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POLYPHONY IN UKRAINIAN INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

The purpose of this paper is to explore the phenomenon of polyphony in Ukrainian instrumental music from a historical and theoretical perspective, within the context of traditions and contemporary trends in the development of musical art. **The research methodology** is based on the principles of systematisation and generalisation of information, as well as methods of historical-theoretical and musicological analysis. These approaches made it possible to examine and synthesise existing scholarly studies on the development of Ukrainian instrumental music, to investigate the works of Ukrainian composers, and to summarise knowledge regarding the polyphonic features of their instrumental and symphonic compositions. **The scientific novelty** of the research lies in its presentation of Ukrainian instrumental music within the framework of polyphony as a characteristic of contemporary artistic thought, while also grounding it in the folkloric origins of Ukrainian melos. **Conclusions.** The use of polyphonic techniques, particularly the polyphonic arrangement of folk songs – which remains a popular genre in Ukrainian instrumental art – represents a deeply rooted tradition in national musical culture. This is evidenced by the large number of works across genres and performance ensembles. Polyphony in the works of Ukrainian composers can be regarded as a fundamental basis of artistic thinking, underpinning the artistry of musical expression. Polyphonic texture, as a defining feature of Ukrainian folk song creativity and the frequent recourse of instrumental composers to folk sources, endows their works with genuine uniqueness. It also serves as a crucial means of preserving and promoting the folkloric musical heritage while integrating traditions with contemporary academic performance practices.

Keywords: polyphony, traditions, genres, arrangement, Ukrainian folk melos, instrumental composers, Ukrainian instrumental music, folk polyphony, national art studies.

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Поліфонічність в українській інструментальній музиці

Мета роботи – розкрити питання поліфонічності української інструментальної музики в історично-теоретичному аспекті у контексті традицій та сучасних тенденцій розвитку музичного мистецтва. **Методологія роботи** включає принципи систематизації та узагальнення інформації, методи історико-теоретичного та музикознавчого аналізу, які дали змогу проаналізувати та систематизувати відомі наукові дослідження з проблеми становлення української інструментальної музики, дослідити творчість українських композиторів та узагальнити інформацію щодо поліфонічності їхніх інструментальних та симфонічних творів. **Наукова новизна** полягає у висвітленні української інструментальної музики у контексті поліфонізму сучасного мистецького мислення та фольклорних основ українського мелосу. **Висновки.** Звернення до прийомів поліфонічного письма, поліфонічна обробка народних пісень, яка залишається популярним жанром у інструментальній творчості українських композиторів, має глибоку традицію в національній музичній культурі. Це підтверджується великою кількістю творів різних жанрів та для різного складу виконавців. Поліфонію у творчості українських композиторів можна розглядати як основу художнього мислення, на якій ґрунтується художність музичного мистецтва. Поліфонічність, як характерна ознака української народної пісенної творчості та часте звернення композиторів-інструменталістів до фольклорних джерел надає їхнім творам справжньої унікальності і є важливим засобом збереження та популяризації фольклорної музичної спадщини, поєднання традицій з сучасними академічними виконавськими практиками.

Ключові слова: поліфонічність, традиції, жанри, обробка, український народний мелос, композитори-інструменталісти, українська інструментальна музика, народне багатоголосся, національне мистецтвознавство.

Relevance of the research topic. The artistic and aesthetic movement of the 20th – early 21st century, characterised by ‘a unique worldview directed toward socio-cultural renewal, the search for progressive paths in the evolution of spirituality, and the rejection of traditional conceptions of art’ [9, pp. 94–95], has come to be known as postmodernism. Scholars use this term to describe complex phenomena in both contemporary philosophy and art, reflecting the multidimensionality of human existence.

The multidimensionality of the modern world is shaped by increased information density, globalisation, integration, intellectualisation, and transformations in poly-communicative processes. When reflected in artistic imagery, this multidimensionality requires adequate comprehension, which, to some extent, becomes possible through a polyphonic mode of perception. The ability of polyphony to simultaneously combine ‘several independent lines and layers in order to create a unified artistic image’ makes it possible to view not only artistic works but even cultural phenomena as polyphonic – embracing the integrity of multiplicity, the wholeness of artistic cognition [13, p. 1]. Thus, polyphony can be regarded as a distinctive feature of contemporary artistic thinking.

In this context, the study of polyphony in Ukrainian instrumental music is of particular significance, as it synthesises deep-rooted national traditions with modern academic thought.

