

THE CHERUBIKONS OF UKRAINIAN COMPOSERS OF THE 20th–21st CENTURIES: THE SPIRITUAL GENRE IN MODERN STYLISTIC INTERPRETATION

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SUMMARY. There are considered the features of the Cherubikons as a special troparion in the system of Orthodox worship. It is emphasized that the singing of the Cherubikon is characterized by extraordinary splendor and solemnity; historically, it always stood out noticeably from other chants. It is indicated that the style of the Cherubikons of various stages of the development of the liturgical singing was influenced by the general style panorama of that era. It is determined that, despite this, during each of the historical eras, significant samples of the Cherubikon were created, which retain visible connections with the genre invariant, based on the reliance on the text, strophic and melodiousness. It is determined that the Cherubikons performed in churches today are stylistically simple, but very convenient for choral singing. Separately allocated spiritual music, written not for church use, but for concert performances by modern composers. It is revealed that Cherubikons songs written by modern Ukrainian composers belong to sacred music and have no direct links with liturgical practice. They are individual author's implement of the canonical text. The musical language of these Cherubikons is extremely complex and involves the use of modern composition techniques. This allows composers to embody the symbolism of the content of the liturgical text and a new look at the traditions of Christian singing.

Keywords: Cherubikons, sacred choral music, sacred music, music of modern Ukrainian composers, musical style, musical genre, musical language

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In the Orthodox church tradition, from the beginning of its existence singing was an obligatory component of worship. Over time, Orthodox church chants were transformed, but some of their initial signs remained unchanged. Among them, there is the corpus of liturgical texts intended for singing. The number of texts that were sung (not proclaimed) from ancient times included the Cherubikon (transliterated, "Izhe cheruvymy"). It is in the central, culminating moment of the worship and symbolize the majesty and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In the ordinance of ancient Greek-Byzantine Church, the singing of the Cherubikon was characterized by grandiosity and solemnity. That part of the Church service noticeably stood out from other chants. Now the Cherubikon refers to the unchanged part of the Orthodox liturgy and is included in the musical and liturgical cycle.

The chants performed in the temples today are stylistically uncomplicated, but they are well adapted for choral singing. Much more complex is spiritual music, written not for church usage, but for concert performances. That is directly related to the Cherubikons.

Therefore, a special attitude to the Cherubikon in the system of Orthodox worship and the design of its musical part, as well as a large number The Cherubikons created during the millennium, **actualizes** studying of the role and significance of the Cherubikon in the practice of ancient and modern liturgical singing.

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of the Cherubikons in the music of modern Ukrainian composers.

To achieve the goal, it is necessary to solve the following **tasks**:

- define the Cherubikon, explain its essence and the symbolic meaning of its text;
- to make a historical review of the Cherubikon at different stages of the development of liturgical singing (monody, partes polyphony, musical classicism, 19th – 20th centuries) ;
- to determine the musical style, features of the musical language, the specifics of the reflection of Christian symbolism in the Cherubikons written by modern Ukrainian composers.

Methods of research

The research methodology is based on the method of musical-theoretical and style analysis, as well as on the comparative method. The method of musical and theoretical analysis contributed to the study of musical texts of The Cherubikon, the analytical method became the basis for identifying the musical style of the examined pieces, comparative – for comparison the music of different eras.

Results and Discussions

The Cherubikon (Greek Χερουβικός Ὕμνος) or Cherubic Hymn is a troparion performed in all churches during the ordinance of the Byzantine rite at Liturgy of John Chrysostom and Basil the Great (except for the days of Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday). The choir sings it at the Great Entrance, that divides The Cherubikon into two parts.

According to most modern liturgists, the Cherubic Hymn is not a prayer, but a description of actions that invisibly occur now of the Divine Liturgy³.

The Cherubikon was added as a troparion to the Liturgy in 573 under the Byzantine emperor Justin II. During the baptism of Kievan Rus (988) the Cherubic Hymn was already a legal part of the Liturgy of the Byzantine rite and had a special musical feature. It was the musical center of the Divine Liturgy, its most beautiful chant, parts of which were divided by the action of the Great Entrance. At this time the Holy Gifts were taken out from the side doors of the altar. It was bread and wine, symbols of the New Testament and Priest of Jesus Christ. Also, the priest in the Royal Gates said a prayer for all Christians. Therefore, the Great Entrance during The Cherubikon symbolized the Christ's voluntary consent to cross suffering and death.

