

## MODERN UKRAINIAN OPERA: VARIETIES OF GENRES

SVETLANA SHCHITOVA<sup>1</sup>, VALENTYNA BRONDZIA MARTYNYUK<sup>2</sup>

**SUMMARY.** The article examines the state of modern Ukrainian opera of the 21st century, which reflects European and global trends aimed at updating the genre and searching for new genre models. The authors of the article purposefully chose works by composers of almost all age categories, which are quite different in terms of genre content – interpretation of traditions and innovation – from creative youth to the most famous artists in the whole world (E. Stankovich), and consciously focused attention on examples of modern opera from several regions of Ukraine: Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa, Lviv, Dnipro. This work, dedicated to modern Ukrainian opera, combined the efforts of a practicing composer and a musicologist-scientist. After all, the material of research in one of the sections of the article was the parody comic opera by Valentina Martynyuk (Bronzia) as an example of the only opera performance in the Dnieper region. The research methodology is based on historical-typological, genre-stylistic, comparative, and analytical methods. The historical -typological method is related to the problems of the opera genre at the modern stage, which needs updating and radical changes; genre-stylistic, comparative, and analytical methods allow us to draw conclusions about the peculiarities of genre models of modern Ukrainian operas. They reflect Ukrainian national traditions, including authentic music and modern compositional techniques. It is noted that the level of the ratio of traditional and innovative appeal to the opera genre is determined by the individual creative approach of a certain composer and director.

**Keywords:** director, double world, genre, comic, modern opera, project, simultaneous, synthesis.

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## Results and Discussions

In the modern opera of Ukraine, pan-European trends are revealed, which is evident in its genre and style diversity, the interweaving of different genre standards. Simultaneous dramaturgy allows you to combine phantasmagoria and symbolism, allegorical and futuristic, ceremonial, and absurd, archaic, and modern.

That is, one way or another, they feel that they are in a state of duality with opposing or co-existing worlds - internal and external, real, and unreal. Such versatility is combined with the conceptuality of the declared opera performances, which makes them unique and significant. The proof of this is the recognition of several operas («When the Fern Blooms», «IYOV», «CHORNOBYLDORF», etc.) as the best examples of the genre at the current stage.

We consider it relevant to discuss the problem of the existence of modern Ukrainian opera at the beginning of the 21st century (by modern operas we mean mainly works composed or staged in a new alternative version in the 2000s), which manifests itself through genre diversity. In this, it follows global trends.

In its pure form, opera as a stable conservative genre is increasingly moving away from the interests not only of today's audience, but also of its creators. Being in a state of crisis, modern opera offers a way out of it through new forms of communication with the listener. It is fueled by interspersions, ingrowths into it of elements of different cultures, different styles, genres – musical and non-musical. Genre mixing, hybridity, and mixing indicate the main vectoriality of the modern opera house – to attract the viewer, to impress him. But one cannot discount the general desire for spectacle, theatricality in any genres, and, on the contrary, the maximum approximation of operas to the topicality of cinema, the conceptuality of theater, the dynamics and hidden symbolism of pantomime movements and choreography, the creativity of the sounds of water and under water («You who will emerge from the flood...» A. Infanti, D. Snapper, 2010) etc. Such genre experiments naturally involve new selections of means of musical expressiveness, the introduction of innovative technical methods of visualization (installations, holograms, light screen, laser effects, etc.) or radical reincarnation of even authentic sources based on allusion, correlation, collage, reduction.

Often in modern operas, one feels that the action is in a certain "two-world" with a typical combination of anti-worlds within a common space. In addition, the approach of several operas works to the noir style, which is characteristic in most cinematography and literature, is a factor.

The most revealing **postmodern operas of modern Ukraine of the «lhybrid» type** are:

- E. Stankovych «When the Fern Blooms» – *folk-opera* (libretto by O. Stelmashenko based on fragments of works by M. Gogol, theatrical premiere in 2017) reproduces authentic national folklore, folk rites;
- G. Gubarenko «Viy» – *opera-ballet* (production 2014, directed by G. Kovtun) based on the novel by M. Gogol, where the entire dramaturgy is subordinated to the disclosure of the two worlds;
- I. Razumeyko, R. Grigoriv «IYOV»<sup>3</sup> – *requiem-opera* (2015, directed by V. Troitsky) with a Latin text from the book of the Old Testament of the Bible and a funeral mass;
- I. Razumeyko, R. Hryhoriv «CHORNOBYLDORF» (2020, directed by V. Troitskyi – a new genre with elements of performance, demonstration of Ukrainian locations and bold vocal solutions;
- I. Haydenko «Skovoroda-live» (2020) – *monoopera* for soloist and choir with lyrics by H. Skovoroda;
- K. Tsepkenko «The Fate of Dorian» (2021, libretto by S. Stupak, director A. Lytvynov) – *noir-opera* based on the novel by O. Wald «The Picture of Dorian Gray», a musical performance-phantasmagoria;
- M. Oliinyk «Ukraine Terra Incognita» (2020) is an *opera-myth* dedicated to the Hero of Ukraine, opera singer V. Slipak, combines academic symphonic music, archaeological singing, free jazz, video art and performance.

