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## VITALIY KYREYKO'S BODY OF WORK IN OPERAS AND BALLETS: GENRE AND STYLE CHARACTERISTICS

### Abstract

**Objective:** to research Vitaliy Kyreyko's opuses for musical theatre in the context of national Ukrainian culture, to examine their genre and style characteristics.

**Methods:** comparative historical (comparison), source criticism, logical and analytical, system-structural (systematic approach), empirical and theoretical (observation, analysis and modeling).

**Results:** basing on the V. Kyreyko's operas and ballets composer's style was considered in the terms of genre characteristics of his five operas such as 'Forest Song', 'On Sunday Morning ... (Turkynia)', 'Marco in Hell', 'Vernissage at the Fair' and 'Boyarynya', and four ballets – 'Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors', 'Witch', 'Orgy', 'Sun stone'. Have been studied their primary sources, that belong to the Ukrainian literature classics and it has been showed the relevance of his body of work.

**Scientific novelty** of the work is that V. Kyreyko's style was explored on the example of his opera and ballet opuses, examined their genre and style characteristics, determined the value of his works in Ukrainian classical history of music.

**Practical significance:** the main provisions and conclusions of this article can be used in the scientific and teaching activities in addressing issues of Ukrainian classical music and in the teaching courses like 'History of Ukrainian music', 'Ballet history', 'Opera dramaturgy', etc.

**Keywords:** Vitaliy Kyreyko, opera and ballet, Ukrainian classical music.

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The more time passes from the moment of departure to the historical dimension of the artist's life, the value of his creative heritage for future generations and importance of conveying the memories and events we witnessed increases.

The great person in the Ukrainian musical culture was Vitaliy Dmytrovych Kyreyko (1926–2016) – composer, social activist, musical critic and professor of P. I. Tchaikovsky Kyiv State Conservatoire (now National Musical Academy of Ukraine). His legacy includes 299 opuses, more than 30 critical and journalistic articles in both musicological and periodicals of Ukraine. Valuable work of the composer was a PhD dissertation on 'Arrangements

of Ukrainian folk songs for voice and piano accompaniment by Soviet composers', which is stored in the archives of Kyiv conservatoire since 1953. V. Kyreyko was a man of high intellectualism and encyclopedic knowledge in many fields, including history, Ukrainian and world literature, poetry and arts, mathematics and, of course, foreign languages: German, French, Italian, Czech, Polish, Spanish, English.

The composer's creative output includes five operas, four ballets, ten symphonies, symphonic poems, fantasies, six string quartets, concertos for violin, cello and the first in Ukraine Double concert for violin and cello with orchestra, two piano trios, quartet and quintet,

‘Symphony variations’, Poem and Fantasy for piano and orchestra; a huge piano legacy, including thirteen piano sonatas, cycles of variations and pieces; works for violin, cello, viola, all orchestral and folk instruments, as well as two cantatas, oratorio and more than 100 romances and choral works.

Currently the interest to Vitaliy Kyreyko’s music is growing, so we can talk about the relevance of his creations today.

The first opera ‘The forest song’ (op. 18, 1957), based on the eponymous fairy of Lesya Ukrainka, brought Vitaliy Kyreyko the glory of a famous composer. Artist was interested in the main plot’s conflict, which is the choice between everyday life and high poetic life, the inseparable connection of man with nature, that is the concept of higher harmony. Having written his own libretto, the composer followed the poetic text of Lesya Ukrainka. At the same time, the music not only illustrated the stage events, but also revealed inner feelings of the heroes by musical means, giving everyone vivid leitmotifs.

The first time the genre of ‘The forest song’ was determined by K. Mayburova as “lyric-philosophical drama” in her book “Vitaliy Kyreyko” in 1979<sup>1</sup>. The composer himself determined the opera’s genre as opera-extravaganza<sup>2</sup> because it based on Lesya Ukrainka’s drama-extravaganza. We agree with the both determinations. The opera has lyric-philosophical lynx, that was brightly reflected in the melodic material of the opera and philosophical generalization of the plot. The same time opera has lynx of drama-extravaganza, especially shown in the fairy forest scenes.

