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Oleh Sokolovskyi

Maksym Melnychuk

Sviatoslav Melnychuk

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SPIRITUAL MUSIC AS A FACTOR OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN UKRAINIAN ORTHODOXY

By Oleh Sokolovskyi, Maksym Melnychuk, and Sviatoslav Melnychuk

Oleh Sokolovskyi, Doctor of Sciences (Philosophy), Professor, Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Political Science of Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University. Zhytomyr. Ukraine.

E-mail: osokol_83@ukr.net

ORCID: 0000-0003-2228-3040

Maksym Melnychuk, Candidate of Philosophical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophy of the National University of Water and Environmental Engineering. Rivne. Ukraine.

Email: m.s.melnuchyk@nuwm.edu.ua

ORCID: 0000-0002-4299-968X

Sviatoslav Melnychuk, Professor, Professor of the Department of Folk Instruments Institute of Arts of Rivne State Humanitarian University, People's Artist of Ukraine, Honored Art Worker of Ukraine. Rivne. Ukraine.

E-mail: hirow@ukr.net

ORCID: 0000-0002-9638-7136

Abstract

This scholarly article explores current challenges and spiritual-cultural trends arising in the context of historical events and civilizational transformations experienced by contemporary Ukraine. The study focuses on the revival of authentic traditions of sacred musical art within Ukrainian Orthodoxy, regarded as one of the fundamental factors in the formation of national identity. Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines religious studies, philosophy, art history, and cultural studies, the research analyzes musical sacredness as a phenomenon of numinous experience imbued with transcendental meaning and cathartic energy. The spiritual music of the Orthodox tradition functions as a form of irrational union with the Absolute, representing a sacred-symbolic model of communication with the Creator. This music emerges not only as an aesthetic phenomenon but also as a specific way of expressing a prayerful dialogue rooted in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church. Spiritual music serves as a symbolic form through which the language of sacred art acquires theological and anthropological significance, embodying an appeal to the Source of Being. The spiritual musical art of Orthodoxy is not merely an acoustic phenomenon but a semantic attunement of consciousness to religious-ontological experience. Thanks to the creative works of brilliant composers of the past, sacred music appears as an energetic carrier of divine presence, operating through acoustic and sensory expressions within traditional culture. Prayerful singing, as a verbal embodiment of the sacred, serves as a mediator between the earthly and the heavenly, revealing the profound essence of Christian symbolism. Thus, Ukrainian spiritual musical art is presented as a phenomenon of sacralized cultural heritage, in which the mystical dimension of Christian faith is revealed, and the personal essence of God is unveiled within the historical-religious continuity of the Orthodox tradition.

Keywords: spirituality, religious identity, religious art, sacred, church music, Orthodoxy, spiritual experience, spiritual practice.

Introduction

The musical religious art of Ukrainian Orthodoxy constitutes an integral part of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people, formed within the context of the Eastern

Christian tradition. As a sacred phenomenon, it combines a liturgical-practical function with an aesthetic-theological representation of Orthodox spirituality. Given its genetic kinship with the Byzantine church singing tradition, Ukrainian religious music-making requires not only musicological or art-historical interpretation but also a profound analysis from the perspective of religious studies. However, despite the significance of this phenomenon for understanding confessional identity and religious practice, scholarly reflection on it remains largely episodic, unsystematic, and often confined to source-based or purely philological approaches. This is due both to the historical peculiarities of the musical tradition's functioning (oral transmission, the absence of musical notation in the early period, socio-political repression, and linguistic and regional variability), and to the complexity of interdisciplinary analysis of the phenomenon itself. In this study, the authors propose a conceptual model for systematizing knowledge about sacred music in the Orthodox tradition along several vectors: the theological (the content-related and dogmatic aspects of church singing), the source-based (the study of authentic texts and musical notation monuments), the art-historical (the aesthetic principles of church musical style), and the functional (the place and role of music in the liturgical, ritual, and communicative dimensions of religious life). This approach aims to overcome the fragmentariness of previous studies and to form a holistic religious-studies understanding of the Ukrainian Orthodox musical tradition as a unique spiritual and cultural phenomenon.

