



From Ukraine to Epsom: How Music and Kindness Struck the Right Note

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When the Ukraine National Opera arrived in the UK on tour in early 2022, none of its musicians could have imagined how the world, and their lives, were about to change. Two weeks later, Russia invaded Ukraine. Many members of the orchestra, seeing the escalating conflict at home, made the painful decision to remain in the UK and claim asylum. Among them was clarinettist and saxophonist Vlad Voloshyn.

Now living in Epsom with local resident Nina Kaye, one of the founders of the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network, Vlad has continued to rebuild his life through music. Together with five of his former orchestra colleagues, he formed a brass ensemble called Freedom Pulse, which performs Ukrainian and classical repertoire across Surrey and beyond.

Alongside his performing career, Vlad is in his final year at the British Institute of Modern Music (BIMM) in Fulham, where he studies music and sound production and hopes to work as a sound designer after he graduates.

Recently, an extraordinary act of local generosity brought his story full circle. Vlad had long hoped to buy a tenor saxophone, an instrument essential for his expanding repertoire but out of reach financially. By chance, his host Nina, who also volunteers for Nucleo, a London-based social action charity that helps children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to music, received an email offering a donated tenor saxophone. Nina runs Nucleo's National Instrument Bank, which matches donated instruments with musicians in need.

The offer came from a donor in the Lake District. Determined and hopeful, Vlad took the long train journey north to collect what he thought was a tenor saxophone. Only on the journey home did he discover it was actually an alto sax, an instrument he already owned. Disheartened, he returned to Epsom unsure how to continue his search.



A few days later, Vlad was performing at a Ukrainian Music Evening in Epsom, attended by His Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Robert Leach. Sitting beside the Mayor, Nina recounted Vlad's misadventure with the saxophone. Without hesitation, Councillor Leach said, "I've got a tenor sax at home which I haven't played for 30 years and he would be welcome to have it, if I can find it."

True to his word, after the concert Vlad was welcomed to the Mayor's home and given the instrument which left him both astonished and grateful.

What began as a story of loss and exile has become one of connection and kindness. From the national stage in Kyiv to community halls in Surrey, Vlad's journey shows how music continues to build bridges where politics and geography divide.

When Vlad plays his tenor sax in Freedom Pulse's performances, he will know that even in times of war and displacement, the power of human generosity, and of music itself, resonates far beyond borders.

Nina Kaye

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