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INTERVIEW

WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY MUSICOLOGY: A CONVERSATION WITH VALENTINA SANDU-DEDIU

Dr. Valentina Sandu-Dediu is one of the most influential contemporary Romanian musicologists whose academic and artistic activity has contributed significantly to the study of Romanian and European music culture. Her work combines research, teaching, editorial activity and performance, creating an interdisciplinary perspective on music history, stylistics and cultural identity. She graduated from the National University of Music in Bucharest in 1990 with a degree in musicology and later earned her Doctorate in



Music in 1995 (Dissertation: Stylistic and Symbolic Hypostases of Mannerism in Music). Her work focuses especially on Romanian post-war music, musical rhetoric, stylistics and the relationship between music and cultural history. In addition to her academic achievements, she is also known as a pianist and editor of important musicological publications. Her professional trajectory reflects a combination of rigorous academic training, international experience, and sustained scholarly activity, which has established her as one of the leading representatives of Romanian musicological scholarship in the international academic community. Her intellectual development has



been shaped by research fellowships and academic residencies in Vienna, Berlin and other major European institutions, which contributed significantly to her interdisciplinary approach to musicological inquiry. Dr. Valentina Sandu-Dediu is the recipient of the Romanian Academy Prize, as well as multiple awards granted by the Union of Composers and Musicologists of Romania. Her international recognition includes distinctions from the Ernst von Siemens Foundation and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences Prize awarded by the Peregrinus Foundation.

At present, Dr. Valentina Sandu-Dediu serves as the Rector of the Institute for Advanced Study at New Europe College in Bucharest, where she also coordinates and supports international research programs in the humanities and social sciences. Here, at New Europe College I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Sandu-Dediu about her life, work and her vision of musicology as an interdisciplinary field through her perspective as a leading female scholar in contemporary European academia.

Professor Sandu-Dediu, if we begin from the present moment, how would you define yourself today: as a musicologist, a cultural mediator, or something beyond these categories?

I would prefer to remain, first and foremost, a musicologist.

To better understand your professional development, let us first look at your educational background and academic formation. Looking back at your formative years at the Liceul de muzică „George Enescu”, what intellectual or artistic impulses proved decisive for your later path?

My parents placed great importance on my education, and they did so in a strict manner that is no longer common today. They provided me with everything I needed, but they also demanded a lot from me: to get only top grades in every subject, to practice the piano intensively, and to excel in everything I did. Of course, I made mistakes; I stumbled along the way at times. But I always worked hard (that was normal in our family) and was good at math, literature, and foreign languages. Today, I'm glad for everything I learned back then, because it gave me a foundation of knowledge that would prove vital for the rest of my life.

Were there particular mentors or intellectual encounters that redirected your trajectory from performer to scholar?

I fondly remember my piano teacher from the last four years of my school days, Marta Paladi, who was a lady in the truest sense of the word.

With a subtle sense of humor and a broad cultural knowledge (she herself was the author of monographs on musicians), she didn't limit herself to piano lessons, but recommended concerts and readings to me and lent me recordings and books. I also had other teachers who sparked my love of reading, but I must admit that I ultimately ended up studying musicology more by chance (should I call it fate?): In 1985, I took the entrance exam for piano at the conservatory and narrowly missed the cutoff score. I decided not to repeat that experience, spent a year preparing for musicology, and that's how my path changed.

Growing up and studying in Bucharest during a complex historical period, how did that context shape your early understanding of music and its meaning?

I spent the first 23 years of my life under the communist regime. I had a grandfather (on my mother's side) who had once been a teacher; he had fought in World War II and had been imprisoned in a Soviet labor camp for five years. We were very close, and he always remained a staunch anti-communist and anti-Soviet who tried to explain the true history to me – not the one we were taught in school. I regret not having listened to him more.

As for our music training, as students we focused almost exclusively on the musical text and its analysis, paying little attention to the historical, aesthetic, and philosophical context. I believe it was a clever way for some professors to avoid, for example, telling us how “atheistic” Bach was; they omitted the stories surrounding the complex contrapuntal structures they taught because they couldn't tell us much about the deep religious spirit that shapes Bach's music. We all know that such things were forbidden in an atheistic society like the communist one.

As someone who began as a pianist and moved toward musicology, how did performance shape your analytical and theoretical thinking?

I am convinced that it is extremely beneficial for any music theorist to have direct, personal contact with music. My years of piano training, competitions, recitals, and concerts have taught me a great deal about music “from the inside out” and have also led me to be thoughtful and attentive when evaluating the performances of others. The question must also be asked in reverse: How have analysis and theory influenced my piano playing? They have undoubtedly helped me understand a score more quickly

and deeply, but I would say that performance and musicology, when practiced by the same person, must remain distinct, separate experiences. In other words, one should not play the piano like a musicologist...

How did your early exposure to international competitions influence your understanding of musical value and canon formation?

The two piano competitions (in Italy and Spain) and a summer course (in Weimar) that I took part in as a student before 1990 opened up extraordinary horizons for me: At the age of 15, I left Romania for the first time, listened to young people my own age, and realized that no unbridgeable gap separated us, as it had seemed to me from the perspective of a country drastically isolated from the outside world. I learned to navigate societies that were so different from my own (or so it seemed to me); I struggled to shake off my insecurities about my behavior, my appearance, or my clothing, as if I came from a country inferior to Western Europe. It is hard to explain such feelings today, but I feel them with the same intensity.

What does musicology allow you to understand about the world that no other discipline can?

For me, musicology was the perfect place where my two childhood passions – literature and music – came together.

Dr. Sandu-Dediu academic formation was further enriched by several prestigious fellowships and research programs. She studied in Austria with a scholarship from the Alban Berg Foundation and later continued her research at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. In Romania, she was affiliated with New Europe College through postdoctoral fellowships, an institution where she later became Rector of the Institute for Advanced Study.

What differences do you perceive between Romanian and Western European academic cultures in musicology?

Musicology is a young discipline worldwide, but in Romania it is even younger. Although journalists and music critics existed long before the 20th century, I believe that we owe the systematization and modernization of our discipline to Constantin Brăiloiu. As a leading ethnomusicologist who was well integrated into the Parisian scene during the interwar period and settled in Switzerland after World War II, Brăiloiu defined methods and provided models for (ethno-)musicological research. After 1947, Romanian musicology

– particularly historical musicology – was inevitably shaped by communist ideology, through the rewriting of history in general and music history in particular. Isolated from the rest of the world – less by language than by the harsh communist regime in Romania – some of the leading figures in historical musicology studied in the former USSR. Only a few managed to maintain contact with France (given the tradition of close Romanian-French relations), and even fewer turned to German models. The field that continued to develop was primarily that of systematic musicology (music theory, structural analysis, aesthetics), with composers who also devoted themselves to musicological work making a decisive contribution to this branch.

There is much more to say about the context of Romanian musicology: what is certain is that it focused heavily on the national musical heritage – which was somewhat natural – and could not keep pace with the new trends, ideas, and methodologies emerging around the world. It was only after 1990 that it began, tentatively, to make up for this lack of communication. Nowadays, with our younger generation being so well connected and having a command of the *lingua franca* (English, of course) that comes naturally to them, the boundaries have become considerably blurred.

Is there a specifically Eastern European perspective in musicology that differs from dominant Western paradigms?

I don't want to generalize, but I believe that it was precisely the political situation in Eastern Europe after World War II that shaped the distinct, strongly nationalist paths and mindsets in this region. In any case, there is clearly a greater interest here in folklore and other traditional music (religious, for instance).

Do you consider musicology today more interdisciplinary than in the past and if so, what are the risks and gains?

Yes, interdisciplinarity seems inevitable today, at least in theory. In practice, however, musicology has never been able to ignore developments in history and linguistics, the visual arts, or discoveries in mathematics, physics, astronomy, and so on. People also speak of multidisciplinary, transdisciplinarity... I consider dialogue with other disciplines to be fruitful and welcome it; however, the danger arises when one ventures beyond one's own field of expertise without possessing genuine expertise in another area.

Dr. Sandu-Dediu research activity focuses particularly on Romanian music after 1944, modernism and postmodernism in music, musical rhetoric and the cultural implications of musical discourse under different political

contexts. Her books and studies address a wide range of topics related to Romanian and European music culture. Among her notable volumes are "Romanian Music between 1944-2000" (2002), "New Music between Modern and Postmodern" (2004), "Choices, Affects, Attitudes. On Style and Rhetoric in Music" (2013) etc. She has also published numeral articles and studies in international journals and collective volumes in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Serbia, Hungary and Poland, contributing to broader discussions concerning modernity, nationalism, ideology, and aesthetics in music.

Your work engages with 20th-century music, ideology and interpretation, how do you conceptualize the relationship between music and political context?

For us, Romanian musicologists trained under the communist regime, accustomed to separating the musical analysis of a composition from its contextual roots, this shift in perspective proved both necessary and difficult in the post-1990 era. While Romanian historiography had been inevitably and profoundly distorted by communism and nationalist ideology, one could find an (illusory) refuge before 1990 in structuralist analysis, in the dissection of the mechanisms of contemporary Romanian scores. But even there, viewed through the prism of the present, deeply ingrained musicological clichés emerge, such as "the tension between the national and the universal" or the "transfiguration" of the folk source in avant-garde composition. The 1990s and the opening of borders to the rest of the world sparked a reflection on the need to rediscover and reformulate Romanian musical histories.

To give a concrete example: when, after 2000, I began to examine more closely the link between music and ideology, I discovered an unexplored area of Romanian composition from the period 1938–1950, and questions arose regarding its similarities with other European music. Do these years, marked by the rise of nationalism, fascist and communist dictatorships, racism, and war, have a well-defined musical profile? Or can we only speak of setbacks relative to the innovations of the 1920s, the instrumentalization of music for political and propaganda purposes, and the retreat of leading artists into isolated niches?

What methodological tools do you find most effective when analyzing postwar Romanian music?

Consult as comprehensive a bibliography as possible, one that includes both the composers' theoretical writings and press articles that shed

light on how the works were received at their premieres; utilize archives – whether those of the Union of Composers and Musicologists of Romania and other institutions or those of the former Securitate; analyze the score while listening to the music; and finally, to the extent possible, conduct interviews with the composers and evaluate other “oral” sources (radio and television broadcasts).

In your view, how does music both reflect and resist ideological frameworks?

Music is a reflection of the era in which it is created; it is inevitably influenced by ideologies. Under totalitarian regimes, however, some composers manage to conceal messages of protest within their music. In any case, it is about people – about musicians – and how they engage with the world around them.

How should contemporary musicologists approach the legacy of music created under political regimes?

With great caution, neutrality, and objectivity (as far as possible), but also with empathy. One must try to understand the context and the reasons that led a musician to make artistic choices during totalitarian times, and to grasp their humanity.

How do you interpret the canonization of certain composers while others remain marginal?

Establishing a canon has always been – and still is today – a marketing strategy (even in times when different terms were used). Extremely talented composers with long-standing reputations are sometimes lumped together with less significant figures in the canon, while exceptional musicians receive little attention. Sometimes (as in the case of Romania), peripheral countries or regions are not taken into account when establishing the canon. It always depends on who is establishing it...

Can musicology still claim objectivity, or is it inevitably shaped by cultural positioning?

That is a very sensitive issue. Of course, I believe that musicology should remain objective. However, history has taught us that under totalitarian regimes that impose strict censorship, objectivity is compromised.

How should we rethink listening in the 21st century, in an era of digital saturation?

I feel that, alongside their active and adept use of digital technology, young people need to develop – or rediscover – the patience to listen, just as they do when reading books. We, the older generations, have also adapted to new technologies and to the appealing “packaging” of classical music, which is designed to attract audiences. We can continue to do this, but we must also remain aware of how much beauty, emotion, and sensitivity there is in listening to the music of Mozart or Chopin, Verdi or Prokofiev (I have chosen these examples at random). If young people are patient, benevolent, and willing not to let themselves get bored too quickly, they will quite simply discover worlds that comfort them, challenge them, sadden them, or cheer them up. After all, what is music other than a bundle of universal human emotions?

As a former prorector and now rector, how has administrative responsibility influenced your scholarly thinking?

I never wanted to be involved in administrative tasks. Nevertheless, I took on various responsibilities from which I learned a great deal. I would have liked to be able to pursue my own musicological and artistic projects without interruption, but I’ve learned that you can’t avoid bureaucratic hassles. It is difficult to collaborate with colleagues from a leadership position: I learned everything on the job, without any management training, and I found it best to handle most tasks myself rather than delegate them to others. However, one must be fortunate enough to have a supportive environment, and that is what I found at New Europe College. Here, the quality of the staff, the selected fellows, and the research projects carried out – all of this fosters excellence, good manners, and elegance in behavior. That is not my doing. I simply “inherited” the institution this way. I am constantly learning from my colleagues in the humanities and social sciences and applying these lessons, consciously or unconsciously, to my own research.

