

Momentum

March 2024

Singing for fallen heroes, friends and fighters



Music, poetry and dancing filled the Scots Kirk as members of the Ukraine day centre remembered the second anniversary of the start of the Russia-Ukraine war. Lausanne's Ukrainian community again demonstrated their extraordinary talent. Our Ukrainian Centre member, Alla Kyrda-Omelian asked a few of the singers to explain just what the songs meant to them :

Veronika Sadovska (pictured left) said : "I chose these songs because they resonate in my heart and touch the strings of my soul. This wretched war is very difficult for me since my hometown, Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk region, is constantly under enemy fire. The song "It isn't your war" is a reminder that the war has been going on since 2014. My relatives and friends took part in the defence of the country even then.

The song "Heroes do not die" is dedicated to my friend, a military medic, who pulled defenders out of the hell of Bakhmut, but unfortunately, he was killed while saving his comrade. It was incredibly difficult for me to sing this song because every chorus brought tears to my eyes.

The song "Zombie" is an eternal classic about the horror of war, children dying, the pain of mothers and about the executioners who came to kill. I wanted to convey to the audience that we should never forget those who lay down their lives for peace in Ukraine, for the life and future of children. I wanted to remind them that we must help our defenders, in whatever way we can!"

Veronika also revealed that her stepfather and uncle were defending Ukraine at the start of Russian aggression in 2014. Her father, uncle, aunt and sister are fighting now.

Anastasiia Dashevska (right) chose the song "Strength of the Family" for the event on February 25 because she wanted to lift our spirits, remind us that Ukrainians are free and strong, and strengthen the faith in victory.

The song "Marigolds" is a classic, inspiring nostalgia for one's home and family. It is about memories, tenderness, and the warmth that everyone feels.



Sofiia Voronaia (pictured overleaf) said: " I performed two songs. The Ukrainian folk song "The sun hid behind the mountain" which moves me with words about the incredible love for one's country. It describes everything: the sun hiding behind the mountain, a light fog, a green grove, twinkling stars, a singing nightingale, a blue sky and children.

The last verse of the song is a declaration of love for one's country. Every Ukrainian who is far from his homeland, misses it and prays that it will bloom again soon, that in the sky there will be no rockets and bombs but magical stars.

I performed the second song "Magic violin" with the talented pianist and composer Pavlina Kravchenko, whose accompaniment was outstanding.

This song is a folk ballad. It is about a young girl's mischievous love for a young violinist. Charmed by his melodies, she carried her love for him, feeling like a moon princess, and hoping it was mutual. However, as often happens in life, his beautiful music was destined for another.

This song is also special for me. While performing it I thought about my beloved and about our sad ending. Not because he chose another, but because he stood up for Ukraine after the start of the full-scale invasion and perished."

"...he stood up for Ukraine and perished."

Lina Klochko (below) plays guitar and performs her own songs. She said: "My new song "Close your eyes" was released a few weeks ago. Even while I was writing it I realised that it is not only about my feelings. It is a kind of anthem for Ukrainian refugees scattered around the world. It's about all of us who miss home.



When we close our eyes, we see familiar landscapes in front of us. Some small, unremarkable details can tear you from reality and take you home. I put all my homesickness into this song. Words appeared on paper by themselves. So, by the second anniversary of the war, I knew exactly which song I was going to perform and why".



Who we are

The Ukraine Day Centre is a not-for-profit association opened in April 2022. It is an ecumenical initiative between Our Lady of Faith, Christ Church and the Scots Kirk. We support those fleeing Ukraine irrespective of language, race, faith or gender. The Centre's services are free.



Volunteer: Stephanie Trahan

Like many people Stephanie Trahan was heartbroken by the war in Ukraine and was glad of the opportunity to help out at the Centre. She is often there on Thursdays. A mother-of-two grown-up daughters, she and her husband Scott have lived in Switzerland for the past 17 years. They are huge fans of the outdoor life and are enthusiastic skiers as well as passionate hikers accompanied by their two dogs. 'There's a tremendous sense of community at the centre and it's been a fabulous opportunity to meet so many incredible people. I truly look forward to Thursday afternoons and it's such a privilege to be part of this unique group.' Stephanie has travelled widely, originally from the US, she also lived for many years in Asia before settling here. 'I have been touched by the Ukrainian community in so many ways. Their bravery, positivity, and strength during such uncertain times is such an inspiration to me and a reminder of what is truly important in life.'

Reunited and it feels so good

By Alla Kyrda-Omelian

Retired kindergarten teacher, 68-year-old Valentyna Gladka, and one of her former charges, Sofiia Voronaia, have been reunited at the Ukraine Day Centre in Lausanne. They were both thrilled to find each other again last summer during preparations for Ukraine Independence Day, known as the Sorochyn fair.

They both also performed at the concert for the second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February. Sofiia sang (see page one) and Valentyna read poetry. The two women's families have known each other for 30 years in Kyiv. Sofiia was even in the same kindergarten class as Valentyna's grandson.

Valentyna is a great cook who is known for baking cakes at the Centre, and when full-scale war began, she volunteered at a bakery but a few months later, in August 2022, she brought her grandson to Switzerland. They now live in the picturesque village of Longirod with a Swiss family. Valentyna knew Sofiia had arrived in April 2022 and was studying at the Lausanne Conservatoire.

The Ukraine Day Centre has become like another home for them ; cozy and friendly where they meet like-minded people who will stand strong for Ukraine. Valentyna believes Sofiia is an extremely talented singer who will glorify her home country abroad. The 29-year-old has a masters in political science and worked for an elected member of Kyiv City Council. However, she always wanted to sing and her grandmother encouraged her to learn folk songs. She was trained in music as a child and eventually graduated as a choir leader. She has won many domestic and international prizes for singing and been honoured by the Ukraine Ministry of Internal Affairs. She is grateful to the Lausanne Conservatoire for being able to resume her true vocation: "My mission is to sing Ukrainian folk songs, get them known and make the whole world fall in love with them!"



Ukraine Day Centre Annual General Meeting

More than 7500 visits were made and 400 refugees registered at the Ukrainian Day Centre during 2023. Centre Secretary and Coordinator, Jeremy McTeague, told the Annual General Meeting that the Centre remained committed to providing a safe and friendly space offering psycho-social counselling, language lessons in French and English, and clothing. It also provided advice on employment and integration into Swiss life. It continued to work with strategic partner, Ukraine Reborn. The Ukrainian-led arts and crafts workshops for children and adults were an important activity. The meeting was told the Centre arrangements were to be formalised with the Scots Kirk and the Centre would now pay rental. There was a need to raise funds to meet these extra costs in future.

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