Review of research and publications. Ukrainian instrumental music has been the subject of considerable research within national art studies. The specific features of its development, including polyphonic creativity, have been examined by scholars such as N. Herasymova-Persydska, N. Horiukhina, N. Matusevych, and I. Piaskovskyi. Recognising polyphony as a universal methodological principle that ensures the coexistence of multiple voices and enables the use of ‘simultaneous contrast’ in the creation of artistic imagery, its application in choral, orchestral, and instrumental genres has also been analysed in the musicological works of S. Miroshnychenko, I. Tsurkanenko, I. Chyzhyk, and others.

It should be noted, however, that the polyphonic principle in Ukrainian instrumental music has been explored unevenly across different instruments, depending on their traditional roles in domestic and concert settings. For example, there has been less curiosity surrounding polyphony in the context of instruments such as the bandura and the guitar. Yet the reliance on folk musical traditions – particularly vocal music rich in

polyphonic textures – as well as the tendency toward stylisation of early music, has encouraged the widespread use of polyphonic elements. Arrangements of Ukrainian folk songs constitute a traditional genre for these instruments, and there also exist transcriptions of polyphonic works by various composers.

The issue of transcription and interpretation of polyphonic works for the bandura – specifically works by J. S. Bach – was raised by A. Yeromenko and N. Yeromenko.

Thus, the question of polyphony in the instrumental works of Ukrainian composers, including those for the guitar and bandura, remains highly relevant and warrants further detailed study.

The purpose of this work is to reveal the issue of polyphony in Ukrainian instrumental music from a historical and theoretical perspective within the context of traditions and contemporary trends in the development of musical art.

Presentation of the main material. The 20th century represents one of the periods of active flourishing of polyphonic music, alongside the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Ukrainian symphonic, including polyphonic, music of the 20th century followed a difficult path of development, as it sought to ‘catch up’ with the musical cultures of other countries with historically more advanced traditions of symphonism, including traits of postmodernism. This era witnessed a radical reconsideration of compositional techniques, the emergence of numerous neo-styles rooted in classical traditions, and a diversification of genres.

The study of polyphony is complicated by the fact that its expressive specificity is defined by its central concept – ‘simultaneous contrast’. The use of the polyphonic principle thus extends beyond music into ‘the tendency toward the musicalisation of other arts, philosophy, psychology, etc.’ [15, 33]. The language of music constitutes a multilayered structure in which the informational significance of any component gives rise to a broad spectrum of regularities. This ensures the multiplicity of stylistic tendencies, which has become a defining feature of musical art at the turn of the 21st century. H. Zavorodnia notes ‘The process of global ‘confusion of tongues’ which is a characteristic feature of contemporary artistic thinking shows an internal and profound idea of stylistic dialogue, polyphonic in its essence. ‘Polyphony’ of musical text reveals the multipartite nature of contemporary musical thinking, striving for the process of ‘analysis-synthesis’ of each musical language element’ [6, 57].

For Ukrainian composers, the task was not merely to transfer 'foreign symphonic traditions onto Ukrainian soil, but to reinterpret them within a nationally distinctive style rooted in the musical laws of Ukrainian folklore and the finest traditions of Ukrainian culture' [5, 149].

Ukrainian culture of the first half of the 20th century, including its musical dimension, was forced to concentrate upon itself, constrained within the strict framework of socialist realism (V. Kozarenko [7]). Later, however, artists and composers increasingly sought to move beyond socialist realism. Their works demonstrate active interaction between harmonic and polyphonic principles of musical organisation (O. Kuzmuk [8]). A tendency emerged toward greater complexity in compositional techniques, stylisation, musical quotations, and polyphonic layering (O. Hurkova [3]). In the era of Ukraine's independence, musical art has become increasingly progressive: what had once seemed a certain eclecticism of ideas and styles has now acquired the qualities of a recognised 'standard' (N. Herasymova-Persydska [2]).

In her study of Ukrainian composers, H. Zavhorodnia considers polyphony as the very foundation of artistic thought, serving as both the artistic and constructive basis of musical art – always relevant to the stylistic development of music from its origins to the 'polyphonic Renaissance' of the 20th century [6].

The earliest known polyphonic examples on Ukrainian ethnic territories date back to the 13th century [14], while the beginnings of polyphony arose in the 11th–12th centuries, with its flourishing occurring in the 13th–14th centuries. On Ukrainian ethnic lands, manuscript samples of polyphonic music were discovered in the Roman Catholic monastery of Stary Sącz (now Subcarpathia, Poland), founded in the 1280s. These are anonymous polyphonic compositions demonstrating the author's familiarity with the stylistic methods of the Notre Dame School of Paris [14]. In later Ukrainian music history, references are found to Hryhorii, a monk of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra in the 12th–13th centuries, known as a 'creator of canons'; in the 16th century, the region of Galicia was home to the musician, pedagogue, and Ukrainian-born musicologist Sebastian of Felshtyn, author of polyphonic motets [14].

