

*O. Starushyk,
Student,
I. Tsyuryak,
PhD (Education), Associate Professor,
Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University*

THE CONTRIBUTION OF UKRAINIAN ARTISTS TO CONTEMPORARY SACRED MUSIC

At the beginning, let's briefly outline the key differences between classical and traditional sacred music. Classical music is characterized by complex harmony and structure, often performed by orchestras, and has formal elements that allow for the creation of large and multi-layered musical works. It can enhance concentration and self-discipline, especially in children.

Traditional sacred music, on the other hand, emphasizes melody, simplicity, and emotionality, often associated with religious rituals. This type of music is typically performed by smaller groups of performers or choirs and may include elements of improvisation.

It is important to note that while both genres can evoke strong emotions, their functions, contexts, and stylistic features differ significantly. In Ukraine, there are currently several contemporary composers who actively compose sacred music. Here are the names of some of them:

The first attempt to restore the millennium-old church tradition in the composer sphere was "Liturgia" by Lesya Dychko, which became the starting point for the birth of contemporary Ukrainian sacred music. "Liturgia" faced significant criticism from choir directors (due to the unacceptable dissonant sound range, excessive secularism, etc.), and the public's reaction was mixed. The level of choral groups at that time, trained in Soviet mass songs, was too weak for a worthy performance of such scores. Moreover, the audience lacked sufficient experience to appreciate it.

The subsequent sacred works of Yevhen Stankovych, Myroslav Skoryk, and Viktor Stepurka slowly began to restore the lost positions. A turning point came with the composer competition "Sacred Psalms" as part of the choir-festival "Golden-Domed Kyiv," where 61 scores were submitted, twelve of which reached the final, and Hanna Havrylets won the absolute victory. However, even here, there were polarizing opinions in the corridors: church music is not written on commission, it must be "suffered," and the composer must come from a church background, etc. According to Mykola Hobdych, "...this time it became clear: we are on the verge of the birth of a new contemporary sacred composer school" [4].

Yevhen Stankovych is one of the most famous Ukrainian composers whose works often have a sacred context. He writes music for choir, orchestra, and chamber ensembles. He is considered one of the prominent Ukrainian composers of our time, an internationally recognized artist whose music has been performed at international festivals and prestigious concert venues for several decades, conquering new and new stages. He combines high spirituality, modern musical language, and Ukrainian folklore in his work.

Yevhen Stankovych is the author of operas, ballets, numerous vocal-symphonic, symphonic, chamber-vocal, and instrumental works, as well as music for a large number of film and television productions. His works "Let Your Kingdom Come" (based on biblical texts) for mixed choir and symphonic orchestra, and "Psalms of War" are recognized for their deep emotional sound and significance in the context of Ukrainian culture. In April 2023, "Psalms of War" were performed at the Lviv Opera, highlighting their heroism and relevance. Yevhen Stankovych approaches these musical-philosophical questions in great detail, as well as the natural expression of indigenous folk musical phenomena. Moreover, he creates not only characteristic intonational-modal and imagistic-genre approaches but also addresses painful issues of war and tragedies for the people. Therefore, the composer's work is a bright example of the true role of an artist [2].

Myroslav Skoryk. Although his works span various genres, the composer also created sacred music, including works for choir and soloists. Specifically, his "Liturgia" is an extraordinarily complex genre, as it constantly requires orientation toward the grand examples of previous composers and internal comparisons with the requiems of Verdi, Mozart, and Ukrainian composers such as the wonderful "Liturgia" by Kyrylo Stetsenko, comparing it with contemporary composers who also write "Liturgies." Myroslav Skoryk's sacred works, like his "Liturgia," are a new chapter in a genre that most closely connects the human soul to the Almighty, bringing it closer to the world of the Divine. This work must be listened to with the soul, as it is a great achievement in Ukrainian music. In it, Myroslav Mikhaylovich, as a person, opens a new page in himself, for he is always unlike himself, finding new intonations and layers of his personality. The premiere of "Liturgia" was performed in 2005 at the National Philharmonic of Ukraine, as part of the concert series "Evenings of Ukrainian Music. Heritage and Modernity," performed by the Kyiv Chamber Choir, for which the work was written [3].

The works of the outstanding contemporary Ukrainian composer Viktor Stepurka, "Confession Liturgia" for reader, soloists, choir, organ, and symphonic orchestra in ten parts, and "Theotokian Dogmas" for choir and symphonic orchestra, are included in the ninth disc of the choir "Pochayna" as part of the cycle "Sacred Music of Europe." The writing of these works was a significant creative and philosophical feat by the composer, the founder of the modern trend of contemporary Ukrainian Orthodox sacred music. The idea for the author's conception was inspired by the work of the prominent Czech composer Leoš Janáček's "Glagolitic Mass" (1927) for soloists, choir, orchestra, and organ on Old Church Slavonic texts. Despite the similarities in musical-stylistic structures and shared Slavic liturgical ethics, these two works differ fundamentally in their prophetic nature regarding the future. "Confession Liturgia," in memory of Hetman Ivan Mazepa, creates a deeply prayerful atmosphere, in which the listener seems to look into the eyes of time, trying to read the verdict for humanity in them. The asterisked work by Viktor Stepurka continues the idea he started with his Ukrainian Orthodox Mass "Theotokian Dogmas of the 17th century" in memory of Saint Dimitry of Rostov, and it forms a diptych. Two figures—Dimitry Tuptalo (Saint Dimitry of Rostov) and Hetman Ivan Mazepa—historically connected, prompted the author to create such a grandiose compositional diptych. Undoubtedly, a crucial role

here was played by the fact that Viktor Stepurka now lives in the hometown of Dimitry Tuptalo—Makaryv in Kyiv region—and considers it his sacred duty to honor this outstanding religious figure and his patron—an exceptional person, the prominent politician Hetman Ivan Mazepa. Listening to this work offers another revelation: the sense of eternity [1].

Among contemporary Ukrainian composers and performers of sacred music, we can highlight the following: Oleksiy Shmurak, Maksym Kolomiyets, Ostap Manulyak, Ihor Zavhorodnyi, Alisa Zaika, Anna Korsun, Maksym Shalyhin, Vitaliy Hromadskyi, Oleksandr Shchetynin, and Oleksiy Voytenko. They actively work in the sacred music genre and contribute to the development of the Ukrainian musical tradition [5].

These are just a few examples, and, of course, there are other composers who turn to spirituality in their music.

Thus, the cultural situation of the 2020s has significantly changed: the musical movement is experiencing a special rise, with the revival of ancient masterpieces. Professional municipal and philharmonic groups advocating primarily for sacred music are being organized across Ukraine. In the composer community, it has become common to write music on liturgical texts; musicologists, who now have access to monastic libraries and previously closed archives from the Soviet era, have taken the first important steps in systematizing the discovered materials. This work will continue, but it is already clear that Ukraine is the heir to one of the richest spiritual and musical cultures in the world.

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