

From Ukrainian Suzuki teachers

I asked my colleagues to write how their lives changed after starting war in Ukraine.

I shared some stories with European teachers. I send you all the stories.

👉 My name is Olga Shymova, piano teacher. I live and teach children in Odessa, Ukraine. There are explosions and sirens in my city, Russian ships stay near the coast now, the coast is mined. I have two sons, I worried about them, so I couldn't stay at home and had to move abroad to Romania with them.

I taught 12 children and 1 parent before war and now all my students left their homes, we started online lessons only with 2 of them. Me personally was busy with my family life and still looking for piano/keyboard (in local studios and schools) to continue working.

👉 I'm Sofiia Fedorovych, from Ivano-Frankivsk. Before the war I taught in my own studio "Allegro" in Ivano-Frankivsk. The studio-rooms have now become a temporary accommodation for migrants from Kyiv and the East of the country. There were 36 students in my studio. I were forced to leave my hometown, my husband and my eldest son (he's 18) and go abroad with my younger 2 children. Thanks to my amazing Suzuki-teacher in Gdańsk (Poland) I have place to live and opportunity to teach 25 of my students on remote, 7 of them are around the Europe, I am constantly looking for violins and the possibility of live lessons for them. 18 of my students are still at home. Some of the families can't pay for the lessons. Also, I conduct group lessons every week. Often during the lessons we have to stop the lesson immediately due to an alarm in Ivano-Frankivsk. There are 15 children, that can't play violin currently because of hard times in their families. I will do my best for Suzuki children from Ukraine and for my own children, despite the horrific inhuman invasion and shameful actions of Russian citizens in my country. Glory to the heroes of Ukraine!

👉 My name is Tatiana Surgan. I am a violinist from the border town of Sumy. For many happy years I devoted myself to playing the best instrument, taught children in the municipal school, and admired Suzuki's noble and amazing method. I and my friend planned to give this wonderful way to the little inhabitants of Sumy and their parents. All these plans were ruthlessly thwarted by the war. It was in our city that the "orcs" first entered, it was on it that terrible Russian tanks passed, and then we came under a long siege and were unable to leave. For many days we hid in the basement to the eerie sounds of sirens, we prayed and hoped that trouble would not come to us. For example, only one air bomb destroyed two neighborhoods in our city and killed 22 people (including 3 children). It's one bomb. There were many more. And when I had the opportunity to go, I went to the other side of Ukraine to save my child's life, and my husband stayed to defend our home. My little students also ran away. One family went to the village, where they found themselves in a horrible environment, rockets flew over them, there were enemies around and they miraculously saved their lives, thank God they are safe now. Others emigrated, leaving all their lives here. And there are families who didn't want to leave their hometown, and my students play their violins heroically in between sirens and sitting in shelters. But this is not a catastrophe. The real trouble, nightmare and pain is the fate of Mariupol, Bucha, Chernihiv, Irpin, Izyum and many other cities where ruthless enemies are committing atrocities. Where innocent people and CHILDREN die! The children we gave birth to and raised for peace! And when I read that the children of those "brotherly" people in the past are going to play concerts "for peace", I do not believe that this society is able to raise a noble heart. Because with such hypocritical concerts they showed that they have no heart!

👉 I, Liliia Burmii, live in Kyiv region, Obukhov district, city Ukrainka. Violin teacher in a traditional music school and the Suzuki method. On 24.02.22 I had 16 students. We had concerts planned, participation in festivals, competitions, workshops...

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All these plans were ruined by the treacherous war waged by Russia against Ukraine. The aggressor's army began firing rockets at Kyiv.

Part of the Kyiv region was occupied by the enemy.

Children with their parents, fleeing danger, were forced to leave their homes. People in panic went to safe places. Most of my students went to Western Ukraine and EU countries, some without violins. Children had no opportunity to play the violin for almost a month, there were no lessons. We were in a terrible state of fear and doom.

Thank God, I live in the south of Kyiv and my city has not been destroyed. But our peaceful happy life, our peace, the future of our children have been destroyed.

Russia -- the aggressor state(((

Putin is a killer (((

 My name is Svitlana Seliverstova. I am a Suzuki teacher from Sofyivska Borshagivka near Kyev. Right now I live in Germany in Giengen an der Brenz. I left Kyev with my son and my mom. Because I couldn't sleep with the sounds of explosions and hearing war machines passing by and complete fear of waiting next bomb attack. Countryside which was 2km from the place we lived in has tons of destruction. In the day of my departure part of the rocket fell near my home. The shockwave from the fall was so great that it was felt 10km around it.

