

УДК 78.03:780.641

DOI 10.32461/2226-3209.1.2025.327997

Цитування:

Hvozdu Yu. (2025). Art of Sopilka Performance in Solo Execution. National Academy of Managerial Staff of Culture and Arts Herald: Science journal, 1, 365–370 [in Ukrainian].

Гвоздь Ю. М. Сопілкове мистецтво в сольному виконавстві. *Вісник Національної академії керівних кадрів культури і мистецтв* : наук. журнал. 2025. № 1. С. 365–370.

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ART OF SOPILKA PERFORMANCE IN SOLO EXECUTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a musicological analysis of the evolution of solo sopilka performance, delineating its progression from a folk instrument to a distinct entity within the realms of both modern academic and popular music. **The methodology of research** is founded on principles of systematisation, analysis, and generalisation, which enable the revelation of the tendencies of development of solo sopilka performance and its place in cultural and artistic life in Ukraine. Utilising a historical and cultural approach permits the tracing of the development of the status of the sopilka from that of a traditional household instrument to that of national identity within the context of global musical processes. The employment of a comparative approach facilitates the examination of the influence of modernisation processes on the repertoire of instruments, playing technique, and stage appearance. **Scientific Novelty.** The current paper sets out to demonstrate the details of the development of solo sopilka performance, its modification in the context of contemporary music, and its role in the establishment of Ukrainian cultural identity. **Conclusions.** The sopilka's function within the context of Ukrainian culture underwent a radical transformation: it transitioned from a folk instrument to a professional medium for contemporary performance. During the 20th century, the sopilka underwent modifications in its construction, leading to an augmentation of its technical capabilities and its subsequent recognition as an instrument of academic music. The evolution of solo sopilka performance towards its current manifestation as an integral component of the global music industry, particularly within the context of world music business, commenced at the dawn of the 21st century. This transformation can be characterised as a synthesis of traditional timbre and contemporary musical genres, encompassing genres such as pop music, ethno-fusion, jazz, and electronic music.

Keywords: solo sopilka performance, folk music, academic performance, modernization, cultural identity, show business.

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Сопілкове мистецтво в сольному виконавстві

Мета статті – здійснити музикознавчу рефлексію щодо еволюції сольного сопілкового виконавства, визначити особливості його трансформації від народного музичного інструменту до самодостатнього явища сучасної академічної та популярної музики. **Методологія дослідження** ґрунтується на принципах систематизації, аналізу та узагальнення, що дозволило виявити закономірності розвитку сольного виконавства на сопілці та його роль у культурно-мистецькому просторі України. Використання історико-культурного підходу дало можливість простежити зміну статусу сопілки від традиційного побутового інструмента до символу національної ідентичності, інтегрованого у світові музичні процеси. Компаративний метод дозволив проаналізувати вплив модернізаційних процесів на репертуар, виконавську техніку та сценічний образ сопілкаря. **Наукова новизна** дослідження полягає у розкритті особливостей еволюції сольного сопілкового виконавства, його адаптації до сучасного музичного середовища та впливу на формування української культурної ідентичності. **Висновки.** Роль сопілки в українській культурі зазнала значних змін: від старовинного народного інструмента вона перетворилася на сучасний засіб професійного виконавства. У ХХ столітті модернізація конструкції інструмента сприяла розширенню його технічних можливостей, що дало змогу інтегрувати сопілку в академічну музику. У першій третині ХХІ століття сольне виконавство на сопілці стало невід'ємною частиною світової музичної індустрії, що проявляється у поєднанні традиційного звучання з сучасними музичними стилями, зокрема у поп-музиці, етно-ф'южн, джазі та електронній музиці.

Ключові слова: сольне сопілкове виконавство, народна музика, академічне виконавство, модернізація, культурна ідентичність, шоу-бізнес.

Relevance of the topic. Solo performance on folk wooden instruments in Ukrainian musical culture is a distinct domain that boasts both a profound ethnic foundation and a rich in artistic expression. Its hallmark features include

improvisation, intimate connection with the folk culture, and a plethora of performing techniques. The development of solo performance on traditional Ukrainian wooden instruments has been further advanced by the research of

renowned scholars such as V. Hromchenko [1], I. Skliar [10], M. Korchynskyi [3], L. Shapovalova [16], and N. Suprun-Yaremko [11; 12; 13], who have successfully combined theoretical investigation with practical innovation in the design of the instrument and playing technique.

