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SYMBOLS OF SACRED FILLING OF RELIGIOUS MUSICAL ART OF UKRAINE

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Abstract

In the spectrum of the research of this paper lies the sacred essence of religious musical art and the symbolic component of spiritual music of Ukraine. This scholarly research is aimed to reflect the content essence of spiritual art in the sphere of the Ukrainian musical culture. This phenomenon is analyzed both as a result of a creative (figurative) thinking in generalization, and the spiritual inner necessity of comprehension of the metaphysical. Symbol is represented as a component of the sacred content of religious art, which reflects the irrationality of the constituent forms of spiritual music. A retrospective analysis of genre wealth of Ukrainian spiritual music gives grounds to state the fact of its sacred predetermination. The essence of the diversity of the phenomenon, according to the researchers of this problem, lies in the full borrowing of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy from all the most common genres of the Byzantine church hymnography. It in turn gained the musical practice of the ancient Hebrew synagogue borrowing from it such genres as psalmody, allyluayya, antiphonal singing although in Byzantine, and later in Ukrainian music, they were filled with new musical content. The symbolism of sacredness of religious cultic singing is a feature that distinguishes it from other components of the musical space in general. It manifests itself on a two-level basis by the means of the complementary functioning both in the context of the components of the phenomenon, and in combination with other types of church art. This sacredness functions as a unified imagery that through the means of symbolism and genre diversity is adapted to the musical-aesthetic environment of Ukrainian Orthodoxy not only as a static category, but also due to its specific features of musical expression and their constant evolution as developing, demonstrating its irresistible dynamics and aspirational desires.

Keywords: sacral, religion, symbol, religious art, emotions, catharsis.

Introduction

The difficult situation against the background of the realities of the spiritual life of humankind in the world context, in particular Ukraine, is characterized by the need to study the art that has the most important psychological levers of suggestibility, causing a sense of catharsis, which in turn strengthens the appreciation of the sacred. It is spiritual music in a global perspective, capable of fundamental positive transformations of human nature. In our research we studied the phenomenon of sacred music of Ukraine. Some of its examples, such as “Shchedryk” by Mykola Leontovych, “God is great, the only one” by Mykola Lysenko, “I believe” by Maksym Berezovsky, “Choral Concert № 24” by Dmytro Bortnyansky are not

only recognizable, but also world-famous. A retrospective analysis of the richness genres of Ukrainian sacred music gives grounds to state the fact of its sacramental content. The essence of the diversity of this phenomenon according to the researchers O. Tsalai-Yakymenko, J. Yasynovsky, O. Shevchuk, L. Korniy, and others “lies in the complete borrowing of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy of all the most common genres of Byzantine church hymnography, which in turn reaches the musical practice of the ancient Jewish synagogue, borrowing from it such genres as psalmody, hallelujah, and antiphonal singing.”¹ However, in Byzantine, and later in Ukrainian music, they were filled with a new musical content.

Music of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy is an extraordinary spiritual musical and aesthetic phenomenon. It has multiple characteristics of both essential and functional order. Among the most distinctive and specific features of this music we can mention sacredness, endowment with divine grace, holiness, and religious sanction. It is no coincidence that the etymology of this concept comes from the Latin word *sacer*, which literally means “sacred.”

How is the sacred manifested in the Ukrainian Orthodox music space, distinguishing the latter from the general socio-cultural context? First of all, it is determined by the literary and poetic level of the biblical imagery of the phenomenon. Due to this, cult music differs not only from other church arts, but also from the genre artistic diversity in general. Therefore, its sacredness should be considered through the meanings of its musical organization.

The diversity of kinds, forms, types of such music is manifested in the genre diversity of spiritual and musical creativity. Due to the genre characteristics of the Ukrainian sacred music we want to analyze the essence of the sacred in it.