Exegesis of the Characteristics of the Ukrainian Spiritual Music Phenomenon in the Focus of Scholarly Contemplation

In contemporary theological discourse, it is acknowledged that liturgical singing, as a form of sacred musical art in the Orthodox tradition, is not merely a product of the spiritual culture of past centuries, but is also directly connected with the overall Church history and the formation of the Church as both a charismatic and socio-cultural institution. At the same time, in the field of religious studies, there are attempts to justify the atemporal, transhistorical nature of the origin of liturgical singing by interpreting it as an immanent component of human religious nature, conditioned by the anthropological need for transcendental address.

In this context, the concept proposed by Yuliia Dergun¹ deserves attention; she interprets liturgical singing as a phenomenon of divine nature—that is, as a form of direct divine inspiration. Such singing appears as a dynamic manifestation of the sacred feelings ontologically embedded in the human being and directed toward the Absolute.

¹ Ю. Дергун. Михайло Литвиненко: “Я не можу увійти до храму, не помолившись...” [Mykhailo Litvinenko: “I cannot enter the temple without praying...”]. *Арт лайн*. 1999. № 4. 27-28.

In the course of this study, a terminological and conceptual diversity (a conceptual-categorical pluralism) has been identified, which emerged through the prolonged functioning and interpretation of liturgical singing in Ukrainian spiritual culture. This is evidenced by the works of Porfiry Bazhanskyi,² Mykola Hrinchenko,³ as well as representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora—Oleksandr Koshyts,⁴ Pavlo Matsenko,⁵ and Myroslav Antonovych⁶—who shaped the corresponding scholarly paradigms in their studies. Monographs by Onysiia Shreier-Tkachenko,⁷ Pylyp Kozytyskyi,⁸ Nina Herasymova-Persydska,⁹ Lidiia Kornii,¹⁰ and others also reflect the presence of semantic and methodological heterogeneity in defining the subject of research.

From the perspective of religious studies, the hymnographic dimension of Orthodox worship is of particular interest. A significant part of the liturgical texts, primarily hymns, were not only translated from Old Greek but also created by Slavic authors to glorify saints associated with the Christianization of the Slavic peoples: Saints Cyril and Methodius, Demetrius of Thessaloniki, Clement and John of Rila, Wenceslaus and Ludmila of Bohemia, and Sava of Serbia. These texts became not only a liturgical heritage but also a source of inspiration for native hymnography, especially in the veneration of Kyiv saints—Olga, Volodymyr, Borys and Hlib, and Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves.

According to Serhii Kotenko,¹¹ the penetration of the Eastern Christian singing tradition into the territory of Kyivan Rus' occurred indirectly—through Byzantine-Bulgarian cultural mediation, which ultimately leads it back to the sources of Near Eastern sacred art. The art-historical interpretation of church singing was initiated by Volodymyr Odoyevsky, who in the 1860s began the systematic study of Znamenny Chant—the vocal tradition of Orthodox

² Н. Кушлик. Порфи́рій Бажанський – сторінки життя і творчості. [Porfiry Bazhansky – pages of life and creativity]. *Вісник Прикарпатського університету*. Вип. 5. Івано-Франківськ, 2003. 16-24.

³ М. О. Грінченко. Вибране [Selected]. Київ : Рад. шк., 1959. 532 с.

⁴ О. Кошиць. Релігійні канти та псалми українського народу (аранжування на мішаний хор). [Religious cantos and psalms of the Ukrainian people (arranged for mixed choir)]. Київ; Ляйпціг: Українська накладня. 1918. 57.

⁵ П. Маценко. Нариси до історії української церковної музики. [Essays on the history of Ukrainian church music]. Репринтне видання. К.: Муз. Україна, 1994. 152.

⁶ М. Антонович. *Musica Sacra*: Збірник статей з історії української церковної музики. [Musica Sacra: A collection of articles on the history of Ukrainian church music]. Львів 1997. 261.

⁷ О. Я. Шреєр-Ткаченко. Історія української музики. Розвиток української музичної культури від найдавніших часів до середини XIX століття. [History of Ukrainian Music. The Development of Ukrainian Musical Culture from Ancient Times to the Mid-19th Century]. Київ: Музична Україна 1980. 235.

⁸ П. Козицький. Спів і музика в українській академії за 300 років її існування. [Singing and music in the Ukrainian academy over 300 years of its existence]. К.: Муз. Україна, 1971. 147.

⁹ Н. Герасимова-Персидська. Хоровий концерт на Україні в XVII–XVIII ст. [Choral concert in Ukraine in the 17th–18th centuries]. Київ: Музична Україна 1978. 181.