From a musical perspective, the sopilka boasts a broad dynamic range, a rich timbre, and a wide array of articulation techniques. This instrument's versatility enables the performance of both folk and academic music. Contemporary trends point to an expansion of its genre boundaries, with the incorporation of jazz and experimental electronic music, and its integration into academic schools of composition. Significant contributions to this field have been made by renowned musicians and orchestral leaders L. Haidamaka and V. Zuliak, and their disciples H. Kaskun, O. Shlonchuk, and I. Skliar [10]. The Lviv Sopilka School has been instrumental in establishing a professional environment, whereby the performance of sopilka is regarded as an equal part of the academic concert repertoire, rather than merely a folk tradition. This development signifies the transformation of the sopilka from a traditional folk instrument to a concert medium with the capacity to compete within the contemporary musical landscape.

Analysis of Research and Publications. The art of sopilka solo performance has been the subject of research by scholars from both within Ukraine and abroad. In the research of M. Korchynskyi [4] and I. Skliar [10], certain issues of sound production are investigated, including natural intonational flexibility and microtonal enrichment possibilities. The form of solo pieces for sopilka relies on variation, decoration, and the principles of improvisation.

Research by V. Hromchenko [1], M. Korchynskyi [3], and I. Skliar [10] affirms that solo sopilka performance is not merely a means of transmitting the national musical code but also a personal way of artistic self-expression. V. Hromchenko's research investigates psychophysiological features of wind instrumentalists in depth and emphasises the necessity of solo playing on wind instruments in order to master inner tension, which is most essential for a musician's stage endurance [1]. In her dissertation, "Origins and Formation of Professional Sopilka Culture in the Context of Ukrainian Instrumentalism", B. Korchynska-Yaskevych explores the professionalisation of the sopilka art form, with a particular focus on the adoption of the alto sopilka for solo performances and the expansion of its repertoire through the incorporation of academic compositions [2].

The activity of instrument makers B. Hulashovskiy and P. Tsynkalov has also facilitated the development of solo sopilka performance. Their constructive innovations in the

instrument expanded its technical and artistic possibilities, as I. Marynin has shown in his research [7].

Special mention should be made of the research of N. Suprun-Yaremko [11–13], whose scientific work has added considerable value to research in the field of folk music and organology. In her research papers, N. Suprun-Yaremko examines the sopilka's distinctive sound characteristics and playing techniques, emphasising its solo expressive potential [11; 13; 15; 17]. The researcher emphasises the sopilka's ability to express a variety of emotions, making it a very important instrument for solo performance. She also emphasises the importance of individual mastery and improvisation in solo performance. Although N. Suprun-Yaremko does not have any special works devoted exclusively to solo sopilka playing, her activity contains practical material on the traditions of solo performance on folk instruments, especially the sopilka, and can become a practical guide for further research in this sphere [11; 13].

Thus, musicological studies emphasise the importance of those technical and structural elaborations of the sopilka that led to its introduction into scientific musical practice and the development of its solo repertoire.

The purpose of the article is to provide a musicological insight into the process of the emergence of the solo sopilka performance, pointing out the development of the instrument from a folk musical instrument to an independent phenomenon in contemporary academic and popular music.

Presentation of the main material. The sopilka, as one of the oldest wind instruments, played an important role in traditional Ukrainian life. It was used in close connection with rituals and folk songs, reflecting the socio-cultural and psychological aspects of various spheres of Ukrainian life.

The social context of the instrument's existence included a socio-psychological aspect of personal expression through music, especially among village youth and shepherds. Its timbre was associated with various ceremonies and rituals and was involved in the preservation and transmission of cultural traditions. Psychologically, playing the sopilka was an important part of daily life, providing emotional release and soothing the challenges of everyday life.

Here are some examples of sopilka melodies that imitate the rhythm of work, the sounds of nature, and the mood of the performers.

"Kolomyiky". These are short, comic or lyrical melodies common in the western regions of Ukraine, especially in Hutsulshchyna and Pokuttia. Their melodic and rhythmic form is particularly well suited to sopilka playing and has

gained popularity among kolomyiky players. Such melodies do not always have formal titles, as they were often improvised and passed on orally. However, some kolomyiky have been given formal titles, based on an opening line or motif. They are: "A Young Man Cut a Viburnum Branch and Made a Sopilka", "Oh, No One Plays as Cheerfully as Ivan", "The Viburnum Sopilka, Small and Thin".

