

FRANCE IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF UKRAINE

French culture and Francophonie now occupy a prominent place in the diversity of the social and cultural landscape of Ukraine.

In particular, 4.5 percent of Ukrainian students learn French; therefore, they have an opportunity to gain access to a number of study programmes, derive benefits from various professional opportunities in Ukraine where French enterprises operate or simply immerse themselves in the French-speaking world and comprehend the ties uniting France and Ukraine.

In order to develop and strengthen these friendly relations, the Embassy of France in Ukraine directs the local French cultural network through its Department of Culture and Cooperation as well as the French Institute in Ukraine (FIU), which are at the centre of French-Ukrainian cooperation and contribute to deepening and consolidating bilateral relations between the countries. Similar to about a hundred of respective French cultural institutions abroad, they exert their efforts to popularise the French language and culture by means of long-term partnerships with Ukrainian educators, scientists, and cultural and artistic figures. In close coordination with Ukrainian institutional and private partners as well as non-governmental organizations they conduct activities in a number of areas.

In the field of **educational, scientific, and university cooperation**, higher education institutions and research laboratories of the two countries have concluded 107 agreements of which nearly 70 are being actively implemented and involve, in particular the mobility of students and researchers. Every year, nearly 1,800 Ukrainian students continue their studies in higher education institutions in France. Some of them study under double diploma programmes between French and Ukrainian universities. Among them, 161 were pursuing their post-graduate studies in France in 2021.

In the field of the **popularisation of the French language and culture**, especially among Ukrainian youth, the embassy's strongholds in regional cooperation are six Alliance Française establishments located in Kharkiv, Lviv, Dnipro, Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, and Rivne. Almost 4,500 students learn French in the network of Alliance Française and the French Institute in Ukraine. Besides, the embassy supports the development of the Lycée Français Anne de Kiev, which is contracted by the Agency for French Education Abroad (AEFE), as well as of the International French School in Kyiv and the French Private School in Odesa.

Lastly, in the field of **promoting culture and developing cultural cooperation**, the FIU and the Alliance Française network in Ukraine seek to insert into the local cultural landscape about one hundred events each year in various artistic and cultural fields, such as cinema, classical music, visual and performing arts, etc. Priority is given to cooperation projects, since numerous meetings between French and Ukrainian artists contribute to intercultural exchange and the creation of joint works. Special mention must be made of street art, where exchanges have been very intense for over a decade.

Considering the increasing number of requests from French artists and institutions of diverse creative areas to perform in Ukraine, the modern role of the French cultural network in Ukraine is to maintain and encourage this momentum, which fosters the strengthening of relations between France and Ukraine. At the same time, the institute attaches special priority to those sectors in which Ukrainian and French cultures actively interact with each other. For example, thanks to a recent initiative of the Ukrainian Club of Contemporary Art Collectors 164 works of contemporary Ukrainian art have been transferred to the permanent collection of the Georges Pompidou National Art and Cultural Centre.

The FIU premises also house a multimedia library, which has recently been modernised. It consists of a rich collection of classical and modern works, printed, audiovisual, and digital materials. The multimedia library is open to everyone and is a wonderful space for meetings and discussions.

The halls of the multimedia library are arranged in such a way as to demonstrate French-Ukrainian ties. Each hall is dedicated to prominent figures in the history of both countries, namely:

- Illia Mechnykov: a zoologist, immunologist, and bacteriologist originally from Kharkiv, who became one of the Nobel Prize laureates in physiology for his work on immunity (1908) and served as Deputy Director of the Institut Pasteur in Paris since 1904;
- Chana Orloff: a French sculptor and graphic artist born in Starokostiantyniv. Having garnered acclaim as a portraitist in the 1920s, Chana Orloff is renowned, among other things, for her bust of David Ben-Gurion and The Hero Monument to the defenders of Ein Gev;
- Sonia Delaunay: a French artist from Odesa who belonged to the Orphism and Fauvism movements and became famous, in particular, for her textile work. She was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honour in 1975. Sonia Delaunay is the first woman to have her works exhibited in the Louvre Museum during her lifetime;
- Sofia Yablonska: the career of this Ukrainian-French writer, journalist, and architect took her all over the world. Her journeys have found expression in the artist's creative activities.



Вікенд просто неба на сцені «Мушля» в Києві

Weekend in the open air. *Mushlia* stage in Kyiv



Вікенд просто неба на сцені «Мушля». Показ серії фільмів «Вона знімає кіно»

Weekend in the open air on *Mushlia* stage in Kyiv. Screening of *She Shoots Film* series

The most important and, for that matter, representative annual event in terms of the French image in Ukraine is the cultural French Spring festival, which the French Institute in Ukraine has been organising every April since 2004. The French Spring festival aims to demonstrate the best masterpieces of classical and contemporary French art to the Ukrainian audience.

Thanks to the events and activities within the framework of the festival, which are carried out in Kyiv and in regions, thousands of Ukrainian citizens have an opportunity to discover new artistic horizons. This French Spring Festival encourages cultural cooperation initiatives on a local scale: Numerous projects, which are held in conjunction with local institutions and partners, contribute to the establishment of strong links between French and Ukrainian institutions and artists.