How do you negotiate the tension between academic leadership and sustained research productivity?

Working in a “polyphonic” way has always suited me. I like to switch between different activities, even though I often take on too many tasks and sometimes get bogged down (but I have only myself to blame!). In the end, I’m stubborn enough not to give up what I love doing most – musicological writing.

How has your experience as a woman shaped your academic and leadership trajectory?

Without necessarily being a feminist, my mother, who was a doctor, taught me that I had to stand on my own two feet in life and build my own career. I have to admit that I've never faced any difficulties – neither in my work as a musicologist nor in the leadership positions I've held – simply because of being a woman. Maybe I was just lucky...

Do you feel that the concept of “authority” in academia is still gendered?

When I look around at Romanian universities, I see very few female rectors. At New Europe College, as well as at the National University of Music in Bucharest, the leadership is predominantly female. But I think these are exceptions.

What challenges did you encounter in positions of leadership and how did you navigate them?

Oh, there were plenty of challenges. I remember when I was appointed vice-rector for quality assurance (I think that was in 2004): I had absolutely no idea what those terms even meant (quality assurance had only just been introduced in Romania). I looked at the major universities and adapted regulations and procedures for us; I learned as I went along. When I was then offered the position of rector at NEC, I honestly thought it was a joke. I accepted the offer recklessly, driven solely by my respect and admiration for the founders, Andrei Pleșu and Marina Hasnaș. Several extremely difficult years followed, during which Lelia Ciobotariu (executive director and my dear friend) and I were on the brink of financial ruin. The fact that we worked as a team and supported each other unreservedly saved us.

Do you see a distinct “female voice” in musicological discourse, or is this distinction problematic?

I think the distinction is indeed problematic. Perhaps a “feminine” voice would be easier to detect in composition, and perhaps here and there in performance as well, although such distinctions do not always hold up. Even less so in musicology, I think.

What advice would you give to young women pursuing careers in musicology today?

Let them choose the path they love, for then they will work with enthusiasm. Let them strive to distinguish themselves through their own qualities and ideas. Our victory – as women – would be complete if we achieved success not because of a quota for gender equality imposed “from above,” but through our own efforts.

What role does curiosity play in sustaining a lifelong scholarly vocation?

A leading role. Constant curiosity is essential. It is curiosity, after all, that drives you to continually adapt to new technologies, for example.

If you were to reimagine musicology for the next generation, what would you change?

I hope that future musicologists will give our voice greater weight and help it be heard more clearly in society. We are a small group, a niche. We know how important our profession is, but I want this to be recognized by the general public as well.

What do you see as the most urgent questions facing musicology today?

To survive in a world that is becoming less and less interested in culture in the traditional sense.

How can musicology remain relevant in a rapidly changing cultural landscape?

I don't know. Whoever finds the answer to this question will earn our eternal gratitude.

Looking ahead, what intellectual projects or themes continue to challenge and inspire you?

A book I finished about a year and a half ago, titled *Music in Nationalist Tones*, is due to be published soon. I will continue to explore this

vein of research on the connections between music and ideologies, but I will also step back from it, perhaps returning to an older interest of mine: theories of musical performance.

If you could address your younger self at the beginning of your journey, what essential insight would you offer?

I'd have a lot to say to my younger self, and I'd probably agree with my critical mother (with whom I often clashed). But I'm afraid it wouldn't do any good. I'd probably make the same mistakes.

What do you hope will remain both from your work and from your presence in the academic world?

For most of my life, I believed that the most valuable thing one can leave behind is a book (or books – written works, in any case). I think I got it from my grandfather, whom I've already mentioned. Now I'm not so sure about that anymore, and besides, musicology books are aimed at an extremely limited audience. But I believe I have succeeded in nurturing a new generation of exceptional musicologists. Of course, I cannot take all the credit for this, as we are talking about intelligent, well-educated young people who bring with them an interest in and openness to music research. Yet I feel that my efforts as a teacher were not in vain and that I have succeeded in giving our marginal discipline a new direction. I also hope to have left a small mark on the history of an extraordinary and far from typical institution like the New Europe College. I could never match the contribution of the founder, Andrei Pleșu – that was never my goal – but it wasn't easy to carry on his good ideas and develop new ones for us (the entire NEC team) that keep pace with the times.

In a time of rapid cultural change, what gives you confidence in the future of music and musicology?

History teaches us that the times change in waves. There has always been a fear of the new and a fear that the old might disappear. Music (I am referring here primarily to what is generally called “classical music”) and musicology will survive, albeit perhaps in forms different from those we have known so far. I don't know how; I'm not good at making predictions.

And finally, if we imagine music not as an object of study but as a companion in life what has it taught you, at the deepest level?

Listening to one another and playing together, just like in a chamber music ensemble.

The interview was conducted by
VERONIKA ZINCHENKO-HOTSULIAK¹  (May 2026)

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FROM THE KOINONIKON TO THE PRICEASNĂ: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LITURGICAL SOUNDSCAPE AND THE DIGITAL INFLUENCE IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN ORTHODOX MUSIC

DANIEL MOCANU¹ 

SUMMARY. This article investigates the transformation of the liturgical soundscape associated with the Koinonikon (Communion chant) in contemporary Romanian Orthodox practice. The study combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, integrating survey data collected from theology students, chanters, and choir members with an analysis of the circulation of devotional repertoire in the digital environment, particularly on the platform YouTube. The results indicate a significant shift in musical practice within many Transylvanian parishes. Survey data show that in approximately 86% of the communities represented in the sample, the traditional Byzantine Koinonikon is frequently replaced by the paraliturgical devotional genre known as the priceasnă. This substitution reflects not only a change in repertoire but also broader transformations in musical authority, devotional sensibility, and the mechanisms through which liturgical music circulates. From a musicological perspective, the phenomenon involves a transition from the modal structures of Byzantine psaltic chant toward tonal and strophic musical idioms influenced by vernacular traditions. At the same time, digital media platforms contribute to the standardization and dissemination of a limited corpus of highly visible devotional songs. The article argues that the growing prominence of the priceasnă should be interpreted as a process of liturgical hybridization in which traditional chant, folk religiosity, and contemporary media culture interact. By examining this transformation, the study contributes to current scholarship on Orthodox liturgical music, vernacular devotional practice, and the impact of digital media on religious soundscapes.

Keywords: Koinonikon, Priceasnă, Liturgical Soundscape, YouTube Algorithms, Digital Mediation, Paraliturgical-Affective Model, Byzantine Chant, Religious Influencers, Folk-inspired Devotional Music

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Introduction

Within the structure of the Divine Liturgy, the Communion of the clergy and the faithful, accompanied by the liturgical chant known as the *Koinonikon* (Greek *koinonikon*, “communion”), constitutes one of the most theologically and musically significant moments of the service.² The liturgical order prescribes the chanting of specific psalm verses at this point in the rite, intended to emphasize the sacramental act and to articulate its theological meaning within the framework of the Eucharistic celebration.³

However, the pastoral reality of contemporary Romania in general, and of the Transylvanian Orthodox liturgical space in particular, reveals a noticeable gap between liturgical norm and actual musical practice.⁴ In numerous parish communities, the soundscape traditionally associated with the *Koinonikon* has been progressively replaced by a devotional musical genre known as the *priceasnă*.

In contemporary usage, the term *priceasnă*⁵ generally designates a paraliturgical devotional song associated with the Communion moment and tolerated within many parish settings through pastoral concession. Over time, however, the *priceasna* has evolved from an expression of local devotional practice into a broader cultural phenomenon, increasingly shaped by the dynamics of the music industry and by the circulation mechanisms of social media.

Within the complex landscape of Romanian Orthodox spirituality, the folk *priceasnă* occupies a distinctive position situated at the intersection of liturgical musical norms and vernacular creativity. Although the term itself derives from the Slavonic vocabulary associated with Communion, its historical

² For further details on the *Koinonikon*, see: Dimitri E. Conomos, *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music*, Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985; Thomas H. Schattauer, ‘The *Koinonikon* of the Byzantine Liturgy’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 49 (1983), p. 91–129; Robert F. Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom; Volume V: The Precommunion Rites*; Capitolul VI „The Communion Psalmody or “*Koinonikon*”, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 261, Rome 2000; Nicolae Gheorghită, *Chinonicul dominical în perioada post-bizantină (1453–1821). Liturgică și muzică (The Sunday Koinonikon in the Post-Byzantine Period (1453–1821): Liturgy and Music)*, București, Editura Muzicală, 2007; Adrian Sîrbu, “The “spirit” of the old communion chants.” *Artes. Journal of Musicology* 17, no. 1, 2018, p. 1–23.

³ Alexei Dmitrievsky, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei, khраниashchikhsia v bibliotekakh pravoslavnogo Vostoka*, vol. III, Kiev, 1917; *Tipic bisericesc*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1976.

⁴ *Cântarea liturgică ortodoxă din Sudul Transilvaniei [The Orthodox liturgical chant of Southern Transylvania]*, Editura Universității “Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu, 2007.

⁵ *Dicționar de muzică bisericească românească*, (coord): [*Dictionary of Romanian Church Music*], ed. Nicu Moldoveanu; Nicolae Necula; Vasile Stanciu; Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, Basilica, București, 2013, p. 144. In Church Slavonic it is translated as: Прича́стие – communion, participation, cf: <https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ushakov/978354>

development in Romania, particularly in the Transylvanian regions, has gradually transformed it into an element associated not only with devotional practice but also with regional and confessional identity.

The substitution of the *Koinonikon* with the *priceasnă* cannot be reduced simply to a change in musical style, such as the replacement of Byzantine monody with tonal harmony or melodic elements derived from folk tradition. Rather, it reflects a broader transformation in the way liturgical music functions within parish life. The musical choices made during the Communion moment increasingly respond not only to liturgical prescriptions but also to pastoral expectations, communal participation, and the circulation of devotional repertoire in contemporary media environments.

In this context, the parish community becomes a space that is increasingly permeable to cultural and technological influences. The perceived success of a liturgical moment may therefore be evaluated not only through theological or ritual criteria but also through the emotional resonance of the music performed and the familiarity of the melodies for the congregation.

The present study seeks to analyze this phenomenon through a combined methodological approach that integrates quantitative survey data, qualitative repertoire analysis, and observation of digital media circulation. Its principal objective is to examine the extent to which the *priceasnă* has come to reshape the liturgical soundscape of the *Koinonikon*, as well as the musical, theological, and pastoral implications associated with this transformation.

1. State of research and literature review

The study of Orthodox liturgical chant has generated a substantial body of musicological and liturgical scholarship, particularly with regard to the historical development and structure of the Byzantine psaltic tradition. Foundational research has examined the evolution of the koinonikon repertoire within Byzantine and post-Byzantine liturgical practice, emphasizing its role as a scriptural and mystagogical element within the Eucharistic rite. Scholars such as Dimitri E. Conomos⁶ and Robert F. Taft⁷ have provided detailed analyses of the historical formation of the Communion chant cycle and its integration within the broader structure of Byzantine liturgy.

⁶ Dimitri E. Conomos, *The late Byzantine and Slavonic communion cycle: liturgy and music*, Washington, DC, 1985. „Sacred Music in the Post-Byzantine Era”, In: *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe*, 1988, p. 83-105

⁷ Robert Taft, F., *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Vol. VI: The Communion, Thanksgiving, and Concluding Rites* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 281), Roma, 2008; „The Frequency of Eucharist in Byzantine Ritual Practice”, in *Beyond East and West. Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, Washington DC, 1984.

Musicological investigations have also addressed the transformation of Byzantine chant in various regional contexts after the fall of Constantinople. Studies focusing on post-Byzantine musical practice highlight the gradual diversification of local traditions and the emergence of new forms of devotional singing alongside canonical psaltic repertoires. In the Romanian context, research by Nicolae Gheorghită⁸ and other scholars has explored the evolution of church music during the post-Byzantine period and the interaction between Byzantine musical structures and local liturgical cultures.

Another important direction of research concerns the relationship between liturgical chant and vernacular religious creativity. Ethnomusicological studies have demonstrated that, in many Orthodox regions, paraliturgical genres often emerge at the intersection between official hymnography and local devotional traditions. In the Romanian cultural space, the genre known as *priceasnă* represents one of the most visible expressions of this interaction between Byzantine liturgical heritage and folk religiosity.⁹

Although the *priceasnă* has been widely acknowledged within Romanian religious culture, it has received comparatively limited scholarly attention in international musicological literature. Existing studies have tended to focus either on the historical development of Byzantine chant or on the ethnographic analysis of Romanian religious folklore, leaving the contemporary interaction between these spheres relatively underexplored.

