UKRAINIAN FREEDOM ORCHESTRA

Presented in partnership with the Scottish Government

Saturday 6 August 2pm

USHER HALL

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours 15 minutes with one interval.

Please ensure that all mobile phones and electronic devices are switched off or put on silent.
UKRAINIAN FREEDOM ORCHESTRA

KERI-LYNN WILSON  founding conductor

ANNA FEDOROVA  piano
LIUDMYLA MONASTYRSKA  soprano
Valentin Sylvestrov
SYMPHONY NO. 7

Chopin
PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2

Interval

Verdi
‘O PATRIA MIA’ FROM AIDA

Dvořák
SYMPHONY NO. 9
‘FROM THE NEW WORLD’
The concert will raise funds for Scottish Refugee Council, as they continue to take a leading role in welcoming displaced Ukrainians to Scotland and providing vital assistance as they settle in.

Scottish Refugee Council (SC008639) work closely with local councils, partner organisations and communities across the country to make sure that Ukrainians coming to Scotland receive a warm welcome.

If you are able to, please consider making a donation to support this important work.

Donate to support Scottish Refugee Council.

eif.co.uk/ukraine

All proceeds go towards Scottish Refugee Council's work welcoming displaced Ukrainians.
Today’s concert provides a direct – and very poignant – connection between the cultural celebrations of the Festival City and the conflict in Ukraine, following Russia’s invasion in February 2022. Among the all-Ukrainian musicians in the specially assembled Orchestra in front of you are players who are members of European musical ensembles, recent refugees, and also musicians still based in Ukraine who have been allowed special exemption from military activities by the country’s Ministry of Culture to perform with the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra. The concert – part of a tour of Europe and the USA by the Orchestra – represents a gesture of solidarity from Edinburgh to the victims of war in Ukraine, and offers a demonstration of the power of art over adversity.

It’s a demonstration, too, of the richness and depth of Ukraine’s own musical culture, not only in the musicians who form today’s Orchestra and soloists, but also in the music that the Orchestra presents. The concert opens with Symphony No 7 by Ukraine’s most prominent and internationally celebrated contemporary composer, Valentin Sylvestrov. Now 85, Sylvestrov fled Kyiv for Western Europe a month after the Russian invasion, eventually settling in Berlin. Composed in 2002–3 as a single span of music, the Symphony contrasts passages of great sadness and tenderness with explosions of anger. Though it was originally written in memory of Sylvestrov’s wife, Larissa Bondarenko, who died in 1996 (and whose name is inscribed in the score’s closing pages), the Symphony’s profound, meditative music speaks powerfully to our current times.

Born in Kyiv but now resident in Amsterdam, Anna Fedorova is the soloist in the delicate, youthful Piano Concerto No 2 by Frédéric Chopin. The composer himself premiered the work in Warsaw in 1830, during one of a trio of concerts that marked his final performances in his Polish homeland, before he was forced to flee to France following a crackdown by the Russian army. In Verdi’s aria ‘O Patria Mia’, sung by Ukrainian soprano Liudmyla Monastyrska, the Ethiopian princess Aida, captured by Egyptians and forced to work as a slave, expresses her longing for her homeland, which she fears she will never see again.
A sense of yearning, too, runs through Antonín Dvořák’s much-loved ‘New World’ Symphony, which he composed in 1893 while Director of New York’s recently established National Conservatory of Music. Despite its American origins – and Dvořák even asked one of his students, Harry T Burleigh, to sing him authentic African-American spirituals for inspiration – the Symphony is filled with a longing for Dvořák’s Bohemian home: he would return after just three years separated from his country.