The first known polyphonic works by Ukrainian composers were choral and belonged to *partesny* singing (Ukrainian church music by Y. Zavadovskyi, M. Dyletskyi, and others) and to the choral concerto (A. Vedel, M. Berezovskyi, D. Bortnianskyi, among others).

A characteristic feature of Ukrainian composers' creativity is their consistent recourse to the folkloric foundations of Ukrainian melos in both original works and arrangements of folk songs. The instrumental arrangement of folk songs represents an important and widespread field of musical activity, contributing to the preservation and popularisation of folklore heritage. This requires a profound understanding of both the folkloric material and the specificities of the instrument. These processes transpose the traditional melodies into the technical and timbral possibilities of the instruments for which the arrangements are being made, combining traditional melodies with modern performing practice.

Ukrainian musical culture is particularly rich in plucked string instruments, among which the *bandura* and *kobza* occupy a special place. The arrangement of folk songs for these instruments involves preserving the melodic line and harmonic structure while simultaneously taking into account the technical potential and distinctive performance techniques of the instruments, such as *arpeggio*, *tremolo*, and others. The use of plucked string instruments is an inseparable part of Ukrainian musical tradition (L. Cherkaskyi), and arrangements of folk songs for these instruments play an important role in preserving national identity and transmitting cultural values to future generations.

Ukrainian folk songs are distinguished by their diverse polyphonic forms, which are an integral part of Ukraine's musical culture and reflect the regional and historical characteristics of the musical thinking of the people. It should be noted that scholars define folk polyphony as 'a type of textural structure of folk music, a simultaneous combination of several melodic lines in folk group (choral, ensemble) vocal, instrumental, and vocal-instrumental music' [10]. As O. Rudnytska notes, group singing was an important and integral 'component of the spiritual life of Ukrainians, from which the distinctive polyphonic song tradition originated' [11, 100].

Culture expert S. Sadovenko rightly justifies Ukrainian folk song creativity as a specific system of national artistic worldview, 'which functions inseparably from the national identity of the Ukrainian people, as a leading factor in the creation of the national identity of modern Ukrainians and as an important condition for the effective disclosure of the latter's ethno-spiritual potential' [12, 143].

The collection and transcription of folk songs, including polyphonic ones, began in the 19th century; with the advent of audio-recording

technologies, this process expanded significantly in the 20th and 21st centuries. According to dictionary definitions, polyphony is 'a musical texture based on the combination of three or more independent voices (polyphony proper) or a melody with accompaniment or chordal support (homophony)' [16, 19]. The term also refers to a type of 'linear musical thinking, serving the revelation of a work's content, the embodiment and development of artistic images, the transformation, juxtaposition, and unification of musical themes' [14, 305].

The Ukrainian Musical Encyclopaedia defines polyphony as a type of polyvocality based on the simultaneous sounding of two or more melodic lines [14]. Scholars distinguish three main types of polyphony – *podholos* (subvoice), imitative, and contrasting. While imitative and contrasting forms developed primarily in academic music, the *podholos* type is widespread in the folk traditions of certain cultures, including Ukrainian. Yet, many works defy categorisation into a single type of polyphony.

The *podholos* style, characteristic of Ukrainian folk songs and their arrangements, involves a principal melody from which additional voices branch off. These 'subvoices' supplement the main line, sometimes merging with it, especially in cadences [14]. Researchers identify the following types of Ukrainian polyvocality: heterophony, drone diaphony, monophony, *kant* three-part singing, and 'podholos-polyphonic functional two- and three-part textures' [10]. Imitative polyphony occurs less frequently in folk song, though it is vividly represented in the works of M. Leontovych.

In Ukrainian instrumental music, polyphonic techniques were employed by V. Sokalskyi, and later by eminent contemporaries such as Y. Stankovych, M. Skoryk, and V. Sylvestrov. Neo-Baroque tendencies, expressed in the use of fugues and cycles of preludes and fugues, can be traced in the works of M. Skoryk, V. Bibik, and others. Composers like D. Klebanov and O. Yavoryk composed for various instrumental ensembles. The *passacaglia* genre was explored both by earlier composers such as M. Kolessa and S. Liudkevych, and by Y. Stankovych and Ya. Hubanov. A significant number of polyphonic works have been written for piano, choir, and vocal ensembles, and this trend continues into the 21st century.

In the 19th–20th centuries, polyphonic thinking in Ukraine was strongly manifested in the genre of folk song arrangements. At its inception, this genre was characterized by intensive reinterpretation of the source material

(particularly in professional solo songs with accompaniment, later in romances). Its subsequent development was marked by a desire to return to the folkloric basis and reproduce its authentic sound within academic music (as seen in the arrangements of M. Lysenko, M. Leontovych, O. Koshyts, and M. Verykivskyi). In the 20th century, this genre continued to evolve in the works of B. Liatoshynskyi, L. Revutskyi, Y. Stankovych, and others, who applied highly individualised approaches to folk sources.

