

## UKRAINIAN CHORAL ART IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURE-MAKING PROCESSES OF THE CONTEMPORARY FESTIVAL MOVEMENT

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**Abstract:** For centuries, choral art has been the foundation of the development of the musical culture of the Ukrainian people and is one of the most refined and accessible forms of musical art. Choral singing, as the most accessible form of music-making, aims to reproduce and preserve the traditions of folk song culture, contribute to its development, elevate the level of musical culture in people, and directly influence people's feelings, emotions, and their will. Choral art is a unique way of understanding the world and carries spiritual values. It also plays a significant cultural, educational, and ideological societal role. The aesthetic influence of choral singing in the process of education and personality formation, as well as in shaping the artistic taste of the listener, cannot be overstated. Therefore, the popularization of this art form through festival projects holds exceptional importance for the development of both the artistic sphere of Ukraine and the global cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** culture-making process, cultural tradition, choral art, music festivals of the Union of Composers of Ukraine, choral style, choral creative work by Yuri Ishchenko, creative interpretation, art project.

### 1 Introduction

Music art, as an integral part of culture, can reflect all socio-political and spiritual processes inherent to society at various stages of its development. As a significant phenomenon in the history of national and global musical culture, choral culture in Ukraine has been shaped over centuries through the best examples of folk song heritage and church music. It is stylistically marked in the works of renowned composers and conductors.

Choral art is an essential tool for shaping personality, developing intellectual and emotional aspects, moral and aesthetic orientations, and progressive cultural thinking, regardless of gender or social role. As Bermes I. rightfully noted, only the period of Ukraine's independent statehood created conditions for the advancement of performing art forms, whose origins are a "fusion" of ancient folk traditions, embodying the brightest manifestations of Ukrainian life. Among these phenomena is choral art, capable of visualizing societal and spiritual progress dynamics, consolidating it, culturally and intellectually uplifting people, and ultimately contributing to strengthening Ukrainian statehood.

Despite the complex socio-political situation caused by the military actions initiated by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, financial and economic challenges, and the absence of regional and state cultural development programs, the state of contemporary choral art reflects changes associated with the revival of musical-concert life, the establishment of professional and amateur ensembles, and the development of their performance skills (Bermes, Polyuha 2017).

The theoretical part of this study provides a general assessment of the current stage of Ukrainian choral art in the context of the festival movement. The practical part of the research includes the systematic collection of data regarding the types and purposes of festivals held in Ukraine. Based on the research findings, conclusions are drawn about the addressed issues, mainly outlining trends in the festival movement as a platform for popularizing and developing choral art.

### 2 Literature review

In recent decades, the emergence of new choral festivals and the continuation of previously established ones have been typical features and important elements of the music industry both in Ukraine and abroad. In addition to classical music festivals, there have emerged festivals and competitions in popular music and events promoting jazz and contemporary music. Concurrently, in the cultural and artistic realm, festivals of folk art and folklore are gaining significant development, playing a special role in the modern means of preserving traditional folk culture (Ihnatyeva 2020), (Filar-Mierzwa, Dlugosz, Marchewka, Dabrowski, Poznanska 2017), (Liu, Song, Zhai, Shi, Zhou 2019).

With its intensive rhythm, maximal informational concentration, and dynamic evolution, modernity contributes to a substantial renewal of what seems to be an eternal tradition of our people, such as choral culture. At the same time, even the most radical civilization changes cannot completely alter the foundation on which the mentioned tradition has grown. At the intersection of the "old and new," rather interesting artistic discoveries arise, requiring their own theoretical and methodological interpretation (Garry, Tighe, MacFarlane, Phelan 2020), (Jiao 2022), (Vasylevska-Skupa, Dudnichenko 2022).

