

Mapping Ukrainian Works Performed in French Musical Institutions Since 2022

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Abstract

This article examines the representation of Ukrainian music abroad through an analysis of programming in French musical institutions since 2022. Numerous concerts featuring Ukrainian compositions have occurred in France, signifying a renewed interest in, and at times a novel encounter with, this repertoire since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion. We explored how two leading Parisian musical institutions, the Philharmonie de Paris and the Opéra National de Paris, have supported Ukraine, both symbolically and practically. Further, we analysed how the selected works, chosen to represent Ukrainian cultural identity on European musical stages, have been framed as part of a shared European heritage, thus demonstrating the role of music as a form of *soft power* in the current war-time context. Finally, we considered the 1991 Project, an initiative led by Anna Stavychenko that supports Ukrainian musicians and strives to preserve Ukrainian musical heritage. In this context, Ukrainian music emerges as a resilient force and a symbol of resistance within the European cultural sphere.

Keywords

Ukrainian music; music and politics; programming; French musical institutions.

Introduction

Just a few weeks before the writing of this paper, on July 24th, 2024, the Ukraine Freedom Orchestra Concert took place in Paris (Eglise Saint-Eustache), organized in partnership with the City of Paris and the Ukrainian Embassy, and with the support of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. This is the first date of the summer tour of this ensemble, founded in 2022 by Ukrainian-Canadian Keri-Lynn Wilson, in coordination with the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and the Polish National Opera in War-

saw. Composed of Ukrainian musicians forced into exile by war or members of European orchestras, the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, committed to peace, celebrates music as a vector of freedom and solidarity. However, in this tribute to Ukrainian culture, it was not a national work that was performed, but Beethoven's 9th Symphony, which was celebrating its 200th birthday at the time. Presented as a work exalting freedom, resistance, peace, and fraternity, this piece was adapted to the Ukrainian context, as conductor Keri-Lynn Wilson explains:

Putin is literally trying to silence a nation. We will not be silenced. Our one amendment to Schiller is instead of singing "Freude" (Joy) we will sing "Slava" (Glory), from the shout of Ukrainian resistance in the face of ruthless Russian aggression, Slava Ukraini! (Glory to Ukraine!). As Ukraine continues its fight on behalf of the free world, it needs our support more than ever, and we will proudly take our message across Europe and the United States in an expression of love for Ukraine and our steadfastness in our resistance to tyranny.¹



Illustration 1: Keri-Lynn Wilson during a rehearsal at the Warsaw Opera, July 9th, 2024, Poland (AFP - @Wojtek Radwanski).

¹ "Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra Beethoven Ninth Freedom Tour," <https://www.keri-lynnwilson.com/news/ukrainian-freedom-orchestra-beethoven-ninth-freedom-tour-2024> (accessed December 15, 2024).

Here is how the press relayed the event, in an article entitled “Paris in Solidarity with Ukraine”:

By combining a cultural and historical gesture, this Ukrainian symphony expresses the desire to defend the country’s artistic heritage at a time when it has been fighting for its freedom for more than two years [...].

Since the start of the war, the City of Paris has been fully committed to supporting Ukraine and its people, as the Mayor of Paris was able to confirm to President Volodymyr Zelensky and his wife, Olena Zelenska, when they met in Paris on 7 June. As early as March 2022, the City of Paris released an exceptional emergency aid package of one million euros to help those who had to flee the country and deployed numerous solidarity actions in the capital. The Mayor of Paris has visited Ukraine on four occasions. In April 2023, Paris was declared Ukraine’s “ville sauveur” in recognition of its mobilization. Paris has also been linked to Kyiv by a friendship and cooperation pact since 2022 [...].

Paris continues to support numerous initiatives undertaken by cultural organizations which, driven by a collective impulse of solidarity, have been promoting Ukrainian culture and creativity in its many forms in their artistic programming for the past two years.²

Beethoven’s symphony was therefore at the heart of the communication surrounding the event. However, the programme also included a work by a contemporary Ukrainian composer, Victoria Vita Plevá: *Bucha. Lacrimosa*.³ This piece for violin and orchestra was composed in memory of the victims of the Bucha massacre in 2022. Although the composer is internationally renowned, mention of her work at each of the ensemble’s concerts is very brief.

Since February 2022, a number of concerts have taken place in France that reflect a renewed interest in, and even discovery of, the Ukrainian musical repertoire.⁴ The seventh edition of the Parisian festival *Un week-end à*

² “Paris welcomes the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra for a free concert at Saint-Eustache,” <https://presse.paris.fr/pages/21258> (effective July 2, 2024).

³ See the video of the premiere in Bonn for the Beethoven festival, August 29, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RzoxWmYt2g&ab_channel=AndriiMurza.