In the first V. Kyreyko’s opera there were manifested the main composer’s style characteristics, such as bright melodic, based on the Ukrainian folklore, romantic musical language with original harmonies, specific orchestra timbres, that show characteristics and emotion sphere of his opera’s characters, development of dramaturgy of every scene.

The opera consists of three acts that include five scenes. It begins with a symphonic prologue, in which Lukash’s leitmotif appears in flute for the first time.

In the first act we see the meeting of the main heroes Lukash and Mavka and the beginning of their love story. Music of this part is based on the Ukrainian national song

motives and filled with poetic themes of the romantic main characters.

The second act reflects Mavka’s unsuccessful attempt to fit into the everyday Lukash’s life. But the boy, by listening to his mother, starts relationships with the widow Kylyna, forcing Mavka to return back to the forest. In this fragment the music is based on the rhythmic theme of Mother and the comic leitmotif of Kylyna. The intonations of Lukash’s flute are transformed from a dreamy spring song to a dance, and Mavka’s lyric motif turns into the dramatic one.

The third act opens with a sad fragment of a melody of main heroine, it is opposed to the Kylyna’s leitmotif, revealing the tragedy of Lukash, who could not accept routine everyday life. Mavka turns into a willow, and the leitmotif of love from the first act returns to the score.

After the fire in the house of Lukash and Kylyna, the man realizes the mistake he made and the responsibility for his betrayal. From such a hopeless state, Lukash was saved by Mavka’s voice: in her aria ‘Oh, do not grieve for the body’ she assures him that the end of existence in a physical body is only the beginning of the immortality of the soul. Emphasizing the emotional and dramatic components of the *drama extravaganza* with the music, which is based on the folk songs through the author’s style, composer delivers the idea of binding together the poetic dimension of nature and high feelings against the human world.

Weather seasons have the special role in Lesya Ukrainka’s drama. They emphasize the stages of the relationship between the main characters Mavka and Lukash.

By that, ‘The Forest Song’ became not only a huge personal artist’s accomplishment, but a notable work for the national musical Ukrainian culture. In his opera, V. Kyreyko managed to express the idea of belief in the triumph of bright ideals, as well as national character of music, that became the most typical features of all of the composer’s operas.

The next opera, written by V. Kyreyko in 1965 (op. 35), was also based on a mystical source: O. Kobylanska’s novella ‘**Early on Sunday...**’. Using genre of *romantic opera drama* composer wrote bright emotion sincere music of the opera. Librettist Mykola Zotsenko changed the plot of novella according to the opera genre requirements by reducing the number of episodes as well as their order and increasing the dynamics and tension in

<sup>1</sup> Mayburova K. V., Vitaliy Kyreyko. Creative portraits of Ukrainian composers. – Kyiv, 1979. – P. 19.

<sup>2</sup> From the private talk I. Shesterenko with V. Kyreyko on 25.08.2006

the scenes. As for the changes made by the composer, he created a ballet prologue in which the main heroine Mavra betrayed her husband, and left the open ending.

The opera consists of four acts and eight pictures. The musical piece begins with a chorus of gypsies in the meadow. They are waiting for Mavra to give birth to a child, who is not her husband's. V. Kyreyko uses intonations of Gypsy folklore samples to show the main characters in this act.

The second act shows lives of Mavra and her son Hryts twenty years later. With the help of romantic musical means of expression, composer shows the main characters: Hryts, who is engaged to young girl Nastka, and another girl Turkynia (Tetiana).

The third act is devoted to development of Nastka and her fiancé Hryts relationships. V. Kyreyko finds specific intonations for different leitmotifs for the main heroes.

The fourth act opens with a big choral scene of Hryts and Nastka's wedding. It was attended by a mad Tetiana, who tried to enchant Hryts to herself. After drinking her potion, Hryts died during his own first wedding dance with wife Nastka.