"Hutsul Tunes". Melodies characteristic of the Hutsul region, traditionally played a type of sopilka or fuiarka (a longer-bodied variety of sopilka). These melodies accompanied rituals, festivities, and the daily life of shepherds in the Carpathians. Among modern performers of Hutsul tunes on the solo sopilka, Yu. Yachyn, T. Onisimiyuk, and M. Savchuk deserve special mention. Examples of Hutsul tunes are: "Arkan", "Hutsulka", "Kolomyika", "Resheto", "Hutsul Polka". A detailed study of the Hutsul sopilka playing tradition with 29 pieces of music transcribed from 11 Hutsul players, was carried out by B. Yaremko in the monograph "Sopilka Music of the Hutsuls" (2014). The author also deals with the interpretation of Hutsul folklore and the performance aspect in the accumulation of musical tradition [17].

When they stayed in the highland pastures (polonyny), the shepherds played the so-called "Polonynsky Melodies", imitating the sounds of nature or expressing feelings of loneliness and contemplation. These melodies, played on the sopilka, are a valuable part of the Carpathian musical culture. They tend to reproduce the sounds of nature and express the states of loneliness and solitude inherent in the shepherd's life in the mountains. Some of the examples of Polonynsky melodies for sopilka are: "Shepherd Melodies", "Mountain Polonynska Melody", and "Krynta". Some modern performers of polonynsky melodies are V. Kermoshchuk, H. Melnyk, and M. Slovak. It is significant that "polonynsky melodies" are one of the most extensively studied musical traditions in Ukrainian musicology and are adequately represented in the repertoire of sopilka players.

In the article "From Field Recordings" (2015), researcher Ya. Tovkailo investigates the intonation and performance style of shepherd songs on the sopilka in the village of Volosianka, Skole district, Lviv region. Seven melodies were recorded in the course of fieldwork, including three kolomyiky, three polonynski melodies, and one shepherd's song-dance "Fesia." A very detailed description of the instrument used – a six-hole sopilka handmade by the player, 18.7 cm long and 2.3 cm wide, and decorated with carvings – is provided by the author. Musical transcriptions of the recorded melodies are given in the paper, and their musical characteristics are analysed [14].

The album "Melodies of the Carpathian Polonyn" is a music album by Kyiv musician Hennadiy Melnyk, performing under the pseudonym Hector Mukomol. The album features traditional Carpathian shepherd music, fuiarka, and other instrumental performances. The unusual aspect of this collection is that the recordings were made directly on the Carpathian pastures, thus capturing the natural atmosphere of the mountain landscape [8; 9]. For the first time ever in such a number, the album offers authentic shepherd's melodies played on such instruments as the fuyarka (floiara), dzholomiha, drymba, telenka, dentsivka, as well as on the trembita and the ox horn. In addition to instrumental pieces, the album includes polonynsky songs and even cowbells and glockenspiels, which were used to track cattle by sound. From a musicological point of view, genuine sopilka playing exemplifies the characteristics of folk melodies, such as their modal and rhythmic peculiarities.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, traditional musical instruments were also an object of interest for the intellectual artistic elite and intelligentsia in Ukraine. Musician M. Lysenko reported that the flute was mainly used for solo playing and was not standardised for ensemble playing. He wrote: "The flute, which plays simple folk songs and dances, is not used in trios, probably because of its soft timbre. The flute is a purely pastoral instrument" [5]. This is due to the traditional construction of the instrument. M. Lysenko explained: "Closed or open, in a combination with each other, these holes change the length of the air column in the pipe, and consequently the pitch or tone" [5]. The composer therefore classified the flute as a diatonic one, and its use is linked to ethnographic and folklore traditions. Apart from Lysenko, other prominent Ukrainian researchers, such as S. Liudkevych, F. Kolessa, and H. Khotkevych, have provided us with details of solo playing on the flute. In the opinion of S. Liudkevych, the flute is a folk instrument, ideal for virtuoso solo playing and sound imagery [6]. Thus, until the beginning of the 20th century, solo flute playing remained integrated into the domestic ethnographic environment, as a central element of household, ritual, and work activities. Solo playing was unplanned and reflected the emotional state of the performer, which was particularly characteristic of the rural environment.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the stereotype of the sopilka began to change, partly under the influence of the professionalisation of folk art. At that time, the first attempts to scientifically analyse and classify the sopilka as a folk instrument began (e.g., the expeditions of P. Chubynskyi). During this period, along with the restructuring of the cultural space and the transformation of the artistic imagery of Ukrainian

art, there was a process of re-evaluation of the status of this instrument.

