

The Gazette

OF MUSIC MISSION KIEV

Music/Widows/Orphans and Children/Church/Victims of War

FALL AMERICAN KSOC TOUR

Forty members of the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – a dynamic group of exceptional musical artists – left lasting impressions with deeply appreciative American listeners on our recently completed American tour.

Ukrainian musicians love American hospitality and a few were experiencing it for the first time. The hospitality was exceptional. But leaving family and loved ones in Ukraine to embark on an extended tour is a great commitment, and all were delighted to see their families and loved upon returning safely to Kyiv.

Such tours are essential for the ongoing ministries of MMK. On such tours we meet new friends and some become faithful supporters of MMK.

Venue and housing coordinators are important leaders, at each venue, when we tour America. We are so thankful for each venue and housing coordinator on our recent tour. It was enormously encouraging to hear from some of them after our visit. Here is a sampling of their comments:

– I lost count of the number of people from our church that have told me how excellent the concert was. I had one person tell me, “we’ve had many great concerts here before, but this one was no doubt the best we’ve ever had.”

– It was a pleasure hosting and hearing such a professional group. Kudos to all. Folks are still talking about it.

– It was a great experience for all of us. The choir and orchestra were world-class. God bless your continued ministry.



– It was such a joy to have you here. The concert was FANTASTIC. It was so good to learn about the ministry the Lord has built in Ukraine and thank you for your labors to build His kingdom.

– Everyone at the concert has told me how wonderful the concert was and how delighted they were to meet the members they hosted. Thank you for coming.

– It was an honor to host you all – blessings!

– Your group was a delight to me and to all of our people and I am so glad to have been able to introduce Music Mission Kiev to our church. Grace and peace in the days, weeks, and months ahead as your folks return to their homeland with new stories, new friends, and hopefully much needed resource to serve the people of Ukraine who so desperately need their ministry.

For at least two reasons, our musicians were better prepared than ever to communicate with Americans in conversations before and after the concerts. More members of KSOC than ever have the English skills necessary to have a meaningful conversation, and they are eager to practice. Additionally, more members of KSOC than ever before are involved in multiple MMK ministries, and are therefore able to speak with first hand knowledge of what MMK is doing. Again and again, homestay families commented on how much they enjoyed their guests. We are also very thankful to each homestay family for their kindness and hospitality.

Do you live on the east coast? It's not too early to contact our Orlando office if you desire more information about having KSOC come to your community on a future tour!

I write from the war zone in Ukraine. Yesterday, our team served profoundly needy people, in the company of heroes: two local pastors, Yuri and Dan, and their wives, on the front lines, in the region of Donetsk, deep in south-east Ukraine. Yesterday, even as we gathered for worship and prayer in two different locations, we heard the explosions of bombs and artillery. Later today, members of Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus will join us to share two friendship-evangelism outreach concerts, hosted by a third pastor in a much larger church, a 40 minute drive from the front lines. Our previous Gazette highlighted our MMK summer Bible camp out-

reach to orphan children from this highly traumatized region of Ukraine. Enjoy reading on, and you will note our extensive follow-up with many of these orphan children. Some will attend our concerts today and tomorrow. I am so proud of our Ukrainian staff. They are giving it their all. Please pray that we would be faithful as we share the light in places of great darkness. Please give generously, so that these ministries — coming alongside God's compassionate love and investing in eternity — can continue.

Dr. Wes Janzen,

President, MMK, Conductor, Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.

THE DEFLIANCE OF JOY

by Yuri Polakiwsky

Turetzt — To get to Turetzt is a hardship. It is in south-east Ukraine, 800 kilometers from Kyiv. The trains which serviced the region have stopped running in recent years. Roads are potholed, and at times treacherous. You have to pass through an ominous looking military roadblock that is guarded by heavily armed soldiers whose post is camouflaged and surrounded by trenches. After checking your papers and answering some direct questions as to the purpose of your visit are you then allowed to enter the official war-zone. From that roadblock, it is a 15 minute drive to Turetzt, which is less than four miles from the front line.