Recent scholarship in ethnomusicology and digital religion has highlighted the role of digital media platforms in transforming the circulation, reception, and performance of religious music, creating new forms of mediated worship

⁸ Nicolae Gheorghită, *Chinonicul duminical în perioada post-bizantină (1453–1821). Liturgică și muzică*, Editura Sophia / Editura Muzicală, București, 2007; "The Kalophonic Idiom in the second half of the 18th century. The Koinonikon Αἰεῖτε τοῦ Κύριου in the first authentic mode", în: *Acta Musicae Byzantinae* 5/2003, CSBI, p. 45–50; "Observations on the Technique of Transcription (εξήγησις) into the New Method of Analytical Music Notation of the Sunday Koinonikon of the 18th Century", în *PSALTIKE: Neue Studien zur Byzantinischen Musik: Festschrift für Gerda Wolfram*". Herausgegeben Nina–Maria Wanek, Praesens Verlag, Wien, 2011, p. 125–144.

⁹ Gheorghe Ciobanu, „Stratificări în muzica populară românească” [Stratifications in Romanian popular music], în: *Studii de Etnomuzicologie și Bizantinologie*, vol. 2, Editura Muzicală, București, 1979, p. 27. „Izvoare ale muzicii românești” [Sources of Romanian music], in: *Studii de etnomuzicologie și bizantinologie*, vol. I., Editura Muzicală, București, 1976, p. 9; Constanța Cristescu, „Pelerinajul și cântecul de pelerinaj din Transilvania epocii comuniste” [Pilgrimage and pilgrimage song in communist Transylvania], in: *Crâmpeie din cronologia unei deveniri*, vol. 1, Editura Muzicală, București, 2004, p. 55–69; Traian Mârza, „Ritmul vocal acomodată pașilor din mersul ceremonial, un tip distinct al ritmicii populare românești” [The vocal rhythm accommodated to the steps of the ceremonial gait, a distinct type of Romanian folk rhythm], in: *Lucrări de muzicologie*, vol. 10–11, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 245–257.

and musical authority within faith communities.¹⁰ Online media environments have become important channels for the circulation of devotional music, potentially altering the mechanisms through which musical authority and religious legitimacy are constructed.

The present study contributes to this emerging research field by examining the transformation of the liturgical soundscape associated with the koinonikon in contemporary Romanian Orthodoxy. By combining survey data with digital media analysis and musicological observation, the article seeks to bridge the gap between traditional liturgical musicology, ethnomusicology, and the study of religion in the digital age.

2. Research methodology and data architecture

In order to ensure the analytical reliability of the conclusions, the present study adopts a mixed-methods research design. Such an approach makes it possible to move beyond purely impressionistic observations and to map more precisely the contemporary soundscape of ecclesiastical musical practice in the Transylvanian Orthodox context.

The quantitative component of the research consists of a survey administered through a structured questionnaire. The analysis relies on the responses provided by a sample of 200 participants, including theology students, ecclesiastical chanters, and choir members. These respondents are directly involved in the musical life of Orthodox parishes and therefore represent a relevant sample for investigating contemporary repertoire practices. Geographically, the participants represent several regions of Transylvania, including Cluj, Bistrița, Sălaj, and Maramureș, as well as a diversity of ecclesial contexts such as rural parishes, urban parishes, and monastic communities. Although the sample does not claim statistical representativeness for the Romanian Orthodox Church as a whole, it provides a meaningful snapshot of active musical practice within parish environments.

The questionnaire investigated several key variables: the frequency with which the traditional Koinonikon is replaced by the priceasnă; the actors responsible for repertoire selection; the criteria guiding musical choices within the liturgy; the perceived influence of digital media on repertoire circulation.

¹⁰ Rachel, Wagner, *Godwired: Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality*, London: Routledge, (2012); Campbell, Heidi A. *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. London: Routledge. 2013; Pauline Hope Cheong (Volume editor) Peter Fischer-Nielsen (Volume editor) Stefan Gelfgren (Volume editor) Charles Ess (Volume editor), *Digital Religion: Social Media and Culture*. New York: Peter Lang. 2012. Tim, Hutchings, *Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community and New Media*. London: Routledge, 2017.

In addition to the survey, the study includes a qualitative analysis of repertoire circulation within the digital environment. This component draws on publicly available data from the platform YouTube, examining metrics such as view counts, subscriber numbers, and the format of devotional music content.¹¹ The analysis included the collection and comparison of data such as number of views, subscriber counts, and content typology for several prominent performers of religious-folk repertoire (e.g., Vlăduța Lupău, Georgiana Lobonț, Paula Hrișcu).¹² These were contrasted with materials representing the psaltic tradition, produced by artists and ensembles such as Maria Coman, Vlad Roșu, Tronos and Byzantion.¹³

It should be emphasized that, although statistical data provide a relatively accurate snapshot of the sample at the moment of investigation, their interpretation requires broader sociological contextualization. For instance, the respondents' frequent indication that "hymns are sung constantly" cannot be understood merely as a numerical datum; rather, it reflects forms of social expectation and pressure exerted upon clergy and chanters regarding repertoire choices. Consequently, the statistical data presented in this study are interpreted not only quantitatively but also through a qualitative analysis of the causal mechanisms that shape these practices.

On the basis of the data obtained, the research pursues several principal objectives: to map the actual frequency with which the traditional Koinonikon is replaced by the priceasnă in contemporary parish practice; to

¹¹ The analysis of repertoire circulation in the digital environment draws on methodological approaches developed in platform studies and online research. In particular, the study follows the perspective proposed by Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, who conceptualize YouTube as a participatory cultural environment in which indicators such as view counts, subscriber numbers, and user interactions can function as measurable signs of the visibility and circulation of video content. At the same time, the use of publicly available online data follows the methodological framework for digital research outlined by Helene Snee, who considers such data suitable for the qualitative analysis of contemporary cultural practices. The relevance of platform metrics for social research has also been discussed in studies of social media analytics, which highlight both the potential and the interpretative limitations of these indicators when assessing audience engagement. See Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018); Helene Snee, "Digital Methods as Mainstream Methodology: Methods of Online Research," in *A Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Psychology* (London: Sage, 2013); Mike Thelwall, "Social Media Analytics for YouTube Comments: Potential and Limitations," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21, no. 3, 2018, p. 303–316.

¹² @VladutaLupau (1.03M subscribers); @GeorgianaLobont (658K subscribers); @PaulaHriscu (173K subscribers). The aggregated data were recorded on 11 March 2026; subscriber numbers are subject to change depending on viewing dynamics and audience engagement on the platform.

¹³ Vlad Roșu (181K subscribers); Maria Coman (94,4K subscribers). Grupul Psaltic Tronos și Mihail Bucă (69,4K subscribers). „Byzantion Choir” (10,3K subscribers).

identify the actors involved in repertoire decision-making and the corresponding mechanisms of authority within the clergy–choir–congregation relationship; to analyze the “platform logic” of digital media, algorithms, view counts, compilation formats, and the emergence of a star system, as a factor contributing to the standardization of repertoire; and to describe the musicological transformations involved in this process (modality versus tonality, changes in ethos, and vocal timbre) and their broader implications for contemporary religious music.

3. Liturgical practice and the hegemony of the priceasna in Transylvanian musical culture

The analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire reveals a musical reality that complicates the assumption of complete uniformity in the repertoire of Romanian Orthodox church music. Although efforts to standardize the national repertoire have existed since the mid-twentieth century, local practices continue to display considerable diversity.¹⁴ In numerous parishes belonging to the Metropolis of Cluj, Maramureș, and Sălaj, as well as in certain monastic communities, the traditional Koinonikon has gradually become less frequent, being replaced in many contexts by the repertoire of priceasna.

Within the Transylvanian ecclesiastical musical repertoire, the term priceasnă has acquired a broad generic meaning. It often refers to a wide range of devotional songs belonging to the sphere of religious folklore.¹⁵ These compositions differ from canonical hymnography in that their texts are frequently products of popular artistic creativity, sometimes anonymous, and shaped by the sensibility of Romanian folk religiosity.

Over time, folk pricesne have gradually entered the liturgical framework of the Divine Liturgy. They may be sung either during the moment traditionally associated with the Koinonikon or independently of it, particularly in parish contexts where the active participation of the congregation in singing is encouraged.

A defining musical characteristic of this repertoire, especially in Transylvania, is the influence of the doina, a genre associated with expressive melodic freedom and emotional intensity. The priest and musicologist

¹⁴ The purpose of this standardization was the creation of a unified and simplified repertoire, purged of what were perceived as “Oriental excesses” (such as overly extended melismas), and accessible to chanters both in rural and urban churches. At the same time, this process sought to eliminate the differences between local styles—for example, the Moldavian style associated with Suceveanu and the Transylvanian style represented by Cunțanu.

¹⁵ Daniel Mocanu: “Christian ceremonial folk song. case study: pilgrimage songs from nicula monastery” *Studia Ubb Musica*, LXIX, Special Issue 3, 2024, p. 33-55.

Gheorghe Șoima argued that church choral music in Transylvania was strongly shaped by melodic elements derived from the doina, as well as from religious carols and star songs. In his interpretation, this interaction should not be viewed negatively but rather as a creative encounter between liturgical chant and vernacular musical culture.¹⁶

Musically, this influence is manifested through the frequent use of parlando-rubato rhythmic patterns, which allow considerable expressive freedom in the delivery of the text, as well as through melismatic ornamentation reminiscent of the lamenting character typical of the doina.¹⁷

Unlike psaltic chant, which maintains a restrained and solemn ethos structured by modal principles, the priceasnă often incorporates melodic gestures characteristic of vernacular song traditions. This stylistic hybridity contributes to the emotional accessibility of the repertoire for parish communities.

Another important feature of the priceasnă tradition is its close relationship with religious carols and star songs. In many rural communities, melodies originally associated with Christmas carols were adapted to devotional texts dealing with moral or hagiographic themes and subsequently introduced into the liturgical environment, particularly during fasting periods.¹⁸

The melodic and rhythmic affinities between the doina, carols, vernacular songs, and priceasne illustrate how Romanian religious culture has integrated hymnographic material of popular origin into both liturgical practice and everyday devotional life.

Within this context, the priceasnă has sometimes been described metaphorically as a form of “religious song”. Beyond its musical structure, the genre functions as a form of vernacular catechesis in which theological themes, such as the Passion of Christ, repentance, or Marian intercession, are expressed through emotionally accessible language and imagery.

4. Frequency of koinonikon substitution: from exception to norm

The central question of this study, “How often are priceasna sung instead of the traditional Koinonikon?”, produced results that point toward the normalization of this practice in many parish contexts.

¹⁶ Gheorghe Șoima, “Folclorul muzical religios” (Religious Musical Folklore), in: *Scrieri de teologie și muzicologie (Writings on Theology and Musicology)*, Ediție îngrijită de Vasile Grăjdian și Cornelia Grăjdian, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu, 2010, p. 185.

¹⁷ Constanța Cristescu, „Pelerinajul și cântecul de pelerinaj din Transilvania epocii comuniste” [Pilgrimage and pilgrimage song in communist Transylvania], p. 57.

¹⁸ Gheorghe Ciobanu, “Colindele și muzică religioasă” [Christmas Carols and Religious Music], in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 1-3, 1947, p. 30-49.

According to the survey data, approximately 86% of respondents report that devotional hymns are frequently or regularly sung during the liturgical moment traditionally reserved for the Koinonikon. This finding suggests that the substitution of the canonical Communion chant with the priceasnă is no longer perceived merely as an occasional pastoral adaptation.

For many of the respondents, the sonic identity of the Sunday liturgy is associated not primarily with the psalmic chant of the Koinonikon, but rather with the strophic and tonal melodic language of the priceasna. Although historically this genre was strongly associated with Transylvania, the available data suggest that contemporary media circulation contributes to its diffusion beyond regional boundaries.

The questionnaire responses also reveal an important shift in repertoire authority. Within the hierarchical structure of Orthodox liturgy, the priest traditionally occupies the central liturgical role. However, in practical musical matters, repertoire decisions are frequently shaped by lay participants involved in parish singing.

According to the survey results, approximately 88% of repertoire decisions are made primarily by chanters or choir members. This dynamic helps explain the permeability of parish musical practice to external influences, including digital media.

Young chanters or lay choir leaders, often lacking extensive formal training in Byzantine chant, are particularly exposed to musical models circulating on platforms such as YouTube, as well as to the expectations of the congregation, which frequently prefers familiar melodies.

