

# ACUAVITAE

ALBERTA'S UKRAINIAN ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE

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## A Community Response to War

ART FOR AID

PYSANKY FOR PEACE

LIANNA MAKUCH INTERVIEW



A PUBLICATION OF THE ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR THE UKRAINIAN ARTS



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# ACUAVITAE



06



08

## FEATURES

04 ART FOR AID

06 PYSANKY FOR PEACE

08 LIANNA MAKUCH  
INTERVIEW



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## DEPARTMENTS

### PROFILE

- 10 Maxim Dondyuk
- 14 Olesya Matskiv
- 16 Poets for Ukraine
- 20 Inna Petriv

### ART & CULTURE

- 18 Our Lady of Kyiv
- 18 Staff Profile

### IN THE COMMUNITY

- 21 Community Outreach Event
- 21 A Special Visit
- 22 Community Fundraising Efforts

THIS IS NOT A COMPLETE LIST OF EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS,  
WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY EVENTS WE MISSED.



## ON THE COVER:

Donation to the Art for Aid Sale, Page 4

BY DANIELA BAHRY



# ART FOR AID

LARYSA ELIUK MATCHAK AND FAMILY

By Tamara Soltkyevych

*For a moment, the world was seemingly brought to a standstill when Russia invaded Ukraine. Again. And then, while trying to absorb the shock, Ukrainians all over the world sprang into action to help. Larysa Eliuk Matchak was no exception.*

As soon as the invasion happened, she reached out to ACUA to see what she could do. That was the catalyst for a very successful fundraising effort held this March known as “Art for Aid.” I spoke with Larysa to learn more about her motivation behind organizing the event and the work that went into it.

Larysa Matchak is an abstract expressionist whose art is inspired by her Ukrainian heritage, nature, travelling, and surrounding environment. After graduating in 2006, she was accepted into a two-month abstract painting course in Italy, where she became inspired to do the type of work she continues today. Larysa’s main artistic goal is to provide beauty to the world and transport people to an alternate reality. Her paintings are characterized by vivid colours with bold, expressive brush strokes. Larysa has a Bachelor of Education degree with a major in Ukrainian Language and Culture and

a minor in Fine Art. She is an assistant principal by day with Edmonton Catholic Schools. However, she devotes much of her spare time to painting, which is her passion. As she describes herself on her website [lemartgallery.com](http://lemartgallery.com), “When I paint and express myself through art, I am able to experience a euphoric feeling of freedom and contentment.” Larysa’s work has been exhibited at the University of Alberta, Edmonton Art Gallery, ACUA Gallery, KUMF Gallery in Toronto, the Harcourt House Gallery, solo exhibits, and at conferences and festivals across Canada and Europe. She has also engaged with local businesses such as cafes and restaurants where her work has been featured.

Larysa has been involved with ACUA since she was 18 years old, featuring her works in the gallery and *ACUA Vitae*. When Russia invaded Eastern Ukraine and Crimea in 2014, artist Oleksyi Karpenko organized the original Art for Aid with ACUA and UCC-APC. Larysa participated in this event, where she found fulfillment in giving back to Ukraine through her art and being part of a collective of artists that could raise funds through art. It continues to be very important to her to participate in fundraising events where she can give back to the Ukrainian community. When Russia began its invasion this February 24, Larysa immediately thought of the success of the previous Art for Aid and initiated the process to organize this year’s event with ACUA. It has been as important to her







ARTIST: AUDREY UZWYSHYN



ARTIST: NATALIA IASHNIKOVA



ARTIST: OKSANA MOVCHAN



ARTIST: YANA MOVCHAN



ARTIST: ADELINE PANAMAROFF



ARTIST: GAIL KOZUN BRUCKNER



ARTIST: DICK MARMAN



ARTIST: ALICE LUIKEN



ARTIST: ELAINE MULDER




ARTIST: VALERIY SEMENKO

as ever to help in fundraising efforts, not only because of her Ukrainian heritage but also because her husband is from Ukraine and the war has directly impacted his family.

To organize the event, she initially started by contacting the original group that was involved with Oleksi. However, once the event was advertised, it expanded to over 50 artists that collectively donated over 150 pieces of art. This was quite the feat given that it was only advertised online. Some of these philanthropic artists are well-recognized in the Ukrainian community in Alberta and have a Ukrainian background, but other artists without any Ukrainian connection also participated simply because they heard about the event and wanted to help. Other than being devoted artists, they all have another thing in common: they all wanted to provide humanitarian aid through the sale of their work. Some are local to Alberta and others live across Canada. Artists who donated their work included Valeriy Semenko, Thea Szewczuk, Oksana Zhelisko, Oksana Movchan, Marina Mediuk, Luba Bilash, Larysa Luciwi, Larysa Eliuk Matchak, Karpata Beads/Daryl and Patricia Chichak, Iryna Karpenko, Helen Maimescul, Daniela Bahry, Borys Tarasenko, and Andrea Kopylech. This collective of artists produced a variety of original and beautiful mediums for sale, in the form of beadwork, pysanky, paintings, sculptures, t-shirt sales, graphic art, ceramics, jewelry, photography, and more.

Art for Aid was held at the ACUA gallery as a one-day art exhibit and sale on Saturday, March 12, 2022, from 1 – 4 pm. The in-person event was a successful, busy day, with coverage from major local news stations. The gallery was a full house with great energy, and by virtue of the event, lots of new members joined ACUA. Many pieces were sold at the event and the remainder continues to be sold in the gallery and online. ACUA has an album on its Facebook page with the pieces that are still available. 100% of proceeds from all the sales go to humanitarian aid in Ukraine via the Canada-Ukraine Foundation (CUF). As of the end of April, Art for Aid had raised over \$20,000.

