

How do you feel about the wars in the world? In Japan, wars are unthinkable, and I am against them for any reason. Now, in the war between Ukraine and Russia, over 3 million Ukrainians have become refugees in their own country. Every time I see on the news that people are fleeing their homes or that families are being torn apart, I feel sorrow.

Ukraine is an artistic country, and it is renowned for classical ballet. I've been learning classical ballet since I was 3 years old, and I often go to see performances by the National Ballet of Ukraine. I'm always inspired not only by the technical aspects, but also by the expression and brilliance. But that brilliance, once dazzling, has been darkened by the shadow of war. For example, the Ukrainian government has restricted the use of Russian composers. The National Opera House has restricted attendance to less than half, to the capacity of the bomb shelter in the basement. Last time I went to a performance, I learned that some male dancers weren't allowed to dance; they went to the front lines of war and died.

Not only are Ukrainian dancers suffering, but information about the war hasn't been reported in Russia. My friend studying abroad in Russia tells me that the Russian people don't hear news about the war. I thought, for what purpose? Why? At the same time, I felt fearful. Now, the Russian people are in a situation where they don't know anything about what is happening in Ukraine. The Russian government is depriving its people of democracy and freedom of speech.

Every time I hear about the terrible wars that are happening all over the world, I remember the words of my old teacher: "Murders are normally never allowed, except in war. If the murderers win the war, they'll become heroes." Since the war began two and a half years ago, the number of casualties between the two countries has reached more than 1 million. I always feel heartbroken, just thinking about so many lives being lost. I'm not sure where justice lies, and what will come out of killing each other.

The sculptor AI WEIWEI said, "Artists can't stop war. But art can send a message. In this sense, art is a powerful presence." Even if I can't stop war, I'd like to keep doing ballet and work on pieces that appeal to the emotions of people around the world. In addition, I'd like to send a message through the "Prayer of Dancing" that war shouldn't occur. I strongly wish for people all over the world to smile, and I hope that peace will come as soon as possible.

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Art Against War