When respondents were asked why certain pieces are selected, a principal factor emerged: the musical level of the choir. Byzantine psaltic compositions, for example those attributed to Petru Lampadarie, Hurmuz Hartofilax, or Iacov Protopsaltul, often require familiarity with psaltic notation and advanced vocal technique. In contrast, priceasne usually employ simpler melodic structures that can be performed without specialized training.

Many respondents indicated that repertoire is chosen according to the liturgical season or thematic relevance, although this criterion is sometimes applied in a relatively flexible manner.

Choir members frequently select pieces that they expect will resonate emotionally with the faithful, creating a feedback loop in which familiar hymns are repeatedly performed because they generate positive responses from listeners.

5. The role of digital media in the transformation of liturgical chant: the case of YouTube

An important dimension of the present study concerns the influence of the digital environment on contemporary devotional musical practice. The analysis of audiovisual materials circulating online indicates that the platform YouTube has become a significant reference point for the dissemination and reception of Romanian religious songs. Through mechanisms of algorithmic recommendation, visibility metrics, and user engagement, the platform contributes to the formation of a new ecosystem of religious musical circulation.¹⁹

Within this environment, the *priceasna* has undergone a notable transformation. Originally associated with local devotional contexts, the genre has increasingly entered the circuits of the contemporary music industry and digital media culture.

Several performers known primarily for their activity in Romanian folk music, including Vlăduța Lupău, Paula Hrișcu, Cristian Pomohaci, and Georgiana Lobonț, have contributed significantly to the popularization of this repertoire, adapting devotional songs to performance styles shaped by the aesthetics of contemporary folk and popular music.

As a result, the *priceasna* has gradually moved beyond the strictly ecclesiastical environment and has become widely present on digital platforms and concert stages. On YouTube, compilations of devotional songs frequently accumulate millions of views, particularly during liturgical seasons such as Great Lent or the Dormition Fast. This phenomenon suggests that contemporary audiences continue to display a substantial interest in religious musical content.

At the same time, the popularity of such productions raises questions regarding the changing aesthetic framework within which devotional music circulates. In many digital recordings, traditional hymns are arranged using modern instrumentation, such as saxophone, keyboard, or studio orchestration,

¹⁹ On platforms such as YouTube, the visibility and circulation of musical content are shaped by a combination of algorithmic recommendation systems and publicly visible engagement metrics. Videos that accumulate higher numbers of views, subscribers, likes, and comments tend to be promoted more frequently by the platform's recommendation algorithms, which increases their visibility and probability of further circulation among users. In the case of Romanian devotional repertoire, such as the genre commonly known as *pricesne*, these mechanisms contribute to the amplification of particular performances or performers, allowing certain recordings to reach audiences far beyond their original liturgical or local contexts. As a result, YouTube functions not merely as a repository of audiovisual material but as a mediating environment that actively shapes the dissemination, reception, and standardization of devotional musical repertoires through processes of algorithmic visibility and participatory engagement.

and are performed in ways that emphasize the individuality and expressive charisma of the performer. In such contexts, the interpretative focus may shift from the theological message of the text toward the performative presence of the singer.

This development has generated critical discussion within certain ecclesiastical circles, where it is sometimes interpreted as a possible transformation of devotional music into a form of religious spectacle. In response to these dynamics, media institutions affiliated with the Romanian Orthodox Church, such as Trinitas TV, have attempted to promote alternative forms of religious broadcasting that emphasize the spiritual and liturgical meaning of sacred chant. Through recordings of liturgical services and educational programs, such initiatives present singing as an integral dimension of Orthodox worship and as a means through which believers approach God through beauty.

A comparison between the audience indicators associated with popular devotional music and those of traditional liturgical chant reveals a considerable difference in reception. While recordings of psaltic chant remain closely linked to the ritual context of liturgical performance and therefore attract a relatively specialized audience, devotional songs circulating online frequently reach much broader publics.

For example, recordings by the artist Maria Coman, including “Psalm 50” (over eight million views) and “Hymn of Love” (over six million views)²⁰, demonstrate the capacity of digital media to amplify the visibility of religious repertoire. Such examples illustrate how contemporary media environments facilitate the circulation of devotional music far beyond the boundaries of liturgical space.

Similarly, Paula Hrișcu’s song *Ce folos?* (“What Is the Use?”)²¹, with more than eight million views, illustrates the resonance of devotional themes when presented through contemporary audiovisual aesthetics. The video, filmed in the landscapes of rural Maramureș, integrates symbolic elements such as the *toacă*, traditional costumes, and forest imagery, thereby transforming the hymn into a visually compelling narrative in which cinematic imagery reinforces the affective dimension of the song.

Another example is the song *La tine vin, Măicuță* (“I Come to You, Mother”)²², performed by Lavinia Maria Chifor, which has accumulated more than four million views. Its interpretative style reflects the emotional expressivity characteristic of Transylvanian devotional singing and demonstrates the enduring importance of Marian piety in Romanian religious culture.

²⁰ Hymn of Love: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wjeburhcwww](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wjeburhcwww;);

Psalm 50 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzzFyToyHuw>.

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQyNaexu69k>.

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmYuggiHfjg>.

By contrast, recordings of traditional psaltic chant, such as those performed by the Tronos Group or Athonite chanters, typically attract audiences in the range of tens or hundreds of thousands of views. This disparity in visibility can generate a form of symbolic legitimization based on digital popularity. For many online users, numerical indicators associated with a video function as markers of authority, potentially influencing perceptions regarding which musical repertoire appears most relevant or meaningful.

The analysis also reveals a growing trend toward the consumption of extended devotional compilations, often presented under titles such as “Pricesne for Easter”.²³ These recordings frequently last between fifty and ninety minutes and are commonly used as background listening. In this context, devotional singing may acquire the character of ambient religious sound, detached from the participatory framework that traditionally characterizes liturgical chant.

These digital media productions contribute to the formation of new aesthetic expectations. Listeners accustomed to studio-produced vocal timbre, artificial reverberation, and instrumental accompaniment may begin to perceive the austere, a cappella sound of traditional psaltic chant as less immediately accessible. As a consequence, stylistic adaptation can also appear within parish choirs. Choir members may imitate interpretative features encountered in digital recordings, including vibrato, glissando, or expressive ornamentation derived from folk performance traditions. In this way, digital media not only disseminate repertoire but also influence interpretative practices within local ecclesiastical contexts.

The study further identifies the emergence of a category of mediators operating between ecclesiastical and cultural spheres. Certain clergy-performers, such as Vlad Roșu and Marius Ciprian Pop, combine pastoral authority with artistic visibility. Their dual identity as priests and performers may contribute to the legitimization of devotional repertoire influenced by folk musical aesthetics.

Taken together, these observations suggest that digital media function not merely as repositories of musical recordings but as influential agents in shaping contemporary liturgical soundscapes. The circulation of devotional music through digital platforms contributes to the emergence of hybrid forms situated between traditional liturgical chant and the communicative logic of modern audiovisual culture.

²³ Pricesne for Easter, Pricesne for Great Lent;
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VpxRU4TMvs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VpxRU4TMvs;);
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ussj7Jq15OU>.

6. Textual and musicological analysis of the priceasna repertoire

Beyond the statistical data presented above, a qualitative examination of the repertoire itself is necessary in order to understand the theological and musicological implications of the priceasnă phenomenon. Content analysis of the most frequently performed songs suggests a shift from doctrinally structured hymnography toward repertoire characterized by emotional and devotional expression.

The survey data, corroborated by digital circulation patterns, indicate that the contemporary repertoire frequently includes songs such as *Fecioară Maică* (“Virgin Mother”), *La tine vin, Măicuță* (“I Come to You, Mother”), and *O, Măicuță Sfântă* (“O Holy Mother”). These compositions have become informal devotional standards in many parish communities. Their popularity is largely explained by their simple melodic structure and their direct emotional address to the maternal figure of the Virgin Mary. The textual content of widely circulated Romanian devotional songs such as *Fecioară Maică* (“Virgin Mother”), *La tine vin, Măicuță* (“I Come to You, Mother”), and *O, Măicuță Sfântă* (“O Holy Mother”) is characterized by a highly affective Marian vocabulary centered on themes of intercession, maternal protection, and personal supplication. The lyrics typically employ direct address to the Virgin Mary and emphasize an intimate devotional relationship expressed through diminutive forms (e.g., *Măicuță*, “little Mother”), a feature characteristic of Romanian popular piety. Structurally, these songs are strophic and repetitive, facilitating congregational singing and memorization. From a theological perspective, the texts foreground the role of the Mother of God as compassionate mediator and spiritual refuge, while musically they belong to the paraliturgical repertoire commonly performed during the Communion moment in many Romanian parishes. Their strong emotional language and accessible poetic structure contribute significantly to their popularity and circulation in contemporary devotional contexts, including digital platforms such as YouTube.

The predominance of Marian devotional songs during the Communion moment therefore introduces a certain liturgical tension. While the Mother of God occupies an essential place in Orthodox theology as an intercessor, the replacement of Christocentric Eucharistic hymnography with Marian devotional repertoire reflects a broader shift in devotional sensibility. In many cases, the emotional and protective symbolism associated with the maternal figure of Mary resonates strongly with the affective expectations of contemporary believers.

In contrast, the traditional Koinonikon chants, such as *The Body of Christ* or *Praise the Lord from the heavens*, possess a clearly defined mystagogical function within the liturgy. Their textual content proclaims the sacramental presence of Christ and invites the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic mystery.

A similar transformation can be observed in hymns that portray Christ primarily in intimate or personal terms, for example, songs that describe Him as a compassionate friend who consoles human suffering. Such imagery reflects influences associated with pietistic devotional currents that emphasize the personal dimension of religious experience.

From a musicological perspective, the priceasna repertoire also displays important structural differences from Byzantine psaltic chant. Traditional psaltic music is organized according to the modal system of the eight *echoi*, which represent complex melodic frameworks governed by characteristic formulas and microtonal inflections.

By contrast, the musical language of the priceasna often adopts the tonal framework typical of Western music, based on the major–minor system. Instead of the modal thinking characteristic of Byzantine chant, melodies are frequently organized within a tonal reference system that is familiar to listeners shaped by Western musical culture.

This transition from modality to tonality also implies a reorganization of melodic hierarchy. In psaltic chant, cadences typically represent a return to the modal base of the voice. In tonal music, however, melodic closure is structured through the dominant–tonic relationship. Such cadential patterns produce a sense of resolution that is immediately recognizable for modern listeners but differs fundamentally from the aesthetic logic of Byzantine chant.

Another significant difference concerns intonation. The tonal system relies on equal-tempered semitones, whereas Byzantine chant often employs microtonal intervals characteristic of specific modes. The adoption of equal temperament facilitates harmonic accompaniment and makes the repertoire easier to perform with instruments such as keyboard or orchestral arrangements.

A similar divergence appears in the rhythmic dimension. Psaltic chant follows the prosody of the liturgical text and therefore lacks strict metric regularity. By contrast, the priceasna typically adopts regular metrical structures (for example 2/4, 3/4, or 4/4), which facilitate memorization and collective participation.²⁴

From a musicological perspective, this transformation may be interpreted as a form of simplification that increases accessibility. Complex melismatic passages characteristic of psaltic chant are often replaced by syllabic melodic writing, allowing broader participation by congregations that may not possess formal musical training.

²⁴ Victor Giuleanu, *Melodica bizantină, studiu theoretic și morfologic al stilului modern (neobizantin)*, *Byzantine Melodics: A Theoretical and Morphological Study of the Modern (Neo-Byzantine) Style*. Editura Muzicală, București, 1981.ș

7. Transformations in the classical repertoire of church hymnography

The growing prominence of the priceasna repertoire has several observable consequences for the musical life of Orthodox parishes. Some of these developments may be interpreted positively from a pastoral perspective, while others raise questions regarding the preservation of liturgical musical tradition.

One important consequence is the emergence of a secondary devotional repertoire that competes in familiarity with the established body of Byzantine hymnography. In many communities, believers recognize and request particular devotional songs more readily than canonical Koinonikon. As a result, the musical memory of the community gradually shifts toward songs characterized by simple melodic patterns and memorable refrains.

This development also affects the functional balance between liturgical chant and contextual devotional singing. In practice, the Communion moment, traditionally associated with the Koinonikon, may be filled with devotional songs, particularly during fasting periods or during services attended by large congregations.

Another consequence concerns the increasing standardization of repertoire across different regions. Devotional songs circulating widely through digital media are rapidly adopted in geographically distant parishes. Local variants and regional interpretations may therefore be replaced by a relatively uniform repertoire disseminated through digital platforms.