The surrounding fields are brown and meandering and it is easy to imagine massive troop movements. Fields have not been sown for three years. This was a strategic battlefield when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014. Bunkers remain at certain high points, but apart from that, everything is bare. There is literally no one on the road, no one driving or walking, giving off an eerie feeling in comparison to usual Ukrainian village life. Nearby coal mines have been closed since the war began and economic activity in the region has ground to a halt. Hundreds of thousands who fled the ongoing conflict, have not returned.

Entering the town, you immediately notice a distinct feeling of an oppressive depression. Turetzt is permeated with sadness. It lingers in the air, seemingly inescapable even though the morning sun is warmly shining and a pleasant early fall breeze blows. Driving from one block to another, one can't help but notice that people are mostly walking with their heads down, covered by the travail in which they find themselves. Most are elderly, with no other place to go.

Only thirty percent of the towns apartments are occupied and one can take up residence by simply paying the monthly maintenance fees. Normal apartments can be bought for a thousand dollars.

This is a place that has known war for four years and it's quite evident that the constant practice of warfare and the fear and threat of war is a cause of rampant depression. Hope amongst the majority of the populace does not exist, for the future is tenuous and unknown.



Serbiy Basarab, Vice President of Ukraine Operations, Irena Donchenko, Children's Pastor, Pastor Dane (Donbass) and Wes Janzen, MMK President, pray for drivers of loaded vehicles



Toretzt is next to Donetsk (south east Ukraine), Ukrainian territory currently occupied by Russian forces

However, as you drive through the gates of the compound of Mission partners, the "Church of Victory," run by Pastor Yuri and his wife Svitlana, one can immediately feel the defiant Spirit of Joy. For what was once a kindergarten complex in a quaint neighborhood just outside the city center, has been transformed into an island of hope, an atmosphere of peace and joy where the elderly, children, the displaced and the addicted can experience a small village of respite, mercy and acceptance within a town under the constant threat of military aggression.

This particular morning, everybody had been waiting for the MMK team, represented by Ira and Sasha, to arrive.

A list of fifty poor pensioners, all victims of war, had been compiled and many had been waiting for a short service to commence, but even when the service started, more continued to make their way into the building that had once been an activity center for young children. The fifty soon became sixty. No one was turned away.

They sang and prayed, and Ira, with her compassionate, pastoral voice, spoke of the hope found in God's Word, encouraging the elderly, always smiling, having long established a level of intimacy with them after visiting many times. Just outside, Sasha and Yuri concerned themselves with how to meet the needs of the extra ten seniors who had come.

After the hour long service, the pensioners came to the van and the food was distributed. All were provided with a package that would last them for at least a week. At that moment, a sense of irony could be felt. In a country that is considered the breadbasket of Europe, donated food had to be made available that would have a direct impact of the quality of life of individuals. Monthly pensions do not suffice and food availability, along with inflation largely effect whether people eat enough. Simply put, in Turetzt, old people are oftentimes hungry.

Just before lunch, which was being prepared outside by using a make shift stove, Yuri and Svitlana provided a tour of the buildings. Rooms, where victims of war had been offered a place to live, a kitchen that still needed a basin for running water, and other empty rooms that were in the process of being renovated. Outside one of the main buildings, there was a three foot high pile of coal in prepara-

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Serbiy, Vice President of MMK Ukraine Operations, Sasha, Pastor Yuri (Toretzt) and Ira, MMK Pastor to children and orphans, share in worship service, winter, 2018 in Toretzt, Donetsk region

THE BOYS OF KRAMATORSK

by Yuri Polakiwsky

Kramatorsk — The boys of Kramatorsk gathered on a few couches. They ranged in age from twelve to sixteen. They have all been affected by the war. They all attended the summer camps sponsored by MMK. Their responses to what they have seen and experienced in their short lives are varied. The trauma of war is retained in their young souls. They are all aware and fully conscious of the psychological impact the war has had on them.

They are met at a Christian sponsored social center in a Kramatorsk neighborhood that has close ties with MMK. Of the hundred kids that regularly attend the center, over forty attended the MMK summer orphan Bible camps.

The kids represent a wide assortment of needs and familial situations. Some are orphans who have grown up in state sponsored and communist inspired orphanages called “internats,” some have found homes through foster care, a number have parents with addictions and no longer live with them, a number have simply been abandoned, while others have been abused. Some are handicapped, while others are from Christian families.

The Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk, occupied by Russian backed forces in 2014, but having been liberated, is located approximately 60 miles from the present front line. It has become a place of destination for thousands of victims of war; people who were forced to flee the war from the Lugansk and Donetsk provinces. The city simply became a destination away from the chaos and occupation and a place where many were forced to seek refuge and to try to seek normalacy in their daily lives.

The boys of Kramatorsk, asked to speak of their life experiences, finally quieted down. It was with great effort that they calmed down and began to share.

As the introductory banter came to an end, and the subject of war was broached, it became immediately clear that their stories represented the essential stages of dealing with death and the process of how to grieve.

For after having talked about how much fun they had at the MMK summer Bible camps, playing sports, participating in all sorts of games, singing, learning the Bible and experiencing reclaimed relationships that were disrupted by the war, they suddenly fell silent. Every single one, at exactly the same time, was overcome with a singular sadness, the ram-bunctious banter having immediately disappeared.

One boy from Luhansk, Artem, would represent “denial.” When asked to explain what he saw, he became lost for words. Natasha, sitting and observing, offered to share part of his story, of how he had seen his home for the last time. Of how it’s structure had been almost totally destroyed, its windows broken from the gunfire, and that all that he knew from his young life was in ruins. Artem sat quietly and listened to his history, unable to tell it himself. He couldn’t articulate the fact that when his family left, they did not return.

He was eight. The life that he had known, was no more. Given another opportunity to say something, he just shook his head quickly, his expression revealing that he was not yet ready to express his feelings. He still



These boys enjoyed our MMK orphan Bible camp

couldn’t believe, nor could he express the loss of what he knew was once his family and home, but was no longer.

Another, Oles, when asked what had happened to him, pondered the question quite intently. Quiet and thoughtful, as everyone waited for him to speak, he finally answered, “I don’t know what to say.”

He either didn’t have the words, or maybe, or so it seemed, he was “bar-gaining” with the destiny that had befallen him. His home had been totally destroyed and, he too, had never returned. He was nine.

Now fourteen, it was clear that he understood what was being asked of him, but even now as an adolescent, he was at a loss to explain.

But it was Danylo, an abandoned orphan, who was now living with Natasha and her family, who answered unprompted.

“I was in the garden digging potatoes with my grandmother when she asked me to get the watering hose. As I left her side and went to get the hose, an artillery shell exploded and killed her.”

He said this in the most matter of fact manner and it was shocking in its expression. One could only ask, “How could a thirteen year old boy, seemingly “accept” such a reality?”

He had witnessed her death when he was just seven years old. And though he could have been lying to his interviewer, or even to himself to mask his pain, it was proclaimed in such a confident manner.

One of our MMK team members commented; “I’m aware that these kids are definitely suffering psychologically and I can’t deny that many will probably need psychological help in the future, however, we are attempting to ensure that they have, in the least, a spiritual foundation of how to live life.”

“The experience of the MMK orphan Bible camps offered them this opportunity. A knowledge of the principles of the Christian life, that offered them hope and exposure as to how to practice the Christian life. At the camps, many kids learned the importance of prayer and how to pray, to read the Scripture and to be aware of the principles of a life that is lived with faith, to fellowship with others, who would love, understand and listen to them. But most important, the summer camps gave them both the knowledge and experience of what it means to be part of a Christian family.”

“The kids are in need of spiritual healing. They need to be restored.”

“That’s the most important thing to us,” she concluded, “We want the kids to know what it means to be part of a family.”

As the conversation of the effects of war ended, the silence soon turned into a boisterous din. Juice, soda, along with cookies, sweets and fruits provided by the MMK team were equally shared amongst the kids, and talk of soccer, school work and music once again dominated the conversation of the teenagers who had seen and experienced the trauma of war, but just wanted to live normal.



As we enter the Christmas season we look forward to hosting hundreds of widows, pensioners and victims of war at our annual Christmas banquets. You help to make this possible. Thank you! Merry Christmas!

Victoria Remembers Home

At a concert in Springfield, Missouri, 16-year-old Victoria attended one of the KSOC presentations. She attended at the urging of her mother. Victoria was adopted from Ukraine when she was 3 years old. As she sat and listened to the music, it stirred memories inside her long forgotten. She had heard this music before. She remembered as a child the tunes from the folk music of Ukraine being performed by the KSOC.