Larysa believes this fundraising event was unique because it united artists for Ukraine and it was its own demonstration, essentially a rally with art. Much of the art has Ukrainian colouring and themes, inspiring emotion and fulfillment in their new owners. Larysa is keen to look at more fundraising events and says to stay tuned for more. For now, interested folks can continue to buy art online and know their purchase is going to a great cause. While monetary donations are much needed and appreciated for humanitarian efforts, supporting Art for Aid is unique. As Larysa says, “It’s more than a donation – people are getting a piece of history because art reflects the current times.” 





# PYSANKY FOR PEACE

## TRANSFORMING GIANT EGGS INTO WORKS OF ART

By Lindsay Shapka

Sunflowers, abstract shapes, birds, geometric symbols, eternity bands (*bezkonechnyk*), wheat, the tree of life (*vazon*) — these are just a few of the intricate designs thoughtfully hand-painted in bright, bold colours on the 12 giant eggs that were the stars of the *Pysanky for Peace* fundraiser.

From April 7 to 16, 2022, a group of local artists gathered at Kingsway Mall in Edmonton to turn a dozen six-foot-high, white eggs into intricately designed pysanky. The goal of the project, a partnership between the mall, artists, and ACUA, was to raise funds for Ukrainian Canadian Social Services (UCSS), whose focus is on supporting the displaced families and individuals who have fled Ukraine and arrived here in Alberta.

### Gathering a Diverse Group of Creators

Though not all of the designs were traditional, they were all painted by artists who generously volunteered their time to create one-of-a-kind artworks in their own distinct styles.

Muralist **Ashley Rosenow** was excited to tackle such a unique canvas, but it meant more to her than just trying something new. “I am a fifth-generation Ukrainian,” says Ashley, “and have been painting traditional pysanky since I was a child. It was an honour to be a part of such a beautiful project.”

Though it only took Ashley one 14-hour day to complete her work, she put a lot of thought into her design, even creating a miniature version on a chicken egg before putting brush to curved surface. “I wanted it to have some traditional elements... and incorporate some modern elements such as my linework. I painted a dove on one side to represent peace, and on the other side, I painted a hand holding snowdrop flowers to represent hope.”

**Borys Tarasenko**, a multidisciplinary artist based in Edmonton, was one of the only to choose red as the base colour for his work. His background in creating graphics for musicians, theatre artists, and non-profit organizations can be seen in his pysanka’s modern, abstract design and curated colour palette.

Artist **Eli Abada**, a member of the Nina Collective — a group of artists with developmental disabilities — created a vibrantly coloured design featuring his favourite elements: insects, fossils, and animals.

A member of the Nina Collective, **Ulrike Rossier** was born in West Germany during WWII and came to Canada when she was 23. According to her, the design on her pysanka is an abstract representation of nature, featuring the colour green, her favourite colour, and the one that she feels best represents life.

An orange bird, with bold black outlines, wings raised, reaches towards a purple stem with outstretched claws. This bird is just one of the detailed elements that Edmonton-based muralist and tattoo artist **Nathan Panousis** added to his pysanka.

Though realistic, the bird was not real enough to jump off its unique canvas and grab **Hannah McMillan’s** egg when it almost rolled away. Hannah, a self-taught visual artist in Edmonton, painted her egg twice before settling on her final design, which included a bold floral motif in white and red on a black background. Just as she was putting the final touches on her work, the egg became unscrewed from its base, fell off, and began to roll! Luckily, fellow artist **Breanna Barrington** was on-hand to help.





Breanna, a multimedia artist who draws inspiration from her travels to Ukraine, her studies in Slavic Folklore, and her heritage, may not have had a set plan when she began, but she did her research. “I went on a deep dive of pysanka websites, and I just immersed myself in the imagery.” One of the most detailed pysanky of the twelve, Breanna started with a black base to honour the lives lost in Ukraine over recent months. Next, she layered on other elements. “Horses represent strength and wealth, so that was one of the first symbols I went with,” said Breanna, “and then I wanted to add the tree of life. I added different colours to look like embroidery and represent prosperity and balance. I also used a lot of farm imagery, because I was thinking about Ukrainian farmers and wanted to send my good intentions their way.”

A clean, white base was what **Kalyna Somchynsky** used for her design, consisting of geometric shapes in yellow, orange, and black. Kalyna has led a lecture series on contemporary art in Ukraine at ACUA and is currently co-

editing a volume of The Shevchenko Scientific Society, *Zakhidn'okanads'kyi Zbirnyk* special issue on Ukrainian-Canadian art.

**Myroslava Oksentiuk**, a Ukrainian folk artist and designer, was inspired and excited to create her own version of a traditional pysanka. Bold white lines section off her design and are filled with plant motifs, Ukrainian words, and geometric shapes in black and red with touches of green and yellow are featured.

**Sky Hoffos**, an artist and craftsman, also went traditional with his design, but with a very different color palette. He has been working on a project involving adopting traditional pysanka designs to flat canvases, and his experience showed in his strong geometric shapes layered in shades of blue with sections of red and yellow latticework.

## Connecting with the Community

No matter how they approached their work, one thing none of the artists

expected was the public response to the project.

“I was shocked by the attention it got,” said Breanna. “What stands out is the number of Ukrainians who wanted to talk about what is going on. People kept coming up to me with stories about how they are affected right now, and it became this very important touchpoint. I have never had a response like that to my art.”

The public interest in the project resulted not only in some great conversations with the artists, but also in a surprising increase in donations made to the UCSS. The fundraising goal for this project was \$20,000. While the auction of the pysanky ended up raising \$11,000, according to UCSS President, John Shalewa, the donations from the community as a result of the campaign added up to \$100,000. <sup>4V</sup>

If you are interested in donating to the UCSS to aid in its humanitarian efforts, visit their website, [ucssedmonton.ca](http://ucssedmonton.ca).