Before the war I had 20 students (2-13 y.o.) right now most of them are located in Europe but in Ukraine there are still about 35-40% all of them are separated from their houses. 1 family stayed in Vyshneve near Kyiv and the mom there is pregnant. They don't want to leave their house. It's really worrying.

Right now all my students stopped their education. Right now we are trying to buy the instruments for children who needs it. What's more we also try to find a Suzuki teacher for each one of them. At the moment I don't have a possibility to have an online lessons. Because of the lack of internet in my flat. All children dream of returning to their lessons and their homes.

I also hope to come back to Kyiv after the end of the terrible war.

 My name is Halyna Pshenytska. I am from Lviv region, I live in Belz. The trouble that came to our Ukrainian land affected every living soul. The pain of loss, tears, sleepless nights is what accompanies us every day. Before the war I taught 18 students, but some of them were forced to go abroad, Czech Republic, Poland. Now we have partially resumed distance learning. I dedicate my free time to volunteering. We do not lose hope for God's mercy! And we hope that the war will end. I believe with all my heart that the Lord will reward everyone according to their deeds.

 My name is Oksana Barytska. I am from Chernivtsi. I have 25 students. Half of them have left for different countries of the world. Some of them now need tools. I deal with children online. Now Chernivtsi is a relatively safe city in the rear of Ukraine, which has hosted more than 65,000 refugees (including more than 20,000 children). Our teachers volunteer, weave nets and form humanitarian aid. We organize concerts for children of migrants. I also work in the symphony orchestra. We perform concerts in different locations with a call to close the skies over Ukraine! Recently we played a concert in a bomb shelter, as we have a lot of air alarms day and night. We believe in the victory of good over evil. We believe in the victory of Ukraine!

 My name is Lyudmila. Before the war, I lived in a small village near Kyiv. She worked in Kyiv and had about 30 students. When the fighting was too close to our village and the shops ran out of food, I was forced to leave with my children. We are currently in Gdańsk with Anna Podhajska. Most of my students have also left their homes, but some still remain in a dangerous place near Kyiv. I keep in touch with them, conduct online classes and we are all looking forward to meeting again in peaceful Kyiv.

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👉 My name is Victoria, I am Ukrainian, I live in the Donbass. I worked as a teacher in a music school for 25 years. For 2 years, as I teach children to play the violin using the Suzuki method, I have 9 students. There are fierce battles in our city, many houses are destroyed, we often sat in the basement, hiding from the shelling. Me and some students of my class were afraid to evacuate. The road to the border with Poland lasted 7 days. We hardly slept, prayed, drove under shelling, spent several nights in the open air. Some students stayed without their houses. Some managed to leave the country. I don't want anyone to have such murderous brothers as Russia.

👉 My name is Olga Bundziak. Before the war I lived and worked in Kolomyia. Due to the hostilities in Ukraine, my youngest daughter and I were forced to leave my hometown and moved to Gdansk, Poland, where we were hosted by our teacher Anna Podhajska. The eldest son and husband stayed at home.

Before the war I taught 25 students. 16 of them are now abroad, in other countries. The learning process with 11 students was resumed online, and the rest of the students stopped studying altogether.

It is very difficult to continue my work. Each child experienced countless sirens. The experienced fear, pain, shock will forever remain in their memory.

Mothers do not know what awaits them next. How long will it take to wander the world like this.

What is happening on our lands does not fit in my head. Hundreds of corpses of civilians, shot children, tortured and executed men, raped young girls, burned women. My heart is torn with pain for all that my people live.

👉 My name is Olga Blyznyuk, I am a teacher from Sumy. I lived near the city, but left home after the air strikes of our village. Now I am in Vinnytsia region. I taught 11 students, they all left home. 2 in Ukraine, 7 abroad, 2 were under occupation. 4 children do not have the opportunity to continue their education. 4 children were helped with tools and we resume classes. We all hope to return home soon.

👉 My name is Olga Skuridina.

I am a teacher from the city of Severodonetsk, Luhansk region, Ukraine.

