

Future Reimagined

**UK/Ukraine
Season**

www.ukuaseason.org



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About the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture

The UK/Ukraine Season of Culture was a collaborative initiative **between the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute**. It took place from **June 2022 to June 2023** and featured artist residencies, talks, film, music, literature, drama, and dance. Over **40** projects were held across more than **20** cities across the UK, most of them face to face but some online.

Originally intended to celebrate 30 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries and strengthen cultural connections, the Season's theme of **'Future Reimagined'** shifted its focus due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. The emphasis was placed on addressing the changed needs and priorities of the Ukrainian cultural sector. The Season became the platform that amplified the Ukrainian cultural and artistic voice in the UK.

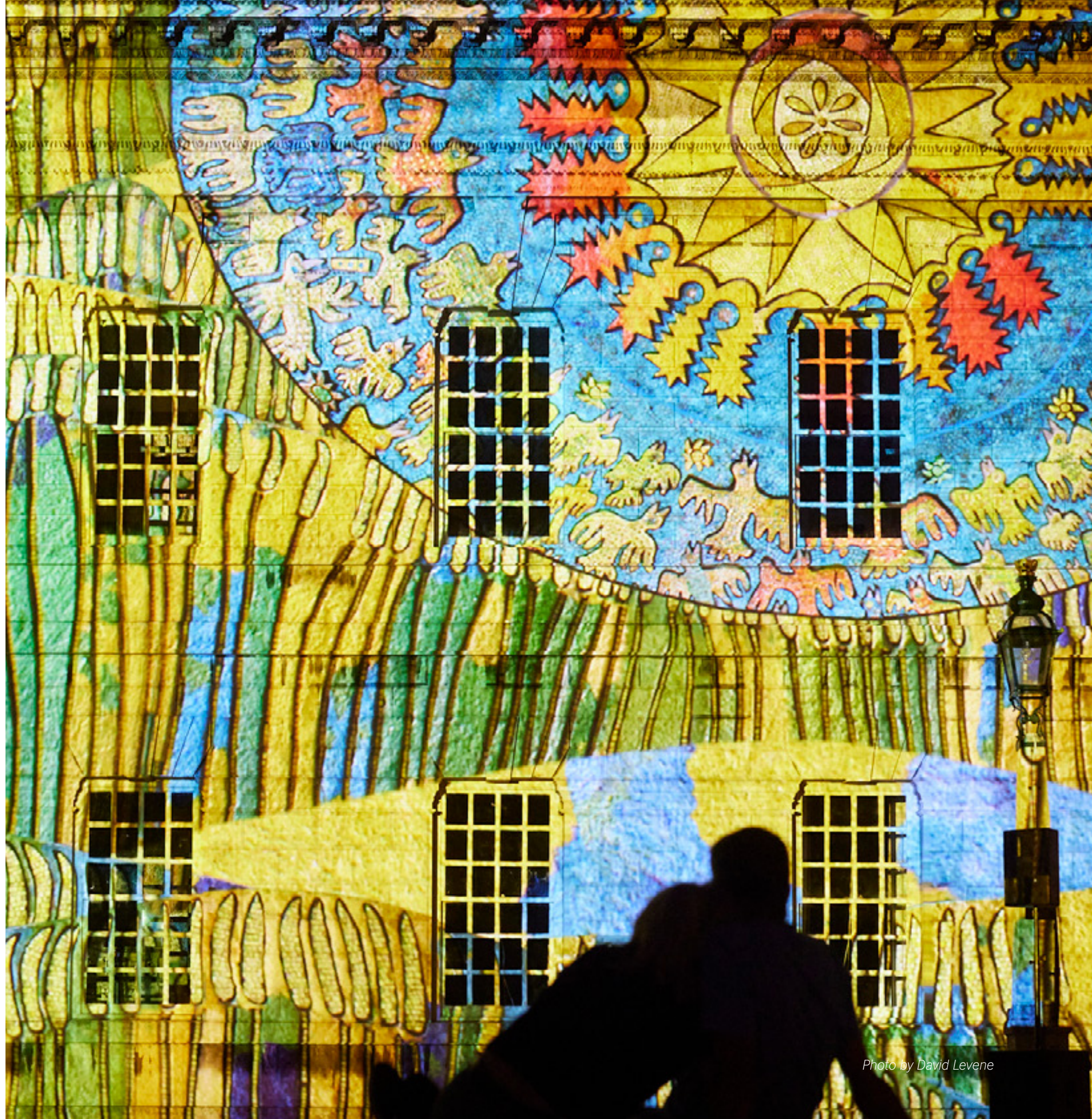


Photo by David Levene

Foreword

We had no clue what lay ahead when we first sat around a table in Kyiv in 2019 discussing the idea of the UK/Ukraine Season. But our strong instinct, conviction, and partnerships have served to guide us through the most troubled times.

In a war that is about identity as much as territory, culture has been one of the main targets for aggression. Culture is vital now to how Ukraine presents itself on the international stage, how it approaches building back the physical damage inflicted, and how it looks at future development through the creative economy.

For this reason, it was clear in spring 2022 that we must ensure the Season happened, both as an act of solidarity and as the most practical means we had to support the Ukrainian arts sector at this critical juncture. The pivot to delivery in the UK provided a unique and meaningful opportunity to open up Ukrainian culture to new audiences.

The spirit and effort taken to deliver the Season – so successfully – is impossible to put into words. I can only express my admiration and humble thanks to every colleague at the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute, and every artist and partner at cultural institutions in both countries who worked through unthinkable circumstances to make projects flourish.

This report gives a snapshot of our rich programme. Behind every number and case study is a real human story. The British Council is committed to maintaining these relationships with Ukrainian artists and creative organisations for the long term. These connections provide solid foundations to match the hope expressed in the Season's title 'Future Reimagined'.



Claire de Braekeleer

Director Arts Wider Europe,
British Council

The UK/Ukraine Season was intended to seal strategic partnership between our countries and honour 30 years of diplomatic relations. It was to boost cultural collaboration between our artistic communities and build more understanding and trust between people.

Between 2019, when the idea was first born, and mid-2022, when the Season was launched, we went through a radical change of context. But the essence and goals remained unchanged. And so the title 'Future Reimagined' was still relevant.

Ukraine faced a full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 followed by unseen violence and devastation. Millions of Ukrainians were displaced, including many creatives who often lost their profession. Ukrainian culture was an obvious target of Russian war. Museums were looted and historical sites were intentionally destroyed by missiles. Preserving Ukrainian culture became a way to resist brutal Russian aggression.

The UK has shown its full support to Ukraine. Honest and deep interest in Ukrainian culture led us to include all forms and media representing Ukrainian creativity from the UK. Projects included film screenings, residencies, theatrical performances, exhibitions, readings and opera. More than 20 cities in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England hosted Ukrainian art and hundreds of artists participated.

Dozens of partnerships created within the Season's programme will flourish in future collaborations that bring our people closer as well as translating not only between the languages but also between contexts. We are grateful to all contributing artists, partners and the Ukrainian Armed Forces for allowing this celebration of culture to happen. The Ukrainian Institute is dedicated to building understanding and cooperation that allows us to imagine our common future. The UK/Ukraine Season showed how interrelated we are in both our past and our future. And that culture is a way to reimagine both.



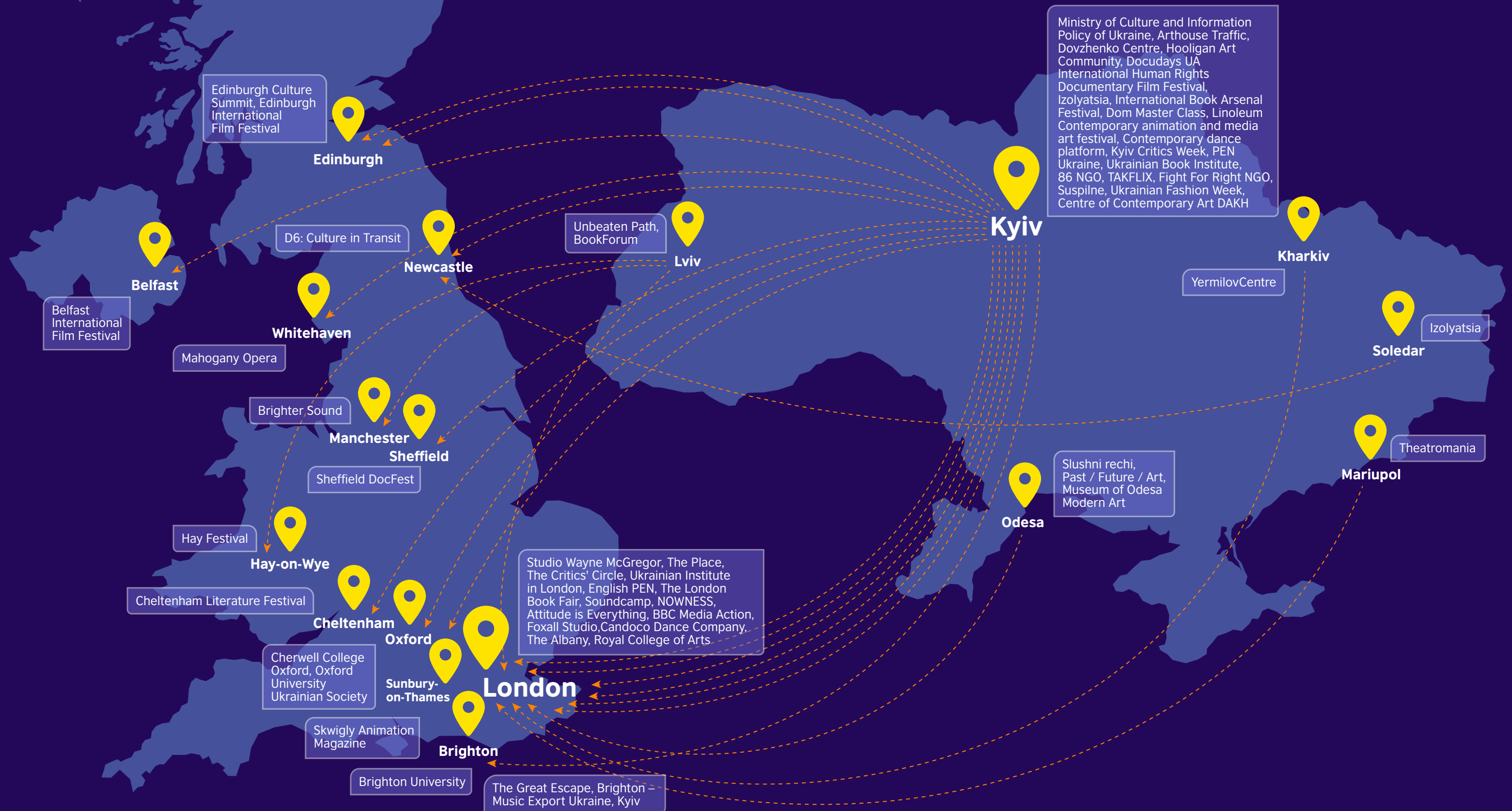
Tetiana Filevska

Creative Director, Ukrainian Institute

Key data about the UK/Ukraine Season

Map of the Season institutional partnerships

Originally, the projects and events of the Season were planned to take place in Ukraine and partly in the UK. However, due to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we were compelled to reformat the programme. As a result, the majority of the events were held in the UK, with some taking place online or in a hybrid format. Additionally, certain events were organised in other countries, providing alternative locations for temporarily displaced participants.



Infographics

42

projects

Over

20

cities in the UK

2445

arts professionals¹

190

million reach through UK
and Ukrainian media

76

partners
in the Season

27

Ukrainian
organisations

49

UK organisations

630+

media mentions

57337

attendees of the events²

591544

audience of the online events³

¹ – participants of the Season
^{2, 3} – these numbers are not final and complete, as some of the data couldn't be collected and passed on to the organisers due to the war.

UK/Ukraine Season timeline

**5–7 April
2022**
London, UK

The London Book Fair: Ukrainian writers at the English PEN Literary Salon

Although the Season of Culture was officially launched in June 2022, its first major event unfolded at the London Book Fair through the Ukrainian stand and programme. The presentation of Ukraine at the fair boldly conveyed the message, 'Russia's war on Ukraine is not fiction but time to act'. As part of the UK/Ukraine Season, renowned writers Andriy Kurkov (Ukraine) and Olha Hnatiuk (Poland) contributed their insights and perspectives during thought-provoking discussions held at the English PEN Literary Salon.

Partners: English PEN, International Book Arsenal Festival, Lviv International BookForum, PEN Ukraine, The Ukrainian Book Institute



Photo by Lidia Crisafulli/Hooligan Art Community

May 2022
Haale, Germany

Hooligan/Radiation

The performances of The Hooligan Art Community, in collaboration with Mahogany Opera and the Dnipro Centre of Contemporary Culture, were originally scheduled to take place in Dnipro in May. However, due to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the project underwent a transformation, resulting in a new and unique outcome. The Hooligan Art Community team, along with Ukrainian artists who had sought refuge in Germany and local residents, embarked on a collaborative endeavour that spanned both online and offline platforms during the 11-day residency. This collective effort culminated in the creation of a captivating performance titled 'Hooligan: Bizhenka', which offered an extraordinary evening of music-theatre.

Partners: Mahogany Opera, Hooligan Art Community



11–14 May
2022
Brighton, UK



Krapka;Koma at the Great Escape

The opening musical event of the Season was the performance of the female electronic band Krapka;Koma at one of the UK's largest music showcases, The Great Escape in Brighton. This marked the first time that Ukraine was represented at this event. The performance held special significance as the band members Ira Lobanok and Aliona Kovalenko devoted most of their time to volunteering and assisting displaced individuals in Ukraine.

Partners: Music Export Ukraine

June 2022 –
April 2023
online

Let the Body Speak

Let the Body Speak was a year-long project aimed at documenting the somatic experience of war, visual evidence of the events that took place in Ukrainian contemporary dance after 24 February 2022. It brought together the creation of a digital hub of Ukrainian dance videos on a YouTube channel, workshops, lectures, discussions, as well as the presentations of new works.

Partners: Ukrainian Contemporary Dance Platform, The Place



Check out Let the Body Speak digital hub

Photo by Kateryna Skraglenko

“The project’s main goal was to support the Ukrainian dance community in a way that would give them the possibility to continue artistic activity. We achieved three main goals through the project. They goals we achieved were: to create online platform with the dance videos created after the war started, to develop and deliver the online educational program with Ukrainian and British lecturers and teachers and to support the creation of three independent dance projects at the stage of R&D and work to progress the presentations.”

