

## The Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of North America

This ensemble is the current incarnation of the State Bandurist Chorus of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Assembled in Kyiv during World War II, the Chorus was forced to tour throughout Germany on cattle cars, performing in Soviet costumes and singing Ukrainian traditional songs that had been re-lyricized to glorify Lenin, Stalin, and the Soviet regime. After the war ended, the group was placed in a displaced-persons camp until they were assisted by Allied forces to immigrate to Detroit, Michigan in 1949. They re-assembled and discarded both the fabricated song lyrics and the Soviet name, choosing instead to honor the poet laureate of Ukraine, Taras Shevchenko. The Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus eventually abbreviated the name to The Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus (UBC). Realizing that once the membership gradually became deceased, the music and history of the instrument would die out as well, the Chorus established bandura schools in Detroit, Cleveland, New York, and Toronto, as well as summer camps devoted to the training of Ukrainian-American children in the art of bandura performance. The success of the schools and camps is evidenced in the sustained membership of the UBC to its thriving status today.



By Mykola Swarnyk - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=96261171>

“Meet the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus...” -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7POr9dvfTG0>

“Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus 2018 Ukraine – Lviv-Hray Banduo!” --  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Enn8CrJGJUA>

Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus website: <https://www.bandura.org/>

## Shpylyasti Kobzari (Cocky Kobzars)

This ensemble is comprised of six young men whose mission is to sustain traditional *bandura* repertoire while “covering” contemporary pop music. In addition to performing live and in real-time on Facebook, this group’s videos are often infused with tangible humor. For example, Shpylyasty Kobzari’s video of “Jingle Bells” is subtitled “The Most Cute New Year Movie.” Singing in Ukrainian, the performers wear white shirts and varying-colored bow ties in a room cozily decorated for Christmas, with puppies on the floor, in a basket, (eventually) on the keyboard, and held by the musicians. At the end of the video, a voice, overdubbed in English, wishes the viewer a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, followed by silence in which stylized text appears (also in English) revealing the true purpose of the video: “YOU are looking for LOVE, THEY are looking for HOME, JUST exchange, TAKE a puppy and be HAPPY in NEW YEAR!” From a broad historic perspective, these young performers are giving back to society just as their *kobzar* predecessors did in their contributions to the local churches. The group’s mission is to revive the general Ukrainian consciousness about the history of the *kobza*/*bandura* as well as to reimagine the *bandura* today as a medium of musical expression and global inclusion.



“Jingle Bells” -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bx4S2YGS48>

“Shchedryk – Blind Audition – The Voice of Ukraine – season 9” --  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s\\_adc4QxrT4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_adc4QxrT4)

Article: “Shpylyasti Kobzari prove Ukraine’s folk music cool.” In *Kyiv Post* July 27/August 14 2018.  
Accessed 3/10/22: <https://www.kyivpost.com/lifestyle/shpylyasti-kobzari-prove-ukraines-folk-music-cool.html>

## The B & B Project

“B & B” in this group’s name refers to *bandura* and *bayan* (accordion). Bandurist Tetiana Mazur and *bayan* player Serhii Shamrai became acquainted as students at the Tchaikovsky National Conservatory in Kyiv. Although they identify as a “cover band,” their repertoire is not limited to pop/rock music, recorded in a studio. They perform a wide variety of selections from various style periods and cultures, often filmed in imaginative, outdoor settings. One example is the “Storm” movement from Antonio Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*, which was filmed on a beach, in an arable field, and on a set of stone outcroppings. Another is Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*, filmed in collaboration with the “sand art” of Kseniya Simonova. Their geographic settings and styles of dress are carefully planned, and their level of musicianship is superb.



“Vivaldi – Storm...”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYW7mrY8Dg0>

“Beethoven – Moonlight Sonata with Amazing Sand Animation” --  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r6zLuy\\_OYo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r6zLuy_OYo)

“Ukrainian Folk Song – Vesnyanka...” -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzqxwKHsHJU>

“Astor Piazzolla – Libertango...” -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ostfkd2r68I>

“Nirvana – Smells Like Teen Spirit” -- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-0ITFZ\\_jVY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-0ITFZ_jVY)

Article: “Ukrainian band makes viral cover of Metallica.” In *Kyiv Post* March 27, 2015. Accessed 3/10/22:  
<https://www.kyivpost.com/article/guide/music/ukrainians-make-viral-cover-of-metallica-383877.html>