Ukrainian choral performance has undergone significant stylistic changes in recent decades. There is a structuring of musical consciousness caused by the country's internal social restructuring and a change in the artistic and creative orientation of aesthetic awareness. It inspires artists to search for innovative and creative approaches and find a new stylistic space (Sadovenko 2022), (Gintere 2020).

The proliferation of amateur music centers in all regions of Ukraine marks the early XX century. At this time, the groups became more active in professionalizing folk singing, and the number of amateur choirs in rural areas and large cities increased. It is important to note that amateur groups are improving their performance techniques, expanding their repertoire, organizing public performances, intensifying their touring activities, and establishing links with world music centers (Sorochyk 2023), (Dingle, Clift, Finn, Gilbert, Groarke, Irons 2019).

Ukrainian festivals and artistic projects have always been a subject of interest to cultural critics. The specifics of Ukrainian choral festivals are described in the studies by O. Rozhenko, M. Cherkashyna-Gubarenko, O. Dyachkova, O. Marach, Yu. Chekan, O. Kavunnyk, and other researchers of the Ukrainian music sphere (Antonenko, Antonenko 2021), (Sorochyk 2023).

Ukrainian art historians and cultural critics actively study the phenomenon of the festival in the contemporary cultural space. The key trends in the development of Ukrainian art today are the processes of regionalization and decentralization. At the same time, on the one hand, given the circumstances of the country's economic and political life, the content of the concert and festival sphere is radically changing. On the other hand, the cultural sphere is currently experiencing an unprecedented explosion of the festival movement that has spread throughout Ukraine (Sinenko 2020), (Choi, Lee 2019), (Samikova 2020).

Since independence, there have been increasing decentralization processes in the national music culture. In addition to Kyiv, the largest cultural centers of Ukraine have emerged in Lemberg, Odesa, and Kharkiv. Festival organizers invite the world's leading composers and performers, as well as represent national art schools (Havrylenko, Hrytsun, Kondratenko, Sukhova 2022), (Fahey, Phela, Clift, Moss 2022).

International music festivals play a significant role in Ukrainian culture and contribute to the revitalization of the country's musical life. They are the most critical factors in the emergence of Ukraine

as a country with a highly developed musical culture in the world (Nerubasska, Palshkov, Maksymchuk 2020), (Zubai 2022).

### 3 Aims

The article aims to systematize the data on the specifics of the choral art development as an essential component of the Ukrainian cultural process. The target areas of the study are to characterize music festivals held in Ukraine and abroad as an important form of artistic projects and key areas for preserving the cultural tradition of the Ukrainian people.

### 4 Materials and methods

A practical study of the modern trends in the choral art development at music festivals was conducted based on the analysis of scientific periodicals, conference materials, and official reports on the results of festivals held in Ukraine and other countries. While working with the data on the participation of choral groups in music festivals and other art projects, the authors used the following methods:

- systematic;
- structural;
- bibliographic;
- analytical information processing methods.

The theoretical background of this paper is based on studies in philosophy, history, cultural studies, art history, and musicology.

### 5 Results

The modern cultural space of Ukraine today cannot be imagined without a significant number of large-scale projects, festivals, and competitions. Since the 1990s, the festival movement has been rapidly developing, encompassing more and more cities and villages. Unlike individual concerts or exhibitions, a festival offers the opportunity to gather a broad audience in one place, allowing them to engage, perceive, and evaluate art and sometimes even participate in the creative process.

One of the vibrant and unique choral traditions of many regions in Ukraine is the abundance of various festivals of choral music and choral performance, which require in-depth research and coverage in various publications. Art becomes closer and more accessible to the general public. Festivals foster creative communication, where new ideas are expressed and new projects are born.

Choral festivals serve as living examples of amateur choral art. Among the most well-known are "Pisenni vizerunky," the festival named after H. Veryovka, as mentioned by V. Polevik and others.

