

UKRAINIAN FOLK INFLUENCES IN CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL MUSIC: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

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SUMMARY. The world's folk art is one of the most significant topics in contemporary cultural practice, requiring careful analysis, as it is directly related to the processes of globalization, market transformations, and commerce. Art inevitably engages with themes of identity and self-determination, which become particularly pressing in nations confronting external challenges, as seen in Ukraine during the 2020s. This also applies to musical folklore, which remains an important source of inspiration for composers of academic music today. This article summarizes the role and significance of Ukrainian folk music in the work of 21st century composers. This study aims to examine the incorporation of folk music elements into modern symphonic, chamber, instrumental, and electronic compositions. The analysis focuses on works created between 2000 and 2024. This article analyzes the works of Ukrainian composers who work in a contemporary academic style and use elements of Ukrainian folk songs in their compositions. Folk motifs are integrated into various musical contexts, ranging from experimental electronic music to atonal and aleatoric orchestral textures, jazz harmonies, and dramatic moments in

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symphonic compositions. Globalization has posed new challenges to the world's culture in terms of preserving folk art in modern conditions. However, Ukrainian folk art demonstrates considerable resilience and adaptability in the contemporary artistic environment.

Keywords: postmodernism, folk revival, Ukrainian music, contemporary classical music.

Introduction

Folk art remains an important part of cultural heritage even in the context of globalization. This is especially true for countries that have experienced colonial subjugation or are currently facing external aggression. Ukraine is a vivid example of this situation: it gained independence only in 1991, and since 2014 the country has been fighting against the threat from the Russian Federation.

In these circumstances, artists' appeal to folklore acquires not only aesthetic but also deep socio-political significance, related to the attempt to preserve national identity in the face of an external threat. It is solely due to its unique capabilities that music can integrate the components of folk art, popularize them, and convey them to a wide audience, turning it into a means of cultural diplomacy. This approach helps promote the significance of each nation, the right of people to self-determination, and the necessity of defending against aggression.

How can folklore elements be seamlessly woven into contemporary academic music, known for its intricate sound structures, while employing advanced composition techniques and multimedia technologies? How does the form of a folk melody transform when adapted for orchestral or electronic music? Addressing these questions has become the core outcome of our research.

Literature review

The interest of music researchers in the study of folklore motifs in classical and contemporary academic music is directly related to the concept of "musical nationalism". This field encompasses a variety of phenomena that arose against the backdrop of the struggle for political independence and is embodied through the active use of elements of the national musical tradition.

These include fragments of folk songs, traditional dance rhythms, and many stories from folklore that are used in operas, symphonic poems, and other musical genres⁶.

In recent years, scholarly interest in folklore has increased significantly in Ukraine, largely due to the geopolitical situation, especially the military aggression of the Russian Federation. For example, Zlotnik⁷ and Tkach⁸ examine the processes of incorporating folklore into contemporary Ukrainian pop music.

Chabanenko⁹ explores the use of folklore elements in choral and symphonic compositions, while Bondarenko¹⁰ investigates their adaptation in electronic music. Markova¹¹ explores the work of Ukrainian composers who searched for folk music and enriched it with new expressive means.

In Europe, the level of interest in folklore is somewhat low, although Eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, and Slovenia, are relatively well known. At the same time, in Western Europe, against the backdrop of globalization processes, scholars are forced to justify the appropriateness of using the concepts of "traditional music" and similar terms¹².

It is difficult not to pay attention to the research on Asian musical folklore and its influence on contemporary religious music, secular music, and culture in Kazakhstan¹³. The musical traditions of African nations, especially Zimbabwe and South Africa, have garnered increasing attention in recent years. However, these studies, like most, focus on pop music rather

⁶ Broiako, Nadia. "E. Stankovych's "Symnoi drimbi zvyki" in the aspect of embodiment of the neofolkloristic tendencies", *Music Art and Culture*, vol. 1, no. 30, 2020, pp. 19-24. <https://doi.org/10.31723/2524-0447-2020-30-1-3>

⁷ Zlotnik, Oleksandr. "The intertextual system "composer-folklore", *Kyiv Musicology*, vol. 57, 2018, pp. 243-253. <https://doi.org/10.33643/kmus.2018.57.21>

⁸ Tkach, Anna. "The revival of folklore in the modern space of Ukrainians", *Musical Art*, vol. 37, 2020, pp. 134-138. <https://doi.org/10.32461/2226-2180.37.2020.221784>