⁴ See academic literature on Ukrainian music: Leah Batstone, “‘Every Kind of Art Began to Flourish’: Ukrainian Music in the Modernist Context,” *Scientific Herald of the National Music Academy of Ukraine* 136 (2023): 49–59; Adriana Helbig, “Lament as Protest: Music, Memory and Mourning in War-Torn Ukraine,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Protest Music*, ed. Noriko Manabe and Eric Drott (Oxford University Press, Forthcoming); Louisa Martin-Chevalier, “The Various forms of Politization of Contemporary Ukrainian Musical Creation,” *Composing Music Today, International Conference Proceedings*, NOVA Contemporary Music Journal 2 (online at the end of 2024); Louisa Martin-Chevalier and Liubov Morozova, “Les mobilisations sonores pendant la révolution de Maidan: entretiens avec Liubov Morozova,” *Filigrane, Musique, Esthétique, Sciences, Société* 28 (2023); Oksana Nesterenko, “Kyiv’s New Music Scene Today: Composing and Listening in

l'Est,⁵ for example, featured works by three emblematic Ukrainian composers: Boris Lyatoshinsky (1895–1968, conductor and teacher of composition in the Kyiv Conservatory, organized and led the Ukrainian Society of Contemporary Music), Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912, ethnomusicologist, considered as the father of Ukrainian music), and Valentin Silvestrov (1937–, student of Lyatoshinsky, post-modern composer). To address this growing interest, this article examines the musical programming of two major Parisian institutions, the Philharmonie de Paris and the Opéra national de Paris, since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion. Without wishing to restrict French musical activity to the Parisian scene or the Parisian scene to these two venues, this study is part of a more global project that will consider these different contexts and open up research to other European capitals and other musical styles.⁶ Indeed, other musical registers could be integrated to interrogate the representation of Ukrainian musical works in Paris since 2022, in the image of concerts by Ukrainian pop star Okean Elzy. While he was invited to *modest* venues at La Cigale in 2017 or Olympia 2015, hosting 1,300 and 2,000 people respectively, he was scheduled at the Zénith de Paris – la Villette (which can seat nearly 6,800) for two concerts on 22 December 2022 and 16 September 2024 as part of the “Help for Ukraine Tour”, which demonstrates the evolution of his notoriety on the French scene, which has been very much linked to the geopolitical context. Continuing the tour, Ukrainian rocker Oleg Skripka made his Paris debut at La Villette (Hall de la chanson) on 30 October 2022, then at Le Paradis Latin on 20 June 2023. Tours by the bands DakhaBrakha and Dakh Daughters should also be mentioned, as their dates are multiplying on national stages.

To begin this reflection, which is part of a work in progress, we have therefore decided to analyse how these two musical academic institutions provide their support for Ukraine in a symbolic or more concrete way. It seems necessary to establish a typology of the different forms these initiatives can take:

- messages of support, public statements from music institution directors;
- scenography: Ukrainian flag on the pediment of musical institutions;

the Time of War,” *Musicology Now* (July 6, 2022); Anna Stavychenko, “Ukrainian Classical Music in the Face of War,” *UN Chronicle* (December 2, 2024); Maria Sonevychsky, *Wild Music: Sound and Sovereignty in Ukraine* (Wesleyan University Press, 2019).

⁵ “Week-end à l’Est Programme,” <https://odessa.weekendalest.com/spip.php?rubrique39> (accessed December 15, 2024).

⁶ See the next symposium “Ukrainian Music Beyond Borders: A Study of Its Reception Before and After 2014” to be held at Sorbonne Université, organized by Louisa Martin-Chevalier and Lidia Melnyk on April 24–25, 2025.

- organization of peace concerts, introduction of the Ukrainian anthem before a concert;
- fund-raising or money-raising initiatives;
- charity concerts during which funds raised are donated to support Ukraine, organized by the Ukrainian Embassy or national and local charities;
- support concerts for orchestral musicians or conservatory students;
- reception and accommodation of Ukrainian artists and citizens, residences for Ukrainian artists, or tour funding for a Ukrainian ensemble.

As Iryna Tukova has shown in her article, “After the beginning of full-scale war Russia against Ukraine from 24 of February 2022, Ukrainian composers are reflecting the theme of a war in diverse ways.”⁷ The representation of war in musical works has been the subject of current research and international programmes.⁸ Music plays a major role in cultural diplomacy, as shown by the scientific literature devoted to this theme, which has seen a resurgence of interest in recent decades.⁹ As Frédéric Ramel and Cécile Prévost-Thomas explain, the armed conflicts of the 1990s, particularly in Eastern Europe and Africa, prompted new research into the role of music in transforming these conflicts. This academic literature has considered not only the power of music to mobilize or justify war, but also the way in which this art form can be used as a resource in peace-building processes. The links between music and politics are inseparable from the question of political power, thus conditioning the context of artistic creation, production, and practice. What works are programmed in France’s lead-

⁷ Iryna Tukova, “Art Music and War: Ukrainian Case 2022,” *Musicologica Brumensia* 58, no. 2 (2023): 193–204.