© David Kettle
David Kettle is a music and arts writer based in Edinburgh, and a former editor of BBC Music Magazine, who contributes regularly to The Scotsman and the Daily Telegraph. He has also written for publications including The Times, The Strad and Classical Music, and for organisations including the BBC Proms, Glyndebourne, the Barbican and Southbank Centre.
Keri-Lynn Wilson was raised in Winnipeg and studied at the Juilliard School, New York. She assisted Claudio Abbado at the Salzburg Festival and began her career as Associate Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra (1994–8). She was Chief Conductor of the Slovenian Symphony Orchestra (2013–15) and has also conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Russian National, RAI Symphony, Salzburg Mozarteum, Seattle Symphony, NDR Radio Philharmonic and Toronto Symphony Orchestras; and the Wiener Kammerorchester, the Bruckner Orchestra of Linz, the Prague Philharmonia, the Orchestre National d’Ile de France and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal. Her opera engagements include Madama Butterfly, La traviata and Tosca in Munich; Don Carlos, La bohème and Iolanta at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow; Tosca, Madama Butterfly and La traviata at the Vienna Staatsoper; Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk and La traviata in Zurich; Tosca in Toronto; La fanciulla del West and Aida for English National Opera; Un ballo in maschera and The Queen of Spades in Stockholm; Hänsel und Gretel and Madama Butterfly at the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg; Rusalka in Prague; La rondine in Los Angeles; Turandot in Washington; Der fliegende Holländer, Eugene Onegin, Boris Godunov and Carmen in Warsaw; La fille du régiment in Palermo; Tosca and Madama Butterfly at the Arena di Verona; Madama Butterfly in Tokyo; and Aida in Rome.
The Ukrainian pianist Anna Fedorova studied with Borys Fedorov at the Lysenko School of Music, Kyiv; with Leonid Margarius at the Accademia Pianistica, Imola; and with Norma Fisher at the Royal College of Music, London. Her mentors include Alfred Brendel, Menahem Pressler, Steven Isserlis and András Schiff. She has performed with many leading ensembles, including the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic, Tokyo Symphony, Yomiuri, Russian National, Utah Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestras, and at the world's leading concert halls, including at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Carnegie Hall (New York), the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Mexico City), the Tonhalle (Zurich), the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (Paris) and Bunka Kaikan (Tokyo). She is a regular guest at leading music festivals, including the Menuhin Festival (Switzerland), the Stift Music Festival (the Netherlands), Festival de Sintra (Portugal), the Ravinia Festival (USA) and the Verbier Festival, which she opened this summer performing with Gianandrea Noseda and the Verbier Festival Orchestra. She has released six albums with Channel Classics Records. Since March she has initiated and performed in benefit concerts that have raised over €600,000 for the victims of the war in Ukraine. With the double-bassist Nicholas Santagelo Schwartz, she recently established the Davidsbündler Music Academy, which will open in The Hague next month; the Davidsbündler Foundation is already providing musical education to Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands.
Liudmyla Monastyrska was born in Kyiv and was a soloist with the National Opera of Ukraine for several years before establishing her international career in 2010 following her debut at the Deutsche Oper Berlin in the title role of Tosca. Her engagements include the title roles of Aida, Tosca, Santuzza (Cavalleria rusticana) and Abigaille (Nabucco) for the Metropolitan Opera, New York; Abigaille and Aida at the Vienna Staatsoper; Abigaille at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and in Los Angeles, Hamburg and Munich; Leonora (Il trovatore) and Tosca at the Berlin Staatsoper; Tosca and Elisabetta di Valois (Don Carlo) at the Deutsche Oper Berlin; the title role of Manon Lescaut in Barcelona; the title role of Norma in Houston; Tosca in Paris, Rome and Barcelona; Aida, Elisabetta di Valois, Tosca and Abigaille in Kyiv; Lady Macbeth (Macbeth) in Munich; Leonora (Il trovatore) at La Scala, Milan; Leonora (La forza del destino) at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and for the Royal Opera; and Santuzza in concert with the NDR Radiophilharmonie. Her engagements this season have included the title role of Turandot for the Metropolitan Opera; Abigaille for the Royal Opera; and Aida in Naples and Verona. She has appeared in concert with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Cleveland Orchestra, among many other major orchestras.
The Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra brings together Ukrainian musicians from around the world in artistic defense of their homeland. Organized by the Metropolitan Opera (New York) and the Polish National Opera in a gesture of solidarity with the victims of the Russian invasion, the Orchestra is led by the Canadian-Ukrainian conductor Keri-Lynn Wilson, whose idea it was to create the Orchestra. The members of the Orchestra are among Ukraine’s leading orchestral musicians. Many members hail from Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, and Odesa, where they perform with orchestras and opera companies such as the Kyiv National Opera, the Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra and Kharkiv Opera. The Orchestra also includes members of the Royal Concertgebouw, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Belgian National and Seoul Symphony Orchestras, the Orchestra of the Royal Swedish Opera and the Tonkünstler Orchestra (Vienna). The Orchestra’s tour of Europe and the USA, in partnership with Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture, includes performances in Warsaw, London, Munich, Orange, Berlin, Snape, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Dublin, New York and Washington D.C. All the money raised from the tour will support Ukrainian artists.
The Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra has been assembled by The Metropolitan Opera and Polish National Opera and made possible thanks to the generous support of the Ford Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, United Airlines and Ann Ziff, Chairman of the Metropolitan Opera. The tour has been organised by Askonas Holt. Money raised by the Orchestra will go to support Ukrainian artists. Donations can be made to the Ministry of Culture at donate.arts.gov.ua/en.
EXTRACT OF A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT ZELENSKY OF UKRAINE TO ACCOMPANY THE TOUR OF THE UKRAINIAN FREEDOM ORCHESTRA

An artistic resistance to the Russian invasion is one of the most important forms of resistance, because the seizure of territories begins with the seizure of people’s minds and hearts.

Music can be a powerful weapon against invaders. That is why the initiative of the Metropolitan Opera and the Polish National Opera, which gathered the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, is so important. The Orchestra includes the best musicians who perform both in Ukraine and outside of Ukraine.

This summer, the Orchestra will have a European and American tour to raise funds to support Ukrainian artists affected by the Russian war.

The concerts will be dedicated to those who are currently fighting against the enemy, who gave their lives for Ukraine, as well as to the innocent victims of this terrible war.

This tour will allow the world to become more familiar with Ukrainian culture, its identity, and consolidate Ukrainian art in the world cultural context.

I would like to thank the General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera, Peter Gelb, and the Director of the Teatr Wielki–Polish National Opera, Waldemar Dabrowski, as well as all the musicians who joined this project. Ukrainian art is the art of being brave in the face of the enemy and winning.