# THIS IS THE WAY THAT I FIGHT THIS WAR

LIANNA MAKUCH AND ADVOCACY THROUGH THEATRE



ALINA BY LIANNA MAKUCH

PICTURED: CHRISTINA NGUYEN

PHOTO BY BRIANNE JANG, BB COLLECTIVE



ALINA BY LIANNA MAKUCH

PICTURED: CHRISTINA NGUYEN

PHOTO BY BRIANNE JANG, BB COLLECTIVE

*By Joyanne Rudiak*

The war in Ukraine. It's the elephant in the room that lies heavily in the hearts of Ukrainians of all stripes, whether those experiencing the atrocities first-hand, or watching in horror from thousands of miles away.

The feelings of heartbreak and helplessness especially rise up in those of us in the diaspora, as we wonder what action we can take to help our sisters and brothers in Ukraine during this continued invasion. Lianna Makuch is one such woman who is taking action in the best way she knows how: through theatre.

Lianna Makuch is a woman who wears many hats. An actor, playwright, producer, and emerging director in the Edmonton area, Makuch is also a proud, second-generation Ukrainian Canadian who is using her craft to bring light to the war in Ukraine, with a special focus on the human cost of war. Her plays, *Barvinok* and the newly premiered *Alina*, are both based on true events that provide context to the current conflict. They are even working as fundraising opportunities for those fighting for freedom in Ukraine.

*Alina* is Makuch's newest play, having recently premiered at STUDIO THEATRE at the ATB Financial Arts Barns in May 2022. It is based on Alina Viatkina's experiences as a 19-year-old volunteer frontline combat medic in Eastern Ukraine in 2015. Unable to join the official military or even the volunteer battalions, she posed as a journalist to gain access to areas she was barred from.

The timing of the play's premiere seems very serendipitous, though according to Makuch, the play was already in the works long before the February 2022 invasion. "I actually met Alina back when I was in Ukraine in 2017." She and team members, Matthew MacKenzie and Patrick Lundeen, were there to conduct research for the first iteration of Makuch's play, *Barvinok*, which included interviewing veterans of the war that started in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. Upon realizing most of their interviewees were men, Makuch asked one of her contacts if he could connect her with any female veterans, since the female







perspective is incredibly important to her identity and work. He wholeheartedly agreed and brought Alina to their next meeting.

When asked what drew her to Alina's story, Makuch replies, "I just thought that it was a really interesting perspective and a really moving and powerful story." Alina also does not look like a military person, being a slight person of small stature. Nevertheless, Makuch insists she, "obviously runs the room ... and you can just tell that people really respect her. [When] she says something, people listen to her."


Although Makuch was already working on the next version of *Barvinok*, she continued to feel drawn to Alina's story. While workshopping *Barvinok* with Дикий Театр (Wild Theatre) in Kyiv in 2018, Makuch reunited with Alina and asked if she could write a play about her experiences. Alina agreed and next steps were taken when Makuch was accepted as the first Canadian Artist-in-Residence with the IZOLYATSIA Platform for Cultural Initiatives in Kyiv in February 2020. This residency gave her the opportunity to conduct more in-depth interviews with Alina and other female veterans. The result is a first-person account of a contemporary war veteran facing struggles with civilian life and PTSD which allows audience members to empathize with those struggling with the current war. As Makuch says, "I really feel like when people see this show, they're really going to feel like they know somebody who has been at war ... and contextualize what that means with where we're at now."

Although Alina has concluded for the moment, Makuch is hoping for touring opportunities in the near future. Next up, though, is an Alberta tour of *Barvinok* this fall, co-produced with the Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts. Many will remember the first rendition of *Barvinok*, *Blood of Our Soil*, the award-winning play based on Makuch's own experiences with her grandmother and grandmother's immigration journal, coupled with veteran experiences of the war in Eastern Ukraine. After performing the show in Edmonton and Toronto, Makuch felt there was more to the story and has continued developing it. A highlight

of this process was working with Wild Theatre, a collective of Ukrainian actors, in 2018, "to massage and shape and bring the play to its next iteration," *Barvinok*. Theatregoers will get the chance to experience the newest version of the play in Edmonton, Lethbridge, Canmore, and one more unconfirmed location in September and October 2022. The production is also in the process of being adapted into a feature-length screenplay, thanks to the 2020 REACH Award from the Shevchenko Foundation.

For Makuch, simply coming out and watching these productions is an act of resistance to Russian aggression toward Ukraine. This has not stopped her from organizing fundraising efforts for battalions the real Alina is in touch with, however. In fact, thanks to her social media savvy and a website dedicated to the effort, Makuch has helped funnel over \$88,000 in capital to those who need it in Ukraine, as well as broker deals for other necessary defensive supplies, such as gas masks and bulletproof vests. She actually made the gas mask deal on her birthday. "It was the best birthday present I could give myself, to send gas masks to Ukraine." She also remarks, "I never thought I would know so much about bulletproof vests...it's like a whole new world that I never thought that I have an understanding of, but I do."

Indeed, many of us cannot believe what Ukrainians have the knowledge of thanks to the war, which is why many continue to speak up. It is why Makuch continues doing the work she does, stating, "I can't just sit and do nothing and feel powerless ... so just doing this [is] a way that I feel like I can have some small semblance of power to fight [the war]."

Fight the war we will, until Ukraine's freedom is secured, and the tyranny of Russian aggression has ceased, one play and dollar at a time. 