⁹ Chabanenko, Nataliia. "Neofolklorism as a stylistic direction in the composer's creativity of the 20th century", *Culture and Modernity*, vol. 2, 2019, pp. 137-141. <http://doi.org/10.32461/2226-0285.2.2019.190624>

¹⁰ Bondarenko, Andriy. "Ukrainian electronic music in globalisation and national revival", *Scientific Journal of Polonia University*, vol. 43, no. 6, 2021, pp. 9-15. <https://doi.org/10.23856/4301>

¹¹ Markova, Olena. "The concept of national in music I. Lukashenko in conditions of development of modern performance musicology", *Educational Dimension*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2007, pp. 258-267. <https://doi.org/10.31812/educdim.5937>

¹² Morgenstern, Ulrich. "In defence of the term and concept of traditional music", *Musicologist*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.33906/musicologist.913512>

¹³ Kovačič, Matěj, and Urša Šivic. "Migracije nacionalizacije glasbe: Od ljudske k narodnozabavni", *Two Homelands*, vol. 58, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.3986/dd.2023.2.06>

than academic art^{14, 15}. Researchers widely acknowledge that folklore, similar to other art forms, not only reflects but also adapts to and shapes modern socio-cultural realities¹⁶. In highly developed countries, attitudes toward folklore have evolved considerably, leading to a sharp decline in the number of folklore groups throughout the twentieth century¹⁷.

Today, folk music seems to be popular only among pensioners, residents of small towns and villages, less educated and seemingly simple religious people, and generally conservatives in society¹⁸. Since modern culture leaves little or no chance for folk music in its original form, its adaptation, or, let's say, mixing with modern musical styles, is a logical step to preserving its commercial value¹⁹. We decided to devote this study to such phenomena of disturbing academic music forgery and find it the most convincing.

Methods

As part of the program of collecting data on contemporary Ukrainian academic music, we listened to the music programs of the KievMusicFest festivals, where Ukrainian composers perform competitive works, as well as concert posters of philharmonic societies in major cities of the country.

Different musicological methods have been applied to examine key trends and assess the impact of folklore elements on academic music, focusing on the analysis of forms, melodies, harmonies, and performance techniques. This approach helps reveal the characteristics of musical folklore present in contemporary symphonic, choral, and electronic compositions. In addition, the hidden methodology and technique of performing modern academic and folk dances makes it possible to identify specific and even paradoxical facts that confirm the proximity of the background to contemporary compositional art.

¹⁴ Kamuriwo, Simbarashe T. *Transformations in Zimbabwean Traditional Music of North America. Doctoral Thesis*, Wesleyan University, 2018.
<https://doi.org/10.14418/wes01.2.188>

¹⁵ Izu, Benjamin Obeghare, and Alethea de Villiers. "The functional role of traditional music and dance in Xhosa traditional healers' ceremonial rites", *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 13, 2022, pp. 716-729.
<https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20223136>

¹⁶ Mauwa, Caleb. "Influence of traditional musics in modern genres", 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.19041.12648>

¹⁷ Moore, Allan. "The end of the revival: the folk aesthetic and its 'mutation'", *Popular Music History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2011, pp. 289-307. <https://doi.org/10.1558/pomh.v4i3.289>

¹⁸ Kyiv Music Fest Program, 2020.
https://composersukraine.org/fileadmin/files/KMF_brochure_Program.pdf

¹⁹ Mauwa, Caleb, 2020.

The obtained results are summarized in a table with information about the authors, years of composition, genre of the works, and the use of elements of folk music. This research period covers 2000 to 2024.

The presentation of the primary material

Folk motifs have significantly influenced the compositional approaches of European artists, particularly since the late 19th century. This influence became evident with the emergence of national music schools in European countries, where secular musical traditions were evolving, while Catholic and Orthodox states continued to uphold church traditions²⁰. Within this framework, European nations such as Poland and Hungary laid the groundwork for new national music schools, incorporating distinctive folk intonations into various genres of European music, including opera, symphonies, instrumental pieces, and vocal miniatures²¹.

The new style in music and painting, as well as in other forms of art, significantly changed the way twentieth-century artists worked, including the ways they used folk music²². During this period, neo-folklorism, a trend in painting that combines folk melodies and contemporary music, developed. The neo-folk movement emerged in the early 20th century, characterized by the use of archaic folk songs, built according to often blurred folklore imagery structures, but with a change in the main motif²³.