⁸ The CNRS SHS UkFeMM/ “Ukrainian Female Musicians and Migrations: A Transnational History of the Crisis” European research programme (2024–2025), led by the CNRS SHS team of Mateusz Chmurski, Denis Laborde, Louisa Martin-Chevalier, Théodora Psychoyou, and Hyacinthe Ravet, or the CNRS/CU TANDEM project “A Subaltern that Sings: From Sound Resistance to Musical Diplomacy in Wartime Ukraine,” led by Valeriya Korablyova and Louisa Martin-Chevalier.

⁹ In particular Robert Adlington and Esteban Buch, eds., *Finding democracy in music* (Routledge, 2021); Rebekah Ahrendt, Mark Ferraguto, and Damien Mahiet, *Music and Diplomacy from the Early Modern Era to the Present* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Jessica Gienow-Hecht, ed., *Music and International History in the Twentieth Century* (Berghahn Books, 2015); Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari, eds., *Music, Art and Diplomacy: East–West cultural interactions and the Cold War* (Ashgate Publishing, 2016); John Morgan O’Connell and Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, *Music and Conflict* (University of Illinois Press, 2010); Frédéric Ramel and Cécile Prévost-Thomas, eds., *International Relations, Music and Diplomacy. Sounds and Voices on the International Stage* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); “Sounds and Voices on the International Stage: Understanding Musical Diplomacies,” Sciences Po Paris, symposium organized by CERI/Sciences Po and CERLIS (Université Paris Descartes, CNRS, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle), April 20–21, 2016.

ing musical institutions? To what extent do these programmatic choices shed light on current aesthetic and political issues? How has Ukrainian music become an object of diplomacy in France since 2022?

In this article, we examine the specific features of musical creations programmed in France since 2022 and highlight new initiatives that help to represent Ukrainian musical culture abroad. Through a study of the programming of the Philharmonie de Paris and the Opéra national de Paris, we examine the particularities of the works chosen to represent Ukrainian identity on musical scenes. They are often presented with the aim of making them part of a European heritage, showing how music is used as *soft power* in the context of war. Finally, we take a look at a specific initiative, the 1991 Project, headed by Anna Stavychenko, which supports Ukrainian musicians and works to preserve the Ukrainian musical repertoire.

La Philharmonie de Paris: “We Are All Ambassadors for Ukraine”

Like many European musical institutions, the Philharmonie de Paris lent its support to Ukrainian orchestras from the very first weeks after the Russian invasion. It participated in making the Ukrainian anthem “Ще не вмерла України” resound in European concert halls the day after the full-scale Russian invasion, as witnessed by the video *Europe Stands with Ukraine*,¹⁰ where twelve prestigious European orchestras gathered to play the anthem together on March 5th, 2022. We can observe that each institution used common scenographic elements, including the colours of the Ukrainian flag—blue and yellow—in a particularly solemn atmosphere. The initiative was organized by the European Concert Hall Organisation (ECHO).

Other moments seem emblematic of the support provided by cultural institutions, such as the first months following the outbreak of war, which saw a particularly dense dynamic contributing to the desire to make Ukrainian culture visible. Ukrainian orchestras were welcomed by various institutions, such as La Fenice in Venice, where the “Concert for Peace” took place on the first of May. The Ukrainian Philharmonic Orchestra was conducted by Volodymyr Sirenko and Johannes Skudlik and opened with Boris Lyatoshinsky’s *Symphony n. 3* in B minor op. 50 “Peace will prevail over war” (1951) and Yevhen Stankovych’s *Concerto for violin and orchestra n. 2* (2015). The second part focused on Italian music (Giuseppe Verdi, Gaetano Donizetti, Giacomo Puccini, Pietro Mascagni, and Giuseppe Verdi). On June 2nd, at the Rzeszów Philharmonic (Poland), an evening of solidarity was organized with the participation of the chamber orchestra

¹⁰ “Concert Europe stands with Ukraine,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pWKVJFF-Pc (accessed December 15, 2024).

of the Lviv National Opera. They performed works by Lviv-born composers or those who studied at the Lviv Conservatory, such as Yevhen Stankovych, Myroslav Skoryk, Mykhailo Shved, and Hanna Havrylets (1958–2022, who died two days before the invasion), among others. Numerous events have been organized in various European cities, and it is not possible to list them all here.

