

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 1 2017

KOBZARI: A Celebration of Shevchenko

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UKRAINIAN BANDURIST CHORUS OF NORTH AMERICA



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CANADA'S UKRAINIAN SHUMKA DANCERS

SHUMKA

UKRAINIAN SHUMKA DANCERS

TO STAGE JOINT PERFORMANCES IN TORONTO, WINDSOR, AND EDMONTON

Saturday, March 18, 2017; 6pm
SONY Centre for the Arts, Toronto

Sunday March 19, 2017; 2pm
Chrysler Theatre, Windsor

Saturday, April 8, 2017; 7:30pm
Sunday, April 9, 2017; 2pm
N. Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, Edmonton

NEW EXCELLENT PROMOTER-RELEASED SEATS AVAILABLE MARCH 3 AT 12NOON

WINDSOR- Excitement is building as two of North America's premier Ukrainian performing arts ensembles prepare to present an evening of song, music, dance and bandura. Celebrating the legacy of Ukraine's national poet Taras Shevchenko, the **Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of North America** and **Canada's Ukrainian Shumka Dancers** will stage joint performances in **Toronto (March 18, 2017)**, **Windsor (March 19, 2017)** and **Edmonton (April 8 & 9, 2017)**. These collaborative performances are a historic first.

In Canada, March is Taras Shevchenko Month. "Do not miss this historic North American presentation in celebration of Shevchenko!" says **Andriy Hladyshesky**, President, Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko. "Together for the first time, these two cultural institutions bring over 150 years of performance history and excellence to the stage."

(more)

The **Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of North America (UBC)** has had Taras Shevchenko as its patron for almost all its 100-year history. Furthermore, musical works arranged around the words of Shevchenko's poems have been central to the UBC's repertoire. Through the strings of their banduras and male voice chorus, the UBC has brought to life the already-moving lyrics penned by Ukraine's national poet. Since the UBC's inception in 1918, songs like *Reve ta Stohne*, *Dumy Moyi*, and *Zapovit* along with dozens of his other poems have been performed by the UBC in concert halls across North America, Western Europe, Ukraine and Australia. A recently released UBC recording, 'Brothers, We Shall Live' – 'Брати, будем жити!' (2015) is dedicated exclusively to songs arranged to the words of Shevchenko's poems.

"We are excited to share the stage with the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers, an organization who shares our passion for Ukrainian history, song and music," says UBC Artistic Director and Conductor **Oleh Mahlay**. "Shumka's KOBZAR brings to life the importance of Taras Shevchenko to people of Ukraine and around the world. This is close to home for us, as songs written to the words of Shevchenko's poems have been a core part of our repertoire since our beginnings a century ago. It is truly fitting the great artistic and spiritual legacy of the great Ukrainian bard brings our two storied ensembles together - and reminding us, more than two centuries after his birth, the deep impact Shevchenko can still have on humanity."

Also inspired by Shevchenko, the **Ukrainian Shumka Dancers'** newest piece, entitled KOBZAR, uses folk and character dance to bring his poignant message to the stage. A kobzar was an itinerant Ukrainian bard who sang to his own accompaniment played on a multi-stringed bandura or kobza. Kobzar is also the name of Shevchenko's famous book of poems, often referred to as his 'literary monument to freedom.' Its first editions – published in 1840 - were censored by the czar, but prevailed to play a key role in galvanizing the Ukrainian identity even to this day.

"Taras Shevchenko was an artist, a poet...a visionary. He was - and remains - the conscience and the voice of the Ukrainian people," says Shumka Creative Director **John Pichlyk**. In KOBZAR, Shumka wishes to honour the poet's gift and to extend his voice through the movement, visuals and music of a dance theatre production. The vast legacy of Shevchenko's work – specifically, the universal relevance of his words – inspired Shumka to probe not only the power of his voice in his own time, but to explore its relevance in the world today."

Basing its narrative on four 'pillars' of Shevchenko's thought – destiny, soul, courage and hope – Shumka explores the timelessness of his expression. Premiered in April of 2016, KOBZAR delves into the emotional struggle of many of the world's nations as they strive to break free from oppression and unite in hope to fulfill their destiny. Under the creative direction of Shumka's **John Pichlyk**, KOBZAR's artistic team includes choreographic lead **Viktor Lytvynov**, music composer **Yuri Shevchenko**, costume designer **Maria Levytska** and visual artist (for stage projections) **Valeriy Semenko**.

About the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus

Founded in 1918, the **Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus** has a long and proud history of representing Ukrainian bandura and choral music on the international stage. Unique to Ukrainian culture, the bandura is closely tied to history. The bandura combines the musical characteristics of both the lute and the harp. It produces a sound similar to a harpsichord but has a wider range and tone.

Today, the majority of UBC's 50 members are second and third generation Canadians and Americans. Fortified by this new generation of young musicians, the all-male UBC has captivated audiences in major concert halls in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and Ukraine since immigrating to North America from Europe in 1949. As a tribute to its role in preserving and perpetuating the legacy of Ukrainian music, UBC was selected by Ukraine's Council of Ministers as the recipient of the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian State Prize, the highest award that can be bestowed for excellence in the contribution to the arts.

The Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of North America is in the midst of their 100th anniversary celebrations, which were kicked off in a sold-out Massey Hall performance with special guest Ruslana in October 2015. Over the coming years, the UBC will continue with its 100th anniversary celebrations with performances across North America and around the world.

www.bandura.org

About the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers

Shumka means "whirlwind," a powerful display of artistry, energy and passion. Over 57 years of performance history, that word has shaped the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers' signature dance style. While maintaining deep respect for their heritage, Shumka continually challenges conventional boundaries to define the Ukrainian Canadian experience in a current artistic context. (more)

From official performances for Prime Ministers, Presidents, and Queen Elizabeth II, to national and international television broadcasts, Shumka has often been called upon to represent the internationalization of Canadian culture.

In addition to the performing company, Shumka operates the Shumka School of Dance, providing high-level multidisciplinary dance instruction to hundreds of youth annually. The School utilizes the only recognized Ukrainian Dance Syllabus in North America, developed by Shumka over the past two decades.

Along with Alberta Ballet and Edmonton Opera, Shumka is honoured to be a resident company of the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium. Shumka operates and rehearses in Edmonton's Shumka Dance Centre, located between the Ice District and Brewery District, in the heart of downtown Edmonton. *"Shumka is Canada's national treasure."* - The Globe and Mail

www.shumka.com

Tickets start at \$25 on sale through Ticketmaster. For more details please visit shumka.com, bandura.org, and ticketmaster.ca
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