I am now in Gdansk, Poland, because I was forced to leave my hometown of Severodonetsk due to the war and constant shelling. During one of these shellings, my home was damaged. A mine exploded in my backyard and windows were smashed throughout the apartment building, and in my apartment as well. In the first days of the war, my neighbors and I hid in the basement of our house, because it was dangerous to be in the apartments. And when it became even more dangerous, we moved to the bomb shelter where I lived for two weeks. In total, there were more than 200 people in the shelter. 70 people lived with me in one of the rooms in the shelter. We lived with families with children and even newborns. We slept on the floor, on tables, on chairs. It was cold. We did not leave the shelter to go out, because the shelling never stopped. Once a day the volunteers prepared food for us and fed us. First they fed children, then adults. On the 8th of March, International Women's Day, the children who lived with us in the bomb shelter made gifts to their mothers - drew pictures with wishes. There was an "exhibition" of these drawings. It was so touching! Every morning there was heavy shelling by the Russian army, after which there was a lot of destruction of residential buildings. There were victims – injured and killed, including children. Russians targeted kindergartens, hospitals, schools, shops. They destroyed the city's infrastructure. We were leaving the city under fire. It was very scary. We drove for four days. Thanks to Nataliia Koptienkova, who found transport for me, we first drove to a safer city in Ukraine, and then took three trains to Poland.

Before the war I taught 8 students. I did not have the opportunity to teach more children, because I took care of my sick father.

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Now all my students and their parents have been evacuated from the city of Severodonetsk. Three of them are in Ukraine, in safer places, others are abroad. So far, I continue to teach only two students online.

One of my students got a violin thanks to the European Suzuki Association and now we can resume classes. I am very grateful for your support and help. I currently live at the Suzuki Institute in Gdańsk. Ms. Anna Podgaiska warmly welcomed our Ukrainian teachers. She helps and supports us. Many of our compatriots are abroad. And I had an idea - to start teaching Ukrainian children in Poland, where I am now. But children fled war without their music instruments and now they need violins of different sizes. Not all parents have the opportunity to buy their child a violin now.

I hope that the idea will become a reality. Music heals souls. And now it is needed more than ever. I really love Ukraine and my hometown of Severodonetsk, which the enemy is now destroying. I want to return home and I believe that it will definitely happen, but a little later. In the meantime, we have to teach our Ukrainian children, whom the war has scattered around the world! But the Suzuki method unites us all!

With Ukraine in our hearts and with respect to all people who understand and support all of us, Olga Skuridina

👉 My name is Maria (Monica). I am Ukrainian and live in western Ukraine. I have been teaching at a music school for more than 30 years. I have been teaching children to play the violin according to the Suzuki method for two years now. I currently have eight students and lead two violin ensembles with forty children.

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation treacherously invaded the independent state of Ukraine, which lived its peaceful life. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some of my students made their homes. My own children lived in the Kyiv region for more than 10 years, namely in the Bucha district of the Kyiv region, and were forced to leave their homes and leave everything after the rocket fire began. One of the rockets fired at the city of Kyiv and Kyiv region hit the house where my children lived. At present, they cannot return home because roads are mined, bridges are blown up and houses are damaged. And the situation remains life-threatening. They are currently living with me. After the beginning of the rocket attacks on western Ukraine, the siren of the air alarm is constantly sounded and we are forced to sit in the basement of the house hiding, thinking that right now the rocket may hit this shelter.

This cannot be forgotten and forgiven! This is the genocide of the Ukrainian people! I condemn the actions of the Russian Federation! I have no forgiveness for them!

Ukraine is invincible! Glory to Ukraine!

👉 My name is Olena. I am a violin teacher from Koriukivka, Chernihiv region, north of Ukraine. Now I am in my hometown in occupation. Before war I had 16 students.

2 of them had an opportunity to move to safer place with their parents.

The Internet connection is really bad, often there is no connection at all. There is no opportunity to study remotely. The music school is closed. Parents of 8 students really want their children to distract themselves from war and heal their damaged mind with the help of music, so they take their children to my house so I can teach them. Other students, who live farther, are afraid to come, because invaders kill, rape, raid houses in nearby villages and sometimes visit our neighborhood.

I hope this all will be over and we with children will be safe, doing what we love - Music.

👉 My name is Anna Batyuk. I live in the west of Ukraine, in the town of Radekhiv in Lviv region.

I am a violin teacher at a local music school. I have been teaching children to play the violin for 26 years. I am happy in my profession, happy because I do my favorite thing.

Three years ago, I was lucky enough to learn the Suzuki method and start my own training. I was glad that now I can pass on that love and nobility to my students, I will be able to give my heart to children as taught by the Great Suzuki.

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I have 7 students, whom I teach by this method. We had a lot of creative ideas and plans. And on February 24, my country, my native Ukraine, shuddered at the shots, at the sound of the siren. Russia vilely attacked Ukraine. Our life has changed dramatically Our nights and days are full of anxiety, despair and fear Because of the war, our children can not go to school, study properly and of course they can not play music, can not play their favorite instruments. Many children are forced to leave their homes and travel abroad. Three of my students also left Ukraine because of the war.