– Anton Ovchinnikov, President of the NGO All-Ukrainian Association Platform of Contemporary Dance



**23–28 June
2022**
Sheffield, UK

Sheffield DocFest: Palianytsia

During the Sheffield DocFest documentary film festival, the official opening of the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture took place, along with the presentation of the Ukrainian programme titled 'Password: Palianytsia'. As part of the focus programme, the festival featured screenings of Ukrainian documentary films in the official competition, engaging discussions, presentations of film projects in the industry programme, and an exhibition showcasing works in alternative reality.

Partners: Docudays UA International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, Sheffield DocFestv



Watch interviews with Ukrainian documentary filmmakers who were part of the Ukrainian delegation at the Sheffield DocFest

**July 2022 –
May 2023**
Newcastle, UK

Regrounding – artist residency programme

The Regrounding research residencies were originally planned to take place in Soledar, eastern Ukraine. However, due to Russia's war, they were relocated to D6's studios in Newcastle, the North East of England. Nonetheless, the project's central theme remained unchanged, as Alexandra Krolikowska and Karolina Uskakovych, the two residency participants, were invited to explore the topic of climate emergency within post-industrial contexts – a matter of utmost relevance considering the ecocide in Ukraine. Alongside the residencies, the programme featured an exhibition that facilitated connections between practice, heritage, and communities between the UK and Ukraine.

Partners: IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Initiatives, D6: Culture in Transit

"We are planning to undertake more collaboration with UK, mainly with post-industrial regions and in Northern Ireland. We will build new programs around environmental topics in post-industrial areas, industrial heritage projects, and conflict resolution through arts and culture. There are more ways to represent our organization's work in the UK and for us to learn from UK experience."

– Mykhailo Glubokyi, Director of Development, IZOLYATSIA

**5 July –
12 August**
online

Ukraine Lab

Another project that addressed global challenges, including the environment, war, and disinformation, was the Ukraine Lab online residency for writers. Throughout a six-week period, chosen participants from Ukraine and the UK attended seminars facilitated by guest speakers. They also engaged in cross-cultural collaborations, working in writing pairs to develop their creative non-fiction pieces, which were then published in both Ukrainian and British media outlets.

Partners: Ukrainian Institute London, PEN Ukraine



Read essays created as part of the Ukraine Lab project

"It was valuable to develop my expertise and work alongside other translators from different cultures to see the different styles and approaches. It helped develop my skills of translation. Mentors at the workshop and my colleagues already translating into English were very supportive and encouraged us to switch the source and target language [from Ukrainian to English]. I've only worked in literature but now I'm more confident in covering film and other disciplines."

– Professional, Ukraine

18–22 July
2022
online

BCLT Summer School: international workshop for translators from Ukrainian into English

In July, the BCLT Literary Translation and Creative Writing Summer School, the University of East Anglia in Norwich, organised the first Ukrainian-English workshop in its 23-year history. A group of ten Ukrainian-English literary translators from Ukraine, the UK, USA, and Germany came together for a week-long session dedicated to translating an extract from Artem Chekh's book, 'Who Are You?' (Meridian Czernowitz, 2021). The main objectives of the workshop were to provide training, boost the translators' confidence in their work, and establish a supportive network to help them gain recognition and eventually publish their translated works.

Partners: British Centre for Literary Translation



Watch Artem Chekh reading an excerpt from his novel 'Who Are You?'

"We feel that the war has broken everything for us, our feelings, hopes and structures of how to behave and live; the only way to live in such a reality is to make things visible, audible and say it out loud. It's really important to speak about what's happened to people and find ways to articulate the experience. At first we were angry but then we felt we had to communicate how we felt differently. The training helped us to learn new skills to better tell a story and to do this through documentaries. Radio is a good way for people to hear these stories and to share different perspectives."

– Professional, Ukraine

August –
December 2022
online

Skills for Radio Docs

As part of the Skills for Radio Docs project, journalists from Radio Kultura (JSC 'Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine') in Kyiv and the regions participated in an online training programme led by esteemed experts from both the United Kingdom and Ukraine. The programme focused on empowering participants by enhancing their professional potential and equipping them with the necessary skills to create captivating radio documentaries. The successful implementation of the Skills for Radio Docs project resulted in the creation and broadcast of four programmes on Radio Kultura.

Partners: JSC 'Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine', BBC Media Action



Listen to the radio programmes released as part of the project here

August 2022 –
June 2023
online, Lviv

WARPATH.24.02

WARPATH.24.02 included the creation of a dedicated media platform, aiming to share the stories of individuals with disabilities who experienced forced displacement at the beginning of a full-scale war in Ukraine. To delve deeper into the subject, these experiences were reimagined and presented through a multimedia exhibition titled 'IT WAS VERY COLD IN THE MORNING AND THE SUN SHONE INCREDIBLY BRIGHT'. The exhibition found its home at the Lviv Municipal Art Centre in June 2023, providing an immersive platform for sharing these stories.

Partners: Fight for Right NGO, Attitude is Everything



Photo by Roman Shalamov

8 August –
October 2022
online, Ukraine, UK

"We've enjoyed working together and found that through collaboration we've come up with new projects which can extend our work in the Season. Our partners have been fantastic in opening up new opportunities for us"

*– Anastasiia Verlinska, Programme Director,
Linoleum International Contemporary
Animation and Media Art Festival*

I'M FINE!

I'M FINE! featured screenings of short animated films and a series of lectures that explored how individuals within the creative industries address emotional burnout and take care of their mental well-being. The films were presented through an online platform and at events held in various cities across Ukraine, as well as at festivals in Chichester and Bolton. Additionally, the educational content remains available online through the Season of Culture website.

Partners: LINOLEUM Contemporary Animation and Media Art Festival, Skwigly Online Animation Magazine



Watch lectures and masterclasses held during
the LINOLEUM Contemporary Animation and
Media Art Festival 2022



**12–20 August
2022**

Edinburgh, UK

Edinburgh International Film Festival: Ukrainian film programme and professional delegation

In August, the Edinburgh Film Festival, the oldest film festival in the world, presented a multi-component Ukrainian program. The first component featured screenings of three new Ukrainian films: the drama 'Reflection' by Valentyn Vasyanovych, the documentary 'One Day in Ukraine' by Volodymyr Tykhyy, and '107 Mothers' (Cenzorka) by Peter Kerekas. The second part of the programme was the Ukrainian showcase, held within the framework of the EIFF Works in Progress industry programme. It provided Ukrainian filmmakers with an opportunity to share their latest projects and establish connections with sales agents in the industry.

Partners: Arthouse Traffic, Edinburgh International Film Festival



**26–28 August
2022**

Edinburgh, UK

Edinburgh Culture Summit: Ukraine Cultural Leadership Dialogue

Also in August, Ukraine took centre stage at the Edinburgh International Cultural Summit. In collaboration with the summit's organisers, we curated the Ukrainian programme titled 'Culture and Freedom'. The programme commenced with a Cultural Leadership Dialogue, bringing together Ukrainian cultural experts, representatives of the UK Government, and ministers from various countries. The aim was to explore practical steps and solutions for rebuilding Ukraine's vibrant cultural sector in the future.

Partners: Edinburgh Culture Summit, Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine

26–29 August
2022
London, UK

Discover Ukraine: Bits Destroyed

Simultaneously, the thrilling Greenwich+Docklands International Festival, which attracts over 80,000 guests each year, showcased the project 'Discover Ukraine: Bits Destroyed'. Originally conceptualised in 2019, this audiovisual experience underwent a reimagination. The project featured a visual presentation of 56 monumental mosaics dating back to the 1960s and 1970s. Unfortunately, more than a quarter of these artworks have suffered damage or destruction in the wake of the extensive Russian invasion of Ukraine. The mesmerising 3D installation was projected onto the façade of the Old Royal Naval College, accompanied by the evocative music of the Ukrainian duo Ptakh_Jung.

Partners: Greenwich+Docklands International Festival



View the video featuring the presentation of the audiovisual piece 'Discover Ukraine: Bits Destroyed' during its screening in Greenwich

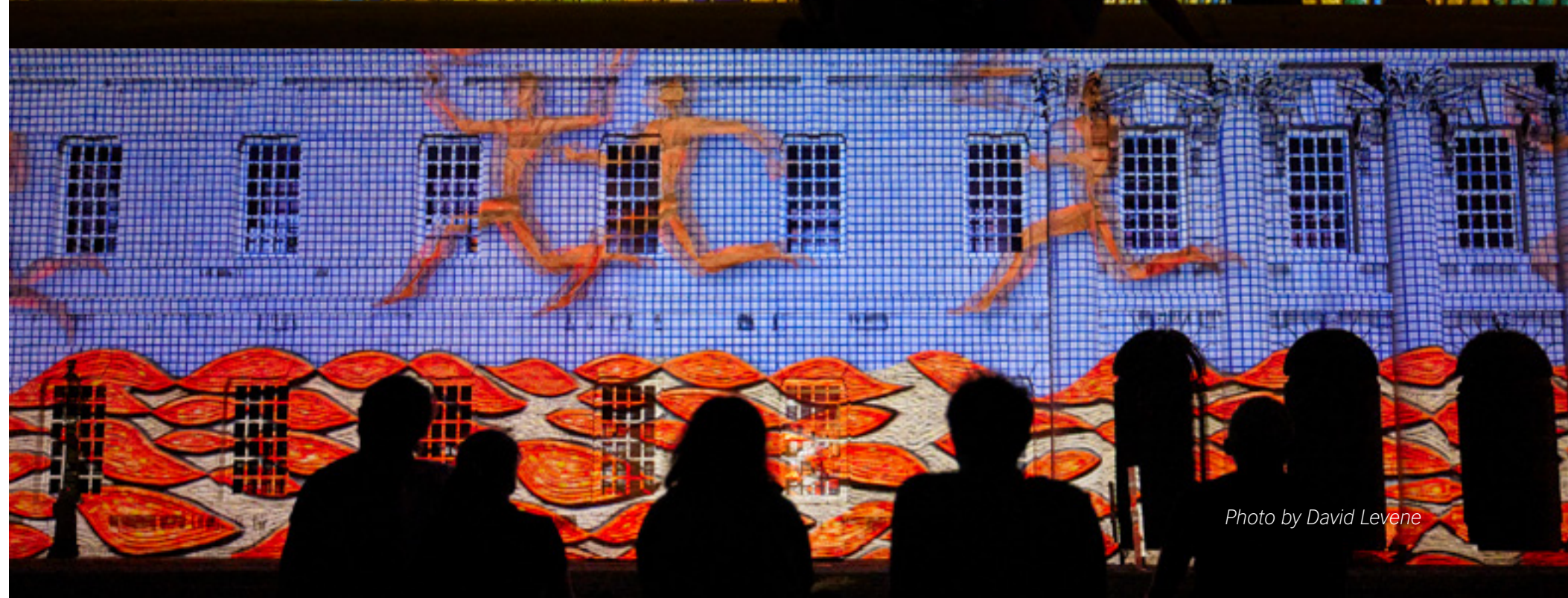


Photo by David Levene

September
2022
online

Ukraine is the Centre of My Universe

Ukraine is the Centre of My Universe is a dynamic cultural movement that seeks to showcase the Ukrainian creative industries on a global scale, particularly during major industry events. As part of the Season, the project aimed to foster five collaborative endeavours between Ukrainian fashion designers and representatives from various creative industries. The culmination of these collaborations was intended to be presented during the official schedule of London Fashion Week in September 2022, offering online viewers an engaging exploration of Ukraine and its abundant creative talent. However, following the events of February 2022, the project underwent a reformulation. Instead, the focus shifted towards the creation of three impactful short films. These films conveyed the personal stories and experiences of individuals within the creative sector amidst the ongoing war.

Partners: Ukrainian Fashion Week, Foxall Studio



All three films are available
to watch on our website

September –
October 2022
online

The Living Archive Project

The Ukraine Living Archive Project was an online professional development and creation programme. Participants had the opportunity to learn how to create choreography utilising the groundbreaking 'Living Archive', a machine learning-based choreographic tool developed specifically for Studio Wayne McGregor in collaboration with Google Arts and Culture Lab. Dance artists were introduced to this AI tool, explored excerpts from McGregor's AI repertoire, and honed their skills in developing their own choreographic material.

Partners: Studio Wayne McGregor, Ukrainian Contemporary Dance Platform

September –
December
online

Transmission.UK: Ukrainian/British contemporary drama dialogue

As part of Transmission.UK, five contemporary Ukrainian plays were translated into English. These translations were skillfully executed by renowned translators Nina Murray, Daisy Gibbons, Rory Mullarkey, and Helena Kernan. Their remarkable works have been featured in various publications with the aim of promoting Ukrainian drama throughout Europe.

Partners: The Royal Court, The Centre for Contemporary Theatre of Birkbeck, University of London

September 2022
– March 2023
online

Land to Return, Land to Care

Land to Return, Land to Care was an artistic research laboratory dedicated to exploring the experience of war. This project united curators, artists, and researchers, who engaged in dialogue utilising visual images, sound, and text to comprehend the profound impact of war on their lives and the environment. The lab's outcomes were then showcased on a specially designed online platform.

Partners: Museum of Odesa Modern Art, Past / Future / Art, Slushni rechi, Soundcamp



Learn more about the experiences
of the lab participants

28–30
September 2022
Oxford, UK

Oxford Bouquet Festival of Contemporary Music

As part of the Ukrainian Cultural Weeks 2022, the Bouquet Kyiv Stage festival took place in Oxford, supported by the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture. The festival revolved around the theme of 'Gratitude from UA to UK'. A significant highlight of the event was the celebration of the anniversary of Valentyn Sylvestrov, a living legend in modern Ukrainian music composition. While the musical programme served as the festival's core, the project extended beyond that. Alongside seven classical music concerts, Oxford also hosted a photo exhibition titled 'War' by documentary photographer Oleksandr Gliadielov, three screenings of Ukrainian films, and a unique music performance called 'Face the Future', directed by innovative Ukrainian fashion designer Fedir Vozianov.

