



Igor Hnydyn (drummer, composer) and Anastasija Litvinyuk (pianist, composer) are the members of ShockolaD, the latest Gene Zwozdesky Artist in Residence at MacEwan

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MacEwan University announces Ukrainian jazz duo ShockolaD as the next Gene Zwozdesky Artist in Residence

Edmonton – MacEwan University is pleased to announce that the next Gene Zwozesky Artist in Residence is the Ukrainian jazz duo ShockolaD. The duo, Igor Hnydyn and Anastasija Litvinyuk, will hold the position for the 2025/26 academic year.

The Artist in Residence program was established in the fall of 2022 and is a collaboration between the [Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre](#) (URDC) and the [Faculty of Fine Arts and Communications](#) (FFAC). The program is funded by a donation from the Ukrainian Foundation for College Education (UFCE).

ShockolaD is among the top Ukrainian bands in world music, frequently performing concerts at festivals, on major stages or at intimate clubs. Founded 20 years ago in Lviv, Ukraine, they produce music from different continents and cultures, whether it's Ukrainian folk, American jazz, blues or even modern electronica. Igor Hnydyn (drummer, composer) and Anastasia Litvinyuk (pianist, composer) are both graduates and long time faculty members of Lviv National Music Academy, MacEwan's partner university, and they are among the best Ukrainian musicians performing today.

“We are excited to come to MacEwan to share our experience in composition, improvisation and creative music-making,” said Litvinyuk. “We believe students will gain valuable insights into cross-cultural composition and improvisation, strengthening their artistic development.”

ShockolaD visited MacEwan in February, 2023 as part of URDC’s Visiting Scholar program during Ukrainian Week.

“We led a master class with students during our visit and had a phenomenal experience,” said Hnydyn. “That kind of collaboration is truly what drives us as musicians. We are very thankful to be selected for this position.”

ShockolaD has titled their residency project *A Creative Musical Journey Between Ukraine and the World*. The project aims to explore composition and improvisation through a synthesis of folk melodies, jazz and experimental soundscapes. It will serve as a creative laboratory where students, teachers and musicians collaborate to push artistic boundaries and develop new musical perspectives.

Hnydyn and Litvinyuk have worked with musicians and educators from Ukraine, Canada, Poland, Israel, Germany and beyond, creating innovative compositions and enriching musical discourse. Their overall mission is to preserve Ukrainian musical heritage while innovating through modern musical expression and cross-cultural collaboration.

The program is named for the late Gene Zwozdesky, a former Edmonton MLA and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, who was also a community leader, musician and champion for the arts in Alberta. Zwozdesky was also a champion for MacEwan, supporting program development between faculty and students in Ukrainian universities and MacEwan’s business, nursing, sociology and music programs. While in office, he also hosted MacEwan’s international visitors from Ukraine at the Alberta Legislature and facilitated the inclusion of the director of MacEwan’s Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre as a member of the province’s Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations.

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Founded in 1971, MacEwan University inspires its students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. Offering more than 90 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training, the university provides a transformative education in a creative, collaborative and supportive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Located in Edmonton, Alberta Canada, MacEwan University offers a unique student experience that opens up diverse pathways for achievement and growth.