¹⁰ Л. Корній. Історія української музики. [History of Ukrainian music]. Ч. 2. Київ; Харків; Нью-Йорк: Вид. М. П. Коць, 1998. 388.

¹¹ С. К. Котенко. До питання походження церковного співу на Україні. [On the question of the origin of church singing in Ukraine]. *Всеукраїнська науково-творча конференція “Проблеми розвитку художньої культури”*. К., 1994. 68-70.

worship based on neumatic notation and aligned with canonical liturgical texts. Odoyevsky attached special importance to the cultural-historical and aesthetic potential of this tradition, particularly in the context of forming a national church style during the era of Kyivan Rus'. In his research, he relied on the works of Ukrainian theorists of Old Rus' monody—Ivan Shaidura, Tykhon Makariievsky, and Oleksandr Mezenets. Although some of his hypotheses now require reinterpretation, Odoyevsky's foundational contribution to the field of musical theology remains significant.

His successor, Stepan Smolenskyi, shared Oleksandr Mezenets's¹² concept of the autochthonous origin of Znamenny Chant, emphasizing that this tradition was formed on the basis of the spiritual culture of Kyivan Rus'. At the same time, Smolenskyi preferred restorative approaches, striving to return neumatic chant to contemporary liturgical practice. However, this raises discussions about whether such restoration corresponds to the historical development and the nature of liturgical innovation inherent in the Church tradition.

In the 20th century, the study of the Old Rus' tradition of Orthodox singing in the context of Kyivan Rus' spiritual culture was continued by Viktor Belyaev and Maksym Brazhnykov. Their research enriched the academic base with new sources and offered new interpretative aspects of the singing tradition, particularly the study of neumatic notation in its most complex forms, demonstrating a high level of expertise and deep understanding of liturgical-musical heritage.

Religious Studies Transcriptions of Ukrainian Spiritual Music-Making

Beginning in the late 15th century, a new stage in the history of Ukrainian church singing emerged, marking a gradual transition from the ancient monodic tradition to more complex forms of liturgical music-making. Sacred music achieved a higher degree of structural organization and stylistic expressiveness in the second half of the 16th century. Individual liturgical singing books—such as the *Obikhod* (a collection of daily chants), *Oktoikh* (a collection of chants in eight tones), *Irmologion* (a collection of hymns), and *Stichirarion* (biblical-themed chants)—were gradually replaced by a unified source of liturgical singing tradition: the handwritten book *Irmologion* (from the Greek εἰρμός—“interweaving”). This collection is one of the most important sources of musical structuring of Orthodox worship, incorporating the main elements of liturgical singing from the Eastern Christian tradition.

The library collections of Ukraine and Poland preserve over a thousand handwritten *Irmologia*, written in staff or neumatic notation. Their paleographic deciphering, structural

¹² М. Антонович. *Musica Sacra: Збірник статей з історії української церковної музики*. [Musica Sacra: A collection of articles on the history of Ukrainian church music]. Львів 1997. 75.

analysis, and cataloging have become the subject of academic work by Yurii Yasynovskiy, who demonstrated the existence of a unique, autochthonous type of Ukrainian church-singing tradition.¹³ The poetic nature of the *Irmologia* texts was also examined by Pavlo Matsenko and Ivan Ohienko (Metropolitan Ilarion), who justified the aesthetic-literary status of Old Slavic translations of Byzantine hymnography as samples of sacred poetry. Despite the presence of Bulgarian, Serbian, or Greek influences in these texts, the majority of *Irmologion* melodies have a genetic connection to Ukrainian monophonic singing practice

The Baroque era was marked by the flourishing of new forms of spiritual music-making within the Orthodox tradition—in particular, the emergence of the genre of the spiritual kant (Orthodox chant) and polyphonic partesna music. The spiritual kant is a synthetic genre of sacred music-making, harmoniously combining religious poetry and music to create a new form of theological-aesthetic reception. Initially, these works were distributed in handwritten collections, often organized by thematic headings, which later served as the basis for printed compilations under the title *Bohklasnyky*. The first of these was published in Kraków in 1631. Uniate reissues appeared in Pochaiv in 1790, 1805, and 1825, while Orthodox editions emerged only at the beginning of the 20th century (1900, 1902).