Partners: Dom Master Class, Cherwell College Oxford, Oxford University Ukrainian Society



Watch the video about the programme
of the Bouquet Kyiv Stage Festival in
Oxford



October 2022 –
March 2023
online

Digital Writer in Residence

The esteemed Ukrainian writer Volodymyr Rafeienko assumed the role of digital writer in residence hosted by the Humanities Department of the University of Chichester, allowing him to focus on his writing. In addition to this, Volodymyr actively engaged with Chichester students remotely, sharing his profound experiences of war.

Partners: Stephen Spender Trust, University of Chichester, the Rathbones Folio Prize

“It’s cool – they’re the same as all of us but they just can’t speak English as well yet.”

– Pupil, UK

October 2022 –
March 2023
Various in the UK

Celebrating Ukrainian Culture

Celebrating Ukrainian Culture was another project collaboratively designed by The University of Chichester and the Stephen Spender Trust. The aim of this initiative was to introduce Ukrainian creative translation workshops and activities to schools and community groups throughout the UK. These workshops served as a secure and nurturing environment for Ukrainian students to proudly share their language and culture with their peers. Simultaneously, their classmates had the opportunity to learn about a different language and culture.

Partners: Stephen Spender Trust, University of Chichester

6–9 October
2022
hybrid

Hay Festival & Lviv BookForum

In a hybrid format, blending both in-person events in Lviv and virtual live appearances, the Lviv BookForum and Hay Festival brought together 40 renowned Ukrainian writers and international literary figures for 15 captivating conversations. These discussions explored a wide range of topics, including art in times of conflict, memory, gender equality, loss, corruption, imperialism, and hope. The programme highlights included the conversation between Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood and Ukrainian psychologist Yurii Prokhasko, the exchange between Turkish writer Elif Shafak and Ukrainian poet Kateryna Kalytko, and the dialogue featuring Israeli anthropologist Yuval Noah Harari and British storyteller Neil Gaiman with Ukrainian journalist Sevgil Musaieva. An exciting aspect of the event involved international writers and journalists attending live sessions in Lviv, followed by their reflections on the experience in their subsequent writings.

Partners: BookForum, Hay Festival



Find out more about the further collaboration between Lviv BookForum and Hay Festival and watch the recordings of past events here



Photo by Jon Spaul/British Council

“In 2022, when we have cancelled the International Book Arsenal Festival in Kyiv because of Russia’s war in Ukraine, it’s extremely important and a matter of honour for us to have our special Ukrainian programme in Cheltenham. To give voice to Ukrainian authors, public intellectuals, artists, to speak loudly from the platform of one of the best literary festivals in the world about our literature and about who we are, where we are and how we struggle for our common human values.”

– Yuliia Kozlovets and Oksana Shchur, Curators, Book Arsenal

**7–16 October
2022**
Cheltenham, UK



Photo by Jon Spaul/British Council

Ukraine Day at Cheltenham Literature Festival

Centred around immersive live experiences and an introduction to contemporary Ukrainian literature, the Season partners, International Book Arsenal Festival and Cheltenham Literature Festival, jointly hosted Ukraine Day, presenting five events that amplified the voice of the Ukrainian literary scene. Among the array of Ukraine Day events, attendees had the opportunity to engage in a conversation with Oksana Zabuzhko, participate in an art workshop led by Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv, experience a musical and poetic performance by Hryhoriy Semenchuk, Liuba Yakymchuk, and Yuriy Gurzhy, as well as delve into insightful discussions featuring Natalia Vorozhbyt, Liuba Yakymchuk, and Olesia Khromeychuk.

Partners: Cheltenham Literature Festival, International Book Arsenal Festival



Watch the video about the Ukraine Day
at Cheltenham Literature Festival

**20–21 October
2022**
online

Mapping Ukraine in the Museum World: Collections and Practices

Over the course of two consecutive days, Ukrainian and international experts in the field of museums participated in a series of online discussions titled ‘Mapping Ukraine in the Museum World: Collections and Practices’. The conversations covered a range of subjects, including an exploration of Ukraine’s role in the context of museum institutions’ decolonisation initiatives, as well as the protection of cultural heritage.

Partners: Birkbeck, University of London



The recordings of the seminars
are shared on the Season’s website

“The main goal of the collaboration was to develop dialogue between Ukrainian and British critics and film makers. This included sharing insights and industry knowledge and popularising cinema from both countries among the audiences with the help the mass media represented by these critics. The main aim of our mission is to support cultural diversity and develop intercultural dialogue. The collaboration of Ukrainian and British film critics achieved this through researching contemporary cinema in both countries, providing expert evaluation of new films, holding open interviews with directors and discussions with the public during the festival.”

*– Illia Diadyk, Programme Director,
Kyiv Critics Week*

**20–26 October
2022**

Kyiv, Ukraine

Kyiv Critics Week

Every year, the curators of the Kyiv Critics' Week festival collaborate with a specific country to foster a cross-border dialogue between critics and filmmakers. In 2022, with the support of the Season of Culture, the programme focused on strengthening the ties between the UK and Ukraine. It achieved this by showcasing three recent films from both countries and organising discussions involving critics, filmmakers, and audiences.

Partners: Arthouse Traffic, The Critics Circle



**November 2022
– May 2023**

London, UK

IN // BETWEEN: London-Kharkiv

The IN // BETWEEN collaboration was conceived as a research journey between two cities – Kharkiv and London. As with other projects, the locations and trajectories of the participants changed, but a series of meetings between cultural practitioners from Ukraine and the UK were maintained. Utilising creative writing, art workshops, and discussions as their tools, the group developed new cultural infrastructures and collaborative frameworks centred around shared concepts. These explorations culminated in an exhibition and a publication containing all the documentation of their journey.

Partners: Royal College of Art, YermilovCentre

"Five films I've chosen give Belfast audiences an insight into the Ukrainian national character, which is not just about being victims of Russian aggression, but is also full of the sense of resourcefulness and inventiveness Ukrainians have. We created a partnership with the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute who then opened up a whole new world of Ukrainian cinema for us to bring to the festival and there seems to be an appetite to keep these channels open. We don't just want to reflect on what's happening right now, we want to be building things for the future."

*– Jessica Kiang, International programmer,
Belfast Film Festival*

3–20 November 2022

Belfast, Brighton, Cambridge,
Cornwall, Leeds

Ukrainian Films Month

In November, Ukrainian cinema embarked on an expansive tour across cities in the England and Northern Ireland. The Ukrainian Films Month made its way to film festivals in Belfast, Brighton, Cambridge, Cornwall, and Leeds, showcasing a selection of the finest Ukrainian films from the year, alongside internationally acclaimed classics of Ukrainian cinema. Notable highlights of the programme included 'Klondike' by Maryna Gorbach, Ukraine's entry for the Oscars; the premiere of 'Luxembourg, Luxembourg' by Antonio Lukich; and 'Pamfir', the directorial debut of Ukrainian filmmaker Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk, which made its debut this year at the Cannes Directors' Fortnight.

Partners: Belfast International Film Festival, Brighton University, Dovzhenko Centre



Take a look at the highlights of
the Ukrainian Film Month in our video

**11–19 November
2022**

Belfast, Northern Ireland

Anton Schebetko's solo exhibition 'What Grows in the Heart' at Outburst Queer Arts Festival

In November 2022, in addition to the cinema events, we also supported to a solo exhibition by Ukrainian artist Anton Shebetko at Outburst Queer Arts Festival in Northern Ireland. Anton's artistic exploration revolves around LGBTQIA+ themes, memory, the loss of identity, the diversity of history, and the significant role of photography in unveiling these subjects. The curated collection for the event in Belfast encompassed self-portraits, video works, and personal testimonials shedding light on the queer experiences of individuals in Ukraine.

Partners: Outburst Queer Arts Festival



Watch the video to find out
more about the exhibition



Photo by Jon Spaul/British Council

18–27 November
2022

Huddersfield, UK

Ukrainian programme at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

During the Season of Culture, new Ukrainian music made its debut in the programme of hcmf//, the UK's largest international festival of new and experimental music. The festival's opening featured the powerful multimedia opera 'Chornobyldorf' created by Ukrainian composers Roman Grygoriv and Illia Razumeiko. String Air Synthesis delivered performances of both composed and improvised pieces, exploring microtonal and even temperament compositions for the Kharkiv-style bandura and flute. The festival also witnessed the British premieres of Anna Korsun's compositions 'Spleen' and 'Plexus', as well as Maksym Shalygin's 'Drop after Drop', as part of the hcmf// shorts programme. These remarkable works were all performed by the British orchestra, Riot Ensemble.

Partners: Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival



Watch a short video about
how the Ukrainian programme
was presented at the festival
in Huddersfield

London, UK

Conversation with Myroslav Marynovych: The Universe Behind Barbed Wire

Myroslav Marynovych, a Ukrainian human rights activist and journalist, received an invitation from the University College London School of Slavonic and East European Studies to present his latest book, titled 'The Universe Behind Barbed Wire: Memoirs of a Ukrainian Soviet Dissident' (2021). This memoir provides a vivid depiction of life in Soviet-occupied Kyiv during the era of the Helsinki movement. Within its pages, Marynovych recounts the activities of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group (UHG) and its members, shedding light on their arrests and the unjust treatment they endured at the hands of the Soviet regime.

Partners: Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain

7–8 December
2022
online

Creative Ukraine Forum: The Power of Resilience

The UK/Ukraine Season of Culture forged a partnership with the Creative Ukraine Forum, an international platform dedicated to discussions on public policy in the realm of culture and creative industries. In 2022, representatives from the British Council participated as speakers in various forum events, centring around the pivotal role of creative industries both during times of conflict and in the process of rebuilding the country.

Partners: Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine

"It was a true privilege to bring Crimea 5am to the stage. I loved working with the Ukrainian co-writing team, Natalka Vorozhbyt and Anastasiia Kosodii, and their beautiful script depicting lives of Crimean Tatar prisoners, imprisoned for their actions as citizen journalists, and their families, and then exploring how to make the work relevant to UK audiences."

– Josephine Burton, Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Dash Arts

16 January
2023

London, UK

Crimea, 5 am

The London audience at the Kiln Theatre witnessed the impactful documentary performance titled 'Crimea, 5 am'. The production draws inspiration from the literary works of Ukrainian authors Natalia Vorozhbyt and Anastasiia Kosodii, and was directed by Josephine Burton. Through the lens of personal stories and testimonials that reflect both love and struggle in contemporary Crimea, the play sheds light on the documented human rights violations that have occurred in the Crimean Peninsula since the unlawful temporary occupation by Russia. Following the performance, there was a post-show discussion for further exploration and reflection.

Partners: Dash Arts



“This project was conceived in the bomb shelter. It’s difficult to describe the unique [Ukrainian partner] projects because it combines therapy in a team and qualitative changes and responses. It creates a space of trust in which I, as an artist, after many years and even in the circumstances of the war-associated trauma in Ukraine, was able to curiously reconnect to. As a video artist, I got a huge boost from being able to connect and record individual and collective experiences. It became obvious that the group, thanks to the collective practice, was able to formulate traumas and transform them inside the show. I’m very grateful for what happened because it allowed me to find the seemingly lost path of pure creativity.”

– Liubov Sliusareva, Video artist,
Hooligan Art Community

**24–25 February
2023**
London, UK

Bunker Cabaret

Emerging from the bomb shelters of Kyiv, the ‘Bunker Cabaret’ performance stood as a poignant tribute on the anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This unique theatrical creation, crafted collaboratively by the Hooligan Art Community and Mahogany Opera, artfully combined music, poetry, dance, and film. The production offered a powerful exploration of the tensions between love and totalitarianism, as well as the personal conflicts faced by artists during times of war. Originally presented in Somerset House in London, the performance then went on tour across the UK, Germany, and Ireland.

Partners: Hooligan Art Community, Mahogany Opera



Photo by Konrad Drobek, Mariusz Kuszpa,
Mateusz Błędziński

**March – July
2023**
hybrid

Move & Sound

Move & Sound was an inclusive lab that welcomed six selected participants. This project had the goal of supporting and empowering the professional community of dancers and musicians, both with and without disabilities. It achieved this through a training and research residency facilitated by coaches from the UK and Ukraine. The project aimed to bring international expertise to train and uplift Ukrainian artists whose professional careers have been jeopardised by the war in Ukraine. The culmination of the residency resulted in the creation of dance/movement-music duets, which were captured in video recordings.

Partners: Unbeaten Path, Candoco Dance Company, Brighter Sound

**1 March 2023 –
ongoing
online**

Ukrainian Talents at NOWNESS

Ukrainian Talents on NOWNESS featured an online showcase of three exclusive short films created by talented Ukrainian filmmakers, under the creative guidance of the teams from Nowness.com and Takflix.com. The programme included 'It's a Date' by Nadia Parfan, 'Dovecotes of Kyiv' by Mykhailo Volkov, and 'The Jump' by Kristina Tynkevych.

Partners: NGO '86', TAKFLIX, Nowness



The two films – 'It's a Date' and 'Dovecotes of Kyiv' – can be watched on Takflix

20–24 March 2023
Belfast, Northern
Ireland

Ukrainian performers at the BIFPA 2023

The Season of Culture also included representation from the performing arts sector through the residency programme and performances by two Ukrainian artists, Yaryna Shumska and Andriy Helytovych, at the Belfast International Festival of Performance Art. Alongside their performances hosted at the Belfast School of Art, Yaryna and Andriy participated as speakers in the symposium titled 'Creativity + Conflict' held at the Ulster Museum.

Partners: Ulster University

20–26 March 2023
Oxford, Cambridge,
UK

Cassandra – tour to Cambridge and Oxford

In October 2022, Live Canon and the Ukrainian Institute London jointly presented the UK premiere of Lesia Ukrainka's 'Cassandra' at the London's Omnibus Theatre. As part of the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture, the production later toured to Oxford and Cambridge in March 2023. The translation of Cassandra was awarded the Ukrainian Institute London's 2021 Ukrainian Literature in Translation Prize and was subsequently published by the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute in the summer of 2023.

