

Violin Becomes 'Weapon Of Resistance' in Ukraine Shelters

By [Rana Moussaoui for AFP](#)

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Vera Lytovchenko. kharkovforum.com

From her shelter in Ukraine's second city Kharkiv, Vera Lytovchenko has become a social media sensation with her violin performances that help her forget the war, if only for a few minutes.

Her renditions of Vivaldi and Ukrainian melodies have triggered an avalanche of messages of support from around the world and she has used the attention to launch a fundraiser.

"I'm not a doctor, a soldier, or a politician. I just play the violin," Lytovchenko told AFP over WhatsApp.

"I don't want to feel helpless. I want to help my friends and music teachers who have lost their homes, their jobs, their instruments," she added.

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A soloist with the Kharkiv Opera Orchestra, the 39-year-old said she was inspired by one of her students who played violin for people taking refuge in a subway.

She has been living in the basement with 11 others, including children and elderly, since the city near the Russian border came under heavy bombardment.

"I consider myself very privileged because I'm in a cellar where we have heating, electricity, food. There are people who are not so lucky," she said.

Helping his country through music is also the goal of Illia Bondarenko, 20, who filmed himself in a shelter playing a Ukrainian folk song, "Verbovaya Doschechka," on the violin.

Through a video montage, he was joined by 94 violinists from 70 countries, including the entire violin section of the Munich Chamber Orchestra, as well as nine of his compatriots.

'Music has power'

The clip went viral after being shared by the London Symphony Orchestra with over 3.6 million views on Facebook alone — part of a "Violinists for Ukraine" campaign raising money for victims of the war.

"Music has power and Ukrainian musicians are now soldiers on their battlefield," said Bondarenko, who took refuge with his grandmother in the Lviv region of western Ukraine but remains worried about his parents stranded in Zhytomyr, closer to Kyiv.

Bondarenko, who was studying composition at the Kyiv Conservatory, sees his instrument as a "weapon of resistance."

"I can do more with my music than with weapons," he said.

The London Symphony Orchestra's Kerenza Peacock, who organized the project, said some violinists had apologized for not being able to participate because they were going to the front.

"There are many musicians who have taken up arms to defend our country," confirmed Mariya Klymenko, 23, who left the Kyiv region for Lviv.

She posted a video on Instagram playing a Ukrainian lullaby with her colleague, guitarist Yuri Bikbaev — but by video link because he was stuck back in the capital.

"He stayed in Kyiv and sealed the windows of his apartment to protect himself. We wanted to get back to the bond that we had before the war," she said.

"I chose this lullaby because my mother sang it to me to calm me down when I was a baby. And I want people who watch the video to feel peace in their hearts."

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