This phenomenon can be described as a form of platform-driven repertoire circulation, in which a small group of widely known songs becomes dominant because they are easily accessible online and already familiar to audiences.

The stylistic influence of priceasna is also perceptible in the interpretative practices of parish choirs. These songs frequently employ tonal frameworks and expressive phrasing associated with folk or popular music performance. When such stylistic features are transferred to the liturgical environment, they may gradually reshape the ethos of church singing, shifting emphasis from liturgical sobriety toward expressive performance.

At the same time, the criteria of musical authority have begun to change. Traditionally, repertoire authority was derived from liturgical books, the Typikon, and formal musical education. In contemporary contexts, however, recordings encountered online frequently function as practical interpretative models for younger chanters.

From a pastoral perspective, the priceasnă phenomenon therefore presents a complex duality. On the one hand, devotional songs may facilitate

participation and function as accessible forms of religious catechesis. On the other hand, excessive reliance on such repertoire may risk diminishing the theological depth and liturgical specificity of traditional Byzantine hymnography.

Conclusions and Perspectives

The findings of this study confirm that the liturgical moment traditionally associated with the *koinonikon* has undergone significant transformation in contemporary Romanian Orthodox parish practice. The data collected through the survey, corroborated by observations of digital media circulation, indicate that the *priceasna* has become a prominent element within the musical soundscape of the Divine Liturgy in many communities.

One of the most important results of the research concerns the frequency with which devotional songs replace the traditional Communion chant. According to the survey responses, approximately 86% of the participants report that *priceasna* are frequently or regularly performed during the moment traditionally reserved for the *koinonikon*. This finding suggests that the phenomenon should no longer be interpreted as a marginal pastoral concession but rather as a widespread practice within certain ecclesial contexts.

At the same time, the study reveals the emergence of new mechanisms of musical authority. While liturgical tradition historically located authority in ecclesiastical texts, the Typikon, and formal musical training, contemporary repertoire circulation is increasingly influenced by digital media. Platforms such as YouTube play a significant role in shaping the visibility and diffusion of devotional songs, contributing to the formation of a shared repertoire that transcends regional boundaries.

From a musicological perspective, the phenomenon also reflects a broader stylistic transformation. The modal structures and microtonal nuances characteristic of Byzantine psaltic chant are often replaced by tonal musical frameworks derived from Western musical practice and vernacular traditions. This shift facilitates accessibility and congregational participation but simultaneously alters the aesthetic and theological ethos traditionally associated with liturgical chant.

The textual dimension of the repertoire likewise reveals a change in devotional sensibility. While the traditional *koinonikon* emphasizes the Christocentric and sacramental dimension of the Eucharist, many *pricesne* foreground Marian devotion or adopt an intimate and affective language of personal religiosity. This transformation may reflect broader shifts in contemporary religious experience, in which emotional engagement plays an increasingly important role.

However, the results of this study should not be interpreted exclusively in terms of opposition between tradition and innovation. The popularity of the *priceasna* also demonstrates the capacity of vernacular devotional culture to sustain religious participation in changing social contexts. For many believers, these songs function as accessible forms of catechesis and as vehicles of communal identity.

Consequently, the phenomenon may be understood as a process of liturgical hybridization, in which elements of Byzantine chant, folk religiosity, and contemporary media culture intersect. Rather than representing a simple replacement of one repertoire with another, the emergence of the *priceasna* within the liturgical soundscape reflects a dynamic negotiation between inherited musical tradition and evolving pastoral realities.

Future research could further investigate this interaction by expanding the geographical scope of the survey, by conducting ethnographic fieldwork within parish communities, and by analyzing the role of digital media in shaping religious musical aesthetics across other Orthodox contexts.

In this sense, the transformation of the *koinonikon* soundscape offers an important case study for understanding how liturgical traditions adapt within contemporary cultural environments while continuing to negotiate the relationship between canonical heritage and lived religious practice.

Translated from Romanian by Angelica Marcu

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WHAT KIND OF SONG IS POURING OUT FROM THE CLASSROOMS PART 2: WARM UP FOR LITTLE ONES¹

ILDIKÓ FERENCZINÉ ÁCS² 

SUMMARY. This study explores the evolution and current challenges of vocal development in early childhood music education, particularly in Hungarian primary schools. Drawing on historical perspectives the paper contrasts past and present experiences of children's musical experiences. In today's context, the decline of spontaneous singing and reduced musical stimuli in family environments have led to a noticeable increase in children unable to produce a singing voice. The paper highlights the crucial role of educators in identifying and supporting these “grumbler” children through targeted breathing and articulation exercises, emphasizing early intervention. It presents a series of creative, age-appropriate singing warm-up routines embedded in imaginative storytelling to improve breathing control, resonance, and pitch accuracy. Furthermore, it discusses the selection of suitable poetic texts for voice development and stresses the importance of motivation, positive reinforcement, and clear, constructive feedback.

Keywords: classroom music, warm up plans, practices for 6-8 year olds.

Introduction: “Sing more clearly!”

József Péter writes in his 1973 methodological book *Zenei nevelés az általános iskolában (Music Education in Primary Schools)* that there are not many children in rural areas who sing falsely. The little ones participate in singing by listening to the older ones and then joining in their songs and plays. The children learn to sing from each other in the natural process of plays (Péter 1973: 68).

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Today, József Péter's statement is less valid. Singing, as a means of expressing moods, emotional states, joy and sorrow, satisfied a basic human need decades ago. Today, however, the traditional framework of individual and communal singing has broken down, and spontaneous singing has almost disappeared from people's lives. Teachers find that a relatively high percentage of children are almost entirely reciting, i.e., are not able to develop a singing voice. These children are unable to produce a singing voice due to a lack of stimulation or because they do not use that function of singing. They have not had the opportunity to hear and imitate "real" singing at home. Although these children hear that their voices are not like others, they cannot perform like their singing peers. Therefore, they often remain silent or refuse to participate in singing games.

If teachers in kindergarten cannot pay enough attention to the child's singing voice, it is up to the junior school teacher or the singing teacher to try to help the "grumbler" to experience of "I can do it too". However, it should be stressed that the later the work starts, the less success is achieved. Singing works in a similar way to learning to speak. Continuous repetition triggers imitation and induces gradual engagement in the activity. Whatever the stimulus, the child practices and imprints a function during the repetitive activity.

Teacher evaluation has a strong impact on the motivation of students. It is natural that a successful child receives reinforcement in the form of praise, a grade or a reward. However, a student who performs poorly or not at all may be put under stress by a teacher's negative attitude. These children should be given the opportunity to experience success in other areas of music education, while at the same time being developed individually and patiently by helping them to pick up the note well, and singing with them. (Ferencziné 1997)

"Sing more clearly!" Hearing the instruction to sing clearly, the child does not necessarily know what and how to improve. Was the voice high or low? How do I do it to get it right? The teacher has to formulate how the singer should improve. How to change the position, breathing, air economy, lip opening, tone shaping, etc. Often a hand movement or arm movement can help in accurately finding and retaining the right note.

EXERCISE TYPES

Breathing exercises

For 6-8 year olds, we recommend a story-embedded positioning and sensation development, e.g.:

I. Fairy Tale Forest³

Children stand, legs slightly apart, and turn into a slender tree with a proud, forward-facing gaze (straight but not tense posture). Hands on waist, palms facing backwards. The line of the forearm gives the curve of the canopy. It is summer, quiet, only the breeze is blowing. Imagine a little bird flying onto your shoulder. You breathe in calmly through your nose, taking care to hold the shoulder loosely so as not to scare the bird away. Do not breathe quickly or too much, as this can cause the shoulders to lift. Try to take in as deep a breath as possible, almost sighing.

If the amount inhaled is just enough, the wind may start to blow. A gentle breeze can be heard through the foliage: the children begin to gently blow out the air they inhale with the sound [s] or [f]. The lips form a rounded shape (to give a slight schwa at the end), like the mouth of a sack. When blowing out, keep the posture and do not collapse the chest, because the bird may fly away at every movement.

Children breathe freely for a few seconds, each at their own pace: inhaling through the nose, exhaling through the mouth. To imitate stronger wind gusts, change to [ʃ](ə).

II. At one puff⁴

The children sit back in their chairs, close their eyes, and relax. They imagine that they are holding a plate of delicious cakes with lots of powder sugar on top, on which a fly is landing (the teacher can imitate a fly with a [z] sound). They cannot drive away the fly because their hands are full. After a slow and deep inspiration, they blow briefly but gently on the fly. Blowing hard is not allowed, because they will blow the powder sugar off the cake. In another story, candles can be blown out, or even two, three or four in one breath to practise intermittent exhalation.

III. Wet kittens⁵

A kitten that has wandered off and got soaked to the skin in the rain needs to be dried. Use a hair dryer. Our machine has two settings, strong blow and a weaker one. Switch to the higher gear first. Blow out the air evenly and with the sound [ʃ] after a cue (meaning breathing in) and a snap or clap. The hum should be even, the lips should be loosely rounded like the round opening of a hairdryer. This phase should only take 2-3 seconds. If done well, the air outflow should be sufficiently intense to use up the air.

³ Ferencziné Ács Ildikó. *Hangképzés az iskolában*. [Vocal Training in the School] Bessenyei György Könyvkiadó, Nyíregyháza, 1997. p. 56.

⁴ Ibid. 57.

⁵ Ibid. 58.

However, before the cat's fur is burnt, the hair dryer should be set to a lower setting. Switch off the machine on signal, with a snap or clap introduced by a cue. The lower power setting can be indicated by the shaping of the sounds [s](ə) or [f](ə). Once the kitten is "dry", the machine can be switched off on a given signal.

For technical information on the exercises, see **Part 1 (Studia UBB Musica 2025, issue 2.)**

Articulatory exercises

For 6-8 year olds, use words, lines of poems, and sentences to develop resonance and for sound formation.

Istvánné Vági recommends the use of a word or motif taken from the song of the lesson for all-class sound formation, practiced in a scale-like manner. She recommends several aspects for the choice of exercises, such as the rhythm of the word, the phonetic relationships, the mood or the melody. In her opinion, such a sound formation can also serve to eliminate boredom and, in the case of false singing, to focus attention (Vági 1987: 132). Although Vági stresses the importance of experiencing the content (Vági 1987: 133, 1963: 140), she does not define the criteria of a good text.

Following in the footsteps of Istvánné Vági, Georgette Sinkovics also uses text exercises for choral sound formation. Her exercises, which contain simple instructions, are supported by emotional, content-related functions. With a few exceptions, the set of notes in the exercises perfectly meets the requirements of applicability to voice training (Sinkovics 2011: 12-13.)

This can hardly be said of publications containing voice training exercises, where proverbs, lines of verse, tongue twisters and other texts are often combined with complex melodic turns. The funny texts do not necessarily follow a phonetic pattern suitable for voicing, nor are they always conducive to singing.

You can also make your own text exercises. For example, phrases from nursery rhymes and poems for children can be used for vocal training. When choosing the text, always take into account the nature of the phonemes, the place of articulation, the aim of development and the function of setting up the appropriate mood.

Some good advice: avoid babbling to the child and trying to lecture him or her. As Sándor Weöres said about the children's poems:

"In my opinion, a children's poem is one that does not directly instruct with words, but tries to give a mood, a melody, a piece of life or nature that makes the child's - and the adult's - soul richer, and more refined" (Domokos 1993: 225). (Ferencziné 2015; Ferencziné–Pintér-Keresztes 2015)

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The following texts and poem extracts may serve as examples for the selection:

Table 1

Suitable for sound formation	Not suitable for sound formation
A million little diamonds Twinkled on the trees. <i>(A Million Little Diamonds by Mary Frances Butts)*</i>	Can you can a can as a canner can can a can?
First I saw the white bear, then I saw the black. <i>(At the Zoo by William Makepeace Thackeray)**</i>	I saw a kitten eating chicken in the kitchen.
They danced by the light of the moon, The moon, The moon, They danced by the light of the moon. <i>(The Owl and the Pussycat by Edward Lear)**</i>	I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream.
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright In the forests of the night. <i>(The Tyger by William Blake)**</i>	How can a clam cram in a clean cream can?
Where the wind comes from, Where the wind goes. <i>(Wind On The Hill By A. A. Milne)***</i>	Thin sticks, thick bricks.
Source: * https://www.planetspark.in/blogs/english-poems-for-kids ** https://www.rd.com/list/popular-short-poems-for-kids/ *** https://allpoetry.com/Wind-On-The-Hill	Source: https://www.engvid.com/english-resource/50-tongue-twisters-improve-pronunciation/ Last accessed: 29 July 2025

Texts and poem extracts

Of the excerpts from poems quoted in the left-hand column of the table, the two-line passages or the ones that can be divided into two parts are suitable for dialogue singing. To pick up the starting pitch right and to get a feel for the new tonality, it is necessary for the teacher to voice the starting pitch for a longer period of time. The first part of the text should therefore be presented with the same notes or in a low range melody, and the class responds with the second part of the text, but with the same melody. See the examples of music for grade 1 in the appendix.