For those wishing to donate to Alina Viatkina, head over to <https://www.supportalinaukraine.com/> for more information and to donate. For tickets to the Alberta tour of *Barvinok*, check <http://pyreticproductions.ca/production/barvinok/>.



# PHOTOGRAPHING THE WAR

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
MAXIM DONDYUK



*By Izzy Sheptak*

**How did you decide to get involved in photography, and what subjects did you photograph before the war?**

I came to photography professionally on the third try. The first experience I had was when I was five, with my mother, who was an amateur photographer, and I used to watch how she processed family photos in a dark room. Later, I was given my first Soviet camera SMENA and started doing my own photos. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, buying and processing film became more difficult and expensive, so my mother and I stopped doing it. The second try was at the age of 12 when I joined a photo club and began shooting film and processing photos myself. But my enthusiasm didn't last long. The third time I came back to photography was at the age of 24 when I worked in a completely different field, and photography became my hobby. All my free time I studied photography, read all kinds of literature and practiced. One year later, I quit my job and became a photojournalist in Ukrainian mass media. By 2010, I understood that I needed a lot more freedom, so I left the Ukrainian media and became a freelancer who creates and promotes personal long-term projects. Photography is

my personal visual diary. It's not a hobby or work for me; photography is my philosophy. It helps me to discover and understand this world.

I work in the field of documentary photography, using mediums of photography, video, text, and archival material. I'm interested in exploring issues related to history, memory, conflict, and their consequences. Each project is a long-term immersion in the environment, it's a reliving of the moments, it's a meditation.

My past projects include 'TB epidemic in Ukraine', a two-year work which investigated the problem of tuberculosis in Ukraine; 'Crimea Sich', both a series of photographs and a documentary, which tell about the military upbringing of children in a secret camp in the Crimean Mountains and its pitfalls. "Between Life and Death" is a personal reflection about the aftermath of wars through the ruins and devastated landscapes that had previously been battlefields. "Culture of Confrontation," which in 2019 resulted in the book of the same name, became a turning point in my artistic work. My latest is called "Untitled Project from Chernobyl," in which I work with vernacular and found photographs in the restricted areas, combining them with landscape photographs of the territories that were burned by nuclear energy.





PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MAXIM DONDUK

**Your pictures do not shy away from the true horror, destruction, and sorrow brought about by war. What specific messages do you hope to convey through your photographs of the war, and how do you hope viewers respond to your pictures?**

I never intended to be a war photographer, never was and never will be. But this is my country, and I feel that this is my duty as a documentary photographer and as a Ukrainian to capture this historical moment for the present and the future. Today, we are witnessing the epic battle moment, a final fight for Ukraine's independence, and for democracy that started at the Maidan revolution of 2013-14.

On the early morning of Feb 24, I woke up to dozens of phone calls and messages; outside the window, the air raid siren had started. I didn't understand what was happening and was shocked to find out that all major cities were bombed, and the Russian army had invaded Ukraine. I felt anger, disappointment, and despair, but clear confidence that I should be there with my camera.

During wartime, everyone chooses their role. Some go to the army or territorial defense, some volunteer, others help financially, and some repair military equipment. I use my

camera to document this story. This is a historic moment, and I lead the chronicle of this war for the present moment to show what it really looks like to challenge what Russian propaganda shows, and for the future.

**How have you managed to remain courageous and mentally strong in the face of the horrors you have witnessed and the physical injury you have experienced?**

I put my emotions into photography, into all that I experience: anger, fear, disappointment, pain, tears, joy. Thus, photographs are filled with life. The more you experience any feelings, the stronger your art, whether it be photography, paintings, books, or music. That's why very often objective photojournalism, which denies subjectivity and emotions, can be simply boring, and informative, without an emotional aspect.

**How does your own artistic ability and style influence the way you photograph the war?**

As I mentioned, emotions play the most important role in my photography. I never thought that being neutral is good. It is normal to take one side or another. We all do this. You can only stay neutral if you come to a country as a tourist or a



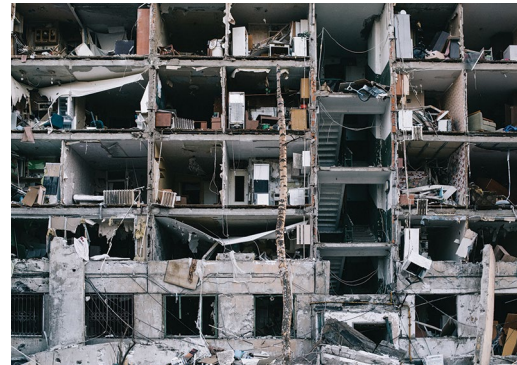
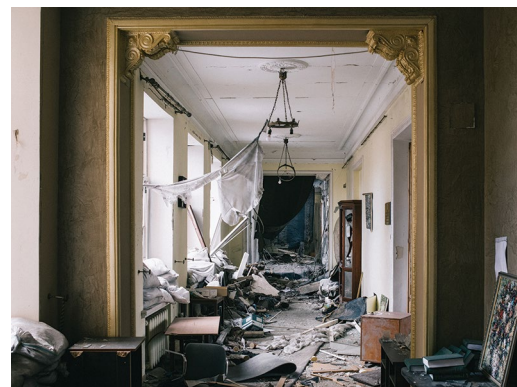


journalist for a couple of weeks. But if you immerse yourself in the situation, or like me, if you live in this country for a long time, then you will choose sides, no matter whether you want to or not. This counts even more if it concerns your mother country. That's why I think that neutral photography is emotionless photography. Of course, it is important to show both sides, and during the Maidan revolution, I tried to show both the protesters' and police's sides. But with war, it is not possible. Once I get to the other side, I will be either arrested or just killed. And so, I believe in subjective photography. For me, objectivity is senseless. It doesn't contain anything but facts. And such a function can be done by a video recorder or web cameras. You don't need a human being for this. A human is needed for subjective photography, with reflection and emotions.