Despite the unprecedented situation, French Spring 2021 has taken place! The Embassy of France and the French Institute in Ukraine have resumed the festival after the pandemic-induced break in 2020 and have held it for the seventeenth time. French Spring in Ukraine is a multi-genre cultural event, which has become a true hallmark of French-Ukrainian cooperation over many years. In 2021, it has taken place in Kyiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa, Rivne, Zaporizhzhia, and Ivano-Frankivsk thanks to the network of Alliance Française establishments and the Paris-IF non-governmental organisation, which actively participate in the cultural life of the cities and respective regions.

The audience, eager to express their joy in celebrating the spring explosion of life and nature after long complicated months, was looking forward to cultural events. The theme of the festival, ‘Outdoors’, was inspired by the image of impressionists who painted from nature.

Adjusting to the challenging epidemiological situation, the 17th festival lasted for several months – from March to July 2021. The institute managed to conduct some of the events offline, following sanitary requirements; the other part of the programme was adapted and carried out online. It was all a resounding success!

It is worth mentioning some of the highlights of this rich cultural programme made up of fifty events, including seven tours.

Street theatre. ‘I am a dream...’ is a performance in the format of monumental projection with 3D technologies. It was created by the Spectaculaires, les Allumeurs d’Images company from Rennes and was shown with the original live musical accompaniment by the Ukrainian folk band DakhaBrakha. Thousands of spectators came to see this high point of the festival, which took place on 11–12 June. The event was organised in accordance with the strict observance of sanitary requirements. Besides, the performance was live broadcast via the UA: Suspilne digital platform. The Les Quidams company presented its street performances named *Les Trois Totems* and *Fiers à Cheval* in Rivne, Odesa, and Kharkiv.



Медіатека в приміщенні Французького інституту містить багату колекцію класичних і сучасних творів, друкваних, аудіовізуальних та цифрових матеріалів

The multimedia library in the premises of the FIU consists of a rich collection of classical and modern works, printed, audiovisual, and digital materials



Медіатека відкрита для всіх і є чудовим простором для зустрічей та дискусій

The multimedia library is open to everyone and is a great space for meetings and discussions

Music. On 25 March, famous French cellist Gautier Capuçon performed with the Ukrainian New Era Orchestra at the opening of Kharkiv Music Fest. Virtuoso pianists Kim Barbier and Maxime Zecchini as well as the young quartet Möbius together with the famous French composer Pierre Thilloy showed their excellence. A representative of a completely different musical genre, a lively French jazz group called Ozma, conducted a tour in Kyiv and Lviv.

Audiovisual sector. During the cinema concert, the Ukrainian audience had an opportunity to get acquainted with three French surrealist films of the 20th century (*Ballet Mécanique* by Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy (1924); *Lopéra-mouffe* by Agnes Varda (1958); and *The Blood of a Poet* by Jean Cocteau (1932)), set to music created specifically for this project by the Ukrainian composer Anton Baibakov.

Cinema. The Pre-premiere Screenings Festival, which ran online from 23 April to 2 May, featured five films watched by nearly 21,000 viewers all over Ukraine. One of the movies was subsequently shown outdoors in Kyiv on 27 June. A series of pictures titled *She Shoots Film* was presented at cinemas in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, and Odesa, and then in eighteen cinemas throughout the country. In total, over 1,400 viewers watched six films of the series. The events dedicated to contemporary French cinema were organised in partnership with Arthouse Traffic.

A retrospective of Leonid Mohylevskyi's films was organised jointly with the Dovzhenko Centre. A native of Odesa, director Leonid Mohylevskyi was an active member of the All-Ukrainian Photo Cinema Administration and is known all over the world as Léonide Moguy.

Street art. World-renowned French artists have painted four murals on the façades of educational institutions: artist Nelio – on the walls of the building of the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute and secondary school no. 157 in Kyiv; Seth – on the façade of the secondary school no. 55 in Odesa; Popay – on the wall of the Prydniprovsk State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture in Dnipro.

Noteworthy is *Blue Labyrinth*, a project at the intersection of contemporary art and urban space. This French-Ukrainian art residence brought together artists Alevtina Kakhidze and Gilbert1 to design urban art interventions in order to revive the memories of small rivers in the collective memory of Kyiv residents. A guided tour was organised to present the project.

Photography. A series of photo exhibitions was held outdoors: the French documentary photographer Guillaume Herbaut presented his series about the Revolution of Dignity on the fence of the National Library of Ukraine; this was echoed by the Ukrainian photographer Oleksandr Hliadielov (a laureate of the prestigious Shevchenko National Prize 2020), who demonstrated his work titled *Eastern Landscape* on the fence of the French Embassy in Ukraine. The latest series of the legendary French photographer Antoine d'Agata entitled *Naked Life*,



Виступ Ґот'є Капюсона, відкриття фестивалю «Kharkiv Music Fest»

Performance of Gautier Capuçon at the opening of Kharkiv Music Fest

dedicated to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in France, was exhibited at the Taras Shevchenko National Museum on 11–30 May.

Fine arts. The Khanenko Museum preserves one of the most valuable collections of French artworks in Ukraine, which was presented separately during the French Spring festival. The curators of the museum acquainted visitors with the works of François Boucher, Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, Claude-Joseph Vernet, and other famous artists of the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as sculptures from the Middle Ages and the 19th century, such as those authored by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux.

This year, French Spring lasted until mid-July. Its conduct became possible thanks to the participation of Ukrainian cultural partners of the Department of Culture of the embassy and the FIU – public and private, national and local, professionals and amateurs, all passionate about French culture, Francophones, and Francophiles. They play a key role in the success of this festival.