Here is the text of The Cherubikon from the beginning was concluded in Greek:

Οἱ τὰ Χερουβειμ μυστικῶς εἰκονίζοντες,
καὶ τῇ Ζωοποιῶ Τριάδι τὸν Τρισάγιον ὕμνον προσάδοντες,
πᾶσαν τὴν βιωτικὴν ἀποθώμεθα μέριμναν,
ὡς τὸν βασιλέα τῶν ὄλων ὑποδεξόμενοι,
ταῖς ἀγγελικαῖς ἀοράτως δορυφορούμενον τάξεσιν.
Ἄλληλούϊα, ἄλληλούϊα, ἄλληλούϊα

The Old Church Slavonic text is a translation from the Greek original. The Cherubikon consists of two parts that are sung separately from each other. Between the chants, the liturgical action continues, the Great Entrance takes place, the Holy Gifts are taken out. In the action of the Great Entrance, all Byzantine military symbols that are not characteristic of the East Slavic world are preserved.

The Church Slavonic text of The Cherubikon gained in the worship of the Orthodox rite not of literal, but of symbolic significance. The lyrics organically fit into the melodies and numerous tunes of the Cherubic Hymn, created over several centuries.

³ Cherubic song and the Great Entrance: the apogee of the Liturgy. URL: <https://rivne.church.ua/2016/09/13/xeruvimska-pisnya-i-velikij-vxid-apogej-liturgiji/>

The centuries-old development of the ancient Ukrainian church monody led to the appearance of unique samples of the Cherubikon, the distinctive features of which were strophic and melodiousness, which brought them closer to spiritual songs and song folklore. Olga Shevchuk⁴ who researches the ancient Ukrainian church monody in her publication indicates that the singing-chorus structure of the stanza of a spiritual song (a + a1 + b + b) was associated with the repetition of some lines of text and the assignment of certain melodies to them. Also, in the church one-part singing (monody) of Cherubic Hymn versus-chorus structures are usually absent because when the musical stanza is repeated, another text is sung. Even so the general structure of the hymn is preserved. It can appear with the repetition of the original melodic line (a + a1); sometimes – with its transposition to a new height (a + a1 + a2) and subsequent intonation renewal of the material (b + c); sometimes with reprisal features (b + a). The intonation and structure of the Cherubic Hymn made them convenient for harmonization and singing into three voices, with the formation of a cantonal⁵ texture. This peculiarity opened the way for the development of partes polyphony within the monody. In the future, the themes of the Cherubikons will be quoted in the numerous partes concerts.

The period of partes polyphony (17th – the first half of the 18th century) was affected not only by a change in the number of voices in the Cherubic Hymns. At this time, musical-liturgical cycles arose and the Cherubikon was included in its composition as one of the central, main part. An important feature of the Cherubikon, inside the Partes art, is the abundance of choral voices (the most common are compositions of eight and twelve voices), which makes it possible for the formation of a powerful sound and operation by performing and expressive means of the so-called multi-choirfulness.

Another innovative influence of partes polyphony is the entry to the Divine Liturgy features of Concerto. The Cherubikons have also been affected by that fact. In its melody and texture, they almost do not differ from part concerts. These features, indicating a purely Baroque style, were a method of separating The Cherubikons from other chants of the polyphonic partes Liturgy.

The era of musical classicism (the second half of the 18th – the beginning of the 19th century) is extremely bright and important for the Cherubic Hymn. First, church music has become a product of not collective or anonymous, but consciously author's creativity; at this time the brilliant composers appeared (Maxim Berezovsky, Dmitry Bortnyansky, Artemy Vedel, and others). Secondly, the stabilization of the structure of the musical and

⁴ Olga Shevchuk, *op. cit.*, p. 58–70.

⁵ Ukrainian cant is a household urban song of the 17th – 18th centuries.

liturgical cycle is completed (for the first time – in the Liturgy of Berezovsky), while in the partes Liturgies the number of parts was not yet regulated and could change arbitrarily. Thirdly, the music of the Church practice, to which the Cherubikon belonged, got rid of the unusual signs of concertedness and elements of excessive baroque splendor, and began to amaze with its simplicity and high aesthetic perfection.

In the 20th century, in the musical interpretation of the Cherubikon, we can observe a tangible stratification into liturgical tradition and concert and performance practice. The first direction continues the development of church singing in the stylistic conditions of relative simplicity, formed during the 19th century. The second direction is a manifestation of individual author's position in referring to canonical texts and is considered the spiritual sphere of creativity, despite the lack of direct links with liturgical practice. Church performance of that music is impossible due to the extremely complex musical language of these chants. A sign that combines both lines is the tendency to revive traditions, which in each sphere of composer's creativity is understood in its own way.