The kant as a musical-religious phenomenon was thoroughly studied by Nina Herasymova-Persydska, who emphasized its significance for shaping the stylistic characteristics of partesna polyphony.¹⁴ This genre was also explored by Onysii Shreier-Tkachenko, who focused on the domestic aspect of sacred spiritual song samples.¹⁵ It is worth noting that the poetics of the kant, especially in its early forms (16th century), is closely connected with the activities of Ukrainian Orthodox brotherhoods, particularly the Lviv Dormition Brotherhood, which fostered a favorable environment for the development of this genre.¹⁶

The Musical Grammar (*Hramatyka Muzykalna*) by Mykola Dyletskyi gained special significance for the formation of professional spiritual music-making in the Baroque period. It was the first Ukrainian musicological work in which the author advocated the need to reform music education methods and introduce modern theoretical approaches. The work reflects

¹³ Ю. Ясиновський. Українська сакральна монодія. Історія, тексти, музично-стильові навірстування. [Ukrainian sacred monody. History, texts, musical and stylistic adaptations]. Дис. д - ра мистецтвознавства. Львів: Вищий держ. муз. ін-т ім. М. Лисенка, 1996. 422.

¹⁴ Н. Герасимова-Персидська. Хоровий концерт на Україні в XVII–XVIII ст. [Choral concert in Ukraine in the 17th–18th centuries]. Київ: Музична Україна, 1978. 181.

¹⁵ О. Я. Шреєр-Ткаченко. Історія української музики. Розвиток української музичної культури від найдавніших часів до середини XIX століття. [History of Ukrainian Music. The Development of Ukrainian Musical Culture from Ancient Times to the Mid-19th Century]. Київ: Музична Україна, 1980. 86–87.

¹⁶ Я. Ісаєвич. Братства та їх роль у розвитку української музичної культури XVI–XVIII ст. [Brotherhoods and their role in the development of Ukrainian musical culture in the 16th–18th centuries]. К.: Муз. Україна, 1966. 88.

humanist sentiment, the influence of Baroque aesthetics, and the specificity of the musical style of the era. Dyletskyi's theoretical and pedagogical legacy, along with his compositional work, was thoroughly studied by the aforementioned O. Shreier-Tkachenko.¹⁷

Partes singing, as a vivid form of polyphonic church music, illustrates the complex dialectic of the evolution of sacred musical art in Ukrainian Orthodoxy—from overcoming archaic monophonic forms to the formation of a new stylistic paradigm that laid the foundation for the further development of Ukrainian sacred music. The genre of the partes concerto, which emerged in the Ukrainian lands in the first half of the 17th century, represents a new aesthetic quality of church singing within the post-Byzantine tradition.

Despite the significance of this period for the national spiritual culture of the 17th-18th centuries, a significant part of the partes music remains insufficiently studied due to both objective and politically ideological reasons. From the second half of the 17th century, many Ukrainian composers and their works were assimilated within the cultural policy of the Russian Empire, where these achievements came to be regarded as part of the “great power” canon. This issue was rightly pointed out by the prominent cultural historian Dmytro Likhachov, who emphasized the substantial influence of Ukrainian spiritual-artistic experience on Russian church culture, particularly in music and icon painting.¹⁸

As a result of the mass migration of bearers of the partes tradition to Muscovy, numerous Ukrainian handwritten musical manuscripts also ended up there, many of which were later incorporated into the corpus of “Russian” church music. Meanwhile, only a limited number of such works have been preserved in Ukraine. A vivid testimony to the development of partes singing in Ukraine is the Register of Music Notebooks of the Lviv Assumption Brotherhood of 1697, which contains 372 partes compositions—choral concertos, canons, communion chants, and services for 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and even 12 voices.

The chronology, description, and cataloging of the partes repertoire preserved in Ukraine (particularly in Kyiv, where over six hundred manuscripts from the collections of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and St. Sophia Cathedral are now housed in the Manuscript Institute of the V. I. Vernadskyi National Library of Ukraine) were carried out by Nina Herasymova-Persydka. Thanks to her research, especially her monograph *The Choral Concerto in Ukraine in the 17th–18th Centuries*, the history of the partes concerto received a comprehensive

¹⁷ О. Я. Шреєр-Ткаченко. Історія української музики. Розвиток української музичної культури від найдавніших часів до середини XIX століття. [History of Ukrainian Music. The Development of Ukrainian Musical Culture from Ancient Times to the Mid-19th Century]. Київ: Музична Україна 1980. 7-87.

¹⁸ Н. Герасимова-Персидська. Хоровий концерт на Україні в XVII–XVIII ст. [Choral concert in Ukraine in the 17th–18th centuries]. Київ: Музична Україна 1978. 3-4.

scholarly interpretation that proved more systematic than studies of cult monody or the genre of the sacred kant.