Comprehension of the Nature of Religious Musical Art in the Ukrainian Intellectual Discourse

Religious musical art of Ukraine is symbolic. Symbol, as a category, is a factor (element) not only in verbal, but also in artistic hermeneutics (Pavel Florensky,² Eugene Herzman, Vasyl Kandinsky³). The liturgy, as an action, is the mystery of parallel worlds in concentrated time; it reproduces the global spiritual history of each individual and of all Christians in general. And this is possible only through the symbolic comprehension of the liturgical action. We touched upon issues of not only tonal semantics, symbolism of mood

¹Л. Корній. *Історія української музики*. [History of Ukrainian Music]. в 2-х ч. Ч. 1. (Київ; Харків; Нью-Йорк: Вид. М. П. Коць, 1996), 65.

²П.А. Флоренский. *Строение слова*. [The Structure of the Word]. (Москва: Мысль, 1973), 74.

³А. Кандинский. “Литургия святого Иоанна Златоуста.” [Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom]. *Журн.: Музыкальная академия*, 1993. №3, 148–155.

and pitch, which are an effective psychological tool, but also a specific form of “*sophia*” comprehension of the liturgical action. Due to this, religion, philosophy and art are a dream synthesis of the perception of the world and worldview in the interpretation of Ukrainian composers.

Music, according to one of its definitions is a specific product of artistic thinking in sound images.⁴ The genetically predetermined basis of this activity is the direct and inverse connection between the biophysical sound manifestations of a person and his or her spiritual, emotional and figurative activity. The culturogenesis of this connection follows from the socio-historical practice aimed at artistic and figurative rethinking of natural (voices of nature) and unnatural (instrumental) sounds of the real world, the formation of *sound matter* from them, and thus its artistic transformation into the world full of aspirations.

The outlined features of music have been the subject of reception by a number of Ukrainian scientists of the 20th century. Let us systematize the most important of them.

Based on this interpretation of the art of music, Ivan Lyashenko on the basis of the term “artistic picture of the world,” proposed by Boris Meylakh, introduces into scientific circulation the category of “*artistic and musical picture of the world*,”⁵ whose essential attributes are due to the internal combination of the two subsystem components—thinking and sound material, in other words, the spiritual and material factors of the musical whole. The system formation of the latter, in turn, is attributed to the principle of the dual nature of the qualitative certainty of things. At the lowest levels of the system under consideration, this certainty is manifested by the structuring of its elements into dual, dialectically oppositional pairs: sensory and conceptual (or emotional and rational) in the artistic, abstract, and concrete (logical and associative) in thinking, natural and unnatural (physical-acoustic and intonation comprehension) in sound material, typical and individualized (socially characteristic and purely personal) in imagery. Therefore, taking into account the well-known reasoning of Robert Schumann that “the aesthetics of one art is the aesthetics of another; only the material is different,”⁶ we state that the subject of music differs from the subject of art in general only according to the sensory material. The latter is considered not just a natural sound (it is only a “raw material,” a substrate), but artistically meaningful, transformed accordingly into a sensory-image material of musical reflection.

⁴И. Ляшенко. “Целеполагание и деятельность музыкального мышления.”[Goal-setting and Activity of Musical Thinking]. *Музыкальное мышление: сущность, категории, аспекты исследования: Сб. ст.* [Сост. Л.И. Дыс]. (Київ: Муз. Україна, 1989), 9-18.

⁵*Ibid.*, 10.

⁶Р. Шуман. *Избранные статьи о музыке*. [Selected Articles on Music]. (Москва: Искусство, 1956), 273.

There is no doubt that in determining the specifics of musical art, the conscious formation of the ideal image, new musical values (phenomena and relationships), modeling musical actions through the free choice of artistic possibilities and motives, using existing and creating new principles of selection and organization of sound material are of great importance. In the process of a purposeful activity of artistic thinking and its dynamics there is a transformation of sound reality into the artistic and figurative one.

Despite the general nature of thinking (judgments, concepts, inferences), in the process of transmission of ideas there is a plurality of language tools. Having verbal, symbolic, visual, plastic, intonation, and any other forms, they are able to convey the essence and direction of mental activity.⁷ We see the multiplicity of language means in the art of music. Ivan Kotlyarevsky, for example, reduced its essence to the dynamic development of systems of *linguistic means of communication*, localizing his attention on the evolution of thinking in *the music and art sphere* and reflecting this progress in two language systems: the means of musical expression and the terminological aspect of musicology. Touching on the categorical nature of musical phenomena, the scientist referred to the authority of Vladimir Ozerov, who believed that the basis of the life force of musical art lay in the common mechanisms of perception of the objective reality and musical phenomena.