**The purpose** of the study is to reveal the genre features of modern opera in Ukraine.

To achieve the set goal, he follows **tasks** must be solved:

- to outline the perspective of the development of modern Ukrainian opera;
- to establish characteristic features of genre subspecies of opera;
- to reveal the peculiarities of the implementation of various genre models in modern Ukrainian opera.

**Research methods:**

- the searching – for finding works of the specified genres;
- the analytical – when studying musical works;
- methods of systematic analysis and synthesis for researching means of genre features of modern Ukrainian operas.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2018 according to Music Theater Now «Iyov» entered the Top 10 best operas of our time.

## Results and Discussions

In our research, we rely on the scientific works of A. Arefeva<sup>4</sup>, O. Berehova<sup>5</sup>, A. Yefimenko<sup>6</sup>, L. Kiyanovskaya<sup>7</sup> from the point of view of the general characteristics of modern opera art as a performance and a phenomenon of cultural dialogue, - with an analysis of the communicative possibilities of Ukrainian opera of the beginning of the third millennium. To understand the peculiarities of modern simultaneous opera drama, we paid attention to the articles by K. Kapitonova<sup>8</sup>, O. Nivel't<sup>9</sup>. For the analysis of samples of modern Ukrainian operas, we used the published clavier of the opera of V. Martynyuk<sup>10</sup>, the article by R. Stankovych-Spolska<sup>11</sup> on the folkloric sources of the folk opera by E. Stankovych, the article by L. Sirenko<sup>12</sup> on the art project Nova opera and the opera works of I. Razumeiko and R. Grigoriv. The modern European opera genre, as a subject of research, is covered in the works of M. Cherkashina-Gubarenko<sup>13</sup>, Zhang Kai's<sup>14</sup> dissertation.

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<sup>4</sup>Arefieva, Anna. Opera art as a phenomenon of cultural dialogue, in: ARKADIIa. №1(42). Odesa, 2015 (p. 121–123).

<sup>5</sup>Berehova, Olena. Ukrainian opera of the beginning of the third millennium as a mirror of modern musical communication, in: Naukovyi visnyk of the National musical academy of Ukraine named after P.I. Tchaikovsky. Modern opera theater and problems of opera studies: coll. art. / Editor-in-chief M. Cherkashyna-Hubarenko. Vol. 81, Kyiv, 2010 (p.190–205).

<sup>6</sup>Yefimenko, Adelina. Zoryana Kushpler: modern opera lives in the aura of performance, in: Zbruch 2.9.2020. URL : <https://zbruch.eu/node/100030>.

<sup>7</sup>Kyianovska, Liubov. Opera as a market: performance as a marketing approach. URL : <http://ua.convdocs.org>.

<sup>8</sup>Kapitonova, Kateryna. Projection of simultaneity on the operas «The Fiery Angel» by S. Prokofiev and «Vii» by V. Gubarenko, in: Muzykoznavcha dumka Dnipropetrovshchyny. Vol. 21 (2, 2021). Dnipro: HRANI, 2021. (p. 234–242).

<sup>9</sup>Nivel't, Olha. Simultaneous type of opera drama, in: Muzychne mystetstvo i kultura. Vol. 7. Part 1, Odesa: Drukarnyi dim, 2006. (p. 16–25).

<sup>10</sup>Martyniuk, Valentyna. As in ancient times. A parody comic opera in two acts (piano): a study guide (introduction. article H. Khananaieva). Dnipro: LIRA, 2018.

<sup>11</sup>Stankovych-Spolska, Rada. Folklore sources of «Fern Flower» by E. Stankovich, in: Kyivske muzykoznavstvo. Vol. 11, Kyiv: KDVMU, 2004 (p. 123–131).