Also, I stand for aesthetics in my work, and what inspires me are art, literature, and music.

**Can you tell us about an experience you had while documenting the war that has had a significant impact on you?**


In the first months of the war, very often I experienced moments of hopelessness; there were a lot of things that broke me down. It is still difficult to understand how all this is possible, and what is the reason Russia is bombing cities and killing innocent people. I remember a boy of six, who I photographed in the Intensive Care Unit at a children's hospital in Kyiv. When I arrived, everyone was hidden in a bomb shelter under the hospital, because of the bombing of the city. The doctor told me that there was a six-year-old boy in intensive care, so we went there, and the doctor told me the



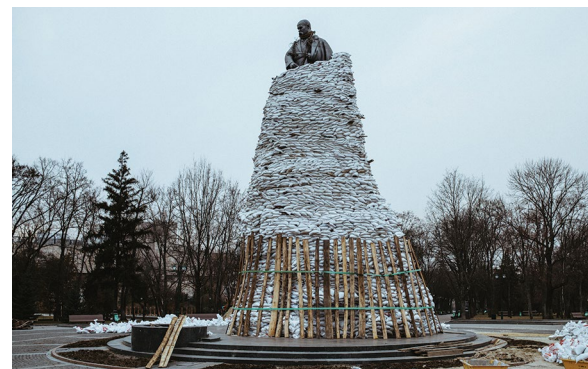


boy's story. When the Russians began to bomb Kyiv, not far from the railway station, the car in which the family, (father, mother, daughter, and son) was travelling in came under fire. The whole family died right there. The boy was taken into intensive care. The doctor threw back his blanket, and the boy lay like a little Jesus, in very serious condition. The doctors called him the "unknown No. 1." Everyone was preparing for the fact that there would be an "unknown No. 2, 3, 4...." His parents were sent immediately to the morgue, to a completely different hospital. No one knew the boy's name, or his age, since the boy was without documents. That's why he was simply called the "unknown No. 1." This was the first wounded child. The next day he died....

There were many emotional things in Kharkiv too, a city that had been massively bombed. When I saw the city center,

destroyed by air bombs, I was shocked. The last time I saw such images were the photographs of World War II. This city was bombed by the Germans during the Second World War, and now it is bombed by the Russians. Because of constant shelling, a lot of people are in hospitals. Once I found two women and one young guy who lost their legs. They just slept in their flats, and then a Russian rocket flew into them. Now they have no home, no things, no legs... it is difficult to understand such things, it is difficult to understand why this is happening. 

*Maxim is currently based in Ukraine and continues to chronicle the war's destruction. He can be found on Instagram @maximdondyuk or on his website maximdondyuk.com.*



ALL PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MAXIM DONDYUK



## INTERVIEW



## AN INTERVIEW WITH *Olesya Matskiiv*

L-R: IHOR RUDYK, BRIAN HILL, OLESYA MATSKIV  
PHOTO PROVIDED BY OLESYA MATSKIV

*By Izzy Sheptak*

**Can you tell us a bit about the history of the Wounded Volunteers Fund Society? What has the organization done in the past, and what is it doing now?**

When the war started, and Russia invaded the East of Ukraine in 2014, a group of like-minded people started to volunteer and help as much as they could in Canada and Ukraine.

Ukraine was not ready for the war in 2014, so soldiers, civilians, and refugees from the east of Ukraine desperately needed everything. This is how the Wounded Volunteers Fund Society started. I felt I needed to help.

**Can you tell us a bit about yourself? How did you get involved in the WVFS, and what is your current role?**

My name is Olesya Matskiiv; I am President/volunteer of the Wounded Volunteers Fund Society, which was registered as a non-profit organization in 2015. It has the endorsement of UCC Alberta, Ukrainian Canadian Catholic Brotherhood of Alberta and the support of other organizations and groups of people.

We were helping wounded soldiers who went to the war as volunteers and, after the war, needed support with medication, financial support to pay for surgeries and rehab outside of Ukraine (abroad), etc.

We also provided help for displaced refugees living in western Ukraine who left their homes during the war.

When Russia started attacking on that horrible morning of February 24, 2022, the war started all over Ukraine. The WVF Society began our work again, with the huge help and financial support of Canadian Ukrainians from Alberta and across Canada. People with big hearts wanted to donate and support Ukraine and Ukrainian people.

WVF Society started to focus on providing lots of different items that Ukrainian Heroes needed on the front line, such as: body armament (protective vests), helmets, knee protection, hemostatic medication (stops blood during hard injuries), medicine, thermal underwear, food etc. We would try our best to provide whatever soldiers (from different battalions) would ask for through our volunteer Myroslava Mysak from Lviv.

Right now, I would say, with God's help and the help of our donors in Canada, our fund got stronger and can support our wounded soldiers more than a few years ago.

I would like to send a big thank you to my close friends, Rena Hanchuk and Yaroslav Kitynskyy, and other close friends, donors,



and people with big hearts from Alberta, who always support Ukraine. Without all of you, this work would be impossible.

I am a proud Ukrainian-Canadian, volunteering and helping Ukraine, like other volunteer organizations as long as it is needed; we will continue our important work to support brave soldiers, people who are protecting Ukraine, fighting for freedom and democracy, and independence in this horrible war with Russia.

**Is there anything you would like the public to know about the war currently or in the past that you think media outlets might have failed to show/communicate?**

Ukraine needs our help and financial support like never before. Every day Ukraine loses many lives. Russian troops destroy cities. Peaceful civilians and children are killed by Russians, many Ukrainians have left their homes because of the destruction, and many children are orphans due to the conflict. This is heartbreaking!