The emergence of new-style sacred music in the second half of the 18th century was a logical consequence of the development of the partes tradition. Composers such as Maksym Berezhovsky, Dmytro Bortniansky, and Artemii Vedel established a new type of Ukrainian sacred music that combined elements of Baroque polystylism with classical forms. Their legacy represents the pinnacle of the national style within Orthodox sacred art. One of the key factors in the formation of this tradition is rightly seen by researchers as the development of the national system of musical education, which was formed in the brotherhood schools. This topic is given a separate section in Lidiia Kornii's work *History of Ukrainian Music*.¹⁹

Throughout its history, Ukrainian sacred music has demonstrated terminological polysemy and conceptual diversity. Its earliest forms are marked by a variety of categorical designations: "znamennyi chant," "cult monody," "professional monody," "hymnography," "church music," "liturgical music," etc. In the works of Yurii Yasynovskyi, particular attention is paid to issues of terminological precision. In his view, the most comprehensive and professionally appropriate term for denoting traditional monophonic church singing is hymnography.²⁰

The Baroque period of the 17th to the first half of the 18th century was represented by the sacred kant and partes music. The Enlightenment era marked the emergence of new-style sacred music in the aesthetics of classicism, while the Romantic period (19th - early 20th centuries) saw the creation of a new national type of sacred music based on folk foundations. Functionally diverse types of sacred music (temple, ritual, liturgical, cult, religious) were realized in the system of liturgical-ritual practice of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

In the works of leading early 20th-century researchers, the subject area was most often defined by the term "church music." Later, within the evolution of religious and musicological discourse, a new terminological dominant gradually formed—"sacred music." For example, Pylyp Kozytskyi uses the concept "church music" while referring to its classicist form as "sacred choral concerto."²¹

Studying the phenomenon of ancient Ukrainian music in the context of religious exegesis, Myroslav Antonovych grants it the status of "church" or "liturgical" music, although,

¹⁹ Л. Корній. Історія української музики. [History of Ukrainian music]. Ч. 2. Київ; Харків; Нью-Йорк: Вид. М. П. Коць, 1998. 66-72.

²⁰ Ю. Ясинівський. Українська сакральна монодія. Історія, тексти, музично-стильові навірстування. [Ukrainian sacred monody. History, texts, musical and stylistic adaptations]. Дис. д-ра мистецтвознавства. Львів: Вищий держ. муз. ін-т ім. М. Лисенка, 1996. 7-8.

²¹ П. Козицький. Спів і музика в українській академії за 300 років її існування. [Singing and music in the Ukrainian academy over 300 years of its existence]. К.: Муз. Україна, 1971. 147.

considering the literary-poetic mediation, he leans toward interpreting it as “sacred.”²² Under the notions of church service and church music, the researcher understands “separate spheres of spiritual life.” He pays special attention to the a cappella nature of the Ukrainian liturgical tradition, which, in his view, possesses those emotional-aesthetic qualities that correspond to the deep traits of the Ukrainian people’s spirituality. Antonovych defines this type of singing as “the singing of the heart,” seeing in it manifestations of deep lyricism and an expression of the national spirit. In it, the scholar discerns an aesthetic-semantic parallel with the original Christian worship. He also grants music of the classicist period an exclusively sacred status, associating it with the work of world-renowned Ukrainian composers—Maksym Berezovsky, Dmytro Bortniansky, and Artemii Vedel.

Nina Herasymova-Persydska, studying the Ukrainian choral concerto of the 17th-18th centuries through the lens of musicological analysis, also offers a worldview interpretation of this phenomenon. In her research, she traces the process of differentiation of musical material developed within the church tradition and the emergence of an autonomous secular line. The scholar emphasizes the formation of two interrelated but functionally distinct branches: secular kants, oratorios, and purely sacred concertos that retain a liturgical purpose. She specifically notes that the sacred concerto of the late 18th century represents a qualitatively new type of church art.