To express the mysticism of the events, composer found special musical language in orchestral palette. Big choral and dance scenes fully complement the love triangle plot. In depicting contrast scenes and feelings of the heroes, V. Kyreyko used a variety of structural and genre forms, such as arias, ariozos, songs, duets, trios, quartets, recitatives, lullabies, dances. The opera has distinct vocal parts of leitmotifs structure which are on folk (Ukrainian, Gypsy and Hungarian) folklore samples.

For the next *satiric opera extravaganza* genre (our genre definition) '**Marco in Hell**' (op. 36, 1966) Vitaliy Kyreyko wrote his own libretto based on the satirical play of the same name by Ivan Kocherga. The opera marked a turn in the creativity of V. Kyreyko in the grotesque and satirical direction. We see the changes in the musical language of the composer too: in the scenes of afterlife world appear Impressionist means of expression and complex harmonic sequences, that show satiric sides of the characters.

The mythological plot of Ivan Kocherga's play-extravaganza focuses on the legend about Marko in Hell, who, as an atonement for his sin, is forced to wander forever in the afterlife world. The play consists of five acts, the last two of which take place in hell. In the opera of V. Kyreyko, the plot is divided into three acts and six pictures. The events take place during the Civil War in the USSR, when the main character soldier of the Red Army Marco arrived to the fantastic station 'Confusion' to

search for stolen by fraudsters wagons with military property. Girl Marusya and orphan Hlamushka helped the soldier to look for the thieves. The plot unfolds through the adventures of typhus patient Mark in the bizarre false world of delusions at the stations 'Confusion' and 'Devil's Dead End', hell and the kingdom of the Queen of hell Lilith, who tried to enchant Mark. Eventually, her palace collapsed, Marco recovered and left the 'Confusion' station with his friends Marusya and Hlamushka. In the opera, Vitaliy Kyreyko depicted negative phenomena of society in a satirical and grotesque form.

Working on the original source of the opera libretto, composer made changes to the scenes, intensifying the action. He added the dance episodes, significantly reduced the number of characters. The specifics of the satirical-fiction genre influenced both the drama and language intonations of the characters in the opera 'Marco in Hell'. The basic musical tool for composer is a recitative that conveys ironic connotations. V. Kyreyko used choral scenes, but in the opera they didn't have an autonomous role, but rather emphasized the emotional impulse of the scenes.

Opera 'Marco in Hell' is marked by the freshness of harmonic and orchestral colours, original means of choral expression (choir is the protagonist of the opera, the participant in the action), bright portrait-like sketches of the heroes, professional opera implementation of the satirical plot of I. Kocherga's play.

In 1986 composer wrote the new opera '**Vernissage at the Fair**' (op. 124) in **chamber comic** genre (our genre definition) on libretto by Eduard and Nadia Yavorski, based on the satirical comic novel by Hryhoriy Kvitka-Osnovyanenko 'The Soldier's Portrait'. With this work composer showed himself as an innovator of this musical theatre genre.

The novel by Hryhoriy Kvitka-Osnovyanenko, dated 1833, was subtitled 'Latin white lies, told in our way', consisted of eleven separated little stories. By depicting the system of relations between different social classes, the author raised the philosophical question of the connection between art and human being in the satirical style of burlesque.

The chamber comic opera by V. Kyreyko consists of a prologue and two acts. Librettists saved a distinct linguistic specificity for the comedy genre with the emotional dialects of the countryside and common phraseology. In the leitmotif characteristics, composer Vitaliy Kyreyko used multinational folklore (Ukrainian, Gypsy, Polish

and Russian). As in the composer's previous operas, choral scenes remained the important part of genre episodes. The work made fun of human's ignorance and inability to read and recognize the true art.

Preserving the authenticity of the original source, the opera left rural vocabulary with dialectisms, and the composer reproduced them in musical recitatives close to human language.

In the last **historical opera-drama 'Boyarynya'** (our genre definition), based on the eponymous Lesya Ukrainka's drama the composer also showed two opposing realities, two main lines, drama contradictions. This is the world of free Cossacks life and brutal world of Russian oppression and occupation, which the main characters feel on themselves.