In the context of the general modernisation of society, Hutsulshchyna became an important phenomenon that influenced the development of art schools and cultural centres. The exoticism of this region, its unique ethnographic character attracted artists and scientists, especially after the development of transport communications and the establishment of tourist resorts. This not only popularised Hutsul culture, but also introduced elements of it into wider national cultural discourses. At the social level, Hutsulshchyna became subject to cultural borrowing, as foreign players engaged with the population to promote its development and the preservation of cultural practices. Artists, as cultural mediators, not only recorded Hutsul practices but also interpreted them, thus influencing their social meaning. In the field of musicology, Hutsul musical culture, especially its instrumental culture, has been an inspiration for many composers and musicians. Folk instruments such as the sopilka, trembita, and others were incorporated into scientific musical compositions, enriching the national musical culture.

Thus, Hutsulshchyna, being individual and culturally diverse, became a driving force in the development of artistic processes and the formation of national identity, as well as enriching the Ukrainian cultural heritage.

The artistic images of the solo sopilka player are actively constructed in Ukrainian dramaturgy as a reflection of the romantic notions of Ukrainian artists about folk music as a channel of cultural communication. At the same time, there is a neo-folklorisation of musical art, in which traditional melodies characteristic of solo sopilka performance become part of the professional musical space.

Early twentieth-century Ukrainian literature did much to spread this image: motifs of sopilka music can be found in the works of Symbolist poets, who sought to convey the folkloric essence through musical allusions. The soloist on folk instruments is an important motif in Ukrainian classical literature. For example, in Lesya Ukrainka's drama-fairy tale *The Song of the Forest*, the main hero, Lukash, plays the sopilka, reflecting his connection with the forest spirits and nature. These images of solo performers with sopilkas have been reproduced in various areas of Ukrainian culture, including photography, decorative arts and social practice.

In the first third of the 20th century, the solo performance of the sopilka underwent some very profound changes. The role of the sopilka began to change, partly due to the professionalisation of folk art. As a result, the instrument underwent significant changes in form, structure and function. Masters (V. Zuliak,

I. Skliar, O. Shlionchyk, and Y. Bobrovnykov) began active work on improving the acoustic qualities of the instrument, with the aim of eliminating its age-old shortcomings: narrow range, instability of intonation, and modest possibilities of sound organisation. This was done in order to extend its technical possibilities and adapt it to the new musical reality, with the possibility of playing more complex melodic lines and with greater clarity in solo pieces. Whereas the sopilka had previously been played more intuitively, with the advent of professional playing it began to be played in a more systematic way, which required the development of its expressive possibilities.

In the second half of the 20th century, the solo performance of the sopilka was innovated not only in the field of traditional folk music, but also in new instrumental music. Players began to experiment with more complex textures, using new techniques of sound production and expanding the instrument's timbral potential. During this period, solo sopilka performance increasingly diverged from its traditional improvisation towards the use of composers' arrangements and original treatments of folk material.

Thus, in the 20th century, solo sopilka performance was transformed into new forms of cultural existence, maintaining the reference to musical folklore, but at the same time taking part in neo-folkloristic processes, romanticising folk performance and recontextualising the use of traditional instruments in the contemporary art space. During the 20th century, the physiological mechanisms of sound production emerged as a controlling factor in solo sopilka playing, directly influencing the acoustic characteristics of the instrument. During the socio-cultural transformation and professionalisation of sopilka playing, particular attention was paid to how the technical skills of the performing musician were linked to the control of sound parameters using natural resonators – the nasal and oral cavities. This ability governs a wide range of tonal colours, from a delicate, light sound to a rich, overtone-rich tone, according to the stylistic needs of the repertoire and the composer's intention in the work.

One of the fundamental features of personal timbre creation was the controlled regulation of laryngeal vibration to achieve natural vibrato. Unlike mechanical pitch variation, which is achieved by controlling the flow of air or using finger technique, laryngeal vibrato is produced by precise control of the fine motor coordination of the vocal mechanism. It allows the performer to regulate the dynamics of the sound and make the interpretation more flexible, something that is particularly valued in solo performance.

Positional technique also deserves special attention, as it had a significant influence on the

stylistic potential of sopilka playing. The interaction between the tilt angle of the instrument and the strength of the airflow determines not only the accuracy of intonation but also the character of the timbre. For example, reducing the tilt angle towards the chin in combination with increased air pressure produces a compressed timbre effect, making the sound deeper and more dramatic. Conversely, by moving the instrument away from the player produces a lighter and brighter sound, typically used to imitate Baroque flute timbre.

In solo sopilka performance in the 20th century, the dynamic colouring of the sound became a matter of experimentation. This included gradations in the intensity of the attack, modulation of the breathing phases and the elastic use of articulation techniques. Mykola Korchynskyi, one of the best Ukrainian performers and teachers, emphasised the necessity of using yogic breathing techniques in solo playing practice. This stabilised intonation and supported controlled projection of sound. His method was based on an empirical study of the motor connections between the performer's muscle tone, head position and the dynamic qualities of the airflow, which deeply affected structural aspects of timbre creation.