I am sure that people in Canada and all over the world, watching Ukrainian news, can see all the truth and all the horror that Ukraine and Ukrainian people are going through. Of course, no media will ever transmit all the pain and suffering that every Ukrainian family is going through.

The Ukrainian nation is very strong, and the whole world believes in Ukrainian victory!

It's very important not to stop broadcasting daily news, or writing articles about the horrible war going on in Ukraine. <sup>AV</sup>

Donations can be made to:

**Wounded Volunteers Fund Society**  
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# Poets for Ukraine

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID C. BRYDGES, THE ONTARIO POETRY SOCIETY POET EMISSARY

By Lizzy Taylor



DAVID BRYDGES PHOTO PROVIDED

**Tell us about yourself. What inspired you to start writing?**

I have always been a curious person and observer, especially about nature. This, coupled with my love of reading

and words, provided some natural background to write poetry. For many years it was a hobby, and I did not have poetry friends and was not a member of any groups until mid-life when I signed up for an open mic in Edmonton for the Stroll of Poets. To this day, I can't remember what poem I nervously read to an audience of total strangers. But what happened after with applause and a warm comradeship that followed made me feel welcomed and motivated to join this group and become more active in the poetry scene in Edmonton.

**How did you get started organizing the Poets for Ukraine anthologies?**

When the news of the invasion hit, I was quite stressed and wanted to help. I was looking for ways poets could be engaged when I heard Penn Kemp, London's former Poet Laureate, was creating an anthology, *"Poems in Response to Peril."* I submitted a poem, then started my own Facebook group, *"Poets for Ukraine,"* and began to post some of my poems.

**I encouraged other poets and noticed poems were coming from all parts of the world.**

I also saw poets posting poems on other Facebook groups, so I contacted them and began planning my anthology, *"Poets for Ukraine"* Volume 1 and 2. A local creative team was put together for this project: Laura Landers donated

her painting *"Flowers for Peace"* as the book cover, Carol Cormier printed the chapbooks at cost, and Brydge Builder Press paid for the printing.

**What is the goal of Poets for Ukraine?**

The Facebook page is a forum for poets to post poems and comments. I encouraged several poets who did not make the deadline to post their poetry online as a way for the poets in the anthologies to keep building community.

The fundraising goal was to raise funds for the Second Front Ukraine Foundation, which, so far, has raised \$1600 in book sales. In 2023, in collaboration with Ukraine poetry groups and poets worldwide, we will be invited to attend a Kyiv International Poetry Symposium.

**How many poets participated?**

We had 51 poets from eight countries submitting poems for both anthologies. The countries were: Canada, the United States, Nepal, India, Kenya, Ukraine, Sweden, and Scotland. One poet from





Kyiv, Vyacheslav Konoval, submitted four poems for the anthology. Fourteen poets from Alberta participated. I had our live book launch in Edmonton on April 24 during the Edmonton Poetry Festival.

### What is the inspiration behind the anthology's cover?

The sunflower is Ukraine's national flower and symbolizes growth and beauty, yet I wanted to convey how this natural wonder of nature has been tainted by the Russian invasion. Thus, the artist Laura Landers created the one drooping sunflower with a bloodstain and the blood the Ukrainian soil has absorbed since the war.


### Where will the funds raised from Poets for Ukraine be going?

At our live launch in Edmonton, we passed the hat around and raised \$515 for ACUA, with board member Darka Broda-Masiuk coming to talk about the organization. The book sale funds have gone to the Second Front Ukraine Foundation in Toronto.

### Where can people learn more about Poets for Ukraine?

Please visit our Facebook page, "Poets for Ukraine," as poets continue to post poetry.

### To anyone wanting to begin writing, what advice would you give?

My favourite poetry quote is by a 17th-century German poet named Friedrich Holderlin, *"Although we have to make a living, we dwell poetically on this earth."* I try to be reminded of this wondrous cornucopia of creative moments that surround us daily. The world is a poetic landscape waiting to be captured in a poem and shared to reinspire others. Trust yourself that your heart is a storyteller and all you need to do is listen to its pulses. Keep refining your writing craft through workshops, reading widely, joining poetry communities, making friendships with poets, and gifting your gifts back to the world. The world needs more poets and poetry. As historian Jacques Attali says, *"Beauty will succeed in nourishing and protecting the last sparks of humanity."* 

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## Our Lady of Kyiv

By David  
C. Brydges

"Artists and poets are the raw nerve ends of humanity.  
By themselves, they can do a little to save humanity.  
Without them, there would be little worth saving."

— statement in the cemetery where artist Jackson Pollock is buried."


A friend discovers a famous iconic painting  
Our Lady of Kyiv and emails its image.  
Originally made by a Byzantine artist around 900 years ago.  
Prince Mstislav commissioned the Virgin and Child  
for a church building near Kyiv.  
Another Russian Prince removed the icon to his northern  
city of Vladimir before he devastated Kyiv.

He installed a puppet political regime  
with his brother Gleb in charge.  
Does this historical narrative sound familiar  
while history bitterly unfolds in modern Ukraine?  
Is this the first attack by the Russian nation on Ukraine?  
In the 13th century, this treasured Ukrainian art heritage  
was taken to Moscow's Tretyakov Museum.

The face of the icon haunts me,  
saddened, joyless heart eyes evoke  
such tenderness and humankind.  
The Slavic spirit is deeply embedded here.  
It's tragic defiance fighting against  
foreign occupation still nobly active.