Partners: Live Canon, Ukrainian Institute London



Photo by chytomo

**17–18 April
2023**
London, UK

Ukraine Guest Spotlight at the London Book Fair

In 2023, we returned to the London Book Fair once again, this time as the Guest Spotlight Country, presenting an extensive programme. Programming comprised conversations on various topics, including how Ukrainian writers have responded to the Russian attack, the role of books in countering disinformation and supporting democracy, amplifying women's voices in these discussions, and exploring writing emerging from the battlefield. The stand showcased the best of contemporary Ukrainian publishing, offering visitors a glimpse into the vibrant literary scene. Prior to the fair, a special event organised by the British Library took place: the discussion titled 'Writing in War: Ukrainian Writers Speak'. This panel featured the participation of Ukrainian writer Victoria Amelina, who tragically sustained injuries during the Russia's attack on Kramatorsk later in the year. Sadly, Victoria passed away on July 1. Her untimely departure marked a significant loss for the literary community.

Partners: English PEN, PEN Ukraine, PEN International, The Ukrainian Book Institute, The British Library

Photo by British Council Northern Ireland
(Facebook)



17–21 April 2023
Belfast, Northern
Ireland

Ukrainian delegates at Peace and Beyond 2023

Later in April, three Ukrainian cultural professionals – Olena Honcharuk, Alina Khanbabaieva, and Yulia Manukian – attended the Peace and Beyond 2023, organised by the British Council to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement. With 33 delegates from 10 countries, including Colombia, Vietnam, Lebanon, Iraq, and Ukraine, the conference provided insights into how local artists and creative organisations played a pivotal role in the post-conflict development of Northern Ireland. Moreover, attendees had the opportunity to engage and exchange ideas with professionals from diverse countries and contexts.



Photo by Culture Liverpool, Liverpool City Council

1–12 May
2023
Liverpool, UK

EuroFestival

Ahead of the Eurovision Song Contest, EuroFestival, a two-week cultural programme, unfolded in Liverpool. This vibrant event showcased 24 newly created works, including 19 collaborations between British and Ukrainian artists. These artistic endeavours graced various venues across the city, with nightingale sculptures adorning the streets and video installations captivating viewers within the iconic Liverpool Cathedral. The festival commenced with the multimedia opera 'Chornobyldorf', setting an exhilarating tone for the festival.

Thanks to the exposure garnered through the Season, the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute became content partners of the festival, contributing to the selection of projects that captured the attention of thousands of Liverpool visitors and residents alike.

Partners: Culture Liverpool, Invisible Wind Factory



Photo by Culture Liverpool, Liverpool City Council

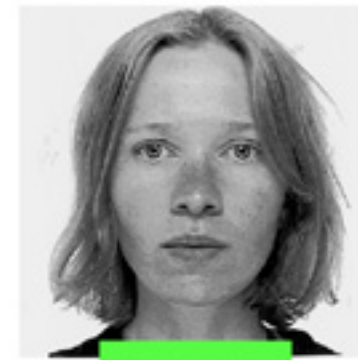


**10–13 May
2023**
Brighton, UK

Ukrainian delegates at the Great Escape

One of the final projects of the Season entailed the visit of two Ukrainian music sector professionals, Dartsya Tarkovska and Olga Bekenshtein, to The Great Escape music showcase. Their objectives included scouting for emerging talent, forging professional connections, and staying abreast of the latest trends in the industry. As Ukrainian delegates, they joined a cohort of international delegates organised by the British Council, collectively exploring the dynamic music landscape of the event.

Partners: The Great Escape



**June –
October 2023**
Scotland

Scotland-Ukraine Arts Residencies

To bring the Season of Culture to a fulfilling conclusion, we launched a new residency programme developed in partnership with Creative Scotland. This initiative entails six Ukrainian cultural professionals embarking on visits to prominent institutions in Scotland renowned for their expertise in contemporary art, literature, sculpture, and music. Through these residencies, participants had the opportunity to temporarily step away from their current endeavours, allowing them the space and time to contemplate the future of their own artistic practices.

Partners: Creative Scotland, Moniack Mhor, Cove Park, Hospitalfield, Edinburgh Sculpture Park, Edinburgh College of Art

1 June
2023
London, UK

Season's closing event

At the beginning of June, we marked the official end of the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture. The closing event, hosted by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in London, provided a platform to hear firsthand from Ukrainian cultural professionals. They shared insights about their work and emphasized the significance of supporting creative expression during times of war. The event served as a celebration of their invaluable contributions to the Season and reinforced the enduring friendship between Ukraine and the UK.



Photo by Alex Dimos

7-17 July
2023
London, UK

r u there? we r here...

A short yet immensely significant epilogue to the Season, 'r u there? we r here' began as a performance that unfolded in 2021. It was created over Zoom, with a director based in the UK collaborating with a team of talented young artists situated in Mariupol, Ukraine. In 2023, 'r u there? we r here' installation was presented both online and at the Deptford Lounge, exploring profound themes of war, loss, and gender-based violence through the compelling integration of words, images, and movement.

Partners: The Albany, Theatromania, Centre of Contemporary Art DAKH



A preview of some of the work is available on this page



Photo by Deptford Lounge (Facebook)

Diversity, vitality and resilience of Ukraine's independent arts sector

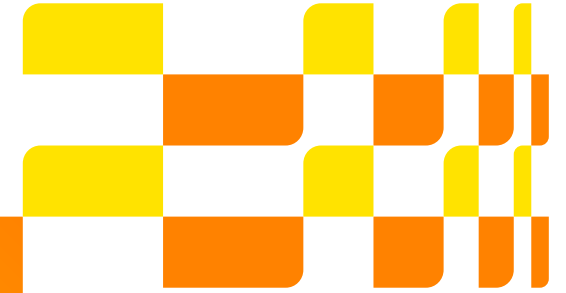
After 24 February 2022, the goals of the Season were revised and refocused to address the pressing needs of the Ukrainian art sector. Consequently, it took on a broader and more immediate purpose. This was express to an international audience that an independent and vibrant Ukrainian culture not only exists, but also warrants and requires support for the resilience of its arts and cultural actors.



Queer history of Ukraine

A timeline

Exhibition 'What Grows in the Heart' at Outburst Queer Arts Festival: interview with Anton Shebetko




I was actively involved in the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture through my solo exhibition titled 'What Grows in the Heart', which was showcased at the Catalyst Arts Gallery in Belfast as part of the Outburst Queer Arts Festival.

One of the most valuable achievements of my collaboration with British partners during the Season was the opportunity to show the complexity of queer histories in Ukraine, with some personal testimonies from the representatives of the community itself. It was a valuable first introduction to the subject, which is still relatively undiscussed and unknown even in Ukraine. In addition to that, one of the works I premiered at the show was spotted and later became the basis of another solo exhibition, 'Ukrainian Queer TV: An Open Archive', in Kaunas, Lithuania.

The role of the artist during times of war has changed. Mainly because many other artists and I took responsibility to create new works reflecting the reality of the war. We also wanted to share our experiences and knowledge with audiences all around the world. I understood that I needed to educate viewers about the queer history of Ukraine.

Art and cultural exchange in times of war are more important. My experience in Belfast was outstanding. There was a very powerful exchange of ideas of solidarity and support with global queer communities. We shared knowledge about facts and events that were previously unknown to the audience and I'm sure regular visitors to the festival left the exhibition with their views about queers in Ukraine shattered – in a good way.


 Photo by Robbie van Zoggel

hcmf// & Chornobyldorf:

interview with Graham McKenzie, hcmf// Chief Executive and Artistic Director

hcmf// had been in discussion with the Ukrainian Institute in Kyiv since 2021 regarding a Ukrainian programme at the 2022 festival, which they had agreed to fund. We had also met Illia Razumeiko when he participated in a panel discussion for hcmf// as part of a series of online events – Unbound Listening – which we ran in partnership with the British Council during the COVID lockdown period in 2020. Part of the event included excerpts from Chornobyldorf. We were interested in bringing this to a future festival. The UK/Ukraine Season seemed to present an ideal platform and opportunity to do so.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Suddenly, we had online meetings with artists who were now either in underground bunkers, in military uniform or cradling a rifle ready to defend their community. Our initial thoughts were that the UK/Ukraine Season would be unlikely to go ahead.

It became clear that it was important in terms of cultural identity for Ukrainian artists to appear on stages throughout Europe and beyond, and the powerful ambassadorial role that artists could provide at this moment.

With the incredible efforts and support of the British Council, we opened the 2022 festival with the UK premiere of Chornobyldorf. The numerous people and difficult circumstances such as financial, logistical and visa issues meant that we had to scale down aspects of the Ukrainian programme.

However, we were able to present String Air Synthesis featuring the beautiful bandura playing of Volodymyr Voyt with Solomiya Moroz on flute and electronics. Riot Ensemble also performed works by Anna Korsun and Maxim Shalygin's 'Drop After Drop'.

The most valuable lesson that we take away from this collaboration during the Season is the important role artists can play as cultural ambassadors on the world stage in times of conflict. It's important that we think about and work with cultural partners to ensure that artists play an important role in the rebuilding of Ukraine post-conflict.

The UK/Ukraine Season has enabled me to dig deeper into the rich vein of music that emanates from Ukraine – both historical and present, across multiple genres – whether that's in composed contemporary classical music, improvisation, electronic music, or sound art and installation based works. Even though I'm only at the start of this process, I look forward to the day when I can visit Ukraine and continue my research. There are already a number of Ukrainian artists that we are speaking to for future editions of hcmf//.

The Season has created a strong bond between hcmf// and Ukraine which I can't see being broken.

Earlier this year, Chornobyldorf had two further performances. This enabled us to bring the composers Illia Razumeiko and Roman Grygoriv back to Huddersfield to lead a two-day creative workshop on contemporary opera for UK based practitioners. Anna Korsun has a commission from hcmf// to write a new work for London Sinfonietta which will be premiered at the festival in November 2023. We're planning to produce a new chamber opera work with Solomiya Moroz to be premiered at hcmf// in 2025, and are currently seeking partners throughout Europe.

A priority is to identify how best we can support artists who are currently in and have remained in Ukraine. We've been in discussion with The Jam Factory in Kyiv to explore ideas and this will continue with some tangible outcomes in early 2024.

The feedback on the Ukrainian programme presented at the festival was entirely positive! Chornobyldorf is without a doubt the most powerful opening night performance during my career as Artistic Director. When the company came out to a standing ovation, I looked around the room and it seemed that the entire audience was in tears. It also received a series of five star reviews in the national press, and a special two-hour edit was made for broadcast on BBC Radio 3's flagship 'The New Music programme!'

Ukraine reclaiming its own culture

One of the themes that emerged particularly strongly in the collaborations developed during the Season was decolonisation. In light of Russia's evident attempts to undermine Ukrainian culture and identity using any means possible, cultural actors in Ukraine and the Season's partners emphasised the importance of amplifying the voices of nations that were once overshadowed by empires. Throughout the Season's events and discussions, Ukrainian artists engaged with their international counterparts on various platforms. They expressed that Ukraine is presently striving for the subjectivity of its culture and asserting its right to claim a position on the global stage, speaking for itself.

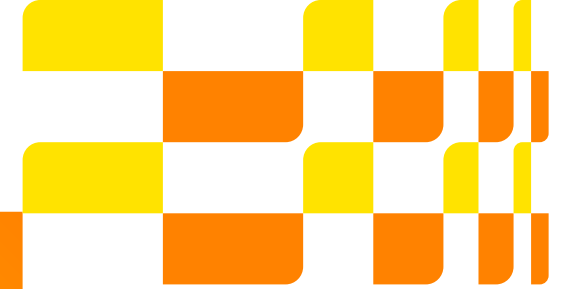


Photo by David Levene

Photo by David Levene



Discover Ukraine: Bits Destroyed: interview with Yevgen Nikiforov



The Ukrainian Institute (UI) invited me to collaborate in 2018 when they were launching a project focused on Ukrainian Soviet mosaics. It was an effort to preserve these unique works in the public space and draw international attention to them. Based on my photographic documentation of monumental mosaics in Ukraine from the second half of the 20th century, a 3D map was created and presented at the MuseumsQuartier in Vienna. This was worked on for nearly half a year by the artist group Theta, producer Taisia Poda, musicians from the Ptakh Jung band, and a large team from the UI. For the final video, we chose the most significant monumental works from Ukraine and included some mosaics that were quite remote and often located near the country's borders.

After the invasion, the Creative Director of the UI, Tetyana Filevska, proposed I conduct research on the works from the initial mapping that had been destroyed due to the war or whose fate was unknown due to occupation. The audiovisual installation was adapted to the facade of the Old Royal Naval College and presented during the Greenwich+Docklands International Festival in London. Our aim was to highlight the hundreds of cultural heritage sites that were destroyed by the Russians, not just limited to mosaics.

Living through war is subjective. My experience of reevaluating my own practices during the war may differ greatly from that of others due to personal circumstances and the trauma I experienced from a car accident shortly before the onset of the full-scale invasion. For a long time, I couldn't work fully, both physically and mentally. Moreover, I practically lost the subject of my photographic practice.

From 2014 until the full-scale war, I travelled around Ukraine, documenting urban and rural landscapes, seeking out remote and lesser-known monuments. However, after the start of the invasion, this became irrelevant and impossible

for me. Additionally, some of the subjects I had planned to photograph were either destroyed or located in occupied territories. It's difficult for me to predict if I'll be able to make up for what I had planned.

I realise that it would be a different theme now, because of the dramatic changes in the country's landscape.

On the other hand, the photographs I've already gathered are even more crucial because many of these subjects will never be seen in person again and will only be accessible through my photographs. Currently, all my efforts are focused on working with my archive. That's why the 'Discover Ukraine: Bits Destroyed' project became necessary, as it provided an opportunity to view familiar and previously publicly shown material from a new perspective.

On any topic or issue, even one that may seem familiar and thoroughly explored, there will always be several points of view in art. When you interact with colleagues from different countries, contexts, and diverse experiences, you not only absorb new perspectives but also start speaking and thinking about your own practice differently.

I received numerous personal messages on the Ukrainian Mosaics Instagram page and my personal account. Viewers expressed gratitude for introducing them to an entirely unexpected facet of Ukraine – a new perspective on the country that sparked their interest after the invasion. Similar feedback was received after the presentation of the 3D map. The audience shared their impressions of the fantastic works of art, unlike anything else. One moment that stood out for me was a girl who was sketching scenes from the mosaics she saw in the photographs during the presentation. She sent me photos of her sketches, providing a fresh and unique interpretation of familiar artworks.



5 insights from the UK/Ukraine Season's film programme

By Daria Bador

The Season spanned cultural and creative industries, with film being one of the key strands. Some projects were built on existing Ukrainian-British cooperation, while others took place for the first time and established new connections. Ukrainian cultural critic Daria Bador spoke to four professionals who took part in the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture. Here are five insights from the discussions.