The expansion of vocal range

In the junior school, the main aim should be to practise correct breathing, the development of a unified sound and the shaping of the voice, rather than expanding the range of the voice.

“The singing teacher in the first and second grades should be particularly careful about extending the vocal range, as he or she is also responsible for bringing ‘growling’ children up to the same level. In singing lessons, sing in one tonality and only gradually increase the pitch by a semitone at a time, and only after the previous tonality has been established” (Osvay 2007: 45).

Summary

The structure of the warm up exercises in music lessons should follow the following sequence:

Table 2

Between years 6 and 8	From year 8
– breathing technique	– breathing technique
– development of resonance a) only with consonants b) connected with vowels	– development of resonance a) only with consonants b) connected with vowels
– sound formation, text exercises	– sound formation
	– legato and staccato exercises to increase vocal range
	– relaxing exercise

The structure of the warm up exercises

“Anyone who cares about what will happen to music here in a generation or two cannot pass by the school indifferently when the sound of singing is pouring out from inside” (Kodály 1982: 38). To quote Kodály's thoughts from 1929, I believe that our junior school teachers and teachers of music today should care what will happen to music here in a generation or two, and they should care what kind of song is pouring out from the classrooms. (Ferencziné 2015)

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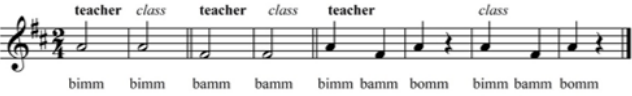
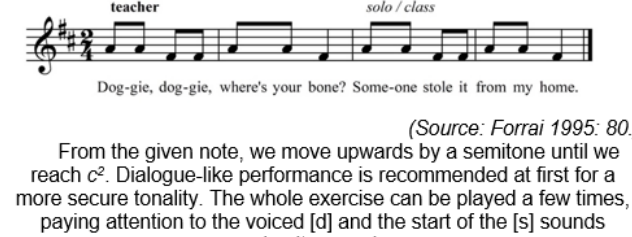
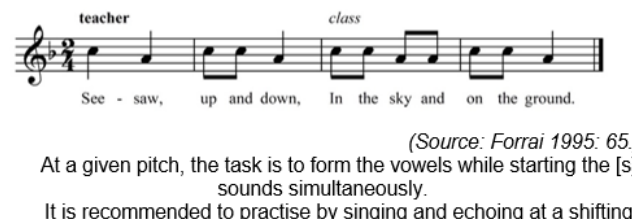
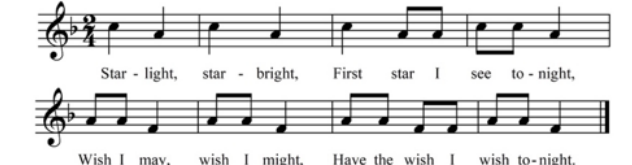
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APPENDIX

Warm up plans for songs in cca. 5 minutes – **Grade 1**




Preparing *Star light, star bright*

–

Practice type	Practice sequence	Aim
Developing resonance	 <p>The dialogue can be freely continued at a given pitch.</p>	to pick up the starting pitch and to form uniform sounding
Developing resonance and sound forming	 <p>(Source: Forrai 1995: 80.)</p> <p>From the given note, we move upwards by a semitone until we reach c^2. Dialogue-like performance is recommended at first for a more secure tonality. The whole exercise can be played a few times, paying attention to the voiced [d] and the start of the [s] sounds simultaneously.</p>	precise starting and shift between syllables, sound forming
Sound forming	 <p>(Source: Forrai 1995: 65.)</p> <p>At a given pitch, the task is to form the vowels while starting the [s] sounds simultaneously. It is recommended to practise by singing and echoing at a shifting pitch.</p>	starting together, forming sounds and character, creating a mood
	 <p>(Source: Forrai 1995: 70.)</p>	

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Preparing *The little bells*

Practice type	Practice sequence	Aim
Developing resonance	<p>A swarm of bees: free performance of a glissando melody with consonants [z] and/or [n] (formed with rounded lips). The teacher points out groups (rows of benches), pairs, etc., while groups of children pitch in one after the other and perform the buzzing together. The teacher can also draw the melody arch while they are doing this.</p>	uniform tone, forming a sound articulated in the front
Developing resonance and sound forming	<p><i>teacher / class</i></p>  <p>Starting from the given root note, the exercise can be pre-sung by the teacher and echoed by the class. The melody can be developed from motif to motif.</p>	precise beginning and shift between syllables, sound forming, extending vocal range
Developing resonance and sound forming	<p><i>teacher / class</i></p>  <p>Starting from the given root note, you can ascend in semitones till <i>b¹</i> until you reach the top note of the melody, and then back. The two bars can be played together, but also in a dialogue (teacher sings only bar 1, the class only bar 2).</p>	starting together, forming sound and character, creating a mood, extending vocal range, preparing downward jumping fourths
	 <p>(Source: Forrai 1995: 138.)</p>	

GETTING FAMILIAR WITH OPERA IN EARLY ADULthood. PERSPECTIVES OF A CREATIVE WORKSHOP

CSILLA CSÁKÁNY¹ 

SUMMARY. This paper investigates how young adults engage with opera, drawing on the author’s two decades of experience in university music education. Opera’s unique emotional and dramatic power appeals broadly, offering a rich interplay of music, text, and theatrical presentation. Generational differences in music listening are highlighted: Generation X favors concerts, recordings, and traditional media, while Generation Z relies on digital streaming, social media, curated playlists, and interactive experiences. Across generations, repeated exposure—central to the “familiarity heuristic”—enhances emotional and cognitive engagement, as demonstrated through examples from Handel, Bach, and Alban Berg. The study also presents the GlosszA workshop, which introduces participants to opera through historical context, performer studies, and creative exercises. By leveraging the familiarity heuristic, the workshop cultivates interpretive skills, critical awareness, and deeper aesthetic appreciation, enabling young audiences to connect more fully with operatic works while fostering lifelong engagement with the genre.

Keywords: Classical music mediation, Familiarity heuristic, Opera, GlosszA workshop, Musical aesthetics

The encounter with the genre of opera is never indifferent. The intimacy of the genre can trigger strong emotions and feelings - both positive and negative. Why does the genre of opera appeal to so many people - whether they are musically literate or not? Perhaps it is because opera, of all musical genres, arouses the most excitement and passion. Unlike other genres, such as the symphony, the concerto or the sonata, opera did not emerge gradually, but rather, at a crucial point in cultural history, it appeared

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in a kind of explosion, as a genre offering a rich repository for the unfolding of the musical-dramatic archetype. And its uniqueness lies in the way it relates to the world, namely by holding up a mirror to the current era.

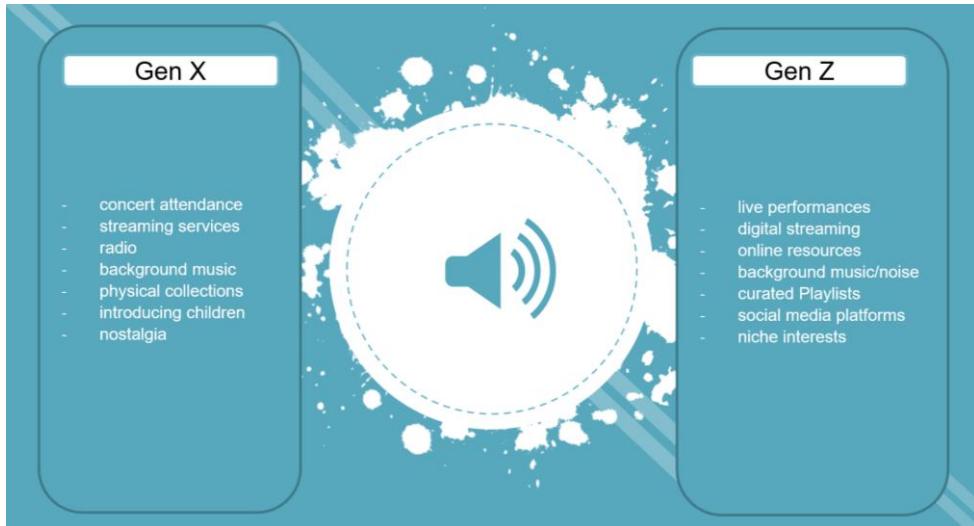
Opera as a genre from the opening of the first public opera house is a mass genre. As with all mass genres, it is more defined by conventions than by those which, by their very nature, appeal to a narrower audience. It is clear that change has repeatedly been forced by the cultural demands of genre lovers, giving rise to so-called reform operas, which have changed the means of expression, a fluid dramaturgy or even a complete change of musical concept. However, these works did not have the expected effect, as the gap between the work and its audience widened. The realization of those activists in the institutionalized system of opera was that, in order to truly move the 'masses', the genre needed a whirling 'circus', with all the frenzy that entailed a complex and varied cavalcade of aural and visual stimuli. Examining the opera-going habits of university students, we found that although the genre is frequented by young adults, there are some aspects that could increase its popularity. In the following we will explore these conceptual problems and assumptions: what is the music listening habits (forms of social and cultural interactions) in early adulthood; what emotional and cultural impact has encountering opera; familiarity gained through multimodal interaction with the genre; what are the goals and methods of the workshop entitled *GlosszA*.

Listening to classical music in early adulthood

Aspects of young adults' music listening habits are described in relation to generational characteristics. Two categories are taken as a starting point: the author, according to her own values, classifies herself as belonging to Generation X, while the other generation to which she juxtaposes these aspects is the generation of students currently in universities, Generation Z. The classical music listening habits of Gen X – depending on personal experiences and cultural influences – are characterized mainly by: concert attendance as special outing or cultural experience; useage of streaming services to access classical music; some still tune in to classical music radio stations especially while driving or working at home; background music while working, studying or relaxing; having physical collections of classical music including vinyl records or CDs. Gen Xers wish to introduce classical music to their children, emphasizing its educational and cultural value and at the same time some may have fond memories of classical music from their youth and continue to enjoy it for nostalgic reasons.

The Z generation's classical music listening habits are based on the preference of digital streaming platform like Spotify, YouTube; they often enjoy classical music that blends with other genres or film soundtracks; they prefer social media platforms: short classical music videos; they resort to curated playlists and recommendations from platforms or influencers to discover classical music, rather than traditional radio or CDs; they attend often to experience the music in a more interactive and communal setting; they resort to classical music courses available for those who want to learn more about the genre; they are characterized by niche interests in specific composers, eras or instruments. Some may have a particular affinity for Baroque Music, Beethoven or for the piano, for example.

Table 1



Intergenerational comparison
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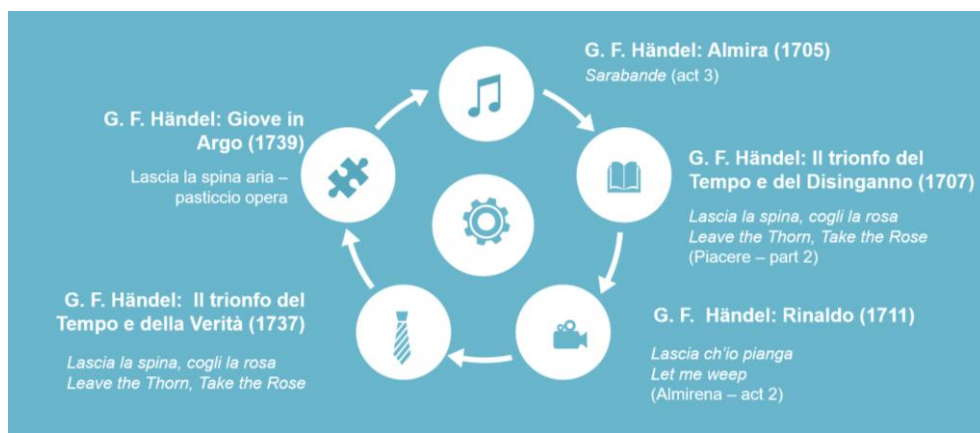
The generationally disaggregated aspects regarding music listening habits certainly converge on one issue: the recognition that repeated exposure to a particular piece of music can enhance the listening experience and the effectiveness of the listening practice².