The Philharmonie de Paris offered a concert on October 5th, 2022 based on the same principles: the Kyiv Philharmonic Orchestra opened the concert¹¹ with Ukrainian folk songs, and this was followed by works by Ukrainian composers such as Mykola Lysenko's *Prière pour l'Ukraine*, Maksym Berezovsky's *Symphony in C major*—considered to be the first Ukrainian Symphony—and Dmitri Bortnianski's *Falcon Overture*—composed to a French libretto; the second part of the concert featured French works by Fauré and Poulenc.

On December 16th, 2023, the Opéra national de Paris hosted an exceptional recital of Ukrainian and European songs in aid of the Kyiv Academy. The event was presented as follows: "Three Ukrainian singers from the Kyiv National Academic Operetta Theatre will evoke in music their country, their dreams and hopes, and the struggle waged by the Ukrainian people."¹² Arias by Offenbach, Rossini, Strauss, Debussy, and Massenet rubbed shoulders with Ukrainian folk songs, as well as melodies by 20th-century composers such as Mykhailo Zherbin, Myroslav Skoryk, Fedir Nadenenko, Anatoliy Kos-Anatolsky, and Lessia Dychko, who is considered to be the leading light of Ukrainian song.

In addition, the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) and Radio France initiative with the "Concert in Support of Ukraine: Theodore Akimenko"¹³ shows that these events are accompanied by the work of scientific valorization. Indeed, the autograph manuscripts of Akimenko, little-known to the French musical community, preserved in the collections of the Music Department, were unveiled and presented by a BnF curator on this occasion. Igor Stravinsky's first composition teacher, Theodore Akimenko (1876–1945) lived in Nice, then settled in Paris during the 1920s. After his death, an archive of 70 autograph musical manuscripts, correspondence, and other papers was created and entrusted to the BnF's Music Department in 1996. The concert programme featured two previously unpublished works, *Nocturne No. 1 for String Orchestra* and his *Deuxième élégie for Cello and Piano*. Debussy's *Quatuor à cordes en sol mineur* Opus 10 and Fauré's *Deuxième quintette pour piano et quatuor à cordes en ut mineur* Opus 115

¹¹ "Concert for Ukrainian artists," <https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/en/activity/concert/26054-concert-en-soutien-aux-artistes-ukrainiens> (accessed December 15, 2024).

¹² "Récital for Kyiv Academy," <https://www.operadeparis.fr/actualites/recital-academie-kiev> (accessed December 12, 2023).

¹³ "Concert for Ukraine," <https://www.bnf.fr/fr/agenda/concert-en-soutien-lukraine-theodore-akimenko> (accessed December 15, 2024).

accompanied these short pieces (each about three minutes). This rediscovery will be pursued through the study of archival documents.

Two years to the day after the start of the Russian full-scale invasion, the Philharmonie de Paris joined forces with the National Philharmonic of Ukraine for an exceptional concert¹⁴ in Kyiv, conducted by Sergii Golubnychyi and broadcast via the YouTube channels of both institutions. Journalist Claire Boisteau writes: This commemorative day, 24 February 2024, may be fateful, but it is nonetheless testimony to a cultural identity that continues to exist, despite the bombs. And that's why it's worth sharing. It also bears witness to the lasting ties forged by the Philharmonie de Paris with the Ukrainian musical community as early as April 2022.¹⁵

Commenting on the programme, in which Beethoven's *Leonore III* Overture and Camille Pépin's orchestral piece *Aux confins de l'orage* (composed in 2021) were interwoven, she noted the "heroic character proclaiming freedom" of the former and the dimensions of the latter, "all flashes of light on the brink of the abyss." Boisteau explains the comparison of these pieces with the Ukrainian repertoire, Yevhen Stankovych's *Violin Concerto* No. 2 (2015), "little known to Europeans and which owes its tragic tone to the Orange Revolution of 2004 which inspired its composition" and Victoria Vita Plevá's poignant piece *Bucha. Lacrimosa* mentioned above—"A testimony to the loss of humanity's paradise," according to the composer.¹⁶

The Opéra national de Paris is planning a concert from February, 8th to 11th, 2025, entitled "Le Chant de la terre, une histoire de l'Ukraine en musique," performed by Volodymyr Kapshuk and Benjamin Laurent. This is no longer a panorama of Ukrainian works, but a contemporary creation offering a (re) reading of the history of Ukrainian music.

These concerts thus provide tangible support for Ukrainian musicians and orchestras by financing their travel, lending instruments, and welcoming performers. Although they are sometimes one-off efforts, these events also enable Ukrainian musical heritage to be (re)discovered and promoted through public concerts open to a wide audience in the main Parisian musical institutions. We can also see that these events often follow the same pattern, with the first part devoted to the Ukrainian repertoire and the second to the repertoire of the host country (e.g., Beethoven, Fauré, Verdi). In the musical scene, as in the political

¹⁴ "Concert in Kyiv," <https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/fr/live/concert/1164591-en-direct-de-kyiv> (accessed December 15, 2024).

