novelty but with depth. Even to a non-flautist, they appear technically very demanding.

The soul of the concert, however, is the engagement and integration of non-musical artistry into the performances. As Lukas told me, she is expanding from pure performance to directing and even stage-managing.



This gradual shift is part of her years-long effort, as a classically trained musician, to expand what she considers to be antiquated models of performance, and a too-narrow vision of what a “music concert” is. (One thinks at once of the Immersive van Gogh Experience or even Alberta Rose’s own Candlelight Vivaldi as parallel efforts to remake the experience of art or, in this case, of music.)

*A Child Lost at Sea* was accompanied by video of the pitiless blue surface of the Mediterranean. A four-minute compressed video of the five-hour train ride from Kharkiv to Kyiv flew along with a flute rendition of Carlos Simon’s *Move It*. But the most extraordinary combination was *Gemma*, accompanied by Ukrainian painter and muralist Tatyana Ostapenko, an homage to gemmas, the small cameo-like brooches favored by Ukrainian babushkas.

During a four or five minute flute piece by Ukrainian composer Ludmila Yurina, Ostapenko painted an oil portrait of an elderly woman, and her work doing this painting was projected live on the stage. We heard the music; we saw the painting emerging; and we saw the painter and her hands at work.





The portrait was completed later, and auctioned last night for Ukraine benefit; Ostapenko has already raised over \$70,000 for Ukrainian relief by selling her usually huge paintings. And Washington dancer Tiffany Loney danced as Lukas played *I Will Not Be Sad in this World*, by the Armenian composer Eve Beglarian.

Given the magnitude of the terror now facing Ukraine, Lukas acknowledged to me that some emotions can't or shouldn't be controlled, but at least they should compel acknowledgement of our own (so far) secure position.

The concert was presented by Alberta Rose Theatre, along with IRCO (Immigrant and Refugee Community Center) and Ukrainian Care, a tiny ground-level NGO that simply distributes bread to Ukrainians, especially in occupied and destroyed areas.

Amelia Lukas is finalizing plans to present this work in other venues as well. And she will present a modified version of *Natural Homeland* at Chehalem Community Center on Sept. 15, the first day of Hispanic Heritage Month, with the program reflecting Latino culture.

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