1. Decentralisation makes sense

Ukraine's film projects in the UK prioritised geographical diversity over London. While organising a large-scale Ukrainian programme in London would have been challenging, experience has shown that focusing on smaller festivals and venues is more beneficial.

Cinecity, a two-week film festival on the south coast of England, has been showcasing world cinema since its establishment in 2003. In the same year, the festival's founder, Tim Brown, organised a comprehensive retrospective of Oleksandr Dovzhenko's works in ten UK cities.

'I've travelled to Kyiv a few times and presented films for the British Film Week', says Tim. 'I worked with the Contact Documentary Film Festival in Kyiv, where I brought several programmes of British documentaries from Brighton'.

Tim's intermittent dedication to Ukrainian cinema led to screenings of recent and archival Ukrainian films in Bristol, Leeds, Cornwall, and Cambridge in 2022. 'When the full-scale invasion began, I contacted the Ukrainian Institute about showing Ukrainian films at the Cinecity to highlight their film culture in Britain', he adds. 'The regional film festivals take place around the same time, so I offered to coordinate screenings there as well'.

For the Brighton Film Festival, Tim showcased four films: 'Pamfir' by Dmytro Sukholytkyi-Sobchuk, 'Klondike' by Marina Er Gorbach, 'Brief Encounters' by Kira Muratova and 'Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors' by Serhiy Paradzhanov.

Archived films were screened at the Cambridge Ukrainian Studies Academic Centre and at the Belfast Film Festival. 'We wanted to show both new and classic films to give the audience an understanding of the history of cinema in Ukraine', says Rose Baker, the Belfast Film Festival's programmer.

Ukrainian cinema integration into festivals posed a diplomatic challenge, but it paid off in Belfast, attracting both Ukrainians and a broader audience. The festival plans to continue featuring Ukrainian films to maintain this newfound interest. 'We attracted an audience that has never come to us before, and we don't want to lose them', Rose adds.



'Klondike' by Marina Er Gorbach

2. Cinemas after the pandemic: is there a place for small cinema on the big screens?

All our experts agree when asked about Ukrainian cinema in the British box office: the pandemic has dramatically altered distribution, affecting not only international films but also low-budget English-language productions.

Cineworld closed its 127 UK cinemas during the lockdown, incurring £3 billion in losses in 2020. Cinemas have been gradually recovering since. People are eager to venture out, making a trip to the movies a special event. High ticket prices have made family outings more costly, making streaming services more affordable by comparison.

In 2019, pre-Covid, the UK saw 916 big-screen film releases (an average of 18 new premieres per week). When cinemas fully recover, competition will be rife. Big films come with flashy promotions and pressure on major festivals for red carpet premieres. Smaller festivals, however, enjoy greater freedom in film selection.

3. Film is a reason to talk

‘It’s hard to find a distributor for documentaries in the UK at the moment, but I believe in and am passionate about documentaries’, says Raul Niño Zambrano, Head of Programming at Sheffield DocFest. ‘The more we show documentaries, the better context we create for them and the better the situation will be’.

Raul’s vision for film screenings extends beyond just showing movies. Sheffield opted for a challenging approach: fewer films in the programme but more events like Q&As, panel discussions, and curatorial introductions.

There’s a demand for curatorial help in choosing Ukrainian films for future festivals, along with readily available catalogues of new and classic films for archives. ‘Curatorial expertise helps’, says Tim Brown, ‘We made a programme of short films in collaboration with the Kyiv Short Film Festival this year which we’ll show in Brighton and offer to other colleagues.’

‘Our main goal when preparing the 2022 Ukrainian programme was to share experiences’, says Raul Niño Zambrano, ‘The films didn’t speak about the war directly but about communities and people. I’m sure the level of empathy for Ukraine has increased over the last year and documentaries contribute to this. Films are a very good medium to show what a country really is. People watch a film then have a conversation and find out what’s happening in which part of the country and how people feel’.

Small film festival audiences are more open to diverse films and curators try to support this. ‘I think people have changed their consumption a lot in recent years. They’ve become selective, but more open to new experiences. They’re confident that a film screening is an invitation to a conversation and an opportunity to learn something new’, says Raul.



4. Timing, timing, timing

Deadlines were the biggest challenge for last year's UK/Ukraine Season in Film. The programme was reshaped and the focus shifted to the presentation of Ukrainian culture abroad due to the outbreak of the full-scale invasion and uncertainty.

'We didn't have much time to review the proposed films and prepare publications, but we did our best', says Raul Niño Zambrano. When the full-scale war began, Sheffield Film Festival reached out to their long-standing partner, Docudays UA, and extended support. Their aim was to create a dedicated Ukrainian film programme as a gesture of solidarity and provide a platform for Ukrainian cinema. Additionally, they welcomed Ukrainian projects to participate in all the festival's industry-focused programmes.

'I wish my connection with Ukraine hadn't been interrupted for 20 years', comments Tim Brown. 'It's a shame that interest in different countries and their cultures only grows when tragedies happen. The Brighton Film Festival was assembled quite quickly, leaving little time for promotions. There was no expectation of a sell-out, however many people attended'.

In Western European countries, planning differs from Ukraine, particularly during the war. Transitioning culture from a subsidised sector to one that appeals to investors and politicians is time-consuming – especially when building connections, attending industry events and engaging in extensive discussions.



'Pamfir' by Dmytro Sukholytkyi-Sobchuk

5. Challenges for Ukrainian filmmakers: sustainability and self-organisation

To cooperate with Western Europe, sell films there, and create new co-productions, it's necessary to listen to its needs and the needs of its viewers.

'It's always been difficult to reach the people who make key decisions in the film industry', says film producer and former Head of Industry at Docudays UA, Daria Bassel.

'We brought several films to the programme. Many people attended and asked questions showing their interest. The BBC was looking for a Ukrainian project about the war and bought "One Day in Ukraine" by Volodymyr Tykhyi. I've never heard of the BBC buying Ukrainian films or entering Ukrainian projects as a co-producer!'

Last year, Docudays UA was a partner who put together a programme of Ukrainian documentaries for Sheffield, responding to a request from the festival. However, it was not the first time that Docudays worked with Sheffield. This sustained partnership has resulted in a significant Ukrainian presence at one of the most prominent English-speaking documentary film markets.

'Everyone who came to the industry part of the festival and participated in MeetMarket had good meetings and feedback on their projects. The organisers said that the projects were very cool. Their support isn't charity on the part of the producers, but a response to really good work. Everything came together', says Daria.

What's next?

The challenge is maintaining contact and sustaining the discussion about Ukrainian cinema for both Ukrainian filmmakers and their British counterparts in their quest to reach new audiences.

Additionally, consistent funding for travel, screening fees, technical support, and promotional campaigns poses a significant challenge in cultural diplomacy, particularly in the realm of cinema.

Rose from the Belfast Film Festival says, 'I'd be happy if Ukrainians could help with the promotion of the Ukrainian programme as the team is tiny and everyone has different functions'.

Tim Brown reiterated, 'Ukraine will remain in our hearts and minds. There'll be reconstruction, and the conversation between countries must continue. Ukrainian film curators, producers, and film festival directors should approach us to normalise relations to strengthen cultural ties'.

A person with long, light-colored hair is kneeling on a dark floor covered in a thick layer of golden, grain-like particles. They are wearing a white, short-sleeved crop top and olive-green shorts. Their arms are raised high above their head, and their head is tilted back, suggesting a gesture of hope, prayer, or triumph. The background is dark, with a wooden chair visible in the upper left corner. The lighting is warm and focused on the person and the grains.

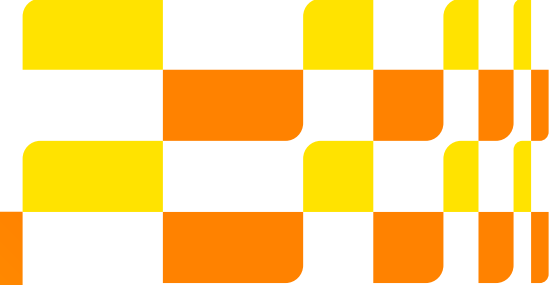
Connections for the Future

Another significant focus of the Season was to provide opportunities for collaborations and mutual support. This concept served as the foundation for planning the Season even before the war and we maintained this objective when reformatting the project. The cooperation between organisations in Ukraine and the UK resulted in numerous outcomes that extended beyond the initial project applications and the Season's programme itself.

Photo by Kateryna Skraglenko



Scotland-Ukraine Arts Residencies: interview with Lucy Byatt, Hospitalfield Director



In 2018 Ilya Zabolotnyi, British Council's Arts Manager, visited Hospitalfield as he was looking for a partner for the 2019 SWAP programme. It was previously hosted by Liverpool Biennale and he was speaking to the Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art (GI) to discuss a similar relationship. The director of GI was on Hospitalfield's board and suggested we host this programme. Ilya visited and asked me to propose SWAP in Scotland for four Ukrainian artists.

This project provided the selected artists with a six week residency. Each was hosted in a rural residency for four weeks and then for two weeks in a more urban residency. The pairings were as follows:

- CCA – Cove Park – **Anastasiia Khlestova**
- Hospitalfield – Glasgow Sculpture Studios – **Yevgen Nikiforov**
- Pier Orkney – Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop – **Oleksandra Kadzevich**
- Scottish Sculpture Workshop – DCA printmaking workshop – **Taras Kovach**

Hospitalfield's role was to bring the organisations together and coordinate dates. Ilya worked with the curators to select the artists through an application process. We gained great insight into the contemporary art world in Ukraine through this as the artists came from very different aspects of their art worlds.

SWAP was initiated by Ilya as part of his British Council programme. This new project [Scotland-Ukraine Arts Residencies] has been initiated by the British Council once again.

Our global programme hosts over 48 artists yearly including our graduate, interdisciplinary and bursary programme. Each is carefully selected by different juries and highly contested. For example, we have three specific residency opportunities and 93 applications. This opportunity is to work alongside the architects to develop a future plan for Hospitalfield.

The programme at Hospitalfield is, at its core, the setting. We have wonderful studios, accommodation and a chef. Every residency setting differs. Creatives, especially freelancers, juggle work-life balance with uncertain income. The opportunity to get to the studio and find time to research and develop their practice is rare. At Hospitalfield we offer a programme that brings artists together in an astonishing heritage environment, overlooking the sea, surrounded by countryside, yet not too remote. We ask artists to apply with an urgent project that they want time to grow. We don't ask them to complete a project or to respond to our needs, only something that's valuable and urgent to them.

We know time to work and focus on research valued by artists and we often hear of projects or outcomes years later that began during our programmes. We've been working with a Masters student in Glasgow on the curator's course to develop a piece of research using case studies to highlight this process.

One of the most important aspects within international programmes is the development of understandings and networks. Artists connect with other artists that come from very different backgrounds, countries, social and cultural situations. We know of artists, curators, musicians who first met on our programme and have gone on to work together for years in to the future.

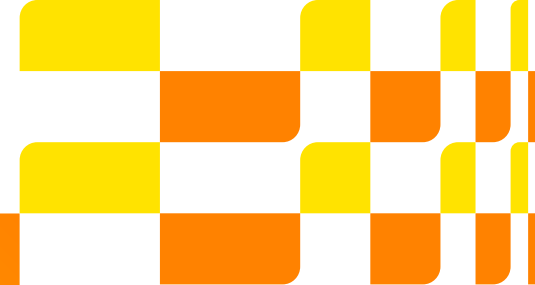
The host organisations and participants of the Scotland-Ukraine Arts Residencies programme in 2023 are as follows:

- Cove Park – **Veronika Skliarova**
- Hospitalfield – **Kateryna Rusetska**
- Moniak Mhor – **Ostap Slyvynsky**
- Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop – EtchingRoom1: **Kristina Yarosh** and **Anna Khodkova**
- Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, Edinburgh College of Art – **Ruslan Luchko**

Photo by Hay Festival – Marina García Burgos



Hay Festival x Lviv BookForum: interview with Cristina Fuentes La Roche, Hay Festival International Director



We were contacted by Lviv BookForum to rethink a format for 2022 during complicated circumstances. We hoped to enrich and internationalise their programme as well as use the Hay Festival's international network to share the forum's work. Additionally, we wanted to help create awareness and celebrate Ukrainian culture within the context of the war.

We achieved this by co-curating a section of the programme that included international digital guests such as Margaret Atwood, Yuval Noah Harari, Elif Shafak or Abdulrazak Gurnah – some of whom attended the event in person and participated in roundtable discussions with Ukrainian artists, activists and writers. They assisted with the communication plan, which meant disseminating the message of the festival internationally, with a focus in Europe but also in Latin America. With the help of our media partners, we hosted live streaming of the talks which were also available to watch later with English and Spanish subtitles. This digital collaboration and communication was supported by the British Council as part of the UK/Ukraine Season.

Our most valuable achievement during the Season of Culture was celebrating and showcasing the amazing work of Ukrainian artists, thinkers, activists, writers, and cultural practitioners with the Lviv Bookforum. Additionally, engaging the audience with relevant discussions about culture in the context of war, as well as democracy and its values. **Lviv Bookforum was able to take place, against all odds, and the strength and quality of Ukrainian culture was shown to the world.**

We learned about the extraordinary relevance of Ukrainian art and the resilience of its people as well as the importance of language and its power to create change. Cultural organisations must contribute toward democratic values by creating safe spaces for discussion. Additionally, we gained insight into a connected, technological youth working in the cultural field.

We absolutely plan to continue working with Ukraine. We've expanded beyond the forum and have brought Ukrainian artists to our international festivals (Colombia, UK and soon Mexico and Peru). This means global audiences gain awareness about their work, the war and its consequences. We're currently working with the forum and finalising the programme logistics for the 2023 event in Lviv between 5 and 8 October.

The interaction during streaming, through social media and afterwards, has been amazing. **To see our Colombian audience actively supporting an event that was happening on the other side of the world as well as asking questions and championing Ukrainian culture was very moving.** Our global audiences are aware of the ravages of the war and of the richness of Ukrainian writers and artists. They're buying new books, watching films and supporting a vision for the future for Ukraine.

We've gained insights into Ukrainian artists' professionalism and how they're creating meaningful cultural partnerships with the rest of Europe. We've learned that what we share is more important than what is different culturally. They also have amazing ska bands which we showcased at the festival.