In addition, the categorical nature of musical phenomena is associated with the ability of creative thinking to create a new artistic and aesthetic reality. The latter not only stimulates the cognitive activity of the human intellect, forming its meaningful orientation, but also attracts a special human interest. Appealing to the person's feelings, experiences, emotions, values, and attitudes, it helps to establish complete harmony between the object and the subject of perception. The existence of a holistic categorical system, which, despite the fact that the emotional and figurative nature in music and conceptual and logical in science, as a rule, are perceived as their distinctive features, brings them together, explains the generally accepted role of science and art—these highest forms of human knowledge.⁸

Kotlyarevsky also hypothesized the regularity of the movement of means of musical expression and the gradual complication and formation of their content as forms of musical thinking. According to the scholar, this process is evolving, from the empirical level to more clearly differentiated forms. This leads to the emergence of concepts that can summarize the

⁷И. Котляревский. “К вопросу о понятийности музыкального мышления.” [To the Question of the Conceptual Nature of Musical Thinking]. *Музыкальное мышление: сущность, категории, аспекты исследования: Сб. ст.* [Сост. Л.И. Дыс]. (Київ: Муз. Украина, 1989), 30–31.

⁸В.Ф. Одоевский. “К вопросу о древнерусском песнопении.” [To the question of ancient Russian chants]. *День*, 1864. № 17, 21–22.

entire experience of practical and theoretical activities, as well as the spiritual mastery of the material of art. At the highest stage of this process there is a crystallization of the categorical system, which symbolizes the formation of a true integrity of the categorical understanding of musical phenomena.⁹ Thus the categorical nature of musical phenomena in general, and the categorical nature of spiritual music in particular, are identical.

The specificity of the artistic content of the art of music is analyzed by Leonid Dis. In his opinion, it consists in "... a constantly existing communicative plexus of one or another type of reflection, manifesting itself through *the object of reflection–relationship–subject of reflection*."¹⁰ In the context of the relations of the links of this chain, the target orientation of activity in such a form of social consciousness as religion or in the mythological type of thinking can be conditionally interpreted as a process of objectification of the subjective. In art, in contrast to other forms of social consciousness, the purpose and specificity of reflective activity is not the object itself and not the subject of reflection, but the relationship. In human consciousness, this relationship can be reproduced only by means of associative connections with the objects of the external world or with our inner state of mind.¹¹

It is worth noting that the sacredness of the literary and poetic layer of church singing, as well as its *musical*, is largely an abstract-conditional and theorized problem. Their demarcation is necessary and once again proves the equality of both components of the phenomenon. However, the vital force of the sacred in this case is "encoded" at a complementary level. That is, the natural-effective parameters of the sacred are really manifested during the Great Entrance (the sacred action), when the Holy Gifts are transferred from the altar to the throne, symbolizing the earthly path of Jesus Christ to be laid to rest. During this period of the ritual action, the flock takes communion.

The joint action of music with other artistic manifestations is *a leading principle* in the dramatic development of the Liturgy. As the most transcendental art form, music has considerable potential for reproducing a complex of symbols of Christian worship. Like every component of art, it is not self-sufficient; in purely musical expressiveness there are signs of non-musical factors (word, space, perspective, motion, colors, etc.). It is no coincidence that such world-renowned researchers of this phenomenon as Jack Lindsay,

⁹Т.А. Котляревський. "К вопросу о понятийности музыкального мышления." [To the Question of the Conceptual Nature of Musical Thinking]. *Музыкальное мышление: сущность, категории, аспекты исследования: Сб. ст.* [Сост. Л.И. Дыс]. (Київ: Муз. Україна, 1989), 34.

¹⁰Л. Дыс. "Музыкальное мышление как объект исследования." [Musical Thinking as an Object of Research]. *Музыкальное мышление: сущность, категории, аспекты исследования: Сб. ст.* [Сост. Л.И. Дыс], (Київ: Муз. Україна, 1989), 36–46.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 38.