Victoria realized this was her people. The beautiful women and men of Ukraine singing before her were her Ukrainian family she had left behind through no choice of her own. She was grateful for the love and care of her family in the USA, but finally meeting people she was historically connect to by heritage. It was a beautiful and rich heritage.

Here are a couple of pictures Victoria gave us permission to share with the incredible story of being loved and received by the chorus members and being reconnected to her people. She is talking, crying, and laugh-

ing with our very own Tatiana. The moments were very personal and intimate for Victoria and Tatiana. Rich and deep in a love filled with meaning and belonging in their brief time.

God has a way of making the world seem smaller and filling a young woman's heart with joy through the people and music of Ukraine. We are so grateful Victoria came to our concert and made wonderful connections with her lost heritage. Don't you love it when God makes a way?



Continued from page 2 tion for the upcoming winter, along with some wood. Electricity, the main source of heat in cities and towns in Ukraine, is not even remotely affordable.

"We started this work," Yuri simply states. "Now, we can't turn the people away."

And so, with the assistance of MMK, because there is absolutely no government help, Yuri and his team, not only provide weekly lunches for those in their "golden years," but food packages for widows, addiction counselling, aid in finding jobs, programs for kids and addiction counselling, and a place of worship and biblical teaching.

"Our work here is totally based on faith," Yuri says.

He smiles confidently, his spirit emanating an infectious positiveness. He reminds those around him, "Note the name of our place here, we are a "Church of Victory." His joy is defiant.

The next stop for the MMK team is a government run seniors' residence. As Ira and Sasha are greeted by the administrator with hugs and kisses, Sasha begins to unload food stuffs as Ira asks about individuals to whom she has ministered for the last two years.

Big bags of staples, such as rice and pasta, canned goods like corn and peas are brought directly into the kitchen. The kitchen staff look at the food provided by the Mission, and are grateful, appreciative and even relieved. Looking at the cans of corn, one cook simply says, "We haven't been able to serve corn to our residents in over a month."

In conversation with the administrator as the food is being unloaded, she is asked what government officials bring when they visit the residence. She answers, "They bring their clipboards and tell us what we're doing wrong and what processes we need to apply."

Food brought by MMK this day, will affect the menu for the eighty residents for approximately three weeks.

As late afternoon nears there is an unannounced surprise. For when the

team arrives at a service center and restaurant, many of the kids who had attended the MMK sponsored orphan Bible camps in Kyiv this past summer are already waiting.

Greetings are infectious and sincere. Everyone is happy and excited.

The front line of the war being less than five miles away, and everyone is filled with joy.

Pizza is ordered. The conversation is noisy and happy. Everyone is glad of the teams' visit from Kyiv. The kids have remained friends since returning from the camps, seeing each other regularly and have been able to maintain and strengthen the relationships they had formed during the camps.

After a while, Ira takes aside each one for a personal chat. Ira is our MMK pastor to orphans, children and youth. They talk, they pray,

she asks them about their life and listens, further building upon the foundation she established with them only months before. As she talked with them one at a time on a bench just meters away from the group, one could not help but think of this as a family reunion of sorts. Ira, very much like a mother, having travelled more than half the country to see her "kids." One is reminded, what she said months before when asked what was one of the main reasons for the camps. "We are building a family."

As the day of activity in Turetz was nearing its end, it was perhaps Pastor Dan, another MMK ministry partner, whose words best summarized the situation in the town.

"We are in a war here, but it is more than just a war with weapons," he began. "We are also in a spiritual war. Here, you can feel an oppressive spirit, but we refuse to succumb to it." His smile is filled with hope and his spirit is unwilling to give up.

In such a place, and in time of war, where many are in despair and feel helpless to affect change in their own lives, Pastor Dan's joy, and that of Ira, Sasha, Pastor Yuri and Svitlana and the kids who came to the MMK orphan Bible camps in Kyiv, is defiant.



Lena, serving needy victims of war in Donbass region with food packages

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT!

Our address: **Music Mission Kiev, 286 Wilshire Blvd., Casselberry, Florida 32707**

You may find more information on our new website: **www.musicmissionkiev.org**

Music Mission Kiev is a member of the E.C.F.A. (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability)

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