EURO FESTIVAL

Interview with EuroFestival artists



The British Council and the Ukrainian Institute collaborated with Liverpool City Council at **EuroFestival**, which presented 24 cultural projects, 19 of which were collaborations between Ukrainian and British artists – exhibitions, performances, concerts, and even a rave party. Some of the highlights are **Izyum to Liverpool**, **Dialogues**, **Chornobyl'dorf**, **HOME**, **'Land & Sky, Home & Dreams'**, **Jamala – Qirim**, and others.

Artists and curators have shared their reflections on presenting their projects in Liverpool before the Eurovision.

I had the opportunity to present the album 'QIRIM' globally and share the unique Crimean Tatar folklore heritage together with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. This type of collaboration was the first in the history of Ukrainian and Eurovision. We performed this unique music in front of 20,000 people. Some of the musicians performing in Liverpool have served in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This was a significant reminder that we did not call for or expect this war. Our musicians did not plan to take up arms, they did not prepare to be soldiers, but they are defending us.

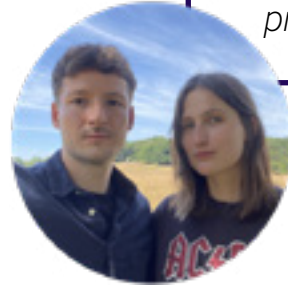


Jamala,
Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar singer-songwriter,
winner the Eurovision Song Contest in 2016

It was a precious experience. Approximately 7,000 people attended the 'Dialogues' exhibition. I used this space to explain that war is an enduring matter. Besides the exhibition, there was a table with new publications about how Ukrainian artists experienced the war. There were always British and Ukrainians sitting by the table, reading and discussing. I also shared my experiences of living through the war in the performance, often resorting to humour since Liverpool audiences tend to absorb information better that way. It fosters understanding, which is crucial.

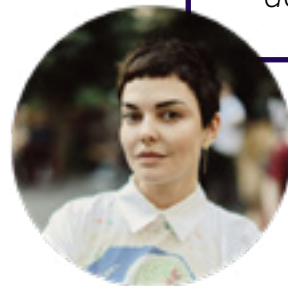


Alevtina Kakhidze,
Artist



For us, it was an excellent opportunity to show Ukrainian art to the local audience and share the history and culture of Ukraine through photography. All Ukrainians feel more responsibility about how we talk about Ukraine, what our projects convey and how our public activity affects the discourse. Ukrainians working in the cultural sector, including artists, curators etc., are trying to use every chance to talk about the war and Ukraine in general. Our cooperation with Open Eye Gallery and all other partners who supported our project was practical. We attracted various local communities to participate in the 'HOME' project and expand their knowledge about Ukrainian art.

Viktoriia Bavykina and Maksym Horbatskyi,
Curators



The most valuable outcome of the collaborative 'Sound of Freedom' project was the social capital we expanded through this project. The British methods and approaches we observed during the cooperation also inspired us regarding work, process organisation, and responsibility. For me, it was an experience of collaboration not only with Culture Liverpool but also with Ukrainian colleagues, who demonstrated daily that borders and locations do not matter.

Katya Taylor,
Art curator



I created the installation 'Izyum to Liverpool', presented at the EuroFestival, at the invitation of Elisa Nocente, cultural programme manager of the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. It was a challenge for me as an artist because Liverpool Cathedral is the second largest in Europe. It's a special place that requires a suitable work of art. It was also a challenge for me as a Ukrainian: how should I speak indirectly about the war in Ukraine? How can I present it in a way that it really works?

Liverpool is a wonderful, bustling city, and before Eurovision, it was crowded. The EuroFestival took place for two weeks. It included various cultural events: art exhibitions, raves, parades, and others. During this, guests had the opportunity to learn more about Ukrainian art.

Katya Buchatska,
Artist

Communications results

The Season has garnered remarkable media attention, with **190 million coverage** and **630 media mentions** across the UK and Ukraine.

In the UK, top media mentions included The Guardian, The Times, Independent, The Sunday Times, Foreign Policy, La Presse, CBS News, Monocle 24, Telegraph, BBC, and others. In Ukraine the Season was covered by Ukrainska Pravda, Suspilne, NV, Ukrinform, LB, Detector media, ZN.UA, BBC Ukraine, Espresso, Marie Claire, Chytomo, LiRoom, Your Art, SLUH, and others.

Some of Season's projects gained special recognition

The BBC called 'Chornobyl Dorf. Archaeological opera', 'one of the most stunning and important performances in the world today'. **The Times** called it 'A modern Ukrainian masterpiece everyone needs to see'.

The Arts Professional described the exhibition 'Discover Ukraine: Bits Destroyed' as 'brightly coloured, hyper-intricate digital projections of the mosaics accompanied by striking sounds, to draw attention to both Ukraine's cultural legacy and losses'.

In its review of the Belfast Film Festival programme, **The Irish Times** highlighted the 'Luxemburg, Luxembourg' by Antonio Lukić. They called it a 'delightfully messy, picturesque film that takes us through a host of universal concerns and the comedic timing throughout is perfection'.

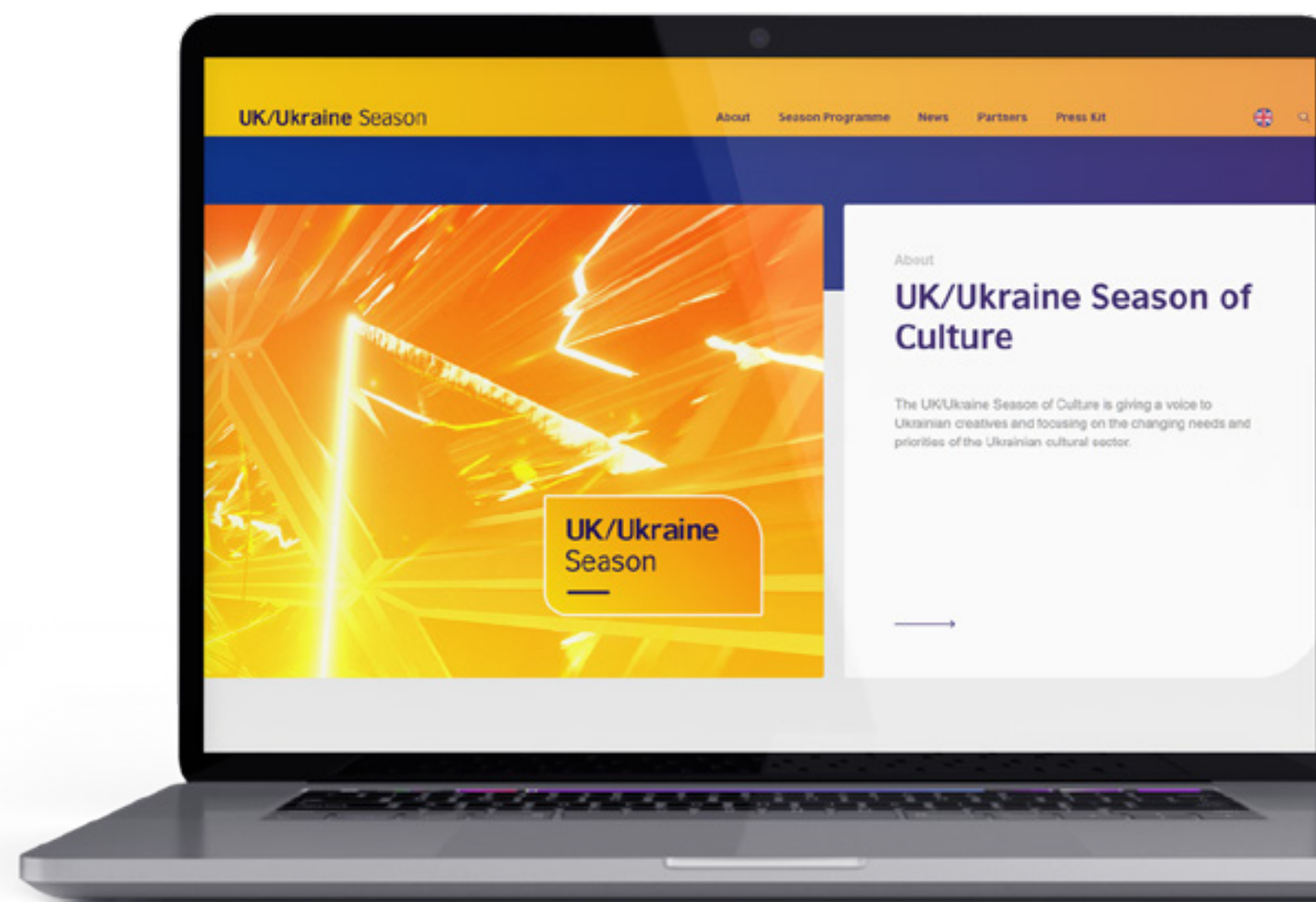
The Cambridge Critique published as review of the 'Cassandra' performance. It said, 'The talented sextet brought a huge amount of clarity and energy to this complex tale and with Helen Eastman's inspired direction, the whole evening at the Round Church was a deeply moving and thought provoking'.

In the special project '**Now You See Us**', together with The Ukrainians media, we have compiled stories of five Ukrainian cultural activists who know first-hand what it's like to showcase Ukrainian culture abroad during the war.

Chytomo media has published a series of articles about Season's literature projects: about **online residencies and Ukraine Lab project** (in Ukrainian); **translation of Ukrainian drama into English** (in Ukrainian); **decolonisation process in museums; London Book Affair and Ukraine's stand; the best Ukrainian literary classics available in English translations**

Website

The Season has a dedicated website where those interested can find the Season's programme, including information about locations, partners, and the timing of specific activities. Moreover, many projects have produced interactive media content that remains accessible to everyone. You can visit the website at **www.ukuaseason.org** to explore these resources.



UK/Ukraine Season of Culture Team

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board offered invaluable advice and expertise to the Season's Programme Team. Through active discussions during board meetings, they contributed significantly to shaping the directions of the UK/Ukraine Season. Their input and guidance proved instrumental in guiding the overall vision and objectives of the Season.

- **Dame Melinda Simmons**, Ambassador, British Embassy in Ukraine
- **Iryna Borovets**, Director, Communication & Public Diplomacy Dept, MFA Ukraine
- **Oleksandr Tkachenko**, Minister of Culture, Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine
- **Galyna Grygorenko**, Deputy Minister of Culture, Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine
- **Volodymyr Sheiko**, Director General, Ukrainian Institute
- **Tetyana Filevska**, Creative Director, Ukrainian Institute
- **Olesia Ostrovska-Liuta**, Director, Mystetskyi Arsenal
- **Andriy Kurkov**, (former) President, PEN Ukraine
- **Marina Pesenti**, Member of Supervisory Board, Ukrainian Institute
- **Volodymyr Vorobej**, Director, PPV Knowledge Network
- **Olha Zhuk**, Creative Director, Mystetskyi Arsenal
- **Skinder Hundal**, Director Arts, British Council
- **Cortina Butler**, Deputy Director Arts, British Council
- **Nicholas Thomas**, Director, British Council Ukraine
- **Rebecca Simor**, Director Festivals and Seasons, British Council
- **Keith Nichol**, Head Cultural Diplomacy, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
- **Harriet Williams**, Senior Policy Advisor, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

The British Council's Programme Board

We express our gratitude to the board members for their encouragement, advice, and support throughout the day-to-day work of the UK/Ukraine Season Team. They provided invaluable assistance to the team, particularly during the most challenging times. Thanks to their unwavering support, the UK/Ukraine Season Programme received the necessary impetus to continue despite the Russian invasion.

- **David Codling**, Director Ukraine Season, British Council
- **Anna Bubnova**, Head of Arts, Season's Project Manager, British Council Ukraine
- **Nicholas Thomas**, Director British Council Ukraine
- **Claire de Braekeleer**, Regional Director Arts, British Council Wider Europe
- **Rebecca Simor**, Director Festivals & Seasons, British Council
- **David Elliot**, Senior Programme Manager, Festivals & Seasons, British Council
- **Jenny Dally**, Head of Stakeholder Engagement, Festivals and Seasons, British Council
- **Yulia Romanova**, Regional Head of CE Marketing, British Council
- **Ian Thomas**, Head of Arts Research and Insight, British Council
- **Ivan Tasic**, Senior Evaluation Adviser, Data Evidence and Performance, British Council
- **Maja Mandekic**, Regional Operations Manager, British Council Wider Europe

Programme Team

British Council
Programme Team



David Codling
Director Ukraine
Season



**Claire de
Braekeleer**
Season Chief
Responsible Officer



Anna Bubnova
Head of Arts



Anna Karnaukh
Head of Creative
Economy



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**Anastasia
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Arts Manager



Yulia Nizgurska
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Nataliia Groma
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Suzy Villafane
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Ukrainian Institute Programme Team



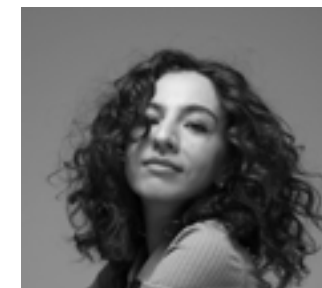
Volodymyr Sheiko
General Director



Tetiana Filevska
Creative Director



Anastasiia Volkova
Head of Arts



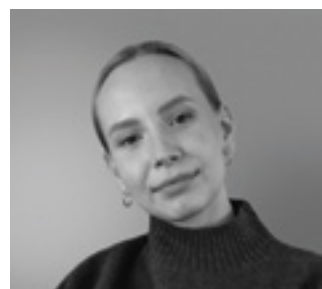
Ani Kazarian
Head of Cross-sector



Alyona Kuhar
(former) Head
of Programmes



**Anastasiia
Manuliak**
Head of Visual Art



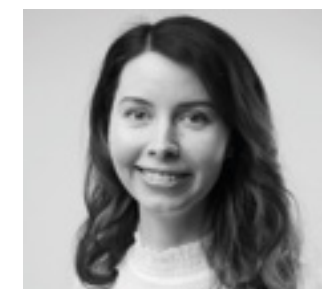
Maria Volchonok
Visual Art Programme
Manager