A separate element of the country's basic music and choral education is the choral ensembles of general schools and lyceums, which operate within extracurricular or group activities. Such groups' activities aim to shape students' aesthetic taste, develop and improve musical skills, and expand the possibilities of professional music education. These groups actively engage in concert activities, regularly participate in city and all-Ukrainian competitions and festivals, and perform alongside professional ensembles.

The world's challenging economic and political situation has led to many socioeconomic, demographic, and security problems, greatly complicating organizing and holding festival events. However, thanks to a professional approach and the use of the experience of European countries, festivals have turned into a kind of creative center that opens up new opportunities for creative development. By combining different creative directions, such institutions make it possible to create inclusive projects in line with modern cultural trends.

It is worth highlighting the interest of composers in religious themes at the turn of the XX-XXI century. This interest was aimed at addressing the eternal questions of existence. This trend, often defined as a "new religious movement," is

characterized by complexity and ambiguity and is considered by musicologists as a spiritual renaissance of musical art.

Ukrainian music of the early 2000s witnessed the expansion of concert practice with spiritual choral compositions. At this time, several festivals dedicated to choral music and competitions of performing choirs gained momentum. Their main condition is, in particular, the presentation of spiritual music. The fact that a number of spiritual choral compositions by Y. Ishchenko, V. Silvestrov, L. Dychko, V. Zubytzky, and E. Stankovych appeared is indicative.

A bright representative of the religious and spiritual principles expressed in music is Yurii Ishchenko's compositions. The composer's creative work is considered in the context of the aesthetics and stylistics of modern times, which is entirely focused on Christian themes. The composer's heritage is represented by traditional vocal and choral music, as well as instrumental works, such as symphonic and chamber music.

Among the author's most significant works are "Our Father" for mixed a cappella choir, "Blessed is the Man Who Endured Temptation," a choral concert based on canonical text, Psalm No. 136 "O Give Thanks unto the Lord, for He is Good" for mixed a cappella choir, Psalm No. 143 "Hear My Prayer, O Lord" for mixed a cappella choir, Psalm No. 104 "Bless the Lord, O My Soul" for women's a cappella choir, Psalm No. 51 "Have Mercy on Me, O God" for men's a cappella choir and others. The composer interprets the works of spiritual music in his unique writing style, reflecting his artistic vision and expressing humanity's natural inclination towards the most profound meanings of human life and the higher truth of existence.

The following types of festivals have been identified by their orientation, given the competitions and festivals analyzed, their participants, their ideological load, and their professional significance for the country's culture (Table 1).

Table 1: The thematic focus of the festival movement in Ukraine

Type of festivals	Purpose of the events	Festival names
Cultural and historical	Revival of traditions that arose in certain historical periods, patriotic education of society	Baturyn Festival "Sablia" (Baturyn), Open Festival of Traditional Slavic Culture and Martial Arts "Kyivan Rus" (Lyubech), All-Ukrainian Festival "Cossack Rodoslav" (Konotop), Days of Ukrainian Cossacks (Shostka), Cossack Glory Festival "Kalnysheva Rada" (Romankivskyyi district, Sumy region), Festival of Historical Reconstruction "Vyrskyyi Hrad" (Bilopil'ia, Sumy region), and others)
Folklore holidays	Revival and preservation of folk song traditions and local rituals	"Konotop Witch Invites," the festival "Revival of the Ukrainian Village, Its Spirituality and Culture" (Pisky village), the "Vertep" festival, the open folk art festival "Prydesnyanski Zori" (Arapovychi village, Chernihiv region), the folk art festival "Dyvohrai" (Pustoviytivka village, Romny district), the folklore festival "Folk Treasures of Kulykivshchyna" (Versynova Muraviyka village, Kulykivskyyi district)
Musical and performing arts	Popularization of modern Ukrainian culture	"Kyiv Music Fest 2022" music festival, XX International Contemporary Music Festival "KONTRASTY" (Lviv)