B. Liatoshynskyi not only skilfully mastered the techniques of polyphonic composition, but created polyphony grounded in specific compositional devices, enabling him 'to convey the inexhaustible semantic depth of life' [5, 40]. A significant role in his work belongs to imitative polyphony – for example, his Second Symphony is permeated throughout with imitative techniques.

The most widespread polyphonic forms are variant *podholos* textures and heterophony, corresponding to the main principles of folk polyvocality. Often employed is the technique of vertically mobile voice exchanges, as well as the inclusion of 'authorial themes' into arrangements as counterpoint to the folkloric source (characteristic of M. Leontovych, M. Verykivskyi, and L. Revutskyi).

The polyphonic structure of Ukrainian folklore, and of folk songs in particular, is reflected in arrangements and original works based on folkloric sources, notably for the guitar and bandura. The bandura has extensive potential for polyphonic performance due to its construction, with 10–14 bass strings and up to 50 treble strings. During the 20th century the instrument underwent considerable modernisation, acquiring 'a new, improved design and tuning system (chromatisation, extended range, and key-switching mechanisms)' [17, 1]. Today, the repertoire of bandura players includes both transcriptions of classical polyphonic works (e.g., J.S. Bach) and original modern polyphonic compositions by M. Dremluha, L. Kolomiets, and others.

As I. Druzha notes, 'kobzarstvo and bandura performance as artistic phenomena today demonstrate a clear genre-based differentiation into two independent and self-sufficient directions. On the one hand, kobzarstvo bears the mission of preserving the traditional repertoire and accompanying function of the instrument, reviving the authenticity of both the instrument and performance techniques. On the other, academic bandura performance encompasses solo-

instrumental, vocal-instrumental, and ensemble practice' [4, 48–49].

Nonetheless, folk song material with its inherent polyphonic qualities often serves as the musical foundation for the bandura repertoire. A considerable number of contemporary original compositions for bandura are based on Ukrainian folk melodies or are variations on folk themes. Over time, the traditional repertoire of bandura players – composed largely of folk songs – has also been transferred into guitar literature, becoming a valuable tradition of the Ukrainian guitar school.

For Ukrainian composer-guitarists, arrangements and variations of folk songs remain a defining genre, still widely performed by contemporary guitarists. The guitar is capable of polyphonic performance, and its repertoire includes not only works originally composed for lute but also transcriptions of organ and piano polyphonic music (for example, the guitar arrangements of A. Sehovia). Thus, the polyphonic repertoire for guitar by Ukrainian composers largely consists of folk song arrangements and original compositions – such as A. Shevchenko's *Carpathian Rhapsody* or *Ricercar* – as well as stylisations of early music (e.g., K. Chechenia's *Polufoniia*).

Special mention should be made of the characteristic three-voice texture of the guitar, consisting of melody, bass, and harmony. In such a setting, the piece may be not only homophonic-harmonic but also polyphonic, or a hybrid composition with polyphonic elements (such as a developed bass line or subvoices).

As F. Bernat notes in his analysis of A. Shevchenko's *Carpathian Rhapsody*, in addition to the vivid national stylistics and harmony (the Hutsul minor mode), timbral imitations of folk instruments (such as the cymbals), and podholos polyphony, the piece also features a specific three-voice guitar texture: 'the tremolo (upper voice) forms a subvoice, the main melody is presented in the middle voice (with occasional tremolos), while the lower voice provides a sustained bass. In this way, Shevchenko's characteristic polyphonic thinking is revealed' [1, 150].

Bernat further observes that Shevchenko's use of guitar texture 'enriches the timbral palette of the instrument – we seem to hear not a single guitar, but an entire ensemble. The guitar imitates the sound of a *troistamuzyka* ensemble, using its typical techniques (tremolo, droning bass)' [1, 153].

Conclusions. In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the use of polyphonic techniques,

and especially polyphonic arrangements of folk songs – which remain a popular genre in the instrumental creativity of Ukrainian composers – has a deep-rooted tradition within the national musical culture. This is confirmed by the vast number of works across diverse genres and ensembles. Polyphony in the works of Ukrainian composers can be regarded as a foundation of artistic thought upon which the artistry of musical creativity is built.

Polyphonic expression, as a hallmark of Ukrainian folk song creativity, along with the frequent recourse of instrumental composers to folkloric sources, imparts genuine uniqueness to their works. It also serves as an important means of preserving and promoting folk musical heritage, while uniting tradition with contemporary academic performance practices.

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