<sup>12</sup>Sirenko, Liza. Where to find modern opera? #9: Roman Hryhoriv, Ilya Razumeyko | Nova opera and «CHORNOBYLDORF», in: The Claquers. 17.9.2020. URL: <https://theclaquers.com/posts/4437> ()

<sup>13</sup>Cherkashyna-Hubarenko, Maryna. European Opera Theater of the New Millennium, in: Chasopys National musical academy of Ukraine named after P.I. Tchaikovsky. 2008. № 1. (p.118–126).

<sup>14</sup>Chzhan Kai. Modern opera theater as an artistic phenomenon and a category of musicological discourse: thesis ... Dr. myst.: 17.00.03 / ODMA named after A.V. Nezhdanova. Odesa, 2017.

The opera theater at the beginning of the third millennium is designed for a new audience perception, and therefore uses new means of addressing the public, new creative directorial and composer discoveries. Often, similar opera performances concentrate conceptual principles and a certain receptiveness of perception. First, avant-garde experiments require a trained viewer who can correctly feel the director's markers and understand the allusions embedded in the play.

In many modern operas, polystylism, polygenre, the principles of simultaneity of their compositions, and the characters' characters in the conditions of the atmosphere of «double worlds» interact and coexist.

So, in the opera-ballet «Viy» by V. Gubarenko, montage dramaturgy is determined by the existence and disclosure of two parallel worlds. They are solved either by operatic means (earthly, real world) or ballet scenes (fantasy world, the image of the Virgin). Both worlds enter a complex relationship, intertwine and, according to the principle of simultaneity, are combined in the last act of the opera (scenes of mourning for the Virgin who died coexist with comic genre episodes of the scene «n Bubleinitsa»).

The principle of simultaneity is closely related to the dual world – real and unreal in their undivided coexistence. The double world is the goal in creating a general tension due to the action of the principle of simultaneity; it becomes a kind of means of revealing the set goal.

Requiem opera by I. Razumeyko, R. Hryhoriv «IYOV» synthesizes signs of various genres – ancient tragedy, early baroque opera, requiem (parts of «Credo», «Dies Irae», «Tuba Mirum», «Kyrie Eleison», «Lacrimosa», «Gloria», «Requiem»; «Requiem aeternam», «Agnus Dei»; «Lux aeternam»), performance and postmodern theater, polystylistics – from neoclassicism to avant-garde, various performance styles – academic, folk, pop, whispering, inhalation air into a prepared grand piano.

Archaeological opera/meta-opera by I. Razumeyko, R. Hryhoriv «CHORNOBYLDORF» switches to the post-apocalyptic future, in which «debris» of past culture coexist in a radically new light, ritual samples with ultra-modern tools, scenography, technical means; the authors appeal to the viewer's consciousness through polystylistic musical language, micro-pattern, micro-tonality and principles of simultaneity. In the combination of pantomime, dance, performance, cinema – the authors see the birth of a new, mixed «artistic genre».

The opera is woven from several borrowings – quotations, allusions, adapted foreign material, compilations, and reductions of fragments of music from the Baroque era – J. Bach, H. Handel, authentic ritual song material recorded directly by the authors of the opera in the exclusion zone near the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Most of them are freckles and mermaid songs performed by women's folk voices.

## Art project «NOVA OPERA»

One of the leading roles in the cultural movement to revive opera in a new, modernized form unique artistic projects, play:

- **Cultural association «HRNOTOP.UA» («Opera in a Suitcase»)** by the director and actor Anton Litvynov, aimed at staging Ukrainian chamber operas by modern composers. Among the presented opera projects are the joke opera «The Bear» by I. Gubarenko is based on the play of the same name by A. Chekhov, the opera noir «The Dorian Syndrome» by K. Tsepkolenko, «Night» by M. Kolomiyets – a modern take on the song «Night, what a moon».
- **«NOVA OPERA»** by the director, head of the Center for Contemporary Art «Dakh» and founder of the Contemporary Art Festival «Gogolfest», Honored Artist of Ukraine Vladyslav Troitskyi – an art formation of young creators focused on synthetic opera performances.

Among the productions of V. Troitskyi are the opera-collective improvisation «Coriolanus» (V. Troitskyi, A. Baybakov) with quotations from music of the Middle Ages and pop culture; the PhD-opera «What Zarathustra is silent about», Re: post-opera «LE» (S. Vilka, A. Merkhel, Ya. Shlyabanska) in the genre of minimalism with the use of live technologies and broadcasting during the entire action on the micro-scenes of different states of the poetess L. Ukrainka.