Cesare Lombroso, and Paul Florensky believed that the idea of light and sound matter originated from mystery cults. The adequacy of sounds and colors is confirmed in the semantic and notional content of the action. According to Stanislav Lyudkevych, the joint action of icon painting and music represents the symbolism of colors through the characteristic tonality. Comparative characteristics of the selection of tonalities, in particular in the author's liturgies—these complex musical compositions, reveal not only the individual reading of the Orthodox principles of the canonical Liturgy, but also reveal its sacred essence.

Here is an example from the “Liturgy of the Sacrifice” (“Liturgy of the Faithful”) in the perspective of the immortal work of the Ukrainian artists M. Leontovych and K. Stetsenko. During this action, the Eucharistic sacrament (consecration and communion) takes place. This part of the liturgy begins with the “Cherubim Song,” in which Christians are equated with cherubim angels. In the interpretation of the great Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovych, the idyllic pastoral G major (G-dur) testifies to the temporary identity of celestial and terrestrial creatures. Another genius of Ukraine, Kyrylo Stetsenko, chose a key in A minor (A-moll), parallel to C major (C-dur), which did not have a so-called “color characteristic” among artists of musical art, and therefore represented the purity of Christian souls. Beginning with a call to prayer for the Holy Gifts brought to the throne, the faithful turn to the petitions addressed to God: “Serve, Lord.” The prayerful litany in the elaboration of Kirill Stetsenko is solved in C major (C-dur) and G major (G-dur) and symbolizes the sending of God's grace on people. Mykola Leontovych, electing D major (D-dur), confirms the readiness of the faithful to accept Christ, being dignifiedly like Him.

Church hymns are liturgical prayers, says Lydia Korniy.¹² The sacralized nature of the latter determines the sacred imagery of the songs. The great variety of prayers (“all kinds of prayer as many as different states and moods can be born in the artistic soul”¹³) accordingly generates a large number of songs.

Hymns “confirmed” their sacred feature by the fact that they were *church* songs performed during services, although they were not considered prayers. *The psalms* expressed “involvement” in the sacred by their belonging to the collection of poetic sacred works—the Psalms. The sacred feature of *antiphons* (finished spiritual songs or poems)—in their biblical origin, *kondaks* and *troparions*—in revealing the most important moments of the life of glorified saints and in messages about a church holiday, cantic—*in* meaningful warning

¹²Л. Корній. *Історія української музики*. [History of Ukrainian Music]. в 2-х ч. Ч. 1. (Київ; Харків; Нью-Йорк: Вид. М. П. Коць, 1996), 148.

¹³Д. Матіяш. “Поетична молитва в українській ліриці XX століття.” [Poetic Prayer in Ukrainian Lyric Poetry of the 20th Century]. *Art line*, 1999. №4, 29–31.

verses from the Psalms, alleluia—in addressing all divine persons.

Dynamics of Development of Religious Music in Historical Retrospect

The genre of constant spiritual singing in its original meaning at the genetic level predetermines the essence of its sacred content. However, the musical and aesthetic space of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has never been static; on the contrary, one of its most important characteristics is continuous development. It is in this dynamic that we observe tendencies towards secularization processes. The fact that the latter took place is evidenced by musical-historiographical research.

Hence the logical question: does the evolutionary process of the phenomenon over time distance it from the sacred, or not? These musical and poetic genres in the Middle Ages in Ukraine, reflecting mainly Christian dogma and teachings of the Church Fathers, naturally generate music, as well as art with a clear theme. All means of poetic and musical expression are aimed precisely at the formation of Christian biblical imagery. Thus, music, or more precisely, the church singing of the ancient Ukrainian Christian Church in its broad genre manifestation was completely imbued with sacredness.

However, the factors of time, adequate to the socio-historical processes, cause changes in the phenomenon we are studying. The first of these occurred literally with the advent of the Renaissance. Within the framework of Renaissance-humanist and Reformation trends, a new type of culture was formed in Ukraine on the basis of a new humanistic ideology, transforming the spiritual-Christian branch of culture in the direction of realism and strengthening the influence of folk melodies. The changes that took place in church monodic singing, in its genres of that period of time, were adequate to the ideological views and complex historical conditions that characterized Ukraine at that time. With this in mind, new examples of church monody appeared, rich in emotional expressiveness, innovations in the musical style of hirmoloy melodies, elements of regular accent rhythms and the first signs of a new harmonic system. There was also a transition from melodic-formulaic to procedural-dynamic musical thinking, etc. All these innovations, although they were aimed at bringing biblical imagery closer to the real world, did not retouch, but only dynamized it adequately to the time.

