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Press Release

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Finding Hope Through Music: Voices gather for historic concert celebrating Ukraine at St Paul's Cathedral

Today, London's **St Paul's Cathedral** plays host to a historic concert celebrating the importance of Ukrainian culture amidst Russia's ongoing invasion.

The **Ukrainian Ambassador to the United Kingdom Valerii Zaluzhnyi** will be in attendance this evening, demonstrating the power of Ukrainian sovereignty and freedom as Russia's illegal and unprovoked war in Ukraine continues.

Valerii Zaluzhnyi, Ukrainian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, said:

'This concert is a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Ukrainian people. Through music, we not only showcase our rich cultural heritage but also send a powerful message of resilience and hope to the world. As we gather here, we stand united in our resolve to preserve our culture and our freedom.'

This evening, audiences will experience a one-time performance by the **Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra** – an orchestra of Ukrainian musicians under the patronage of **First Lady Olena Zelenska** and founded by conductor **Keri-Lynn Wilson** – accompanied by singers from the **Royal Opera House's Songs for Ukraine Chorus** – a group formed to bring Ukrainians living in London, many who were forced to flee their homes, to sing together in the wake of the ongoing war.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony – which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year – will be performed in the Ukrainian language, symbolic of what the concert represents: using joy, music and culture in Ukraine's ongoing fight against tyranny.

This concert follows First Lady of Ukraine Mrs Olena Zelenska recent visit to the UK, where she met the Royal Opera House's Songs for Ukraine Chorus at Number 10 Downing Street.

Yaroslava, a member of the Royal Opera House Songs for Ukraine Chorus, says:

'It's important to remind the world that Ukraine is more than this war. Performing a classic masterpiece like Beethoven's Ninth alongside new music gives Ukrainian musical and artistic heritage a well-deserved place on the arts stage.'

The importance of using culture and continuing to put a spotlight on Ukraine has been a major focus of President Zelensky, who earlier this year said that *"in times of war – even more so than in times of peace – we must all remember the significance of culture. And people of culture matter. Everyone who speaks out for Ukraine. Who voices what's on their hearts. Who preserves everything we go through. Who revives what could have been forgotten but renewed, gives people strength, gives emotions."*

This concert, presented by the **Barbican**, the **Royal Opera House**, and **Askonas Holt**, is not only an opportunity for these musicians to proudly showcase their talent, their culture and their rich history – it's also a way for the rest of the world to show that the plight of Ukraine has not been forgotten.

Keri-Lynn Wilson, the founder of the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, and a world-renowned conductor, says:

'Putin is trying to silence a nation. The purpose of our orchestra is to show that Ukrainians will not be silenced. Whether through **Victoria Vita Polevá's Bucha Lacrimosa**, written in memory of the innocent victims massacred at the hands of Russian invaders in 2022, or through our Ukrainian language rendering of Beethoven's monumental Ninth Symphony. We are out here on the international stage, on a mission to show the power of a Ukrainian artistry that offers both hope and solace as we fight for liberty and democracy on the cultural front.'

Members of the **Royal Opera Chorus**, conducted by Royal Opera Chorus Director, **William Spaulding**, have performed with the Songs for Ukraine Chorus since the group first formed, and will join these incredible Ukrainian musicians and singers at St Paul's Cathedral in solidarity.

To find out more about today's concert, and the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra's international tour, visit [Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra: Beethoven's Ninth](#).

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Images can be downloaded [here](#).

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About the Royal Opera House

Home to The Royal Ballet, The Royal Opera and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, the Royal Opera House brings together world-class performers and trailblazing creative teams to share unforgettable performances with audiences near and far. Our theatres are in the heart of London's Covent Garden, but our work is accessed and experienced across the UK and globally through ROH Stream, tours, cinema programme, radio broadcasts and TV output. Our work in schools and communities up and down the country is driven by our curriculum linked Create & Learn programmes, specially designed to inspire creativity, broaden participation and diversify the future of opera and ballet. These sit alongside industry-leading talent development projects, regional partnerships, and a raft of daytime events, family activities, tours, exhibitions and free concerts here in our iconic Covent Garden home. We are also expanding our audience through our flagship Young ROH scheme and are committed to reducing our impact on the environment and net zero emissions by 2035.

About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), and a London base of the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other associates and partners including the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [the BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Britten Sinfonia](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), [Darbar Festival](#), [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [Drum Works](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [Human Rights Watch Film Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), [National Open Youth Orchestra \(NOYO\)](#), [Serious](#), and [Trafalgar Entertainment](#).

For more information, visit our [website](#) or connect with us on [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

About Askonas Holt

With a history dating back over a century, Askonas Holt is one of the world's leading arts management companies, specialising in classical music. Working across the globe, the highly experienced team provides bespoke, strategic career management for established and emerging artists, with a roster that includes Sir Simon Rattle, Nicola Benedetti, Joyce DiDonato and Jakub Józef Orliński. The Askonas Holt Fellowship programme nurtures the next generation of talent, providing bespoke mentorship and financial support for emerging conductors and singers.

The award-winning Tours and Projects department arranges tours and residencies for orchestras, ensembles and dance companies, and is committed to leading new collaborative initiatives that put the containment of the climate crisis at the heart of every touring decision. It has been breaking new ground for decades, from the Berliner Philharmoniker's first tour of Asia and the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra's landmark tour in 2007, to the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra's debut tour in 2022.

Askonas Holt has offices in London and Berlin, and is part of a strategic alliance under the umbrella of the San Francisco of Music, along with sister companies Opus 3 Artists in New York and recording label Pentatone. The alliance organisations share a common mission to increase the impact of music in the world, and to change the nature of how artists, students, patrons and audiences interact with one another.