The authors of the Cherubikons intended for church use tried to revive the aesthetic qualities of ancient singing, which were common before the implementation of polyphony. The authors of the Cherubikons, intended for concert performance, traditionally understood all periods of development of ancient Ukrainian musical culture, including both spiritual chants – medieval (or early modern) monody, part singing of the Baroque era, choral concerts of the Classicism era (the second half of the 18th century), chants of the 19th century, and folklore manifestations – cants, spiritual songs, etc. The Cherubikons, that represent both branches of composer's creativity, are completely different in their musical language. They are united by an understanding of the sacredness of the liturgical text, to embody the symbolism of its content and imagery. In the manifestation of these ideas, in some cases there is a clear observance of the traditions, in others – a pronounced individual author's position.

From the beginning of the 90s of the 20th centuries in Ukraine there was an outbreak of composer's interest in sacred music because of the natural moral and religious orientation of human consciousness. "Rooted in the cultural layers of the past, spiritual and religious music provides a reliable connection with the national tradition and, at the same time, creates a significant perspective of new creative searches, subjective interpretations, interpretations of form and content from the standpoint of moral requests"⁶.

⁶ Oleksandr Tyschenko, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

After several decades of atheistic propaganda and a ban on free religion, several generations of composers changed in the country. At the turn of the 80-90s, when all prohibitions were lifted, the so-called “generation of sixties” – artists born in the 30s of the 20th centuries and brought up in the traditions of atheism. They had no idea how to write sacred music for the church, and began to write it for concert performance, turning to canonical church genres and canonical texts and using the means of modern musical language that they used in music not related to spiritual texts.

Such works were not performed in churches during worship, but reflected the spiritual theme, revealed the views of composers on the world of the sacred, the attitude to eternal Christian values, to their understanding and perception. The generation of composers of the sixties, in whose work the indicated trends were reflected, includes the classics of modern Ukrainian music such as Lesia Dychko, Myroslav Skoryk, Yevhen Stankovych, Valentin Silvestrov, Leonid Hrabovsky etc. Using the texts of the Liturgy of John Chrysostom, they wrote beautiful examples of The Cherubikons full of Divine light, high philosophy, and Christian ethics.

Composers of our time believe that in spiritual music the most important is the transmission of its deep essence. According to one of the most famous Ukrainian composers of today, National Artist of Ukraine, Yevhen Stankovych, when a composer undertakes to write such a music, he must know God’s words from the Bible: “I discovered the Bible at a mature age. My friend, talented Lithuanian composer Osvaldas Balakauskas presented it for my 40th birthday. Like most of my peers, I had no idea about the biblical texts, about the Ten Commandments of the Lord, because the words “God”, “the Bible” at that time were even dangerous to speak. It took a long time to comprehend the Words of God, try to understand their deep essence and dare to voice an appeal to the Lord. The Bible makes it possible to know spiritual values and their foundations – the Ten Commandments, which should constitute the essence of the existence of mankind. The world has been arranged for centuries so that everything important for a person must be fought. Good must be gained, and evil, alas, already finds a person. Therefore, while a person lives in this world, he must do everything to fill this world with good»⁷.

Modern composers tend to write music for church service, but their desires and opportunities to convey deep spiritual meaning by means of modern composer technology are unacceptable for the Service of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, they write spiritual music on sacred texts, including the texts of The Cherubikon, for concert performances. However, this music has a spiritual status because of its connection with liturgical texts and canonical genres of Orthodox-Christian worship.

⁷ Oleksandr Tyschenko, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

The Cherubikon by Myroslav Skoryk (1938 – 2020)

The Skoryk's Cherubikon is a part of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. It was written for soloists and a mixed choir a capella in 2005 (in the same year the work was published in the series "Kyiv Choir Library"). It is the ninth number of the liturgical cycle.

The Cherubic Hymn has a thin chord texture, which was necessary to create textured arches to other chants of the cycle to give integrity and completeness to its overall Liturgy structure. The transparency of the texture is one of the signs that relate this Cherubikon with canonical chants. However, other components of musical language, in particular tonal features, reflect the individual musical style of the composer and are quite complex.

As Ostap Manulyak notes, "Skoryk applies in this work the traditional for his individual style manner of constant tonal and sudden chromatic shifts and modulations. An important role is played by polarity on the axis of second (A - b, h) and third (A - c) comparisons"⁸. Despite the bright color of such comparisons, they do not correspond so much to the church rules as to allow the performance of this Cherubic Hymn in the church for worship (except in the case of an experiment).

