

With a population of over 3.7 million people, Mosul is considered the second largest city in Iraq after the capital Baghdad.

Modern metropolitan Mosul encloses the ruins of the ancient Assyrian city of Nineveh on its east side.

Mosul and its surroundings have an ethnically and religiously diverse population. A large majority of its population are Arabs with Assyrians, Turkmens and Kurds with other, smaller ethnic minorities comprising the rest of the city's population.

Sunni Islam was the largest religion, but there are a significant number of Christians as well as adherents of other sects of Islam and various other minority religions.

Mosul is among the larger and more historically and culturally significant cities of the Arab World. Historically, important products of the area include Mosul marble and oil.

Mosul is home to the University of Mosul and its renowned Medical College, one of the largest educational and research centres in the Middle East.

On June 10, 2014, the Islamic State captured Mosul after the Iraqi troops withdrew. Half a million people escaped on foot or by car during the next two days.

According to western and pro-Iraqi government press, Mosul residents were de facto prisoners, forbidden to leave the city unless they left ISIL a significant collateral of family members, personal wealth and property.

They could then leave after paying a significant "departure tax" for a three-day pass (for a higher fee they could surrender their home, pay the fee and leave for good) and if those with a three-day pass failed to return within that time, their assets would be seized and their family killed.

Fast forward to 2022.

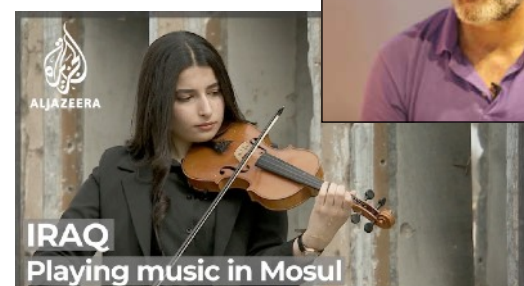
Today AlJazeera reports the return of around 40 young musicians to the old city. They make up the Orchestra Watar; musicians gathered from around Iraq by Mahmoud (inset), the self-taught conductor, and maestro who was born in the old city.

In exile Mahmoud wrote a piece called 'Ashes' which they play in the Al Jazeera video Playing music in Mosul. (link image right).



Above: Musicians returning to recommence music in the ruins of Mosul's 'Old City'

Below: two of the musicians outline their hopes in the video



Now to Ukraine, another war, and again the power of music.

I don't need to give you background on Kyiv. In recent weeks you will have learned so much about this beautiful city from whatever news channel you watch. But consider this I quote:

The war in Ukraine broke up the Kyiv-Classic Symphony Orchestra. More than half of its musicians have fled the capital. And with that, the music died. In this conflict, the musicians who remained in Kyiv having endured shells and missiles landing close to their homes. Nights hiding in underground bunkers. Days waiting in long lines to stock up on food and medicine. They played their instruments inside their homes or in their basements as explosions reverberated in the streets above, keeping ready for the moment when they could play together as an orchestra again.

That day arrived Wednesday, March 9.

The site of the outdoor concert by the Kyiv-Classic Symphony Orchestra symbolises defiance: the Maidan Kyiv Central Square, the focal point of revolutions including one in 2014 that ousted a pro Moscow President and helped define Ukraine's western political path.

On March 26 as the war dragged on, 5 musicians took their music underground in another Ukrainian city, Kharkiv. They tried to drown out the thunderous explosions with their violins, cello and bass for those taking shelter in the subway.

*The Washington Post* had the dramatic headline: 'Concert between explosions' provides respite in Kharkiv subway shelter'. So began the 2022 Kharkiv Music Fest. The link below will is to the full article.

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible bears eloquent testimony to the power of music. Twenty six psalms specifically mention instruments by name.

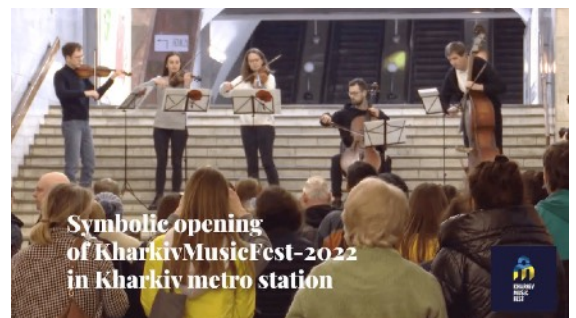
Psalm 150 alone mentions nine instruments!

No passage more specifically deals with the power of music to sooth the soul in times of trouble than David playing in the the court of king Saul. The passage is 1 Samuel 16.

May music sooth our own souls in times of stress and trouble.

Christine Bradbeer

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/27/classical-music-kharkiv-concert-ukraine-war/>



1 SAMUEL 16:14-23

“Whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him” (v. 23).