² Desblache, Lucile: *Music and Translation New Mediations in the Digital Age*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Familiarity: the effect of repeated exposure to the work of art

Even at an early age, educators noticed that repeated exposition of an audition gave the children a greater pleasure in time. Transposing this idea on listening to classical music, similar results have been formulated by researchers in the field. Operating with familiar melodies was also very effective in pre-recording eras. Many composers from different historical periods beginning from the Baroque era have used this impact-mechanism. Let's just take for example the famous aria from Händel's *Rinaldo*: *Lascia ch'io pianga* (*Let me weep*). The composer completed the score of the opera just a few days after his arrival in England. He could accomplish it only by usage of "ready-made" music for the plot provided by the libretto. He also 'recycled' the aria in question, knowing that its melodic material was perfectly tailored, and perhaps even trusting that there would be people in the audience who had heard it somewhere before. To ensure success, he presented himself in London with a familiar musical score. And success was not lacking.

Table 2



The Journey of a Melody
(The image was created by the author)

As is well known, the aria *Lascia ch'io pianga* (*Let me weep*) has a remarkably long and intricate history. The melody originated from the *Sarabande* in Act III of Händel's *Almira* (1705). Two years later the composer revived the tune in his oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* (*The Triumph of Time and Disillusion*), this time setting it to the text *Lascia la spina cogli la rosa* (*Leave the Thorn, Take the Rose*) in accordance with the moral message of the work. The melody reached its most famous form in the opera *Rinaldo* (1711).

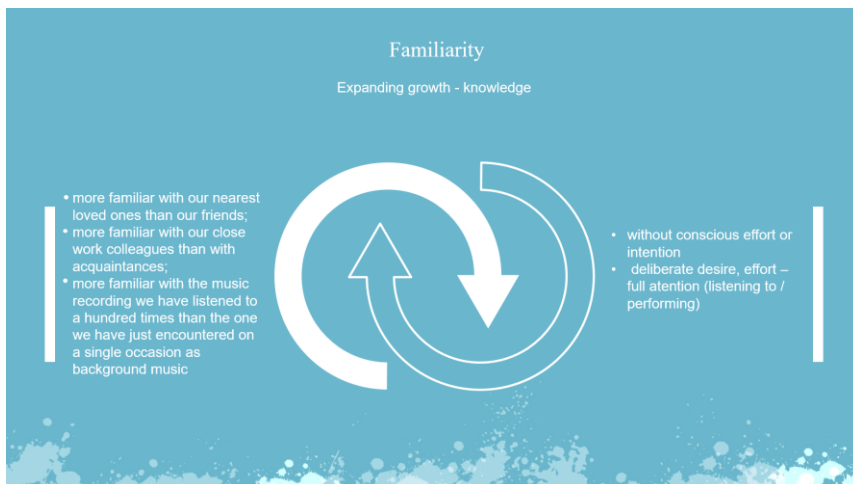
Afterwards, the aria lay dormant for several years during a period of creative rest, until Händel reworked it once again in *Il trionfo del Tempo e della Verità* (*The Triumph of Time and Truth*) in 1737. It resurfaced yet again two years later in the pasticcio opera *Giove in Argo* (*Jupiter in Argos*) in 1739.

Because audiences had already become familiar with the melody, its reappearance consistently elicited delight. Händel clearly understood the evocative power of recognition: by reintroducing a well-loved tune, he created an immediate emotional connection with listeners. This strategic use of musical familiarity functioned almost as a mediating “trick,” ensuring that the aria’s entrance would have a heightened expressive impact each time it returned.

Familiarity as a key concept in classical music mediation techniques

The familiar resonance of musical passages can awaken countless thoughts and emotions in the listener. It often happens that the very first moments of a film score evoke memories, moods, and even entire stories within us. Musicology scholars Elaine King and Helen M. Prior states that “the notion of *familiarity* is ubiquitous in our lives: it pervades everyday conversations, thoughts and activities. If one is familiar with someone or something, one might be described as being ‘well acquainted’, ‘intimate’ or ‘close’ to it.”³

Table 3





The development of a sense of familiarity (The image was created by the author)

³ *** *Music and Familiarity. Listening, Musicology and Performance* (ed. Elaine King and Helen M. Prior). Ashgate, 2013, 1.

In certain cases, familiarity with a person, object, or phenomenon develops without conscious intention or deliberate effort. In other instances, it can arise a clear desire, intention, or necessity to increase — or conversely, to decrease — the degree of familiarity with a given phenomenon. This dynamic is particularly evident in the context of classical music listening: some works become familiar gradually through repeated encounters, while in other cases we consciously engage in attentive, analytical listening in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the musical material. Naturally, there may be numerous reasons why a listener seeks a greater or lesser degree of familiarity with a musical work; often, however, this pursuit simply stems from the wish to know more — or, at times, less — about the work's musical structure, modes of expression, and aesthetic significance than is afforded by one's prior experience. Our next music example is from the repertoire of violin concertos, but it has an intrinsic textual analogy with a chorale, thus it functions in this context. One of my favorite church cantatas is *O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort* (*O eternity, you word of thunder*), BWV 60, a cantata composed by Johann Sebastian Bach. It was composed in 1723, during the first year of his tenure in Leipzig. The work focuses on themes of fear of death, concept of eternity, and the Christian hope of resurrection. The text and musical dramaturgy of the cantata introduce two allegorical figures: Fear (alto voice), representing human existential anxiety and dread of divine judgment, and Hope (tenor voice), embodying consolation, faith, and trust in redemption. The dialogical interplay between these two figures forms the theological and emotional core of the work. The cantata is scored for a relatively rich ensemble, including oboe da caccia, strings, and basso continuo, with the instrumental writing playing a significant role in reinforcing the rhetorical meaning of the text and intensifying its affective content. Formally, the work belongs to Bach's chorale cantata cycle. It opens with a large-scale chorale fantasia, followed by a sequence of recitatives and arias, and concludes with a four-part chorale, thus framing the composition within a clear theological and formal structure that leads the listener from fear toward hope.

The closing part of the cantata is a setting of Franz Joachim Burmeister's chorale *Es ist genug* (*It is enough*). From a musical perspective, the composer resorts to a highly distinctive device — indeed, it is likely that this very procedure drew Johann Sebastian Bach's attention to the chorale melody. The soprano line, set to the words '*Es ist genug*' (*It is enough*), consists of an ascending motion built from successive major seconds, ultimately forming an augmented fourth. This melodic formula was known as *diabolus in musica* and was employed only rarely, typically in rhetorically significant contexts. Within this textual framework, the intervallic gesture most likely symbolizes transformation or passage — specifically, the transition from life to death.

Table 4

 <p>Es ist genug! Herr, wenn es Dir gefällt, so spanne mich doch aus! Mein Jesus kommt: Nun gute Nacht, o Welt! Ich fahr ins Himmels Haus, ich fahre sicher hin im Frieden, mein großer Jammer bleibt darnieden. :] Es ist genug! :]</p>	<p>It's enough! Lord, if it pleases you, unchain me! My Jesus is coming: Good night, O world! I'm going to heaven's house, I'm going safely in peace, my great sorrow remains there. :] It's enough! :]</p>
<p>5. Chorale</p> 	

**Franz Joachim Burmeister's chorale *Es ist genug* (It is enough)
(The image was created by the author)**

I assume that this cantata is well known to music lovers around the world. The same is true regarding Alban Berg's knowledge of music literature. In his *Violin Concerto* of 1935 – perhaps his most frequently performed work – Berg evokes the chorale in a way that creates a profoundly heart-wrenching effect. Thanks to the familiar melody – this subtle “familiarity trick” – the concerto immediately acquires greater emotional depth and a striking new perspective.

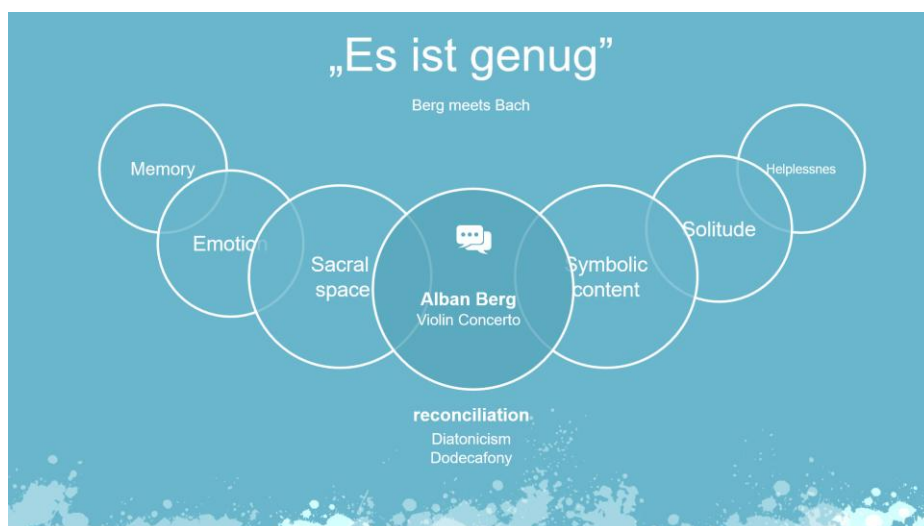
The violin concerto was commissioned by Louis Krasner, and the composer dedicated the work in memory of Manon Gropius, the daughter of Alma Mahler, who had passed away. Manon was the daughter of architect Walter Gropius and Alma Mahler, and a beloved figure in Viennese artistic circles. Exceptionally graceful and gifted, she died tragically at the age of eighteen from polio – a loss that deeply moved Berg and became the emotional impetus for the concerto. Berg was working on the opera *Lulu* when he accepted the commission to compose the *Violin Concerto*. He could not have known at the time that this work would become his last completed composition — a veritable double swan song. In a letter written in mid-August 1935 at the Waldhaus am Wörthersee, he noted that, despite having looked forward to the sense of liberation he expected upon completing the concerto, “some insect” had bitten him in the lower part of his spine⁴. In December of

⁴ *** *Alban Berg. Írások, levelek, dokumentumok (Alban Berg: Writings, Letters, Documents)*. Translated by: Péter Várnai. Zeneműkiadó, Budapest, 1965, p. 111.

that year, this led to septicemia, and on the 24th the composer passed away. The traces of the terrible pain he had endured for months had vanished from his face, and the death mask taken the following morning by Anna Mahler, daughter of Gustav Mahler, presents an image of a “healed” countenance.

The concerto consists of two movements: the first, marked Lento – Allegro moderato, is followed without pause by the second, Adagio, which concludes with a chorale-like ending. Structurally, the lyrical expressiveness of the violin and the richly contrasting orchestral textures engage in a constant dialogue, symbolizing Berg’s personal grief and the themes of life’s transience. In terms of its message, the concerto serves as an expression of remembrance and mourning: the solo violin often appears as an intimate, introspective voice, while the orchestra gradually unfolds dramatic tension and lyrical depth. The work is remarkable in that it combines the traditional form of the classical violin concerto with 20th-century atonal and twelve-tone techniques, creating a profound vehicle for emotional expression.

Table 5



**Symbolic and emotional content mediated by heuristic familiarity
(The image was created by the author)**

When Alban Berg incorporates the Bach chorale into his *Violin Concerto*, he essentially externalizes his own sense of helplessness, transforming it into a cry that soars into a sacred space. The chorale elevates this appeal toward God (*Es ist genug – it is enough*) while simultaneously entrusting his fate into divine hands (*Wenn es dir gefällt – when you wish*). Its symbolic

content is rendered through the timbre of the woodwinds, resonating beneath the violin's solitary lament. We recognize the chorale, yet it emerges as if from a distant memory – familiar, but at the same time imbued with the weight of solitude and profound emotion.

In the study of mediation techniques, experts often draw our attention to a phenomenon known as the “familiarity heuristic”. This principle facilitates the pleasure of sudden recognition or the “eureka” moment, a device that composers frequently employ at key moments in their works. The technique appears widely in 20th-century opera as well. For instance, the Transylvanian composer Ede Terényi referred to the evocation of earlier musical styles as “music of affection.” Contemporary opera composers such as György Selmeczi, Levente Gyöngyösi, and Dávid Mester similarly enjoy “playing” with stylistic gestures that evoke past eras. By harnessing the power of familiarity, they are able to more readily elicit that moment of recognition and delight in their audiences. This phenomenon allows someone to approach a problem or situation based on their prior experience with a similar context, guiding them to act as they did before. In musical terms, composers exploit this principle to create moments of instant recognition for the listener: when a familiar melodic or stylistic gesture appears, the audience can immediately connect with it, experiencing a flash of insight or delight – a musical “eureka”. By skillfully integrating elements of past musical styles or familiar motifs, 20th-century opera composers enhance this effect, turning stylistic familiarity into a tool for emotional and cognitive engagement.