The second wave of folklore influence, which characterizes the postmodern period, goes beyond the use of folklore material in its authentic form, combined with modern expressive means²⁴. One of the main compositional techniques today is ethnophonism, a term that refers to the timbre and sound characteristics of folk instruments in Ukrainian instrumental music or the

²⁰ Marchenko, Valerii. "Accordion and its role in the development of music arts of Ukraine", *Humanities Science Current Issues*, vol. 2, no. 39, 2021, pp. 42–47. <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/39-2-7>

²¹ Niemtsova, Liliia. "History of the specific musical movements in Ukraine in the XX century", *National Academy of Managerial Staff of Culture and Arts Herald*, vol. 4, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.32461/2226-3209.4.2021.250285>

²² Gintere, Ieva. "Signal and video processing: Developing the noise music trend in digital edugaming", *International Journal of Circuits, Systems, and Signal Processing*, vol. 14, 2020, pp. 1176–1180. <https://doi.org/10.46300/9106.2020.14.145>

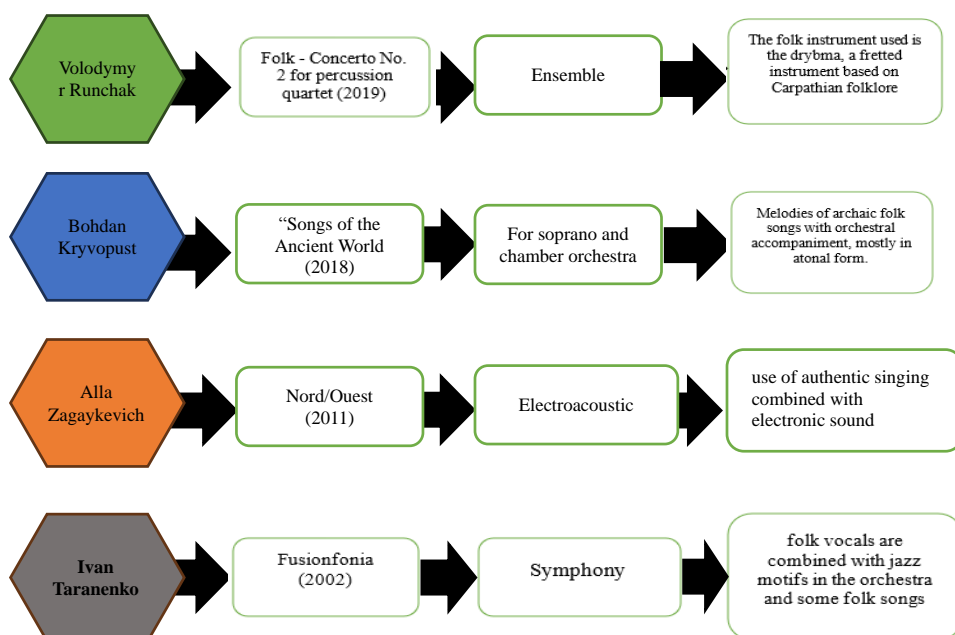
²³ Kratochvíl, Matěj. "'Our song!' Nationalism in folk music research and revival in socialist Czechoslovakia", *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 56, no. 4, 2015, pp. 397–405. <https://doi.org/10.1556/6.2015.56.4.7>

²⁴ Samikova, Nelli. "Polycultural trends of Ukrainian ethno pop folk music of the 21st century. *Polonia University Scientific Journal*, vol. 43, no. 6, 2021, pp. 138–145. <https://doi.org/10.23856/4317>

stylistic features of traditional folk singing in vocal works. The inclusion of folklore elements at this stage serves as a means of counteracting the one-sidedness of cultures and globalization trends, causing this form of bilingualism in genre and stylistic elements as well as in semantics²⁵.

Figure 1 presents a selection of the most notable musical works featuring folk motifs in Ukraine from 2000 to 2024. This list does not include arrangements of Ukrainian folk songs or commissioned pieces for traditional Ukrainian folk instruments. Only original academic works that were performed in public and intended for choral, symphonic, or chamber instrumental ensembles are included²⁶.