Natalie Movshovych
Head of Film



Iryna Kyporenko
Film Programme
Manager



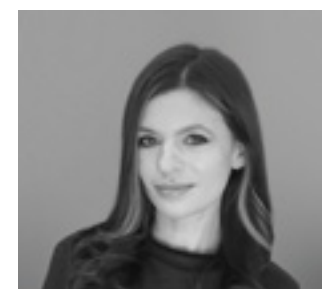
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**Maryana
Bondarenko**
Head of Music



Liubov Morozova
Music Programme
Manager



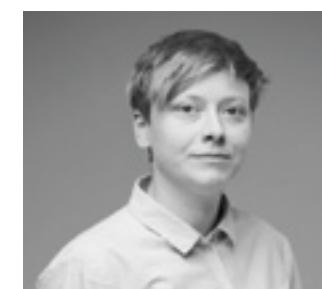
**Svitlana
Lenchenko**
(former) Music
Programme Manager



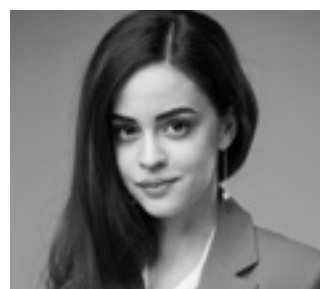
Mykhailo Chedryk
(former) Music
Programme
Manager



**Anastasiia
Haishenets**
(former) Head of
Performing Arts



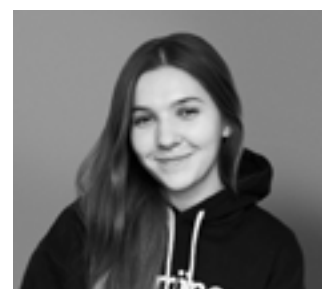
Nadia Sokolenko
Performing Arts
Programme Manager



Tetiana Sadova
Cross-sectoral
Programmes Manager



Ksenia Kalyna
Head of
Communications



Diana Shvets
Communications
Manager



Tetiana Melnyk
Designer



Olena Makaieva
Communications
Department Specialist



Anna Strakhova
(former) Communications
Department Specialist

Case studies

We chose five projects from the Season of Culture, which were independently evaluated by the research agency, Impact Stories. Here, you can learn more about what some of the projects involved, how partners participated, how audiences responded, read participant feedback, and gain a sense of the long-term impact of the partnerships. We invite you to gain deeper insights into the Season and the strength of the cultural ties established between organisations in Ukraine and the UK.



Photo by Jon Spaul/British Council

UK/Ukraine Season of Culture 2022–23 – Case study:

Cassandra tour to Oxford and Cambridge



Background and context

The Ukrainian Institute London, a charity dedicated to promoting Ukraine's presence in the UK and beyond, hosts events and projects on various aspects of Ukraine, including culture and literature. Live Canon is known for performing verse text in theatres, museums, festivals, galleries, and on radio and digital platforms.

Lesia Ukrainka's ground-breaking poetic drama, published in 1908, retells the Trojan War from Cassandra's perspective. Despite her foresight about the war's outcome, she was disbelieved, trapped in besieged Troy, and witnessed its destruction.

In 2021, the Ukrainian Institute in London awarded its annual translation prize to Nina Murray for her excerpt of 'Cassandra', celebrating Lesia Ukrainka's 150th anniversary. An acclaimed translator, Nina Murray has also translated works by bestselling contemporary writer Oksana Zabukzhko, including 'The Museum of Abandoned Secrets'.

Lesia Ukrainka, a pioneering feminist writer, is a cultural icon in Ukraine but remains relatively unknown outside the country. Her Cassandra story is relevant in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Project aims

This project aimed to elevate the recognition of Lesia Ukrainka, a key figure in Ukrainian culture, often called Ukraine's Shakespeare. The team created a performance based on the first English translation of 'Cassandra', using it to emphasise the story's relevance to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Institute London also organised post-show discussions and published a blog to deepen understanding of the writer and play's context.

Project activities

'Cassandra' premiered at London's Omnibus Theatre in October 2022, directed by acclaimed director Helen Eastman, known for her work in producing contemporary productions of Ancient Greek plays. The play also toured Oxford and Cambridge as part of the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture, with post-show discussions featuring Classics experts Professor Edith Hall and Professor Simon Goldhill in both cities.

Achievements

‘Cassandra’s’ translation, production, and touring spotlighted Lesia Ukrainka as a prominent Ukrainian cultural figure and the author of a story with profound current relevance.

“On the UK stage for the first time, this Ukrainian masterpiece about truth, violence and power has astounding relevance today. Nina Murray’s stunning new translation of “Cassandra” breathes new life into the classical war epic.”

– Partner, UK

The productions sold out, and over 200 attendees joined the post-performance discussions. Media coverage in Cambridge and Oxford highlighted Ukrainian culture and the play’s relevance to the Ukraine war, earning positive reviews. The translation reached wider audiences through publication, including an anthology by Live Canon and the release of the full translation of the play by Harvard University Press.

Lesia Ukrainka’s reputation has grown among academic stakeholders, with experts from Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham universities participating in post-show discussions. Her work is now recognized for its significance in the context of Greek text adaptations and as a pioneering critique of military violence in the Iliad. Professor Edith Hall plans to feature Lesia Ukrainka in her upcoming book on Trojan War adaptations.

Impact

The production supported intercultural understanding between the UK and Ukraine, and raised awareness of Russia’s campaign to erase Ukrainian culture. By celebrating and promoting Ukrainian culture globally, we can ensure its survival.

“Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is not only about territory; it’s an attempt to stamp out a culture. In the arts, we must refuse to let this happen by amplifying Ukrainian culture in our work.”

– Helen Eastman, Director of Live Canon Production of Cassandra, UK Ukraine Season of Culture website

‘Cassandra’ highlighted Lesia Ukrainka’s significance as a cultural icon and the global relevance of her work. The production also raised awareness of Ukrainian culture among UK artists and theatre practitioners who are part of Live Canon. Future collaborations between the Ukrainian Institute London and Live Canon are in discussion.

“The director Helen Eastman and the team of actors and creatives who worked on Cassandra have now learned a great deal about Ukraine’s history and culture, and have become advocates for Ukraine, committed to working on Ukrainian theatre in future, and continuing to raise awareness about Ukraine’s rich culture which has been repressed for centuries.”

– Partner, UK

The translation is also considered relevant to social issues today in exploring issues such as feminism, class, truth and anti-colonialism. New links and networks for translators were established with academic stakeholders through the post-show discussions attended by experts from the classics departments of Oxford, Cambridge and Durham universities. There’s now wider recognition of Lesia Ukrainka’s pioneering role and the significance of her adaptations of Greek texts. The production and post-show discussions were performed exceptionally well despite the short turnaround time and limited resources.

Sustainability

The translation and production of ‘Cassandra’ in the UK highlighted Ukrainian culture and contributed to Lesia Ukrainka’s legacy by bringing her to the forefront as a global literary figure. There’s now worldwide interest in producing further performances of her translated work.

UK/Ukraine Season of Culture 2022–23 – Case study:

Chornobyl'dorf – Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival



Background and context

The 2022 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, the UK's largest new music event, returned after a hiatus since 2019. It featured around 50 events, including concerts, music theatre, dance, multimedia, talks, and films. The festival also highlighted an extensive Ukrainian programme in the UK/Ukraine Season of Culture, spotlighting new Ukrainian music and performance.

Due to the Russian invasion, Ukrainian professionals and their UK counterparts had to adapt to virtual collaboration, often working from bomb shelters and makeshift spaces. They were determined to prepare thoroughly for the live performances at the UK festival.

Project aims

The dedicated Ukrainian programme at the hcmf//22 aimed to provide an international platform for Ukrainian voices, arts and culture to be shared.

“Their unique power to bridge gaps of ignorance and suspicion, uniting nations and people, is poised to take the lead. And at this moment, the distinctly creative voices of the Ukrainian people, from past and present, will be heard.”

– hcmf// 2022 website

Project activities

Four main elements in the Ukrainian programme at hcmf// 2022 were:

- ‘Chornobyl'dorf. An archaeological opera’ by Ukrainian composers Roman Grygoriv and Illia Razumeiko combined folk and classical elements with theatre, dance, video, and unique instruments, exploring nuclear power’s global impact.
- A panel discussion about art in times of conflict.

- ‘String Air Synthesis’ by Volodymyr Voyt and Solomiia Moroz improvised and comprised UK premiers in microtonal and even temperament for Kharkiv-style bandura and flute.
- A premiere of compositions from Anna Korsun (‘Spleen’ and ‘Plexus’) and Maksym Shalygin (‘Drop After Drop’), performed by the British orchestra ‘Riot Ensemble’.

Achievements

- In the UK, an estimated 550 people attended face-to-face at the hcmf// 2022.
- The performances at hcmf// 2022 received huge critical acclaim and were widely reviewed in the UK media and beyond. ‘Chornobyldorf’ was described by the Times as ‘a modern Ukrainian masterpiece everyone needs to see’, and BBC Radio 1 called it ‘one of the most shattering and essential performances anywhere in the world today’.

Impact

hcmf// 2022 provided a prestigious platform for Ukrainian professionals and organisations to debut new work and connect with global audiences. The event increased international visibility through associated activities, including a panel discussion addressing the Ukraine conflict’s context and future challenges for the culture sector. It served as both a safe space and a creative platform for Ukrainian professionals to express themselves and be heard.

“The opportunity gave a new focus to the theatre project. The feedback confirmed the importance of Ukrainian culture representation abroad during this time.”

– Professional, Ukraine

It allowed Ukrainian creatives to showcase and depict the evolving Ukrainian reality. For example, ‘Chornobyldorf’, written before the Russian invasion, has gained new resonance and anger.

“Chornobyldorf was created two years before a large-scale Russian war against Ukraine became radically relevant. In 2020, a nuclear explosion had an abstract meaning to us, whereas today the fear of nuclear threat is well-founded. Each day, the fictional world of Chornobyldorf is getting more real. The context of the piece changed for both its creators and the whole world.”

– Roman Grygoriv, Composer and Director (hcmf.co.uk)

Ukrainian participants networked globally, fostering growth opportunities and UK-Ukraine collaborations enhanced professional skills. UK partners have gone above and beyond to support their Ukrainian counterparts.

“It established new connections crucial for further development with UK-based organisations and artists, as we didn’t have any before.”

– Professional, Ukraine

“The level of preparation and implementation was outstanding. The whole team cooperated and was committed to the collaboration. We all learned so much.”

– Professional, Ukraine

These partnerships demonstrated Ukrainian artists' dedication and resilience in collaborating with UK peers during the ongoing war. For example, Chornobyldorf opera artists resumed rehearsals at the end of April 2022 at the Ukrainian Composers' Association, but curfews and occasional bomb shelter work posed limitations. Robust partnerships generated new work for the Season and sparked ideas and plans for potential future projects.

"Events are happening with extra planning for the bombing."

– Olha Diatel, producer, Ukraine

"Thanks to the collaboration with British artists, a lot of space and prospects for new cultural projects have emerged."

– Professional, Ukraine

"[The long-term benefit is] continued collaboration with Ukrainian artists and ongoing collaborations between hcmf// and cultural organisations in Ukraine (including Opera Aperta and Jam Factory). In the longer term, we also hope to create opportunities for emerging British artists to export their practice to Ukraine."

– Partner, UK

All proceeds from the performance of Chornobyldorf at hcmf// 2022 were donated to humanitarian aid charities in Ukraine.

Sustainability

The UK/Ukraine Season at hcmf// 2022 provided Ukrainian voices a lasting platform, ensuring their continued global recognition. Furthermore, the festival yielded tangible outcomes that sustained momentum and relevance for Ukrainian work among new audiences.

The second performance of Chornobyldorf at Liverpool's EuroFestival in May 2023 as part of the Season was significant. This involved adapting the opera into a club-immersion format for broader accessibility, with free tickets provided to promote free cultural experiences and engage a diverse audience.

"Chornobyldorf's appearance there takes our work out of the realm of 'elite' art and into the masses. After all, radiation and post-apocalypse have no class, social or aesthetic boundaries."

– Illia Razumeiko, composer, Ukraine

Following the festival, a BBC Radio premiere of Chornobyldorf aired. The Season empowered professionals and organisations to enhance their practices and create future opportunities with support from the British Council.

The partnership between the Season of Culture and hcmf// played a crucial role in uniting Ukraine and the UK's Arts and Culture sectors to create Ukrainian-focused programmes, fostering collaborations among organisations, artists, and professionals.

UK/Ukraine Season of Culture 2022–23 – Case study:

Skills for Radio Documentaries

Background and context

BBC Media Action, the BBC's international development charity, assisted the Ukrainian public broadcaster (Suspilne Ukraine) in enhancing audience share and journalistic standards. This served as a model for Suspilne Ukraine's goal of developing documentary-making skills and delivering public-serving content across all news platforms (radio, film and TV). Suspilne Ukraine, the Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine, part-funded the project, which received funding through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Originally scheduled as a three-day offline training in Odessa in May, the project was transformed into a six-day online training session and month-long mentorship programme due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Project aims

The main goal was to train Ukrainian radio presenters, editors, and journalists to boost their professional abilities and refine their skills. Initially focused on pandemic-related content, the project shifted its focus to covering life and mental health in wartime.

"The only way to live in such a reality is to make things visible and audible and say it aloud. It's important to speak about what's happened, and we must find ways to articulate these experiences. Initially, it was hate speech, but this is very destructive, and so we wanted to find other ways of communicating about the war."

– Professional, Ukraine

Project activities

Louise Cotton, a 30-year BBC veteran, conducted a six-day online training programme for Ukrainian professionals, including Oleksandr Zinchenko (Historian, Publicist, Journalist) and Anastasiia Nizhnyk (Consultant Psychotherapist). The programme covered various topics, such as documentary criteria, archival data handling, wartime emotional resilience, and talking about tragic events with eyewitnesses.

21 participants were split up and received online mentoring to develop the radio documentaries created during the training. They consolidated knowledge and skills learned and purchased equipment as part of the project – enabling them to continue.

Achievements

The documentaries aimed to reflect the continuation of everyday life and the preservation of Ukrainian customs and culture during the war.

“In the terrible times of Russian aggression, everything that’s not about survival but about life becomes a healthy island to preserve sanity. Children continue to study, musicians write music and sing songs even in the trenches, winemakers make wine, photographers document war crimes and create works of art that amaze the world. Life goes on.”