A similar position is held by Larysa Kornii, who identifies two leading vectors in the Ukrainian musical tradition: the classical stratum of Ukrainian musical folklore and professional sacred music. She interprets the latter mostly in terms of church music and liturgical singing, correlating its initial stage with forms of monody, in particular as “church monody” in a monophonic rendering. According to her, the *partes concerto* marks the conclusion of the 17th - early 18th-century stage, while the sacred concerto represents the classical phase of development of the phenomenon. In the terminological framework used by her, the category “church music” prevails as the system-forming one.²³

Among the wide spectrum of terminological approaches, it is worth mentioning the concept of Mstyslav Yurchenko, who analyzes the phenomenon through the prism of the terms religious, church, and liturgical singing, while also attempting to reduce this conceptual variety to a generalized definition—church singing. He also includes in this category the paraliturgical forms of choral music, which possess religious content but are not always part of the official liturgical canon (e.g., choral concertos on sacred texts, psalms, kants, carols). He designates

²² М. Антонович. *Musica Sacra: Збірник статей з історії української церковної музики*. [Musica Sacra: A collection of articles on the history of Ukrainian church music]. Львів 1997. 261.

²³ Л. Корній. *Історія української музики*. [History of Ukrainian music]. Ч. 1. Київ; Харків; Нью-Йорк: Вид. М. П. Коць, 1996. 70.

this type of creativity as paraliturgical musical practice, uniting it with the official church singing tradition under the category of sacred music.²⁴

In an attempt to conceptually generalize the terminological palette, modern scholar Yurii Yasynovskyi offers a clear distinction of terms. Thus, in his opinion, the terms church, liturgical, and ritual music are functionally close, as they denote music performed within the church ritual. In contrast, the terms Christian and Orthodox indicate the confessional affiliation of the musical phenomenon. The category religious music is interpreted as broader in content, as it encompasses not only liturgical but also secular religious music. The term sacred music, according to the scholar, is an aesthetic-philosophical category denoting music imbued with harmony, beauty, and deep meaning. This music may have both cultic and non-cultic functions, and may even exist within secular tradition when it carries signs of sacredness.

In this vein, the terms temple, cult, and sacred music also have distinct semantic implications. In particular, temple music refers exclusively to music performed in religious buildings; cult music—to that which accompanies ritual actions according to canonical tradition; sacred music—to the category emphasizing the holy and transcendent character of the musical text.

In this sense, the term church music is usually equated with the categories liturgical, ritual, and cult music. As Yurii Yasynovskyi rightly observes, the very attempt to emphasize the liturgical function of this music led to the establishment of the term church music as a professional category.²⁵ After all, it refers primarily to an art form that constitutes an organic part of Orthodox worship, representing a holistic religious-aesthetic model of the sacred culture of the Ukrainian people.

The explicit polyphony of reflections regarding the conceptual-categorical definition of the subject of our study indicates, on the one hand, the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomenon itself, and on the other, reveals the limitations of existing research approaches, which are usually based on narrowly specialized methodologies and classifications. In most cases, various definitions are used without conceptual justification, as if they are self-evident, which creates a sense of semantic incompleteness. It is worth noting that scholars of religious studies and philosophy often bypass this issue, avoiding its comprehensive conceptual analysis.

Without diminishing the value of existing terminological definitions (religious, liturgical, ritual, Christian, Orthodox, ecclesial, cultic, sacred, church, etc.), a philosophical

²⁴ М. Юрченко. Духовна музика. [Spiritual music]. *Історія укр. музики: в 6 т.: наукове видання*. Київ: Наукова думка, 1992. Т. IV: 1917–1941. 105-124.

²⁵ Ю. Ясиновський. Українська сакральна монодія. Історія, тексти, музично-стильові наверстування. [Ukrainian sacred monody. History, texts, musical and stylistic adaptations]. Дис. д - ра мистецтвознавства. Львів: Вищий держ. муз. ін-т ім. М. Лисенка, 1996. 7.

and religious studies understanding of the subject requires a more generalized and representative term, capable of encompassing the full spectrum of the phenomenon's functioning and semantic content. The common denominator for all the aforementioned definitions is the attributive component—music, which sets the foundation for the phenomenological specificity of this complex phenomenon. This specificity is expressed in a broad palette of sacred and parasacred forms, which we propose to designate with the category musicking.

As a form of aesthetic activity, musicking not only acoustically represents the sacred but also conveys it as a value, becoming the bearer and mode of expression of aesthetic and religious experience. This position allows us to formulate a new, conceptually significant category—the musical-aesthetic space of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, which represents not only liturgical practice but also the anthropological measurability of the sacred, rooted in the activity of the individual—creator, performer, listener.