Figure 1



**Compositions by contemporary Ukrainian authors of 2000–2024,
based on folklore. Source: Marchun²⁷**

²⁵ Zlotnik, Oleksandr. "The intertextual system "composer-folklore", *Kyiv Musicology*, vol. 57, 2018, pp. 243-253. <https://doi.org/10.33643/kmus.2018.57.21>

²⁶ Berezhenyuk, Sviatoslav. "Atlas Weekend - the largest music festival in Ukraine", *Almanac "Culture and Contemporaneity"*, vol. 1, 2019, pp. 222–227. <https://doi.org/10.32461/2226-0285.1.2019.180832>

²⁷ Marchun, Oksana. "Folk revival as a means of expressing identity and promoting folk motives", *Modern Engineering and Innovative Technologies*, vol. 4, no. (32-04), 2024, pp. 92-99. <https://doi.org/10.30890/2567-5273.2024-32-00-094>

This table is not comprehensive. In addition to the listed works, it is important to mention the numerous arrangements of folk songs for choirs by Anna Havrylets, Yevhen Petrychenko, Nadiya Kurinna, Hanna Khazova, and others, as well as those for bandura ensembles by Viktor Stepurko and Lesia Dychenko, and for piano solo or duet by Maksym Kankevych. These compositions are featured at music festivals such as Kyiv Music Fest, Two Days and Two Nights of New Music, Contrast, and others, and are also frequently performed in educational settings²⁸.

Popular music partially adopts the approaches of academic composers in working with folk motifs. These include modern approaches to harmonization, expanding instrumentation, and the use of variable signatures that are alien to pop music but very common in some forms of Ukrainian and contemporary classical music²⁹.

Part of the curriculum in music schools in Ukraine is also a course on musical folklore, which is taught at composition faculties³⁰.

The course is aimed at acquiring knowledge of theoretical aspects of folklore studies, familiarizing students with the genres of Ukrainian musical folklore, and practicing the performance of folk melodies in the form of musical notation. Therefore, while studying at music academies and universities, composers receive the necessary theory and practice for their future professional activities³¹.

Discussion. As can be seen from the figure above, Ukrainian folklore remains an important source of inspiration for composers of different generations. Numerous composers go beyond simply using the melody of a folk song, aiming to capture the unique style of its performance. For example, this can be seen in the work by A. Zahaikevych Nord/Ouest.

Modern compositional techniques are often combined with folk motifs, creating original stylistic fusions. This is particularly true for Kryvopust, whose compositions blend elements of experimental electronic music with avant-

²⁸ Alonso-Vazquez, Marisol, and Christina Ballico. "Eco-friendly practices and pro-environmental behaviours: the Australian folk and world music festival perspective", *Arts and the Market*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2021, pp. 76–91. <https://doi.org/10.1108/aam-10-2020-0046>

²⁹ Lei, Lei. "The latest technological developments in Chinese music education: Motifs of national musical culture and folklore in modern electronic music", *Education and Information Technologies*, vol. 29, 2024, pp. 10595-10610. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-12227-0>

³⁰ Mohd Ariffin, Ariffin, and Mohd Khairil Naim Mohamed Jamel. "Visitors' preferences on seasonal accommodation for the Rainforest World Music Festival", *Built Environment Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2021, pp. 49. <https://doi.org/10.24191/bej.v18i1.9962>

³¹ Gilstrap, Curt, Andi Teggart, Kyle Cabodi, Julian Hills and Shona Price. "Social music festival brandscapes: A lexical analysis of music festival social conversations", *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, vol. 20, 2021, 100567. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100567>

garde approaches. Runchak, who uses postmodern allusions and stylistic play, and Taranenko, who uses jazz fusion.

Particularly noteworthy is the use of the song “Plyve kacha po Tysyne” in Ilnytska’s work, where it acquires an important dramatic and semantic function. In Ukraine, this composition is traditionally performed in memory of fallen soldiers, which gives it a deep symbolic meaning in the context of contemporary music related to the tragic events of the Russian Ukrainian war.

Conclusion

The Ukrainian song holds an important place in the works of composers across various periods, spanning both older and newer generations. Folk songs frequently merge unconventional compositional methods, electronic components, and jazz harmonies. In some cases, incorporating folk themes into avant-garde music imbues them with a richer semantic meaning, making them more relevant to current events. When compared to the folklore of other nations, Ukrainian folklore is most prominently featured in modern academic music, both in terms of its prevalence and artistic value.

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