¹⁵ "Philharmonie Live broadcasts an exceptional concert live from Kyiv," <https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/fr/magazine/actus/philharmonie-live-retransmet-un-concert-exceptionnel-en-direct-de-kyiv> (accessed February 19, 2024).

¹⁶ "Philharmonie Live broadcasts."

one, the links with European heritage are highlighted. The history of Ukrainian music is now being integrated in the aesthetic and artistic history of European music. Before 2022, the history of Ukrainian music was associated with Russia in European historiography. This desire to liberate it from the “Russian world,” analysed as the continuation of colonial domination, starts with the reconsideration and revalorization of the Ukrainian identity of some artists that were considered as Soviet, as in the case of Malevič or Roslavcev. We can understand this rediscovery of Ukrainian creators as a part of the process of cultural decolonization,¹⁷ presented as necessary by Ukrainian artists, musicians and musicologists. Most works of postcolonial and decolonial academic literature question the way in which the colonial enterprise has left its mark on colonized and colonizing cultures and societies, on our knowledge, and on its production and institutionalization. As suggested by Svitlana Biedarieva, “many of the works created by Ukrainian artists during the last eight years reflect on the postcolonial state and traumatic memories of Ukraine’s entanglement with Russia before and throughout the twentieth century. However, [since Russian full-scale invasion] [...] understanding of this postcolonial entanglement has changed as has the attitude toward decoloniality in Ukrainian culture.”¹⁸ In this time of war, decolonial processes are reflected in contemporary Ukrainian culture through the notion of “derrussification” and the promotion of Ukrainian repertoire. Two Ukrainian manifestos (from the Kyiv Contemporary Music Days¹⁹ and from the Musicological community²⁰) embody this reflection on the role of music in times of conflict and demonstrate committed and militant discourses, which are not common among musicians. The last decades have seen in Ukraine the creation of specific ensembles, legitimized by criteria such as national affiliation, repertoire, or genre (*Queens Orchestra*, *Ukrainian Youth Orchestra*, *Nova Opera*, *Ukraine Freedom Orchestra*, *Mriya Orchestra*, or *Ukrainian Muses Are Not Silent*).

Moreover, it is interesting to observe that most of the Ukrainian works featured have short pieces, composed in the 19th and 20th centuries. The vast majority of them, if not all, have been by men composers. The first programmes devoted to the rediscovery of the Ukrainian repertoire did not include any works by women composers, once again underlining the invisibility and minority status

¹⁷ We use the term “decolonization” as it is theorized today in the academic literature (See Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* [Routledge, 2010]).

¹⁸ Svitlana Biedarieva, *Decolonization and Disentanglement in Ukrainian Art* (Post at MoMA, June 2, 2022).

¹⁹ “KCMD Statement,” <https://en.kcmd.eu/releases/statement> (accessed December 15, 2024).

²⁰ “Ukrainian Institute Statement,” <https://ui.org.ua/en/news-en/statement-by-the-musicological-community-of-ukraine/> (accessed December 15, 2024).

of women musicians in the artistic arena,²¹ even if progress on this front seems to have been made recently.

Thanks to the mobilization of a large network of orchestras, patrons, associations, and partners, the Philharmonie has been able to provide support to musicians left without work, without an orchestra, and without resources since February 2022. Sarah Koné, Deputy Director in charge of Corporate Social Responsibility and New Projects, points out that this support must not be a one-off event, but must be part of a longer-term process. Anna Stavychenko is leading a broader initiative from 2022 to 2024 to enable dozens of exiled female musicians to join French national or regional orchestras, benefit from instrument loans and help with administrative formalities and accommodation, and pursue their professional careers, even if their future remains uncertain and their trauma acute. This unprecedented initiative, involving a wide network of partners and guaranteeing a long-term commitment to support Ukraine and Ukrainian classical music professionals, has enabled some thirty Ukrainian musicians to be welcomed in collaboration with numerous French institutions. Some of them have been in France since April or May 2022 and are still working with the Orchestre de Paris, the Orchestre national de Lyon, the Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, the Orchestre national du Capitole de Toulouse, or the Orchestre national de Metz. Others have been invited by orchestras for shorter periods or for specific projects.

However, Stavychenko warns of the trauma experienced by these musicians: "The most urgent issue remains the treatment of post-traumatic stress, which affects musicians and damages their physical and mental health."²² All these musicians have lost their jobs, witnessed terrifying scenes of destruction, and can hear the sounds of bombs in their memories. She recounts the tragedy of conductor Yurii Kerpatenko, who was shot dead by the Russians in his home in Kherson for refusing to conduct a concert in praise of "a happy life under Russia."