The lion's share in the implementation of the director's ideas of V. Troitskyi is his work in collaboration with young composers, laureates of the State Prize named after T. Shevchenko, representatives of the Ukrainian opera avant-garde by Roman Hryhoriv and Ilya Rozumiyk: biblical trilogy – opera-requiem «IYOV», opera-circus «BABYLON» and opera-ballet «ARK», dream-opera «NeprOsti» (a performance with defined time frames and conditions for listeners – to fall asleep while listening to meditative material and observe the spatial movements of the performers), «CHORNOBYLDORF» – *archeological opera/meta-opera* switches to a post-apocalyptic future<sup>15</sup>, in which «debris» of the past culture coexist in a radically new light, ritual samples with ultra-modern tools, scenography, and technical means; the authors appeal to the viewer's consciousness through polystylistic musical language, micro-pattern, micro-tonality and principles of simultaneity. In the combination of pantomime, dance, performance, cinema – the authors see the birth of a new, mixed «artistic genre»; neo-horror «HAMLET», Trap-opera

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<sup>15</sup> The opera consists of seven novellas – «ELEKTRA», «Dramma per musica», «RHEA», «The little accordion girl», «Messe de CHORNOBYLDORF», «Orfeo ed Euridice», «Saturnalia».

«WOZZECK», futuristic opera «AEROPHONIA», dystopian opera «GAZ». The ninth in a row, the opera «CHORNOBYLDORF» – *real virtuality opera* – transfers to the virtual world performances that take place in different locations and combine a plurality of toponyms.

Residents of the new conditional area – Chornobyl'dorf – are deprived of historical and national roots. They appeal to a certain code system of information about past eras stored on boards. Deciphering them involves a completely independent, author's interpretation of the artifacts placed on them.

In the duality of operas of V. Troitsky, I. Razumeyko, R. Hryhoriv one can see the author's modeling of one of the main paradigms of modernity – the tendency towards any genre synthesis, to operas of the diffuse type.

The main vector of the «NOVA OPERA» project is aimed at absolute discoveries in the art of opera and involves the use of digital technologies, mixing of styles and manners of performance, outrageousness in the selection of texts and acting, in the use of unusual tools – shock installation; Rhea-player algorithmic piano, Mongolian-Buryat two-string morin khuru, duduk, zurna, Japanese wind shakuhati, or even making your own instruments with microtonal tuning (bandura, cymbals) in accordance with the idea of this or that opera.

In the polystylistic, multigenre operas of the project, different levels of dichotomy coexist simultaneously – archaic and modern, ceremonial, and futuristic, symbolic and allegorical. Their multidimensionality is combined with reception in modern society and attracts attention.

### **Ukrainian modern opera: regional aspect**

In contrast to the majority of polystylistic and polygenre examples of operas, which synthesize features of different genres, different, including polar styles, the opera of the Dnipro composer, honored artist Valentyna Martynyuk «Like in the distant past» is based on the national traditions of Ukrainian musical theater and has a clear genre foundation of comic opera.

V. Martynyuk's first theatrical experience – one-act vaudevilles «At the first date» based on the play by S. Vasylychenko and «Po-modny» based on the play by M. Starytskyi, performed on the stage of the Dnipropetrovsk Music and Drama Theater named after T. Shevchenko, was connected precisely with the comedic direction.

In 2018, the composer V. Martynyuk, in the commonwealth with the authors of the literary idea and libretto, G. Hananaeva and M. Kotenzhi, created a parody comic opera in two acts «Like in the distant past», counting on the possibility of performing the work by the creative youth (singers, choir, chamber orchestra instrumentalists of music institution), as well as professional

performers. The premiere of the performance took place in early 2019 as part of the «Magic World of Music» festival at the Kamianske Music College (Dnipropetrovsk region).

The annotation to the play provides a brief description of the action, designed for any audience: «The action of the opera takes place in a Ukrainian village at the end of the 18th century. This is an unimaginative story about how the main characters overcome trials in the name of love. Witchcraft and love, intrigue and friendship, several comic characters – everything is woven into a tight knot of plot vicissitudes of the opera – this is an ironic look from the XXI th century on our past. All events pass as if through a portal of time – a symbolic connection of times and traditions».

It is no coincidence that the opera is called «Like in the distant past» and subtitled «Genre pictures of ancestral memory». That is, the authors of the libretto emphasize the conscious use of typical characters, situations, and typical features of the national character. The genre definition – parody comic opera – directly refers the viewer to the first Ukrainian national opera by S. Hulak-Artemovsky «Zaporozhets behind Dunai». Created 160 years ago, it is still the most famous and popular Ukrainian opera not only in Ukraine, but also in the whole world.