Thanks to the human factor, this musical-aesthetic space acquires the nature of personal meaning-making, in which the spiritual appears as the result of the intentional striving of a person toward the Absolute. In this context, the musical-aesthetic dimension of Orthodoxy may be elevated to the level of the most generalizing concept—spiritual music.

The concept of spiritual music has deep traditions, as even in the early Middle Ages it denoted singing performed to biblical or similarly regarded texts, presupposing an address to God, the expression of faith, and belonging to a religious community. This understanding remains today in both theological and broad cultural and everyday discourse. Spiritual music is perceived not only as an aesthetic reflection of religiosity but also as a manifestation of the ontological presence of the spirit of the Church, which in theological terms is the mystical body of Jesus Christ—a sacred community of believers mediating between God and humanity.

In this worldview context, it is appropriate to ask: Is the category of spiritual music sufficiently representative to denote the full diversity of semantic layers of sacred musicking? In answering this, it is necessary first to outline the concept of spirituality. In the philosophical-anthropological sense, spirituality is a dimension of being associated with the transcendent horizon of the human person, their relationship to God, faith, the Church; it is also an expression of the inner life of the soul – intellectual, moral, emotional-sensory, and meaning-creating capacities.

In a narrow sense, spirituality is transmitted through biblical-poetic imagery that preserves sacred archetypes in cultural memory. In a broad sense, spirituality functions as a process of human self-realization in their meaningful becoming, where music is not only a form of aesthetic experience but also a means of existential presence in the sacred. Through a

person's dialogue with the transcendent in music, the spiritual emerges not as a set of predefined qualities but as an ontological event, in which the individual acquires their own identity in interaction with higher reality.²⁶

Conclusion

Music within the tradition of Ukrainian Orthodoxy appears as a holistic phenomenon that embodies the spiritual in both its narrow (liturgical, ceremonial) and broad (aesthetic-anthropological, existential) meanings. Orthodox musicking, being exclusively vocal in nature, initially existed as a form of chant that for centuries preserved the oral nature of sacred communication. As early as the mid-17th century, the categories "liturgical chant" and "music" were semantically synthesized within the ancient Greek concept of μουσική (musikē) – not music as art in general, but specifically divine, religious, ritual, ecclesiastical—that is, spiritual by its nature.

In this context, Orthodox musicking should be understood as sung music, which through a particular type of musical-intellectual thinking and vocal expression produces sacred imagery and serves as a bearer of the spiritual in its multivalent semantic field. However, such an understanding of the spiritual is, in our view, only schematic, as it reflects the general contours of the phenomenon without revealing its essential depth. For philosophical and scientific analysis, there arises the need for a conceptually integrated definition of the subject, as the accuracy and completeness of its definition determine the adequacy of the cognitive process and its analytical and interpretive validity.

The category of the spiritual serves in this context as the semantic starting point that determines the logic of our research approach. Taking into account the existing theoretical groundwork, the spatio-temporal context, and the current tasks of the humanities, we propose the concept of a philosophical interpretation of the phenomenon of spiritual music within the Ukrainian Orthodox tradition as an integral cultural-religious formation.

A generalized understanding of this phenomenon as a unity of ritual, aesthetic, theological, and anthropological dimensions allows us to define it as a form of religious-musical discourse, which is characterized by a clear spiritual constant (appeal to the transcendent); ritual-liturgical purpose (within the structure of Orthodox worship); sociocultural functionality (representation of national spiritual identity); a high degree of suggestive impact (through acoustic symbolism and liturgical context); adaptability to dynamic modern conditions (through the synthesis of tradition and modernity).

²⁶ О. П. Наконечна. Естетичне як тип духовності. [Aesthetic as a type of spirituality]. Рівне: БАТ Рівненська друкарня, 2002. 96.

Spiritual music of Ukrainian Orthodoxy not only harmoniously coexists with other forms of sacred art (architecture, iconography, liturgical text), but also creates an imaginative-dynamic space that enriches the Church's ritual practice. It acts as a means of overcoming rigid canon law by rethinking tradition as something living and open to new meanings. It is precisely in this ability for renewal, while preserving its authentic form, that spiritual music becomes a revitalizing factor of religious experience.

As a phenomenon of sacred culture, the spiritual music of Ukrainian Orthodoxy remains relevant in the context of global cultural transformations. Its ontological originality, linked to national tradition and Christian worldview, allows it to be viewed as an immortal phenomenon of Ukrainian spiritual culture, maintaining its value-creating and identity-forming functions within contemporary religious consciousness.

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