Lesya Ukrainka's drama, written in 1910, was banned in Soviet times. It tells about the tragic destiny of the Ukrainian boyarynya Oksana, who goes to Russia with her husband, who swore allegiance to the Moscow tsar. Unable to withstand separation from his native land and the despotism of foreign captivity, woman dies.

In the plot, Ukrainian girl Oksana, was forced to leave their native Ukraine and tolerate Moscow slavery. In the opera, V. Kyreyko conveys not only the poetic, but also the socio-political direction of Lesya Ukrainka's work. The opera, written in **2003** (op. 226, libretto by Vasyl Turkevich), despite the death of the main character Boyarynya-Oksana, in the finale affirms the idea of the need for further struggle for the independence. Presenting the historical context of the time after the death of Ukrainian ruler Bohdan Khmelnytsky, librettist V. Turkevych and composer V. Kyreyko opposed the world of the Ukrainian Cossacks to the brutal despotic Russian enslavement.

Reinforcing the original source with a musical score, V. Kyreyko paid special attention to the emotional experience of the characters and the disclosure of their psychological characteristics. Oksana's leading image is shown in active dramatic development: the first love aria is built on lyrical intonations, but with the development of the plot the vocal score is getting more dramatic.

The intonation layer of Ukrainian characters is conveyed through melodic motifs of Oksana and Stepan, the world of Russian boyars is built on dry recitatives. However, composer focused not only on the fate of Boyarynya, but also on the historical irreconcilability between the

two nations, in particular, depicting the conflict at the level of two languages, which are Ukrainian and Russian. The whole conflict of the opera was built in opposition of those two dimensions.

Through the prism of Oksana and Stepan's love drama, opera reflects the idea of the Ukrainian people's struggle for freedom and dignity, and despite the heroine's death in the end of the opera, the need for the Cossacks to further defend their independence.

V. Kyreyko's ballets are also an important contribution to the treasury of Ukrainian classical music. The most complex of them is the **romantic ballet 'Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors'** (op. 21, 1959) based on the Myhaylo Kotsyubynsky's novel by the same name. The genre of the ballet was determined the first time by Ukrainian musicologist M. Zahaykevych<sup>1</sup>.

In the original story of M. Kotsyubynsky, written in 1911, poetic love and tragic death of the heroes were revealed in the context of depicting everyday life with distinct multi-genre traditions and rituals. V. Kyreyko was the first composer who embodied the plot of M. Kotsyubynsky in music (after there were created the romantic film of the same name by S. Paradzhanov with unforgettable music by M. Skoryk).

The ballet 'Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors' by V. Kyreyko has three acts (four in the old version), divided into eight pictures: the first act introduces the context of a family conflict between the Gutenyuk family, to which the girl Marichka belongs to, and the Palaychuk family, from which Ivan comes, and the friendship of a boy and a girl despite the enmity of their families. Marichka and Ivan later fall in love, but their relationship ended tragically with the death of a during the flood. The second and third acts are telling about Ivan's life after the death of Marichka, his departure to the mountains, returning and attempt to adapt to life he used to have before, which is hindered by longing for Marichka. Ivan's marriage to Palagna and household life did not help him to forget about the lost love, and he run away into the wood to look after the happy youthful memories, but the man fell into a precipice and died.

Dramatic contrast in the ballet draws two lines: the sublime pure love of Marichka and Ivan and the empty passion of Palagna and Molnar. Much attention is paid to huge genre scenes, such as wedding, men's dances in the meadow and the dramatic final episode of farewell

<sup>1</sup> Zahaykevych M. The artist and his time // Culture and life, – Kyiv, 1997. – 05.02. (in Ukrainian).

to Ivan. While creating the musical interpretation of the story, composer built the score on folk intonations of the region and ritual music, reading them through his own author's style.

Composer revealed a romantic vision of the tragic and, at the same time, bright feeling of the heroes, which becomes a symbol of the greatness of the human spirit.