It hurts even to think that children from the aggressor country, which brutally and inhumanely kills Ukrainian children, rapes women and girls, kills mothers in front of children, destroys everything in its path, are organizing a concert "for peace".

This idea looks so humiliating, immoral and disgusting.

These people do not have and probably will not have a real understanding of the situationreally want this cruel, unjust war to end. For our Ukrainian children to fall asleep to the singing of their mother's Lullabies, not to the sound of sirens. For every child to live in peace, have a happy childhood, many dreams and be happy in their country. ..

👉 My name is Natalia Ivashko, I'm from Ukraine. For more than 10 years I have been doing my favorite thing, teaching children to love and understand the world of music through playing the violin in the beautiful town of Myronivka, Kyiv region. On February 26, our family was forced to leave their home with two small children. My Chernivtsi. My husband is a volunteer. The war, which has been going on in our country for 2 months, has caused a lot of grief and tears to civilians! Many people need help! My husband and a group of brothers bring them medicine, clothes, food sent by our friends from the United States, and some no longer need it ... Russian soldiers brutally kill children, destroy our homes, hospitals, schools and kindergartens, maternity hospitals, rape girls and women in the eyes of their relatives, looting. Here it is "Russian world", which came to save us ... I have 11 students, 11 charming girls! Seeing their sad eyes over the phone is the hardest thing for me ... Some of them have also moved and left their homes. I teach lessons online, in groups and individually. Now we all need the support of our friends and like-minded people, especially children! They should not suffer and see this evil! We hope for God and believe that soon we will all meet together and continue to live peacefully in our independent Ukraine! Sing songs in the native language, play, joke, raise our children, see the smiles of parents, relatives and neighbors. Everything will be Ukraine, so hold on! Pray and believe in victory.

👉 My name is Tatyana Karbovnichenko. I am a teacher from Kherson. I managed to bring my daughters 12 and 15 years to a safe place. Now we are in the Khmelnytsky region in the small town of Slavuta. My parents remained in Kherson. The city has been paid by the Russians in the first days of the war. The houses were fired by Russian artillery. My father had problems with a heart and when on first of March, we wanted to call an ambulance, she did not come because ambulance cars were also fired. My dad died in the morning of the second March. Kherson was blocked by Russian soldiers who shot the cars of civilians and pedestrians trying to go or enter the city. I could not see my father and could not see the last time. My mother remained alone. She is helped by the parents of my students who did not have time to leave. I have 16 students, most remained in Kherson. Remote classes are very difficult because the boosts are dismantling the Internet. I hope that Kherson will soon be released and we will be able to return.

👉 My name is Oleksandra Pershyna.

I am a piano teacher from Kharkiv. I left my hometown with my two children aged 8 and 6 and my mom due to bombardment and shelling Kharkiv.

Now I am living in Red cross camp in La Pineda, near Tarragona, Spain.

Before the war I taught 15 students in Kharkiv National University of Arts, and 10 students in Kharkiv secondary music school.

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Now all my students have left for other cities if Ukraine and Europe. Some of the children stopped studying.

I do not have free access to the piano and have only arranged for practice at a music school in a nearby town.

I really miss my city, my work, my students.

And most of all I missed my husband and father, who stayed in Kharkiv.

👉 My name is Olga Taranenko. I am a Suzuki piano teacher (Book 1). I lived in Okhtyrka, Sumy region. My city was the first to take the fight against the Russian occupiers and is courageously defending itself even now. My city received the title of "hero city"! But it comes at a very, very high price: homes are being destroyed, children and peaceful adults are dying. This is the result of Russian bombs and shells (((

Before the war, I was the director of a music school, teaching 10 children and 2 Suzuki students. Since February 24, my schooling has been completely suspended, my students are in different parts of Ukraine and Europe. They also did not take any tools with them. After three weeks of occupation, I am also forced to flee and now live with strangers in the Transcarpathian region. I want to work, live, but I don't have a piano either.

I am responsible for every word I say, because I see with my own eyes the "atrocities" of the Russian army! I myself, together with my children, grandchildren and students, was in this terrible "cauldron". The consequences of war frighten us every day!

We want peace !!! We want to live !!! We want to teach and learn !!! We all love life !!!! ❤️❤️❤️

I hope that these stories will help to understand how the Ukrainian Suzuki teachers and students are doing.

We believe that the war will end.

Ukraine will survive. We are strong.

Thanks to the entire Suzuki community for their support!

With faith in the best,
Nataliia Koptienkova.