The Baroque era with its new view of the human brought to art many new, hitherto unknown and alien trends, namely: the coexistence of love of life and asceticism, rationalism and irrationalism. This created in the art of that time a magnificent decorativeness, sublime pathos, majesty, as well as an exquisite form of verbal formulations, paintings, and musical

works. Elements of allegory and symbolism became important. Characteristic of art were the connections with folk culture, as a result of which there was a “folklorization” of some baroque genres, as well as the allocation of high, middle and low styles.

In Ukrainian Orthodox sacred music, the Baroque style was clearly manifested in the genres of party and canticle singing. It is here that the tendencies of bringing this music closer to the masses in order to involve the latter in active religious life can be traced. As for the edging, it deserves a favorable characterization, because, as a connecting element between the old and the new, it convincingly produced, albeit in its infancy, modern, often secularized tendencies, which soon became the determining factors of qualitatively new party music. But depicting the plots of the eternal, heavenly and immortal, canticle has always remained the bearer of religious, i. e. sacred imagery.

Music of this time represents the newest genre of professional polyphony—a party concert. The novelty of this genre was manifested primarily at the level of musical means of expression. Thus, a special quality in party music in comparison with the church monody acquires a light-joyful emotional sphere, in which triumphant joy and majestic panegyricism are achieved by musical means. The sad lyrical intonations also deepen here, approaching the folk genre of “cries.” However, all this is a light-joyful sphere, where triumphant joy and majestic panegyricism, as well as sad-lyrical emotional manifestations with their deplorable moods are directly related to religious events that reflect God, Christ, the theme of his passions, motives for death, repentance, etc.¹⁴ That is, the imagery of the party concert with its latest modifications still remains sacred.

Stylistic and genre changes in the musical art of the classicism of the Enlightenment renew spiritual music, creating a new genre in it—a spiritual cyclical concert of a new style. It is characterized by inner simplicity, harmony, clarity, solemn and energetic musical images—and all this connects it with the classical style. It was also affected by the distinction of “sensuality” inherent in the musical art of that time, which was connected with the new world of feelings and the emotional embodiment of human experiences in spiritual music; there was an enrichment of her/his personal beginnings. This was reflected in lyrical, touching, softly sensual intonations such as “sigh.” Related to this is the giving of paramount importance to the melody, which becomes more emotionally expressive (this is especially evident in the work of Artemy Wedel). Ties with secular art are strengthening; a new quality of musical imagery is emerging with a brighter reproduction of human emotional experiences. In

¹⁴Л. Корній. *Історія української музики*. [History of Ukrainian Music]. в 2-х ч. Ч. 1. (Київ; Харків; Нью-Йорк: Вид. М. П. Коць, 1996), 227.

addition to the above-mentioned factors, we observe the influence of figurative and intonation spheres of songs-romances ingrained with Ukrainian national melodies. However, all this did not mean that such music became secular. This was not sought by the composers themselves, and their figurative world remained religious, sacred.¹⁵

For sacred music of the late 19th–early 20th centuries this feature is also characteristic, although it is gaining still unconventional dynamics. An interesting stage in the development of the phenomenon of this period is the beginning of the 20th century. Analysis of the spiritual and musical literature of that time shows that its development took place in three directions. Regarding the first, it is worth noting the representation of author's works, own compositions on canonical texts. The second, arrangements of ancient monophonic liturgical melodies. The third, paraliturgical creativity–arrangements of ancient religious chants, psalms, carols, as well as the genre of a spiritual concert. In the works of these genres there is a tendency to freely use the original melody, enveloping it with original accompanying voices, the purpose of which is to identify and enhance the features of the melodic, rhythmic, fret sound of the original monody.