²¹ See in particular Hyacinthe Ravet, *Musiciennes. Enquête sur les femmes et la musique* (Autrement, 2011); Marci G. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (University of Illinois Press, 2000); Suzan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Suzan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou, *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (University of Illinois Press, 1994); Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); Julie C. Dunbar, *Women, Music, Culture: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2021); Tereza Havelková, *Sound, Gender, Identity: Cultural Analysis of Music in East-Central Europe* (Karolinum, 2024); and Iryna Tukova, "Empirics and Theory: is there a 'Female' Music," in *Composing Women: 'Femininity' and Views on Cultures, Gender and Music of Southeastern Europe since 1918*, ed. Elfriede Reissig and Leon Stefanija (Hollitzer Verlag, 2022).

²² Anna Stavychenko, "Parler de notre pays et de son patrimoine musical est notre façon de résister," interview by Claire Boisteau, *Philharmonie de Paris*, (<https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/fr/magazine/perspectives/anna-stavychenko-parler-de-notre-pays-et-de-son-patrimoine-musical-est-notre-facon-de-resister>, accessed December 15, 2024).

The former executive director of the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra says: “Charity concerts are useful, of course, to raise funds at a particular time, but they don’t really help Ukrainian musicians adapt to the tragic living conditions imposed by war, nor do they give lasting visibility to Ukrainian culture.” In this article, we therefore present the 1991 Project, a new initiative that is helping to promote Ukrainian music in France.

The 1991 Project: “Ukrainian Music as Political Resistance”

Directed by Anna Stavychenko, the 1991 Project is a Paris-based initiative that aims to explore and enhance the Ukrainian musical repertoire, which remains unknown or rarely performed, as well as to discover and support new talent. This non-profit association also seeks to demonstrate the close links that Ukrainian music has with European cultural traditions. A musicologist, opera critic, classical music curator, former Executive Director of the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra, and former Harriman Scholar at Columbia University’s Institute for Ideas & Imagination, Anna Stavychenko has worked as a project manager for the Philharmonie de Paris, providing Ukrainian musicians living in exile in France with temporary contracts with national-level French orchestras such as the Orchestre de Paris, the Orchestre national de France, and the Orchestre national de Lyon. She has also been the curator of special projects of the Sinfonia Varsovia, which was launched to integrate the Ukrainian repertoire into the programmes of this prominent Polish orchestra and create special events for Ukrainian refugees and their children. Supported by the Columbia Global Centres in Paris and the Institute for Ideas & Imagination, the Ukrainian Embassy in France, as well as the Arts Arena, the Ukrainian Institute, and Columbia University in New York, the 1991 Project has organized unique events and concerts in prestigious venues such as the Musée de l’Orangerie, the Low Library Rotunda at Columbia University in New York, and the Amphithéâtre Richelieu at the Sorbonne University in Paris, as well as the Grande Salle Ginsberg-LeClerc at Reid Hall, which hosts most of their concerts.²³

To this dimension of promoting Ukrainian works, the project also includes a research component. The project is working on researching and preserving Ukrainian scores that have never been published or have been poorly preserved or destroyed. These have been made available to orchestras and ensembles such as Orchestre de Paris, Sinfonia Varsovia, Orchestre National d’Île-de-France, and Orchestre Colonne, as well as to soloists such as Jean-Guihen Queyras. Embodying this desire to pay tribute to Ukrainian musical creation of the 20th

²³ “Ukrainian Classical Music Face War,” <https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/ukrainian-classical-music-face-war> (accessed December 15, 2024).

century, the 1991 Project helped the Orchestre National d'Île-de-France find the score for Valentin Silvestrov's *Piano Quintet* for a new concert²⁴ (November 5th, 2023). *Silvestrov Days in Paris*²⁵ also contributed to making the Ukrainian composer's work more visible, with three days of concerts, the screening of a documentary by Serhiy Bukovsky, and the presentation of a book²⁶ based on conversations with composer and philosopher Constantin Sigov and musicologist Alla Vaysband. A pupil of Boris Lyatoshinsky, to whom he dedicated his *Piano Quintet* played at the Paris concert and also known for his aspirations to peace (*Hymn-2001* or his 2014 *Prayer for Ukraine*), Silvestrov was censored by the Soviet regime and excluded from the Composers' Union in the late 1960s. On March 8th, 2022, urged on by friends and family, and against his will, he decided to leave his homeland after the Russian invasion. It is particularly important for the musical and academic community to continue documenting and performing the works of this major composer of musical modernity in the 20th century, who remains one of the leaders of Ukrainian art music.