Here are some other observations of Manulyak regarding Skoryk's Cherubikon: "With regard to appeals to the traditions of religious music of the past, it should be noted an appeal to the Renaissance-baroque cantonal layer and the heritage of baroque part concerts and samuilic⁹ tradition, that in general is uncharacteristic for the Skoryk's style. Rather atypical for the composer's individual manner is the usage of a parallel chord movement, that reminds polyphony on archaic folklore traditions"¹⁰.

Therefore, there is a connection with the traditions of Ukrainian sacred music, but not in the generally accepted, but in the author's sense. The concept of tradition is also individually understood: the composer tries to modernize it through the saturation of music of the Cherubikon by expression and sharpness. The main conclusion after acquaintance with the music of this Cherubikon is about the approximation of Skoryk's bright individual style, "one of the characteristic features of which is attention to expressive, coloristic and phonically qualities of chords, to the character of sacred music used in the church"¹¹.

⁸ Ostap Manulyak, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁹ "Samuilki" or "samuilkov tunes" – are ritual chants of the Ukrainian church of Galician land.

¹⁰ Ostap Manulyak, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

¹¹ Ostap Manulyak, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

The Cherubikons by Lesia Dychko (born in 1939)

Lesya Dychko is not only a talented composer, but also an activist in the field of spiritual life of Ukraine and Ukrainian culture. She was the chairman of the jury of the Christian Youth Forum of Ukraine (Kyiv, 1999), the organizer of anniversary concerts in honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Patriarch UAOC Mstislav, the organizer of the concerts of the Spiritual Youth Week, etc. Lesya Dychko is the author of three Liturgies on the texts of John Chrysostom, which include beautiful Cherubikons. They embody the understanding of spirituality in the individual author's manner.

According to Dychko, «Spirituality is man's richest treasure, his divine Being. The miracle of folk intonations, which was accumulated over thousands of years by the Ukrainian people, the unique beauty of the Kyiv chant, I wanted to combine with the depth of the spiritual texts of the Bible, the spiritual world of a Christian man. The days when I had been working on the Liturgies were the happiest in my life. I was very worried about how they would relate because I was the first woman who dared to write the Liturgy in the Slavic, and maybe in the Christian world. But in this I see the divine call of the woman-progenitor to express the deepest, the petition for forgiveness and salvation of our souls, for God's churches of unity in an extremely difficult time, at the turn of the millennium, at the time of the greatest anxieties for the fate of the world, for the preservation of life and spirituality”¹².

Lesya Dychko's Cherubikons contributed to the revival of the Ukrainian tradition of author's sacred music. They have specific author's genre-stylistic features and bright emotional coloring, their texture and musical language are complex, they come across features not inherent in canonical singing – individualization of themes, sonority technique, complex chord verticals and harmonic progressions, atonal consonances and clusters, elements of heterophony, parallelisms. Along with modern composer technique, Dychko turns to Ukrainian folk traditions, which gives the music a bright national color.

Her Cherubikon from The Solemn Liturgy is a vivid example of the author's interpretation of ancient liturgical melodies. Along with medieval Orthodox tunes, there are signs of Ukrainian baroque and the strictness of classical forms. Stylistic features of music of past eras are combined with the bright, rich emotional colors of the author's musical language.

¹² Orysa Pysmenna, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

The Cherubikon by Hanna Havrylets (1958 – 2022)

Ukrainian composer Hanna Havrylets belongs to a generation of musicians whose teachers were composers of 1960s. She was a student of Miroslav Skoryk. In her music she professes the same values as the generation of her teachers, especially in relation to spiritual music and the problem of spirituality in common.

“Music of Hanna Havrylets that bases on canonical texts represents the organic share of modern composer’s creativity, dedicated to the liturgical theme. These are wonderful examples of the national cultural and historical tradition, which at the turn of the 20th – 21st centuries have become widespread, becoming almost an obligatory indicator of the composer’s entry into the modern artistic process. How diverse is its palette, indicates not only the pieces of different authors, but also numerous festivals of spiritual creativity and performance. Intensive deployment is facilitated by the impressive flowering of performing skills, the restoration of sound ideals of different eras, work on the development of specific qualities of Ukrainian intonation”¹³.

The Cherubikon for mixed choir was written by Hanna Havrylets in 2001 as a separate liturgical song. It impresses with the refinement of sound beauty and other purely aesthetic qualities of sound. This impression relates to the usage of sonority music effects, which manage to create an extraordinary elegance of presentation and perception of music. For the canonical Cherubikon Hymns such methods of composition are completely uncharacteristic. Observance of the tradition is noted in the compositional division of the musical text into two parts, in accordance with the canonical text and the appearance of through symbolic ideas, particularly the symbolism of angel singing (with lyrics “the three-sacred song is caressing”), which was present in the canonical Cherubikons even of ancient eras.