She knows painfully centuries of wars reality.  
Gazing into the darkened twenty-first century,  
sees babies like hers being bombed.  
I feel her tears of bloodshed, while the holy one  
innocently keen to become "*the world peacemaker*"  
clings to no reality except his mother's warm neck.  
And her doubts he will ever fulfill his divine destiny.

I want history to teach me, but it is only  
an imperfect mirror cracked to the core.  
I want to believe that the fairy door  
opens; says everything's ok, but it is silent.  
I want to read Chinese sage poetry but  
worry wounds obstruct my concentration.  
I want to pray, but it is not enough.  
I want to do yoga and pretend I am at peace.  
I want this meditation cushion to be calm, but it is in flames.  
I want to praise my spirit guides for their wise clarity,  
but all I see is smoke and chaos.

The world is burning, and I lend my little tears  
as the enormity of destruction burns my furious body.  
Our family of humanity is suffering  
because of one man's evil mind.  
Yet "*the world peacemaker*" ideal  
can't be killed by bullets or brutality.  
It's in our heart's heritage,  
nine hundred years of solitude,  
this icon of hope, waiting to be disarmed.  
So, peace once more has a chance. 




### MEET THE STAFF



PHOTO PROVIDED

# LIZZY TAYLOR

Lizzy Taylor started at ACUA in January 2020 as a Production Assistant for the *Threads That Connect Fashion Show* and has stayed on to coordinate *ACUA Vitae*, manage workshops, and as the Curatorial Assistant for ACUA's upcoming pottery exhibit, *Out of the Kiln*. When you visit ACUA, she's likely the first person you meet!

Lizzy graduated from the University of Alberta with her BSc Specialization in Animal Biology and recently completed her Arts and Cultural Management Diploma from MacEwan University. She is a painter and textile artist, and her work is often inspired by nature. 

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# Newly Displaced

**AN INTERVIEW WITH  
INNA PETRIV**

*By Izzy Sheptak*



**Where in Ukraine are you from, and how has this area specifically been impacted by the war?**

I am from Ivano-Frankivsk, a nice city in the western part of Ukraine. Our city was hit on the very first day of the invasion by an attack at the airport. My workplace is not far from the airport and on my way to work, I could see heavy clouds of smoke and intense fire coming from there. Although we were not heavily bombarded like other cities, the air raid sirens were signalling five to six times a day and night. I was very scared for my family, especially my children.

**What do you think people should know about the war in Ukraine that the news leaves out? What important messages or information do you think people who are outside of Ukraine should be aware of?**

People are not well aware of the atrocities of this horrifying war and think that it is happening somewhere far away. But in reality, it concerns every person on this planet. It potentially could lead to nuclear war and world famine. Therefore, there is no way to be ignorant and only with joint effort the democratic world can stop tyranny and avert the disaster.


**Please tell us a bit about your experience as a refugee. How did you come to the decision to leave Ukraine, and why did you decide to come to Canada? What are some of the sacrifices you had to make or difficulties you had to overcome?**

Fortunately, people from the countries we were travelling in were kind and helpful, though we were missing our motherland, especially our children. We decided to move to Canada because of my husband's relatives who live in Edmonton and gladly agreed to help us. My boys are missing their dad who stayed in Ukraine and kept working as a surgeon. Unfortunately, I had to leave my favourite job as a pediatrician.

**Were there any times during your experience when you felt well-supported or not supported enough? Have certain individuals or groups helped to make your experience easier?**

When we stayed in Budapest during the first week of our journey, we had to spend the night in a very filthy and dirty hotel though we saw a different picture on the Internet. We had to move out, but the host didn't compensate for the rest of the days we had paid upfront, and we were running out of money. Psychologically, it was hard as well as I couldn't sleep at night. Thankfully, my cousin helped us find accommodation in Germany through her close friend.

**How do you feel the war has impacted your own identity and the identity of Ukraine as a nation?**

The world after the 24th of February will never be the same and one can hardly know where it will end up. Ukrainians as a nation have never been so united before. We showed the whole world that we deserve to be a sovereign, free and successful country. I feel proud that I am Ukrainian. 





# A SPECIAL VISIT

*By Lizzy Taylor*

On April 12, 2022, ACUA welcomed some special guests! Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Member of Parliament George Chahal joined a group of recently arrived children from Ukraine and Afghanistan to decorate and dye eggs. The class was taught by artist Larisa Sembaliuk Cheladyn, who showed everyone how to decorate their eggs with crayon wax and dye them their favourite colour. What a talented group of artists! 🎨



## Community Outreach Event / Taras & Elise Opening

*By Lizzy Taylor*

Russia's invasion of Ukraine happened only a few days before the opening of our March Signature Artist Series opening, KORINNYA, featuring the works of Elise Futoransky and Taras Lachowsky. ACUA adapted the opening into a community outreach event, providing an opportunity to gather, touch base, and support one another. The evening opened with the Ukrainian Male Chorus of Edmonton performing the Ukrainian national anthem and prayer. Member of Parliament Randy Boissonnault, ACUA Board Member and Vice-President of the National Ukrainian Canadian Congress Olesia Luciwi-Andryjowycz, and playwright Lianna Makuch were among those who spoke about their response to the war and how it has affected their communities. 🎨





PHOTO PROVIDED



SLAVKA AND JOYCE'S EMBROIDERY TALISMAN | PHOTO PROVIDED



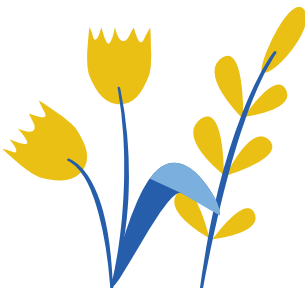
CONFETTI SWEETS COOKIES | PHOTO PROVIDED



DARIA PASKA FOR PEACE | PHOTO PROVIDED

# COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

*Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, our community came together to raise funds in all sorts of creative ways, from bringing dance companies together for the first time, to concerts, performances, tasty treats, and more. This page is a snapshot of some of the fundraising efforts that have taken place over the past months from those within the ACUA community.*



**Confetti Sweets** planned to raise funds for the Canada-Ukraine Foundation by selling its delicious blue and yellow sugar cookies and cookie mix. With 23,000 cookies and over 200 pounds of sprinkles, they've raised over \$35,000 and counting.