«Like in the distant past» by V. Martynyuk, as well as the work of S. Gulak-Artemovsky, has typical features of a domestic lyrical-comic opera, in which spoken fragments (the characters' thoughts alone or dialogues) alternate with finished musical acts. In V. Martynyuk's opera, there are four pairs of heroes: the wealthy peasant Yukhym, who likes to hand out and drink, and his grumpy and jealous wife Horpina (parallels immediately arise with Karas and Odarka from the opera by S. Gulak-Artemovsky), lyrical young lovers Hannusya and Hnat, motor and smart Khimka and her cheerful and talkative friend Andriyko are the engines of the whole action, who «all things were arranged, obstacles were overcome», the cunning and greedy winemaker Yavdoha and her son, the village fool Omelko – the main comic character.

Each of these actors has its own characteristics – its own musical portrait – a separate number, sometimes participation in ensembles (duets, at the end of the second act – a quartet). Special mention should be made of the peasant woman, hostess of evening parties Solokha and her nieces Varka and Odarka. Having turned into witches, they perform a ritual and brew a magic potion. Trio of witches «Conjuring and the Dance» is one of the brightest numbers of the opera by V. Martyniuk.

Using the number structure traditional for a comic opera, the composer gives almost all the solo characters the genre name Song, although they can be boldly and confidently replaced with other, more characteristic Romance,



Cavatina, Arioso. In addition to the couplet form, the composer in some numbers turns to a free form of through development (for example, «Conjuring and the Dance» of the Witches).

Small, but important for the dramaturgy, instrumental numbers (Intrada, Waiting, Potion, The leitmotif of the potion, Shinok, Meeting of Hnat and Hannusi on the lawn) unite the entire musical material of the opera into a single whole. Traditionally, each of the opera's two acts has a concluding ending. For example, at the end of the first act of the opera – the big action «We came to the evening party», which includes girls' and men's choirs, Omelko's song and mockery of him, the final chorus-dance with the singing of soloists and a collective chorus of all those present.

In her work, V. Martyniuk has previously embodied the vespers in music for the play «At the first date» based on the play by S. Vasylenko. But the fundamental difference between the vaudeville «At the first date» and the opera «Like in the distant past» is in the interpretation of the role of music, which in terms of quantity and quality plays the main role in the characteristics of the characters, in the development of the plot, in the dramaturgy of the entire work, in announcing the main idea of the play.

Let's compare the ratio of the folk and the authors in the poems and in the music of the opera by V. Martyniuk. The author of the libretto, G. Khananayeva, uses three options: author's texts, folk words, free processing of a folk text.

Composer Valentyna Martyniuk creates completely original author's music, without citations and arrangements, but preserving the national spirit. In the opera, several dramaturgical lines develop in parallel – lyrical, comic, everyday, ritualistic, and mystical; for each of them, the composer uses the appropriate intonation sphere: lyrical songwriting of the romantic type, humorous danceability, chromatic mystery of the sorcery episode and the leitmotif of the potion. Considering the capabilities of the opera's performing ensemble, the chamber ensemble of the orchestra was supplemented with the parts of two banduras, which all mankind perceives as a musical symbol of Ukraine. The variety of vocal data of the singers allowed V. Martyniuk to combine academic, folk, and pop style in the opera.

Thus, consciously preserving the typical features of Ukrainian comic opera at the level of libretto, music, stage design, national Ukrainian costumes, acting, directing work, the authors deliberately parody, that is, reproduce the characteristic features of universally known originals. Exaggerating the merits and demerits, even making fun of the main characters of the work, the composer and librettists do it with great love for their national history and culture, their national mentality. After all, optimism, love of life, capacity for work, and the eternal, indestructible desire for freedom from ancient times to

today's calamities are the defining features of our people. And a humorous worldview helps all of us to persevere and win. The main idea of V. Martyniuk's opera «Like in the distant past», which is repeatedly sung in the Prologue and choral finale of the opera by all performers in modern and ancient costumes: « As long as we laugh, we don't give up, May Ukraine live freely! »

## Conclusions

In the modern opera of Ukraine, pan-European trends are revealed, which is evident in its genre and style diversity, the interweaving of different genre standards. Simultaneous dramaturgy allows you to combine phantasmagoria and symbolism, allegorical and futuristic, ceremonial, and absurd, archaic, and modern.

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