– Partner, Ukraine

The four documentaries on Radio Kultura in January 2023 were:

- **Musicians and War.** This focused on the Ukrainian music community’s fight for victory. It featured stories of choice and victory, new creativity and impact. It was selected from many applicants to participate in the 49th International Conference on Radio Documentary / IFC AudiDocs in May 2023 in Reykjavik, Iceland. After the broadcast, delegates participated in a Q&A session and a special plenary session dedicated to Ukraine-related content. An episode was also posted on the Suspilne Kultura YouTube channel and received widespread national and specialist media coverage. The programme was also shortlisted for the international Prix Europa award. It is important to note that the broadcaster made efforts to continue the programme after the project ended – five more episodes of the radio documentary project were added to the initial five episodes dedicated to the fate of women musicians during the war.
- **One Day in the Life of a Teacher: Big Victories in a Small School.** Journalists spent time at a school observing teaching during air raids, power outages, and other wartime challenges.
- **Ukrainian Sparkling Wine: We Know How to Walk Around It.** Sparkling wine is explored as a symbol of the anti-colonial struggle in the Kherson region, which has experienced and overcome the occupation and Russian aggression.
- **Photos of War: Stories from Behind the Frame** shows the reality of war crimes and tragedies. Each episode discusses the people, stories and context around a famous photograph.

Impact

- The training strengthened soft skills, technical competencies and professional practice by enabling journalists to innovate and produce radio documentaries. Editors and presenters also developed their professional skills.

“I gained valuable knowledge and skills through documentary characters, stories, scriptwriting, and technical work with sound and recording. Together, we analysed radio documentaries by our colleagues from the UK and worked in groups to improve our skills. We created a topic, finalised it with our coach, Louise, and created 4 episodes of documentaries. It was an incredible experience as I created my first radio documentary, which was broadcast on national radio.”

– Professional, Ukraine

- Lead trainer Louise Cotton brought value through experience, expertise, professionalism and knowledge of UK documentary-making across many topics.

“Louise gave us valuable advice on working with characters and sound and finding topics. She also shared her life hacks on technical work and recording. We discussed the intricacies of work and learned from examples of British radio documentaries. She answered all my questions, accompanied us during the training, and helped us focus on the topic and prepare our work. She’s a valuable specialist who’ll be able to help and advise us when working on further documentary projects.”

– Professional, Ukraine

- Suspilne Ukraine expanded its portfolio of public service radio products to include documentaries, thus increasing audience share and its competitiveness.
- Ukrainian participants showcased reality through documentaries, and there’s been an increase in public demand for evidence-based war broadcasting.
- Participants were supported by developing the format and presentation to better showcase their work for a wider international platform.
- Ukrainian participants made new connections amongst each other, the BBC MA personnel and Louise Cotton, and continue to be mentored. Subsequently, BBC MA released five short documentaries on digital platforms as part of the Suspilne ‘Yes, I am a Woman’ project, additionally developing skills in new platforms.
- The training took place under challenging conditions, with participants frequently joining from makeshift locations, including bomb shelters, to access the internet and power during blackouts. Both the Ukrainian and UK teams displayed adaptability, and the Ukrainian participants showed remarkable resilience.

Sustainability

The project provided a lasting global platform for Ukrainian voices. Participants are now producing documentaries showcasing Ukrainian artistic and cultural figures at home and abroad.

A compilation of short films, ‘Shifting perceptions of women’s participation and encouraging visibility and inclusion of LGBTQI+ communities in Ukraine’, is a new project resulting from the connections between UK participants within Suspilne and the BBC MA.

UK/Ukraine Season of Culture 2022–23 – Case study:

Ukraine Day at Cheltenham Literature Festival



Photo by Jon Spaul/British Council

Background and context

Cheltenham Festivals is an organisation that creates joy, sparking curiosity and inspiring change globally through four world-class festivals (Jazz, Science, Music, Literature) and charitable programmes. It fosters a cultural world where exploration and creativity flourish, featuring top artists, unique experiences, and emerging talent at the heart of the UK's cultural scene with international acclaim. The International Book Arsenal Festival gathers global artists, writers and leading publishers in Kyiv each spring. In 2022, when a full festival was impossible, Cheltenham Literary Festival joined forces with Book Arsenal for a series of in-person and online events, co-curated under the 'Read the World' theme, part of the UK/Ukraine Season.

Project aims

The project aimed to celebrate Ukraine's rich culture and shed light on the personal impact of the ongoing conflict.

"International collaboration is at the heart of the festival. It aimed to connect writers and thinkers from both a local and global community of book lovers. It provided an opportunity to build partnerships with global cultural organisations that are mutually beneficial and long-lasting. It provided a platform to showcase Ukrainian talent and expose authors to new audiences."

– Partner, UK

Project activities

In collaboration with Book Arsenal, Cheltenham Book Festival hosted Ukraine Day on 11 October 2022. The day featured Ukrainian authors, poets, musicians, and filmmakers in a mix of ticketed and free events.

A panel discussion about art in times of conflict.

Five events took place with high-profile Ukrainian authors and talents.

- **‘My Longest Book Tour (in conversation)’** by Oksana Zabuzhko. She was on a book tour in Poland when the war started, and she learned that her home was struck by missiles.
- **‘When War Comes to Your Home’** by poet, playwright and scriptwriter Liuba Yakymchuk, and author, historian and Director of the Ukrainian Institute London, Olesia Khromeychuk, discusses the impact of war.
- **‘Create a Canvas: How War Changed Rondo’** by Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv pays tribute to peace, resistance and hope with storytelling and an art workshop.
- **‘Songs of Love and Hate’** is a musical soundtrack by Yuriy Gurzhy set to the poems of Grygoriy Semenchuk and Liuba Yakymchuk.
- A conversation with the visual culture researcher Kateryna Yakovlenko and the first UK screening of the producer’s cut of ‘Bad Roads’ (2020) by Natalia Vorozhbyt.

Free events on the Huddle stage included:

- An Introduction to Ukrainian Language and Culture. Translators Anna Walden and Ruth Ahemdai Kemp led a session on Ukrainian phrases and books for all ages.
- Explore Ukrainian: Translate a Ukrainian Picture Book, a creative collaborative translation of a Ukrainian picture book.

Achievements

The five events showcased selected authors, artists and performers and gave them an international platform to reach global audiences and networking opportunities. The face-to-face events attracted around 200 visitors on the day and feedback on a free session, even though unusual for literature events, was positive. It was based on the “Read the World” theme about literature in translation and sparked curiosity about the Ukrainian language in relation to other European languages, particularly Russian, and the nature of Ukrainian cultural identity.

“For Ukrainians, having their language and politics centre stage was affirming. For others, it was enlightening.”

– Professional, Ukraine

Impact

The Season provided ample networking opportunities, emphasising international connections. This platform effectively showcased Ukrainian culture and language and demonstrated the Festival’s strong solidarity with Ukraine through prominent events.

“The vision for the theme was to be the passport to a world of ideas, connecting writers and thinkers from all over the world with both a local and global community of book lovers.”

– Partner, UK

“The Festival provided relevant content from authors and speakers who were truly representative of the trauma, and could articulate their experiences and share their grief.”

– Partner, UK

Artists promoted their work, reached new audiences, and boosted book sales, while Ukrainian participants enhanced their visibility and networked with delegates from various countries and cultures about further collaboration. Relationships between the UK and Ukraine were strengthened and further developed. Free events ensured that many Ukrainians could attend and engage in the activities.

"We strengthened the initial relationship with the Ukraine Book Arsenal and were able to offer a very meaningful day of events at the Literature Festival."

– Partner, UK

"We invited Ukrainian refugees and supplied over one hundred free event tickets. Events were preceded by an ambassadorial reception where local MPs, council leaders and the media were present, as well as staff from organisations, refugees and supporters."

– Partner, UK

Moving the events from Ukraine to Cheltenham and coordinating this digitally was a challenge that required flexibility and sensitivity, especially as this took place in an unstable situation and with people who were living and working in a war zone.

"We learned about their experiences and developed an understanding of some of the challenges they faced while trying to put up the programme."

– Partner, UK

"It was very different regarding the depth and importance of the collaboration within the political climate."

– Partner, UK

Sustainability

The free picture book event marked the debut of a new approach to a public audience, demonstrating its proof of concept and paving the way for its expansion to other public stages. It's been adapted for classroom use to promote language learning and pride in native languages, particularly Ukrainian, with plans for implementation in UK schools with mixed communities. Funding for this expanded programme has been provided by the Stephen Spender Trust and the British Council.

"We realised that we could do so much to promote language learning and creative writing in schools – diaspora children can take pride in their own language, and others can explore it. It can open up discussions about culture and politics."

– Professional, Ukraine

The Festival enabled individuals to raise their profile and build a reputation, and one participant is recommending Ukrainian children's writers which are being published.

"My book recommendation helped to get it published in English. It greatly affirms the power of knowledge and connections in the Ukrainian world. I am currently also discussing getting another one of her books published in Germany – this has all come about on the back of other connections and contacts made through the season; it just builds and builds."

– Professional, Ukraine

UK/Ukraine Season of Culture 2022–23 – Case study:

Let the Body Speak



Background and context

UA Contemporary Dance Platform unites and coordinates contemporary dance choreographers and performers. It organises the International Zelyonka Dance Festival. The UK partner, The Place, is a London-based centre for dance development, with Wayne McGregor CBE as a longstanding Patron. Due to the displacement of Ukrainian dancers and choreographers following the Russian invasion, all training and mentoring activities transitioned to online platforms, allowing artists to participate regardless of their location.

Project aims

The project aims to inspire choreographers and dancers working during the war, providing an online platform to showcase and archive their recent works, fostering cross-cultural collaboration and addressing the discourse on ‘contemporary dance art during the war’ while promoting peer learning among UK and Ukrainian dancers..

Project activities

Body language and dance conveyed war experiences, exploring themes like death, independence, and collective trauma while interpreting Ukrainian identity. Ukrainian choreographers collaborated with UK mentors, receiving online consultations and tailored professional development. Three work-in-progress dance pieces were presented to an international audience in the UK on 28 March 2023, with audience feedback shaping future development. Performances occurred in European venues and Lviv and were streamed online.

Performances included:

- Bohdan Polishchuk’s ‘Danse Macabre’ is a 30-minute dance, physical theatre and musical performance combining experimental research with tradition on how death has changed Ukrainian society.
- Tetiana Znamerovska’s ‘Who Are We’ explored psychological trauma from the catastrophic events that affect the nation.
- Yulia Lopata’s ‘Kosachka’ celebrated female warriors who choose to fight for freedom.

“They’re a mix of dance styles and techniques reflecting the emotional and physical state of the Ukrainian people during the war. Three choreographers selected for support at the last stage represent the ideas which reflect Ukrainian identity in the most original way.”

– Partner, Ukraine

Performances were held at Les Kurbas Lviv Academic Theatre on 14 and 15 April 2023, as part of the Season. They were:

- Bohdan Polishchuk’s ‘Danse Macabre’
- Tatiana Znamerovska’s ‘Traces’ (renamed from ‘Who are we’).

The ‘Let the Body Speak’ YouTube channel, a digital archive which highlights Ukrainian choreographers’ work during the war, was also featured.

Achievements

The educational programme engaged over 320 participants through a combination of workshops, lectures, online sessions and interviews, covering topics such as drama, composition, experimental dance, site-specific performance, project management, participation in residencies and festivals and dance techniques. Ukrainian choreographers and dancers expanded their skills and approaches through the training programme, while partners innovatively delivered online training using new technology.

“I came up with the idea of a dance film, and when I found out that it would be possible to publish it on “Let the Body Speak”, I decided to shoot it. I also applied to participate in preparing a work-in-progress performance.”

– Professional, Ukraine

The project featured live performances in European cities where Ukrainian dancers relocated and an additional USA presentation. A video archive on the **‘Let the Body Speak’ YouTube channel** now hosts works, movement practices and discussions by participating Ukrainian dancers and choreographers, with 140 artists already contributing and ongoing submissions accepted until the war’s end.

“The experience of production and dance education of our partner is priceless to us.”

– Partner, Ukraine

Impact

The project fostered new connections and networks among Ukrainian and UK artists, venue curators, managers, and commissioning bodies.

“The participation gave me the opportunity to meet other professionals in the field of dance and music, establish contacts and expand my professional network. This can open new opportunities for cooperation and performances in the future.”

– Professional, Ukraine

“This has served to develop audience awareness of Ukrainian Contemporary Dance, of Studio Wayne McGregor and the Zelyonka Festival, and exposed new international audiences to contemporary dance.”

– Partner, UK

The new techniques and tools enabled artists to express their trauma through acquired skills.

“Dance is a universal language and a tool for self-expression. New tools to expand dance vocabulary are a way of articulating personal, meaningful concepts through physical movement.”

– Partner, UK

Sustainability

The YouTube channel functions as a living archive for Ukrainian choreographers and dancers. It promotes Ukrainian dance globally while the project partners are dedicated to future collaboration, fostering professional growth, launching new projects, and expanding international networks.

“Future sustainability is strengthened through professional relationships, between partners and the individual artists, and between native artists themselves, providing mutual support and opening doors to future collaborative opportunities”

– Partner, UK



Photo by Kateryna Skraglenko

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Epilogue

'Ukraine thinks its struggle matters to the whole world, but the rest of the world thinks the struggle matters only to Ukraine', is a point of view which we've all heard or read in the last year. I'd rarely hear this in the UK as there's a broad public understanding of what the threat to Ukraine implies for us. So, why should I, as Director of the UK/Ukraine Season, have paid it any attention?

Ukrainian artists and the independent cultural sector are making space for critical debate. They're interrogating the past and imagining the future in the light of two questions: What is it that is worth fighting for? And, what kind of country do we want to live in? These questions surfaced throughout the programme of the UK/Ukraine Season. They are the fruit of a varied cultural landscape where the soil is rich but the climate often harsh. For Ukraine these questions are a source of nourishment and strength, but they have relevance for us all.

The UK/Ukraine Season had a bilateral focus as an exploration of the multifaceted cultural exchange between our two countries. This was to forge new partnerships and celebrate those already established. It was also part of a wider, international and urgent conversation vital for everyone's future. I was humbled, and immensely privileged, to have been involved in that conversation alongside our Ukrainian Institute partners and my British Council Ukraine colleagues as well as working with such a superb array of artists and cultural activists.



David Codling,
Director Ukraine Season,
British Council



www.ukuaseason.org