		All-Ukrainian Children's and Youth Festival of Musical Art "Kobzarsky Maidan," "Doroga do Zirok," "Zvuchni Surmy" (Konotop), All-Ukrainian Competition Festival "Vesnianyi Zorepad," Country Art Fest, Regional Festival-Contest of Young Artists named after A. K. Rozumovsky, Competition Festival "Zoryani Mosty," Festival "Farbotony" (Kaniv)
Festival events for choirs only		Festival of Children's Creative Arts "Sorechko" in Irzhavets, Choral Festival "Sviato Khoru", Choral Assembly in the memory of Liubomyr Bodnaruk, Creative Project "Maistry khorovoho spivu Chernihivshchyny"
Spiritual direction		"Voskreslyi Khrystos radue ditei," the City Festival of Jewish Culture named after Sholem Aleichem, the "Chernihivska Osin" festival of Jewish song, and the concert program "Jews in Cultural Life," Christmas Charity Festival "Khrystos Narodyvsia – Slavimo Yoho" and others
Festives aimed at celebrating anniversaries without permanent operation		(Regional competition of Ukrainian pop songs and modern pop music "Radoslav" (Sumy), Street Music Day (Konotop)
Competitions and ratings of creative teams	Popularization of modern Ukrainian culture, as well as an educational function	Interregional Open Festival-Contest of Children and Youth Creativity "Zirkovyi shans," International Children's Music Festival "Kvitka myru" within the fourth phase of the project "Zbroini Syly Ukrainy," "Armiia-ditiam"
Festivals dedicated to personalities and well-known artists		A creative project, "Muzichna Ukraina," dedicated to the 85th anniversary of the birth of composer and People's Artist of Ukraine Oleksandr Bilash and the Hryhoriy Verevka Ukrainian Song and Dance Festival

Source: compiled by the authors based on the data (Havrylenko, Hrytsun, Kondratenko, Sukhova 2022), (Sheiko 2019), (Sadovenko 2022).

Since the festival movement is prevalent as an integral part of the national cultural and artistic space, it is possible to identify typical features of Ukrainian festivals. The unique significance of festivals as concert venues that attract large audiences to traditional choral performances makes this type of event an essential educational and uplifting function.

As part of the nationwide process of cultural revival in Ukraine, local folklore festivals are gaining popularity, renewing local regional traditions. The results of ethnographic expeditions, transcription of folk songs, reconstruction of rituals, presentation of elements of daily life, and costumes are an integral part of

such projects. According to the latest trends in contemporary choral performance, musical and theatrical performances have become popular forms that fully immerse people in the ancient layer of local culture.

Professional musicological and cultural studies approaches to the study of regional traditions are evidenced by the holding of various scientific and practical conferences within the framework of folklore festivals. The more general festivals related to the type of music performance are the most common today, both in Ukraine and worldwide.

By bringing together a large number of artists, mostly young people, representing singing, choral, performing, choreographic, and theatrical styles, such festivals continue to exist even under quarantine restrictions and enter the international arena. The absence of specific topics, age restrictions, and a special artistic focus make such events unique creative projects where listeners and viewers can get acquainted with a wide repertoire of groups.

A more professional organizational approach is characteristic of festivals and competitions of a musical-performing nature with a professional musical orientation. The modern musical and educational space contributes to the full functioning of such festivals. It demands specific professional achievements from teachers and choir conductors, confirmed by diplomas and certificates.

An unbiased professional perspective on performance is particularly important for amateur folk ensembles. Typically it does not have competition in its field and does not always follow contemporary trends. Festivals of exclusive choral conducting play a crucial role in shaping and revitalizing choral traditions, exerting significant influence on the musical-choral education of the region and the functioning of artistic centers. Participants in choir festivals usually include children's choirs from music and art schools in the city, students from general and higher educational institutions, and professional choirs of academic and folk orientations. This composition of participants promotes the fullest reflection of the state of choral culture, exchange of experiences, and development strategy formation.

