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After the successful presentation of *Clara's Dream...Edmonton's Ukrainian Nutcracker*, the **Ukrainian Shumka Dancers** are pleased to present the **world premiere** of their newest work, **KOBZAR** on **April 9 & 10, 2016** at the **Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium**. Tickets are **on-sale now** at at the **Jubilee Auditorium Box Office**, online at www.ticketmaster.ca or by phone at **1-855-985-5000**.

Inspired by the words and works of eminent Ukrainian writer **Taras Shevchenko**, **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. 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. Using his powerful words as the guiding principle, this work 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.

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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**.

*Do not wipe my tears away,
Let them freely flow,
Let them soak this foreign field,
Water it day and night,
Until, until... with foreign sand
At last they close my eyes...
- T. Shevchenko, My Thoughts*

KOBZAR will be presented along with a classic from Shumka's repertoire of dance theatre productions, **Travelling Chumaky**. A light-hearted story about the travels of 19th century salt traders amidst the colourful regions and characters of Ukraine, **Travelling Chumaky** toured successfully throughout Ukraine and Canada in 1990/91.

"We chose to pair **KOBZAR** with **Travelling Chumaky** as these two pieces have a natural thread that binds them together," said Shumka Creative Director John Pichlyk. "The *Milky Way* plays an important role in **KOBZAR** as a sign of hope for the oppressed. In Ukrainian language *Milky Way* is called the *Chumaks' Way*, referring to the salt traders' reliance on the stars to guide their travels. *Chumaky* were also featured heavily in Ukrainian folklore and like the *Kobzar*, they often served as the storytellers and news-gatherers for the community. In some ways, they were the voice of the people."

With choreography by the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers, **Travelling Chumaky** was written and directed by **John Pichlyk**, with music compositions, arrangements and orchestrations by **Gene Zwozdesky**.

Tickets for **KOBZAR** and **Travelling Chumaky** range from \$25 to \$60 (plus service charges) and are available at the **Jubilee Auditorium Box Office**, online at www.ticketmaster.ca or by phone at **1-855-985-5000**.

KOBZAR, a World Premiere

April 9 & 10, 2016, Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

With the Shumka classic, **Travelling Chumaky**

Tickets at www.ticketmaster.ca

www.shumka.com