Author's work in the field of spiritual musical art usually developed in the genres of canonical liturgical literature. The most characteristic form was the "Liturgy," or, as it was called in Ukraine, the "Service of God," to which the vast majority of composers turned. We can observe complete "Liturgies" in the works of Leontovych, Stetsenko, Demutsky (for a three-part homogeneous choir), Yatsynevych (there was only one in the edition), Goncharov, Gaidai, Levitsky, Davidovsky, Koshytsya (five), and others.

Liturgical and musical forms of the early 20th century carried the idea of a single compositional cycle. The pervasive nature of their musical formations united the liturgical rite-mystery into a single whole, dynamizing the integral sacred plot of the latter. Thus, the sacredness was manifested by a continuous pulsating canvas.

As an example, we can note that in the final part of the Liturgy there is a "Thanksgiving Litany," a prayer which is called to establish the faith of all Christians present there. The soul of each of them is filled with exaltation, the commandments of Christ become feasible for them, because "the yoke of Christ is sweet, and the burden is light." The Liturgy ends with the key of A major (A-dur), which symbolizes the state of comprehended joy, the great spiritual victory over earthly passions, the achievement of the sacred state as the only one for all believers.

¹⁵Ibid., 131.

As a result of the reform of the liturgical language that took place in the Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, religious mysticism and rich associativity, due to the obsolescence of the Church Slavonic language, moved to the musical plane, because the Church came into full use of literary Ukrainian. Mystical-associative components, as in-depth expressions of the holy and sacred, are produced in the spiritual music of this time by a number of factors of the musical-aesthetic continuum. However, one thing stands out the most—the tendency to return to the monodic medieval melodies, enriched with the latest national and colorful harmony. Medieval monody now acts as a talisman of the sacred, which expands the scope of associativity and romanticizes the mood of traditional mysticism. Although the researcher Lydia Korniy notes the weakening of prayer intonations in the works of composers of the younger generation (P. Kozytsky, M. Verykivsky, F. Popadych, etc.), the sacred remains a defining feature of the phenomenon, because, permeating its numerous structural and semantic levels both literary and poetic, and the source of music, keeps its figurative essence at the level of irrational and metaphysical associativity.

The same genres of canonical liturgical literature are characteristic of the modern spiritual music of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Its leading form, as in the previous day, is the “Liturgy.” The biblical imagery of its literary and poetic layer remains unchanged; the musical, by virtue of modernism, is evolving.

An important principle that unites the “Service of God” in its numerous musical versions of the early 20th century and the “Liturgy” of modern times (late 20th–early 21st century) is the imitation of both principles of a single compositional cycle. However, this is almost the only musical relationship of their kinship. In search of an argument for this problem, we will analyze one of the variants of the typical latest musical material, laid down in the “Solemn Liturgy” by Lesya Dychko.

The prayer intonations of the deacon and readers, embodying the *individualization* of each prayer, in Lesia Dychko’s “Solemn Liturgy” acquire a clear compositional-logical, intonation-rhythmic structure, which brings the personal prayer mood of the believer to the level of highly aestheticized organization and thus gives them a sense of greatness worthy of God. Thus, the latest musical thinking of the “Liturgy” transforms the sacred to the level of the transcendent attitude of the believer. We consider this work no less than a creative and philosophical rethinking of the party music of the Baroque era by means of the modern musical language. This means that the real, human imagery rises to the level of the supernatural, the divine (in the believer’s imagination–perfect). In fact, in this synthesis, sacredness elevates human nature, often at the level of the subconscious, to the vastness of

the universe, and therefore—to God. It is this sacredness that is a high degree of an “integrator” of the real earthly world of man with the perfectly higher world.

Conclusion

The symbolism of *the sacredness of Ukrainian* sacred music is the feature that distinguishes it from other components of the musical space in general. It is manifested at two levels by means of complementary functioning both in the context of the constituent phenomena and in combination with other types of church art. This *sacredness* functions as a single imagery. Through the means of symbolism and genre diversity, it is adapted to the musical and aesthetic environment of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy not only as a category of statics, but also, thanks to its specific means of musical expression and their constant evolution, as a developing one, thereby demonstrating its unrestrained dynamics and aspiration to strive forward, towards catharsis and deification of the human being.

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