The 1991 Project also led to the creation of two chamber ensembles, the Quatuor *Bleu et Or* and the Duo de violon *Pochaina*, whose names feature in Parisian music programmes devoted to Ukrainian music. In addition to major institutions such as the Philharmonie and the Orchestre national de Paris, these ensembles help to promote the Ukrainian classical and contemporary repertoire in France through concerts in smaller Parisian venues or in the provinces.

Founded in June 2022 by Anna Stavychenko, the Quatuor *Bleu et Or* includes Ukrainian musicians Yanzhyma Morozova, Antonina Krysa, and Nataliia Ivanovska—who had to leave the country because of the Russian invasion—and violist Andrii Malakhov. They subsequently became temporary residents of the Orchestre de Paris and the Orchestre National de France as part of the 1991 Project hosted by the Philharmonie de Paris. A festival tour has been organized for the quartet, including the “Ukrainian Rendezvous”²⁷ (July 15th, 2023), the

²⁴ “Philharmonie de Paris’ programmation,” <https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/fr/activite/musique-de-chambre/26346-silvestrov-dvorak> (accessed December 15, 2024).

²⁵ “Silvestrov’s days in Paris,” <https://france.mfa.gov.ua/fr/news/les-journees-silvestrov-paris> (accessed December 15, 2024).

²⁶ Constantin Sigov and Philippe de Lara, *Conversation with Valentin Silvestrov. Composition and Ukrainian soul* [Entretiens avec Valentin Silvestrov. Composition et âme ukrainienne] (Chora, 2023).

²⁷ “Ukrainian Rendez-vous,” <https://ideasimagination.columbia.edu/events/rendez-vous-ukrainien-2/> (accessed December 15, 2024).



Illustration 2: Anna Stavychenko & the Quatuor Bleu et Or © Charlotte Force

Glanum Festival²⁸ (July 19th, 2023), the Festival Septembre musical de l’Orne²⁹ (September 8th, 2023), the Festival Les Estivales d’Artenetra³⁰ (July 21st, 2024), and a forthcoming date at the Auditorium du Musée d’Orsay³¹ (May 16th, 2025).

The quartet performs many emblematic works from the Ukrainian repertoire, such as Borys Lyatoshinsky’s *String Quartet No. 4* (Suite on Ukrainian Folksong-Themes, Op. 43, 1943) or Mykola Lysenko (*String Quartet in D minor*, 1869). It also highlights pieces by lesser-known composers such as Zoltan Almashi (1975–) or Vasyl Barvinsky (1888–1963), and supports contemporary compositions, as demonstrated by the programming of a work by Victoria Vita Polevá (*Walking on Waters*, 2013). Indeed, Anna Stavychenko maintains close ties with contemporary composers, commissioning them directly to create new works.

²⁸ “Glanum festival,” <https://www.hotel-de-sade.fr/agenda/lc-festival-de-glanum-2023> (accessed December 15, 2024).

²⁹ “Musical September Festival,” <https://www.septembre-musical.com/wp-content/uploads/SEPTEMBRE-MUSICAL-BROCHURE-2023-HD3.pdf> (accessed December 15, 2024).

³⁰ “Les estivales Festival,” <https://artenetra.com/project/2024/> (accessed December 15, 2024).

³¹ “Bleu et or Quartet at Musée d’Orsay,” <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/fr/agenda/evenements/quatuor-bleu-et-or-victoria-vita-poleva-mykola-lysenko-darius-milhaud> (accessed December 15, 2024).

Such is the case with Alisa Zaika's *Œuvre nouvelle*, scheduled for April 12th, 2025, at the Philharmonie,³² conducted by conductor Claire Gibault as part of the *La Maestra* competition for women conductors.

As Anna Stavychenko said in an interview, “in the face of a war aiming to erase Ukrainian national identity, preserving Ukrainian music becomes a pillar of resilience and resistance.”³³ Other Ukrainian artists consider the representation of Ukrainian Music in the artistic scenes as political resistance. For example, exiled director Vlad Troitskyi sees the stage as a space of resistance, and he uses theatre as well as music to give an account of the war (Vlad Troitskyi, 2022).³⁴ Nova Opera—the collective that he founded in 2014—is a group of young Ukrainian artists working together to develop new creative practices. Their experimental performances are designed as works “devoid of aesthetic borders, freely joining avant-garde, rock, Gregorian chant, trip-hop, new baroque and traditional improvisation together.”³⁵ The women collective Dakh Daughters—made up of seven women claiming to be political activists—explores the potential of underground theatre mixed up with electroacoustic as well as baroque music and traditional songs as a way to “resist with humour [. . .]; it is one of our weapons.”³⁶ Natacha Charpe, Natalka Halanevych, Ruslana Khazipova, Solomia Melnyk, and Anna Nikitina are actors, singers, and musicians, who will be part of Le Préau-Centre Dramatique National de Normandie-Vire's artistic project for two years. On June 16th, 2022, a few months after the full-scale Russian invasion, Dakh Daughters, Tetiana Troistka, and Vlad Troitskyi performed a *Danse macabre* show at the Parisian Odéon theatre. This creation was presented as an act of resistance: “Having taken refuge in Vire (at Centre Dramatique National de Normandie-Vire³⁷) since March, the artistic team conceived this show as an act of resistance, an ‘Art Front’ performance to continue bearing witness here to what is happening over there.”³⁸

³² “Concert at Philharmonie,” <https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/fr/activite/concert/27669-eroica> (accessed December 15, 2024).

