The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Metropolitan Opera and PBS

Announce

Final Performance of

the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra

Filmed at the Kennedy Center for Broadcast on PBS

**ARLINGTON, VA; AUG. 30, 2022 --** The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Metropolitan Opera and PBS announce that the final performance of the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra has been filmed for broadcast on PBS. The Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, gathered by the Met and the Polish National Opera, is comprised of recent Ukrainian refugees and other artists in a gesture of solidarity with the victims of the war in Ukraine. The orchestra embarked on a European and American tour on July 28 that culminated with a performance at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on August 20. The broadcast version of the performance, **UKRAINIAN FREEDOM ORCHESTRA AT THE KENNEDY CENTER**, which will include behind-the-scenes footage from the tour, premieres Friday, Sept. 9 at 9-10:30 p.m. ET on PBS, [PBS.org](http://pbs.org/) and the PBS Video app.

“This remarkable ensemble is a testament to the power of artists and the arts to affect change and uplift the voices of those fighting for freedom. We are honored, as America’s national cultural center, to join with our friends at PBS and the Metropolitan Opera to bring this concert and the stories of these brave artists to the world,” said Deborah F. Rutter, president of the Kennedy Center.

"We’re extremely proud to share this powerful program with audiences across the country on broadcast and streaming platforms,” said Paula Kerger, CEO of PBS. "The arts are unmatched in their ability to bring people together and highlight our shared humanity, and I hope that by spotlighting the vibrancy and talent of these Ukrainian artists, we can enable a deeper understanding of the situation in Ukraine.”

The orchestra includes recent refugees; Ukrainian members of European orchestras, including the Tonkunstler Orchestra of Vienna, the Belgian National Orchestra and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; and musicians from the Kyiv National Opera, National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra and Kharkiv Opera, among other Ukrainian ensembles. The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine is supporting the project by addressing the organizational issues of allowing male musicians to put down their weapons and take up their instruments in a remarkable demonstration of the power of art over adversity.

Under the leadership of Canadian-Ukrainian conductor **Keri-Lynn Wilson**, the orchestra will perform a program that includes Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov’s Seventh Symphony; Chopin’s Piano Concerto No. 2, with Ukrainian virtuoso **Anna Fedorova**; and Dvořák’s Ninth Symphony.

Leading Ukrainian soprano **Liudmyla Monastyrska** will also perform Leonore’s great aria “Abscheulicher!” from Beethoven’s Fidelio, a paean to humanity and peace in the face of violence and cruelty.

The assembling of orchestras in the face of violence and in the name of peace has a long tradition. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra has its roots in an ensemble founded in Palestine by Bronisław Huberman in the 1930s to help rescue Jewish musicians in Europe from the Holocaust. The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, founded in 1999 by the conductor Daniel Barenboim and the Palestinian scholar Edward W. Said, brings together musicians from Israel and Arab nations. The Afghanistan National Institute of Music, long a target of the Taliban, had sent ensembles out into the world before the recent Taliban takeover of the country.

The U.K. concert agency Askonas Holt, one of the world’s leading management agencies, organized the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra tour.

The broadcast is executive produced by Deborah F. Rutter, Peter Gelb, Matthew Winer and Steve Holtzman. Kristin Fosdick directs with her team in the Kennedy Center’s multimedia department. Elizabeth O’Neil is associate director, content and strategy, for PBS.

**ABOUT THE KENNEDY CENTER**

[The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](http://www.kennedy-center.org/), currently celebrating its 50th Anniversary, is America’s living memorial to President John F. Kennedy, attracting millions of visitors each year to more than 2,000 performances, events, and exhibits. With its artistic affiliates, the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera, the Center is one of the nation’s busiest performing arts centers dedicated to providing world-class art, powerful education and outstanding memorial experiences to the broadest possible constituency. Across all its offerings, the Kennedy Center is committed to increasing accessible, inclusive opportunities for all people to participate in, and learn through the arts, including more than 400 free performances each year and a variety of specially priced ticket programs for students, seniors, persons with disabilities, and others. On September 7, 2019, the Kennedy Center inaugurated the REACH, its first-ever major expansion. Designed by Steven Holl Associates, the REACH provides visitors with new opportunities to interact and engage with the Center as the nation’s premier nexus of arts, learning and culture.

**ABOUT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA**

Since the very start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Metropolitan Opera has been taking action to support Ukraine and its cultural sovereignty. On February 25, the day after the invasion began, the Met severed its co-production relationship with the Bolshoi, since it is subsidized by the Russian state, and the Met produced a series of events to demonstrate its solidarity with Ukraine. The Met was the first opera company to perform the Ukrainian National Anthem and the first company to present a special concert in support of Ukraine, featuring some of the Met’s leading stars, which was broadcast live into Ukraine on Ukrainian Public Radio. The Met presented Ukraine’s leading soprano, Lyudmila Monastyrska in performances of Turandot that were transmitted into cinemas. The image of Monastyrska, wrapped in a Ukrainian flag during her curtain call, was seen around the world. Together with the Polish Opera, the Met organized the creation and historic tour of the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra. “With this tour, we are helping to defend Ukraine and its cultural heritage,” said Peter Gelb, the Met’s general manager.

**ABOUT PBS**

[PBS](http://www.pbs.org/), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 120 million people through television and 26 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature, and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’s broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirms that PBS’s premier children’s media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV — including a 24/7 channel, online at [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org/), via an array of mobile apps, and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org/), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](https://twitter.com/pbs), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pbs) or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](http://www.pbs.org/anywhere/home/). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pressroom.pbs.org/) or by following[PBS Communications on Twitter](https://twitter.com/PBS_PR).

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