Regarding the combination in this music traditional and individually author’s principle, the researchers note: “The originality of this work is manifested in the features of the theme deployment”¹⁴. The composer traditionally separated the first three poetic stanzas but builds their dramaturgy on an integral intonation complex. Typical for the Cherubikons compositional sequence A – A1 – A2 (that is a result of individualization of structures of each of the three stanzas) acquires a different form with a clear strengthening of procedural as a kind of realization of a single intonational idea, where themes of each three stanzas develops so freely that after the initial phrases one gets the impression of its complete renewal”¹⁵ [p. 41].

¹³ Yuliya Puchko, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

¹⁴ In Ukrainian – “rozgortannya” – a special term used to refer to a particular polyphonic development associated with incarnations of the theme.

¹⁵ Tetyana Maskovych, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

A feature of the melodic and structural basis of the Havrylets' Cherubikon is a short two-bar phrasing in the initial constructions, which is further overcome by the appearance of wider melodic lines. It is based on a narrow-volume singing with third dubbing in soprano parts, sounding against the background of sustained pedal tones in the lower voices of the choral score and forming soft-sounding harmonies that are typical for modern music. Later the initial melodic phrase germinates in other voices of the choral tissue. Its tonal appearance changes by reharmonization and timbral renewal. Despite the greater melodization of voices, the presence of pedal tones remains a sign of texture, which creates unusual sonority effects for canonical singing.

The imitative "echoes" between the soprano and tenor parts, which expound the basic intonation material, acquire symbolic significance, creating the impression of "a peculiar echo of human and Heavens"¹⁶, that reminiscent the technique of partes polyphony. In general, the flow of melody clearly indicates the symbolic connection of angelic singing with the world of those who seek to become like cherubs. The idea of creating such a sound effect is not new, but its embodiment by means of modern musical language indicates individual manifestations.

The second part of the Cherubikon (transliterated, "Yako za Tsarya") is given by the composer in contrasting comparison with all previous expositions in which initial intonational and textural models gradually sprouted. The contrast of music is manifested in tempo-dynamic, textural and articulation changes. Only the usage of pedal tones is associated with the material of the previous section. The leading melodic voice is the tenor, evoking symbolic associations with the image of the King, and on the other hand, reproducing elements of male monastic singing. The dynamism of the subsequent presentation is formed by the consistent imitative introduction of voices (bass – tenor – alto – soprano), reminiscent of the initial presentation in fugue or fugato and giving the effect of gradual coverage of the range and the impression of extreme mobility.

Conclusions

Numerous versions of the Cherubikons were created during different stages of the development of liturgical singing in Ukraine (one part singing, partes polyphony, musical classicism, 19th – 20th centuries). During the ancient periods of the development of Orthodox sacred music in the

¹⁶ Tetyana Maskovych, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

field of church singing, extremely high, creatively, and artistically perfect results were achieved. The development of the ancient Ukrainian church monody led to the emergence of unique samples of the Cherubikons, the distinctive features of which were strophicity and melodiousness, which brought them closer to spiritual songs and song folklore.

The period of partes polyphony (17th – the first half of the 18th century) was affected not only by a change in the number of voices in Cherubikons. At this time, musical and liturgical cycles arose, and the Cherubic Hymn was included in their composition as one of the central, main parts. The abundance of choral voices makes it possible to form a powerful sound and operate with performing and expressive means of the so-called multif-choirness and penetration of signs of concertedness – features indicating baroque style. Extremely bright and important were Cherubikons of Berezovsky, Bortnyansky, Vedel and other composers of Classical period. The music of their Cherubic Hymns lost the signs of concertedness and other elements of excessive baroque splendor and began to amaze with its simplicity and high aesthetic perfection. The simplicity of the musical style of the Cherubikons that sung in temples very well conveys the essence of Christian aesthetics and attitude, reproducing a state of peace, prayer, sacrifice, and forgiveness.

The Cherubikons written by modern Ukrainian composers reflect the manifestation of individual author's position in reading of canonical texts. They are considered spiritual music, despite the lack of direct links with liturgical practice. The musical language of these Cherubikons is extremely difficult. The individual author's position is manifested in special comprehension of the sacred liturgical text; in attempt to embody in music the symbolism of that text, as well as the attitude to the problem of the revival of religious music tradition.

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