The socio-cultural aspect of solo sopilka playing also transformed significantly in the 20th century. While traditional representations in literature and the visual arts were predominantly of male sopilka players, the academicisation of the instrument allowed women to be included in performance practice. This was driven by broader trends towards the democratisation of music education and the development of new institutional models for the training of musicians. The expansion of the repertoire, the diversification of the technical possibilities of the instrument, and the integration into music education schools led to a significant increase in the number of female soloists. This transformation has shattered gender perceptions of representation in the arts and has become one of the manifestations of cultural modernisation in Ukrainian musical life.

Thus, the solo sopilka musicianship continued to evolve in the 20th century towards greater individualisation of the performance style, a broader technical repertoire, and a redefinition of archaic socio-cultural roles. The use of physiological means of production – i.e., airflow control, laryngeal modification, and positioning – transformed the sopilka into a standard academic instrument for musical performance, capable of competing with other wind instruments as a solo concerto instrument.

These changes in the practice of academic performance also influenced the stage image of the sopilka player, making it more performative. From the traditional folk musician, representing

either home music-making or a pastoral symbol, the solo performer developed into a stage figure whose performance met the expectations of an academic concert or theatre performance. This was reflected not only in the perfection of technical skills, but also in a new aesthetic approach to presentation: artists began to actively use gestures, lighting effects, and stage costumes, and their performances became more visually appealing. This kind of transformation of the sopilka player's image was in line with the general trends of the late 20th century music industry, in which academic art attempted to reach a wider audience through the aesthetisation and modernisation of performance traditions.

Although the sopilka remains a popular instrument, its role in the culture has changed considerably. It used to be an integral part of family musicianship, accompanying work, rituals, festivals, or simply entertainment. By the second half of the 20th century, the tradition had more or less disappeared.

In the first third of the 21st century, solo sopilka performance has undergone significant development, marked by the emergence of a new generation of virtuosos, the enrichment of the solo repertoire by recent scholarly research, and the appearance of new pedagogical and methodological publications dedicated to the instrument.

In the early 2000s, Yu. Rybak, in collaboration with Lviv-based ethnomusicologists L. Dobrianska and L. Lukashenko, conducted an exhaustive study of the villages of the Rokytne district. During five days of fieldwork, they interviewed 54 performers, conducted surveys of seven settlements, recorded 601 pieces of music, and noted down 67 folk melodies of the Polissian dudkari (traditional wind instrument players) of Drozdyn, Stare Selo, and Vezhytsia. The results of these field studies were compiled in the collection *Folk Music of Northern Rokytne Region* (2002) [12].

Modern sopilka performance is characterised by an increased focus on masterful interpretation and creative solutions to the repertoire. Craftspeople consciously cultivate techniques that expand the instrument's timbral world. In particular, dynamic colouring, articulation colours, throat vibrato, and microtonal colour palettes are emphasised. As a result, the sopilka is no longer treated merely as a folk instrument, but has become an independent concert instrument of artistic virtuosity.

Conclusions. As life has evolved, so has the role of the sopilka as a historical musical instrument. Initially, the sopilka was exclusively associated with everyday life, before rituals, production processes, and leisure time activities. In the 21st century, however, the sopilka has become a national symbol of the cultural self-determination of the Ukrainian people. Its sound has also evolved, not only representing ethnic

heritage, but also merging with new forms of music.

The image of the sopilka player also evolved. In the folk environment, the player was associated with folk musicians, shepherds, or performers in ritual ceremonies. In the 20th century, with the professionalisation of instrumental performance in folk music, the image of an academic musician – capable of performing complex solo compositions – emerged. Today, in the 21st century, the sopilka player is not only the heir to the tradition, but also a contemporary concert performer who incorporates the melody of the sopilka into pop music, jazz, electronic creativity, and film scores.

The instrument itself was modernised in the 20th century. Thanks to virtuosos, its technical potential was expanded, and traditional limitations in range, intonation stability, and tonal structure were removed. The alto sopilka, chromatic versions, and experiments with using other materials and forms brought the instrument into the sphere of academic solo performance.

Today, the sopilka is part of the modern entertainment industry. It is actively used in popular music and is included in performances at international competitions and festivals. Thus, solo sopilka performance continues to evolve, preserving traditions while, at the same time, becoming part of the global cultural discourse.

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Стаття надійшла до редакції 10.01.2025
Отримано після доопрацювання 11.02.2025
Прийнято до друку 19.02.2025