³³ “Ukrainian Music as Political Resistance with Anna Stavychenko,” *Atelier*, March 21, 2024, <https://shows.acast.com/atelier/episodes/anna-stavychenko>.

³⁴ “Vlad Troitskyi: la scène comme espace de résistance,” <https://www.radiofrance.fr/francemusique/podcasts/reportage/vlad-troitskyi-la-scene-comme-espace-de-resistance-3594607> (accessed January 21, 2025).

³⁵ Nova Opera, “About,” <http://novaopera.com.ua/about/>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ “Centre Dramatique National de Normandie-Vire Presentation,” <https://www.lepreaucdn.fr/index.php/les-artistes> (accessed December 15, 2024).

³⁸ “Concert at Théâtre Odéon,” https://www.theatre-odeon.eu/fr/concert_danse_macabre-21-22 (accessed December 15, 2024).

Conclusion

Through this study of the programming since 2022 of two major Parisian institutions, the Philharmonie de Paris and the Opéra national de Paris, we have been able to note the different forms that support for Ukrainian creation and Ukrainian musicians can take. This is based on a broad desire to rediscover our musical heritage, which should be extended to include Ukrainian composers who, apart from the likes of Victoria Vita Polevá and Hanna Gavrilets, are largely absent from these concerts. However, many women composers have left their mark on Ukrainian music history. Indeed, we could hear works by Janna Kolodub (1930), Alla Zagaykevych (1966), and Ludmila Yurina (1962), the famous generation of women composers from Kyiv; or Olga Kryvolap (1951), Liubava Sydorenko (1979), and Bohdana Frolyak (1968) from Lviv; Julia Gomelskaya (1964–2016) and Karmella Tsepkolenko (1955) from the Odessa region; or the younger generation of composers Anna Arkushyna (1989), Katarina Gryvul (1993), Marta Haladzun (1989), Olena Ilnytska (1977), Alisa Kobzar (1989), Anna Korsun (1986), Kira Maidenbergh-Todorova (1985), Yana Shliabanska (1994), and Alisa Zaika (2001)—to name but a few.

To extend this reflection and conduct a broader comparative study, it would be interesting to put this cartography into perspective with other European institutions such as the Prague Philharmonia³⁹ (which welcomed conductor Oksana Lyniv for the Prague Spring Festival 2023), Berliner Philharmoniker (which collaborates with the Youth Orchestra of Ukraine,⁴⁰ founded by Oksana Lyniv), Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Oper Frankfurt, Gran Teatre del Liceu Barcelona, Theater an der Wien, and the Stuttgart State Opera to name but a few. We could also examine the programming of European contemporary music festivals such as Autumn⁴¹ and the Ukrainian Contemporary Music Festival,⁴² hosted in New York; sponsored by the state-run Ukrainian Institute, it grew out of a research project looking at changes in music programming in Ukraine following the 2014 Revolution of Dignity [Maidan]. Today, it showcases Ukraine's complex and unique contributions to contemporary music through performance and discussion with scholars, musicians, and composers. The festival engages the intersection of new music, contemporary events, and the culture of Ukraine.

This overview would not be complete without mentioning Ukrainian festivals that are currently unable to offer a programme due to the war, but which

³⁹ "Prague Philharmonia Concert," <https://www.prgphil.cz/en> (accessed December 15, 2024).

⁴⁰ "Berliner Philharmoniker Concert," <https://ysou.com.ua/en/about/> (accessed December 15, 2024).

⁴¹ "Autumn Festival," <https://warszawska-jesien.art.pl/en/> (accessed December 15, 2024).

⁴² "Ukrainian Contemporary Music Festival Website," <https://www.ucmfny.com/> (accessed December 15, 2024).

are worth mentioning, such as Two Days and Two Nights of New Music (2D2N/2Д2Н)⁴³ founded by Karmella Tsepkolenko in 1995 in Odessa; Kontrasty (founded the same year in Lviv); or the Kyiv Music Fest. Music appears to be a major issue at the heart of this conflict, which is not only a territorial war, but also a cultural one.

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⁴³ "Two Days and Two Nights of New Music Website," <http://www.anm.odessa.ua/fest/f-main.html> (accessed December 15, 2024).