In light of the practical implementation of the benefits of globalization processes, the festival movement helps expand the geographical, repertoire, and stylistic boundaries of choral creativity. Furthermore, the education and experience gained through participation in festivals of various directions broaden composers' horizons. The involvement of Ukrainian composers in international festivals and the creation of music for contemporary art festivals have ensured a new quality of creative achievements. It includes the renewal of the genre base of compositions and the emergence of synthetic forms of creativity using cutting-edge technologies.

## 6 Discussion

Musical-performing art in the socio-cultural space of Ukraine at the end of the XX – early XXI century underwent significant changes: from expanding the range of styles and genres to the growing role of new technologies in musical creativity. The trends in the cultural processes of the early XXI century include:

- the modernization of art education;
- the intensive development of the festival and competition movement;
- its integration into the world music process.

All these led to an increased scholarly interest in the study of national choral art from the perspective of contemporary cultural thinking. It aims to develop new methodological foundations and assess the creative potential of Ukrainian performance (Havrylenko, Hrytsun, Kondratenko, Sukhova 2022).

The Ukrainian cultural and artistic development demonstrates a wide range of research on issues of musical-performing art. However, despite the considerable volume of scientific research, Ukrainian musical-performing art needs reevaluation in a broad

cultural context as a complex systemic phenomenon. Its functioning is determined by the interplay of components such as musical performance, musical-creative activity, performance skills, and artistic communication (Bermes, Polyuha 2017), (Gilstrap, Teggart, Cabodi Hills, Price 2021).

Conducting festivals and their scholarly evaluation allows for comprehensive research into Ukraine's musical-performing art within the framework of analyzing cultural and artistic trends. It reveals the specificity of the performance process, explores the characteristics of the functioning and development of performance schools as cultural traditions and organizing musical-concert practices in the context of modern socio-cultural reality (Rosenko 2021), (Havrylenko, Hrytsun, Kondratenko, Sukhova 2022).

A demonstrative characteristic of the development of musical-choral art is the fact of the intensive spread of Ukrainian music festivals and competitions at the end of the XX – beginning of the XXI century. It demonstrates prevailing positive tendencies, namely:

- the dynamics of concert activity, life, and movement of festivals and competitions;
- the development of the musical-performing school, and support for the music education system;
- a high professional level of Ukrainian artists, their competitiveness in the international artistic space is confirmed by their victories in international competitions.

On the other hand, negative characteristics of the contemporary festival movement include the following:

- narrowing the audience,
- increasing contradictions in musical education for young people,
- commercialization of artistic projects,
- inadequacy of professional musical criticism, as well as the migration of musicians and performers abroad (Bermes, Polyuha 2017), (Xu 2021), (Sheppard, Broughton 2020).

An assessment of the reviews of musical events and studies in music history, cultural studies, art history, and musicology has revealed how the Ukrainian music and choral art and festival movement entered a new stage of development in the context of national and world cultures in the late XX – early XXI century, revealing their prospects and artistic potential. The representation of the best achievements of Ukrainian musical culture abroad (the organization and participation in festivals) contribute to the spread of Ukraine's image as a European country with strong artistic traditions and a high level of modern professional music performance (Dovzhynets, Govorukhina, Kopeliuk, Ovchar 2022).

## 7 Conclusions

The results of the study show that the festival movement as a means of popularizing and developing choral art has always been present in the life of the Ukrainian people. Ukrainian choirs represent choral art both inside and outside of Ukraine. The defining trends in the development of choral performance in independent Ukraine have been as follows:

- the expansion of the repertoire policy to include sacred music;
- the use of new opportunities for foreign touring;
- the emergence of a significant number of festivals, art projects, and choral competitions.

Further dissemination, development, and improvement of existing traditions is facilitated by the functioning of creative platforms – festivals, competitions, and concerts. They operate under the aegis of the respective state institutions and receive an international support.

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**Primary Paper Section: A**

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