The ballet was successfully staged in 1961 in the Kyiv Opera and Ballet Theatre after T. Shevchenko (choreography by Florian Kotsubynsky and Natalya Skorulska), but it didn't stay in repertoire for a long time. The first premier of the ballet in the Lviv Opera and Ballet Theatre (choreography by T. Ramonova) was less successful. Now 'Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors' are waiting for the new staging, relevant for today.

One-act *romantic* ballet '**Witch**' (op. 39, 1967, libretto by V. Nerodenko) is based on the poem of the same name by great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. It shows the tragic psychological drama of a young woman left pregnant by a soldier. People blame the young woman and call her a 'witch'. In the poem, the author addressed the theme of unhappy girls' fate, particularly during the serfdom, and the heroine warns the girls, tell about their mistake.

The ballet was successfully staged in the Lviv Opera and Ballet Theatre (choreography by V. Nerodenko) in 1968. It was shown together with One-act ballets by M. Skoryk and L. Dychko, but not a long time. Composer waited for new staging of his ballet by choreographer Dmytro Kyreyko – composer's grandson, who works in Budapest Opera and ballet Theatre. But for our days it stays not staging.

The *lyric-epic ballet* '**Orgy**' (op. 88, 1976), based on the drama by the same name by Lesya Ukrainka, is telling about a struggle of a talented independent artist against environmental injustice. Following the original source, composer reveals a philosophical problem of an artist and society. The ballet consists of two acts, and its content is concentrated in the scenes-dialogues. The main characters, as in other works by V. Kyreyko, have their own individual characteristics (leitmotifs).

The music of the ballet is based on the lyric-epic genre traditions with leisurely development of events, embodiment of the feelings of the heroes, that reduce internal dynamics of the ballet. The musical stylistics with the use of ancient folk music melodies, polyphonic

texture contributes to the disclosure of ancient images and the main psychology idea.

Despite the shortcomings of the choreographic libretto by Natalia Skorulska, the composer created his epic-lyric musical dramaturgy, based on the stylistic features of the Lesya Ukrainka's poem.

The last, fourth ballet '**The Sun Stone**' (op. 113, 1982), has typically *romantic* genre. Its plot, based on the legends of the Donetsk region, shows the hard life of miners during the capitalistic times. The libretto was made by Y. Kushakov. For the first time ballet was staged in the Donetsk Opera Theatre in 1982 by choreographer-director Y. Khasyanov. The composer told us, that the choreography was not so high professional as he wanted<sup>1</sup>. So, the ballet did not stay for a long time in the repertoire of the theatre. This was only one musical-theatrical work by V. Kyreyko, that did not base on the Ukrainian literature classic and was written by order of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine. After receiving the independence for Ukraine, the plot of ballet became irrelevant. So, composer understood that it will never be staged again. The beautiful music of several ballet numbers V. Kyreyko used later in the piano suite in his last opuses.

**Conclusions.** The results of exploring Vitaliy Kyreyko's musical and theatrical creation revealed that the composer fully expressed himself in such different theatrical genres: drama extravaganza, romantic drama, satirical opera extravaganza, chamber comic opera, romantic ballet, lyric-epic ballet. In each of the directions of theatrical and stage drama, the author managed to deeply reveal the underlying philosophical layers, by recreating the specifics of each of the genres in the score. By adapting the original sources to the requirements of opera drama, author intensified the conflict by musical meaning, raising the works to an even higher poetic level by it. The leading theme in the aesthetic and stylistic perception of the composer was the subject of devotion to the poetic dream and sincere feelings against the fate and drama.

Composer's body of work needs to be further updated and published: the vast majority of opuses are still in manuscripts given to us for safekeeping by the Kyreyko's family.

Vitaliy Kyreyko made a great contribution to the Ukrainian classical music of XX – XXI centuries by his high professional, sincere and deep music of different genres. Composer created his own stylistic system and

<sup>1</sup> From the private talk with V. Kyreyko on 23.12.2013.

musical language, which synthesizes intonations of Ukrainian songs with the achievements of European music, has a melodic and harmonic richness.

Vitaliy Dmytrovych Kyreyko's creative heritage combines several different components, forming an inner integrity that opens up new ways of research into the work of the Master Artist, who inspires others by his example.

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