**Taste of Ukraine** knew that nobody could resist a plate of perogies! March 20th saw the St. Albert restaurant's parking lot full of people enjoying their perogy fundraiser. "Perogies in the Parking Lot" raised \$50,120 for the Canada-Ukraine Foundation, with the initial one-day fundraiser continuing for a week with a dedicated perogy plate available in the restaurant.

Supporter **Daria Luci** raised over \$4,000 with her **Paska for Peace** campaign, which saw her baking 247 paskas over the course of the Easter season. The funds have helped to pay for a portable X-ray machine for a hospital

in Lviv, where many injured soldiers and civilians are being treated. "There is just this desire to continue passing on this tradition and maintain that culture, especially when it's being bombed to extinction in Ukraine," said Daria.

**A Night for Ukraine** brought together Edmonton's Ukrainian dance companies to the same stage for the first time in history, raising funds and dancing in solidarity with Ukraine. **Shumka, Cheremosh, Volya, Viter, Dunai, and Vohon** came together to celebrate the perseverance of Ukrainian culture, alongside the Viter Ukrainian Folk Choir and a local bandurist. Proceeds from the sold-out show went to the Canada-Ukraine Foundation, totalling over \$100,000.

**The Children of Ukraine Benefit Concert** saw classically trained violinist **Vasyl Popadiuk** and his five-member band, Papa Duke, performing across Western Canada including Edmonton



and Calgary to raise money for two orphanages in Sumy, Ukraine. Says Popadiuk, “As a Ukrainian, I am honoured to contribute to the most vulnerable part of the population, our children.” Popadiuk, a world-renowned musician from Kyiv, Ukraine, now living in Ottawa, Ontario, played five concerts throughout the month of May.

**BRAVO! Benefit Performance for Ukraine** united the Calgary and Edmonton dance communities, with over 100 dancers taking the stage from seven dance groups: **Cheremshyna Ukrainian Dance Ensemble and Chumak II, Studia Shumka, Vykrutas Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, Polanie Polish Folk Dance Ensemble, Yalenka Ukrainian Dancers, Barvinok Ukrainian Dancers, and Junior Tryzub.** The sold-out performance donated all net proceeds towards Ukrainian humanitarian aid and showcased their love and pride for Ukraine through dance.

**Viter Ukrainian Dancers and Folk Choir** hosted “Ribbons of Promise: An Evening of Solidarity” in early March, raising nearly \$22,000 for the Canada-Ukraine Foundation. Attendees of the banquet enjoyed performances by the Viter dancers and folk choir throughout the night.

**ACUA board members Joyce Sirski-Howell and Slavka Shulakewych** began stitching patches for the Ukrainian soldiers, cross stitching the *Oberih* (amulet) talisman to be worn on their uniforms as a small thank you for their bravery. ACUA's Drop-In Stitch-In participants put aside their projects to embroider patches for our March drop-in night.

**Focus on Fibre Art Association** quickly began work on creating quilts for Ukrainian displaced persons and Afghanistan refugees, coming together to sew quilts of all sizes for the newly arriving families. So far, they've sewn over a dozen quilts, and that number continues to rise.

**Stand With Ukraine.EDM** formed just three days after the invasion to address

the high demand for Ukrainian flags, coming together to sew flags and create ribbons with proceeds going towards humanitarian aid. Encouraged by the massive support, the volunteers branched out to creating bracelets, wreaths, paintings and more, working out of ACUA to continue to fundraise.


**The Cobblestone Freeway Foundation** was originally established to support cultural projects in Ukraine. With Russia's war against Ukraine, it has now shifted focus to sending donations directly to Ukrainians in need, focusing on Ukrainian displaced people, Cobblestone Freeway Tours staff and their families, artisans, and performers.

The **University of Alberta** brought together students and faculty alongside members of the Ukrainian community for a fundraising concert in support of Ukraine. The night featured performances from the Viter Folk Choir, singer Marcia Ostashewski and bandurist Dr. Andrij Hornjatkevyc, alongside other musical performances and poetry readings throughout the evening. Proceeds from the event went towards the Canada-Ukraine Foundation.

**MacEwan University's Fine Arts and Communications** program donated 100 percent of ticket sales from the 2022 Winter Term to the Canada-Ukraine Foundation. Beginning with their performance of “The Drowsy Chaperone,” the department continued to fundraise through its theatrical and musical performances, raising a total of \$10,052.00.

The **Art Gallery of Alberta** held its Benefit for Ukraine on March 13th, featuring performances by Cheremshyna Ukrainian Dancers and the Ukrainian Male Chorus of Edmonton. Tickets included a dinner catered by Prairie Catering, The Royal Glenora, and KITCHEN by Brad. 100 percent of the proceeds went towards humanitarian aid.

**Waddington's Auctioneers** raised \$113,800 for the Canada-Ukraine Foundation with their Standing Together with Ukraine online auction. The auction inspired a huge response, both from artists and bidders, with 263 enthusiastic bidders for the 112 donated pieces. Every work in the auction found new homes across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Bravo to all who worked so hard for our *Ukraina! Molodtsi.* 



MACEWAN DROWSY CHAPERONE PERFORMANCE | PHOTO PROVIDED





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