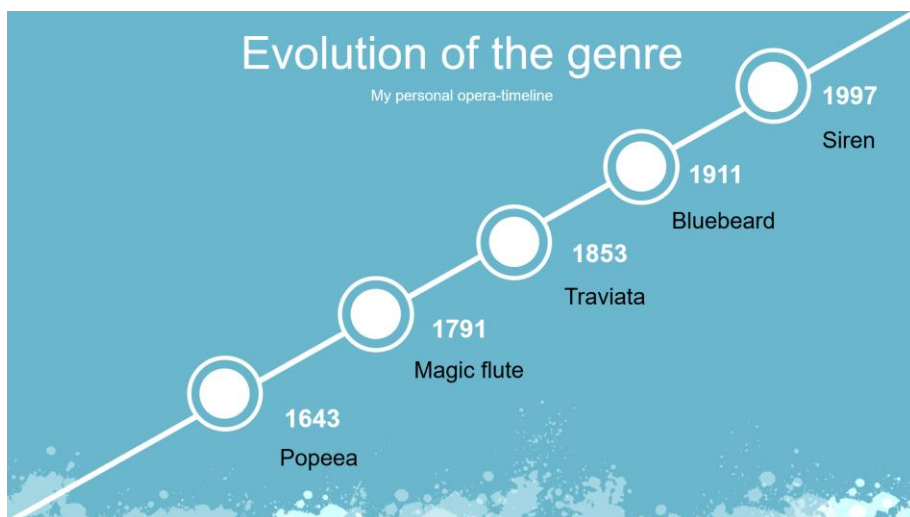
Encountering Opera. Difficulties, benefits of the genre

Many questions arise when we engage in the genre of opera. Should it be considered elitist or popular? Is it primarily a social or a cultural interaction? Does its reception depend on the audience's education and familiarity with musical taste? Are well-loved masterpieces more important, or should rarities also be valued? What matters most: the score, the libretto, or the visual dimension of the production?

I share Hegel's perspective: *the truth is the whole*. In other words, the meaning of an opera emerges not from any single element in isolation, but from the dynamic interplay of music, text, and theatrical presentation. This holistic approach reminds us that understanding and appreciating opera requires attention to the complex synthesis of all its components — a synthesis that can evoke profound emotional and intellectual responses in the audience.

Once someone has been captivated by the world of opera, they gradually develop a personal list of favorites. They return again and again to the arias, duets, and trios of these works, as well as their orchestral and

choral passages, intermezzos, preludes, and finales. Mine, organized roughly in chronological order from a music-historical perspective, includes the following.

Table 6

**A personal timeline of operatic experiences
(The image was created by the author)**

In 1643, Monteverdi's *Poppea* marked a turning point in early opera, blending expressive recitative with rich orchestration to dramatize the passions and intrigues of its historical characters. In 1791, Mozart's *The Magic Flute* combined enchanting melodies with symbolic storytelling, creating a work that is at once accessible, profoundly moral, and visually imaginative, reflecting both popular and Enlightenment ideals. Verdi's *La Traviata* of 1853 captures the intensity of Romantic opera, focusing on human emotion and societal constraints, while elevating the intimate drama of its tragic heroine through unforgettable melodic writing. In 1911, Bartók pushed the boundaries of operatic language, incorporating folk influences, modal harmonies, and rhythmic complexity to create a sound world that was both modern and deeply rooted in cultural identity. Finally, in 1997, Selmeczi's *Sziren* demonstrates the continued evolution of the genre, blending contemporary musical language with historical references, and exploring both personal and collective narratives in a way that speaks to today's audiences.

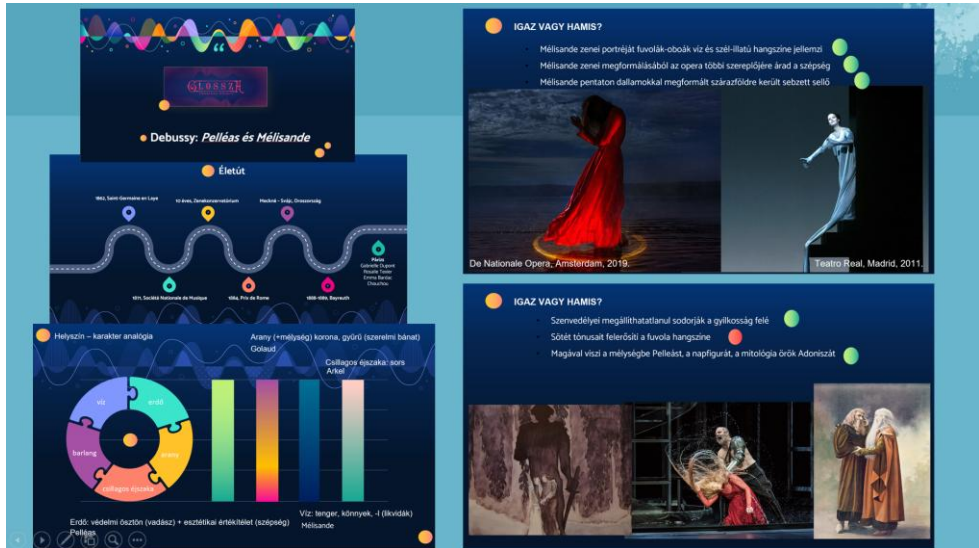
In recent years, I have sought to share my love of opera through mediation sessions in the form of interactive presentations. I hoped that by

offering audiences an insight into individual performances, they would find it much easier to engage with the work and communicate with the performers. Following the idea of initiating participants into the experience of the work itself, the *Glossza* workshop was conceived, hosted by the Hungarian Opera of Cluj.

The Framework of Glossza⁵ in the Practice of ‘Familiarity’

The workshop takes its name from the word *glossa*, which means a *marginal note*, a *brief comment (annotation)*, or an *explanation*. Gloss(a) in latin is a brief explanatory note or comment added to a text, often in the margins, intended to clarify, interpret, or provide additional information about the main text.

Table 7



Examples from the workshop’s instructional component
(The image was created by the author)

During the workshop, participants become acquainted with the work itself and learn about the era and the spirit of the time (*zeitgeist*). They get to know outstanding performers, including singers and prototypes of emblematic roles, and confront contemporary press coverage of the pieces. Participants

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBjW-5PPEMI>

experiment with creative auditory and visual associations and engage in the analysis of finding the right words to interpret an opera and form their own opinions about the works they hear.

The main goal of the workshop is awareness-raising through various topics. These include exploring the methods used in opera, the genealogy of a single work (such as the symbolic features in Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*), the deliberate infringement of operatic rules (as in Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande*), uncovering facts and mysteries surrounding the creation of a work (for example, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*), and examining heroes and antiheroes as archetypes on the opera stage.

Overall, the workshop fosters critical awareness and interpretative competence by combining historical context, analytical listening, and creative reflection, while employing the mediation technique of familiarity in order to enhance future listening experiences and enable opera performances to generate deeper aesthetic pleasure for participants.

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PROBLEMS OF TEACHING MUSIC-THEORETICAL DISCIPLINES IN MUSIC EDUCATION IN BUKOVINA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19th CENTURY: BASED ON THE TEXTBOOKS AND SONG COLLECTIONS BY SYDIR (ISIDOR) VOROBKEVYCH

YARYNA VYSHPINSKA¹ 

SUMMARY. This article explores the role of Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych in the development of music education in Bukovina in the second half of the 19th century, with particular attention to the formation of music-theoretical training in regional educational institutions. The study outlines Vorobkevych's views on music-aesthetic education and the establishment of singing as a school subject. Music-theoretical disciplines - solfeggio, music theory and harmony - are defined as key components of the professionalization of music education. Special emphasis is placed on the analysis of the structure and content of the Romanian-language textbook *Manual de Armonia musicală* (1869) and on the song collections for elementary schools published in Vienna and Chernivtsi. The article also examines the church-musical and spiritual-educational aspects of Vorobkevych's activity, reflected in his choral works intended for liturgical and school practice. The research demonstrates that his pedagogical legacy contributed to the formation of an integrated model of music-theoretical education in Bukovina and highlights the relevance of further historical and musicological investigation of his work.

Keywords: Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych; music education in Bukovina; music-theoretical disciplines; solfeggio; music theory; harmony textbook; sacred music.

1. Introduction

The second half of the 19th and the early 20 centuries constituted an exceptionally dynamic period in the cultural, educational and artistic development of Bukovyna. This period was marked by the gradual strengthening

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of the region's urban and industrial landscape and by a relatively liberal policy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire towards issues of national identity and education. A clear manifestation of this policy was the educational reform implemented by the Austrian government.

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the network of public (folk) schools in Bukovyna expanded considerably; secondary schools of various profiles and vocational institutions were established; the publication of educational and methodological literature was encouraged; in-service teacher training courses were organised; teachers' salaries increased; professional teachers' associations were founded; pedagogical periodicals and journals were launched; and issues related to the education and upbringing of young people were actively discussed in public discourse. This context stimulated the pedagogical activity of many artists, composers, writers and teachers who contributed to shaping the educational and artistic profile of multi-ethnic Bukovyna.

One of the leading figures of the cultural, artistic and educational development of the Ukrainian community in the region was Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych (1836–1903), whose multifaceted activity represents a unique example of an artist and intellectual who combined literary, musical, theatrical, folkloristic, scholarly, publishing and pastoral work with an active engagement in the spiritual and aesthetic education of young people in educational institutions. He was among the first to initiate the systematic development of music education in Bukovyna².

2. Review of Recent Research and Publications

The formation and development of the educational system in Bukovyna during the Austro-Hungarian and Romanian periods have been examined in the works of numerous scholars who have studied the history of education in the region, both in the past and in contemporary scholarship, including V. Akatrini, N. Babych, V. Botushanskyi, O. Gomenyuk, S. Dalavurak, I. Karbulitskyi, L. Kobylanska, O. Penishkevych, I. Petryuk, I. Rusnak, S. Smal-Stotskyi, L. Tymchuk, I. Kholyavska, and others.

A number of studies by Bukovynian researchers are specifically devoted to issues of musical culture, music education and the upbringing of young people. Among them are the works of K. Demochko, O. Zalutskyi, A. Kushnirenko, Ya. Melnychuk, Ya. Vyshpinska, and G. Postevka.

Comprehensive historical and biographical studies of the life and work of Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych in the fields of literature, music and pastoral

² Nykonenko, P. *The Bukovynian Skylark: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. PP Lysenko M. M., 2011. p. 58.

service have been conducted by M. Bilynska, Yu. Kapliyenko-Iliuk, O. Makovei, P. Nykonenko, O. Polyanko, M. Yuriychuk, and others.

For a comprehensive reconstruction of the state of development of music education and the teaching of music-theoretical disciplines in Bukovyna in the second half of the 19th century, the original works of Sydir (Isidor) Ivanovych Vorobkevych himself are of particular scholarly value. These sources make it possible to visually demonstrate the aims, ideas and principles underlying the formation of the school system in Bukovyna. They also reveal the depth and scope of Vorobkevych's musical and pedagogical experience as a composer, theorist, conductor, choirmaster, musicologist and folklorist.

3. Historical and Cultural Context of Music Education in Bukovyna in the Second Half of the 19th Century

According to the historical and social development of the educational system in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it should be noted that only “after the democratic revolution of 1848, the establishment of an independent Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the implementation of a series of educational reforms and the adoption of the Constitution of 1867 did public schooling in Bukovyna begin to develop more successfully, relying on imperial and regional legislation as well as governmental and local administrative regulations”³. In accordance with the Constitution, “public education was placed under state supervision and acquired a secular character, while the influence of the Church was limited to the sphere of spiritual upbringing”⁴. At the same time, “home education was not subject to any restrictions”⁵. The effectiveness of this educational policy is clearly illustrated by the example of the Mandychevsky family. As the contemporary researcher Volodymyr Akatrini convincingly demonstrates in his reconstruction of the educational and pedagogical activity of this family, “every member of the Mandychevsky family was fluent in German, Polish and Ukrainian. This constituted their advantage and enabled them to establish communication with representatives of various cultural communities, being well known among Ukrainian, German

³ Botushanskyi, V. M. *Essays on the History of Education in Bukovyna (19th – Early 21st Century)*. (Translated Title). Tekhnodruk, 2017. p. 4-5.

https://archer.chnu.edu.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/2749/Нариси%20з%20історії%20освіти_2017.pdf (accessed 25 Dec. 2025)

⁴ Akatrini, V. “A Short Outline of the Development of Education in Bukovyna (1774–1918)”. (Translated Title). *Molodyi vchenyi*, no. 9 (49), 2017, pp. 299.

⁵ Botushanskyi, V. M. *Essays on the History of Education in Bukovyna (19th – Early 21st Century)*. (Translated Title). Tekhnodruk, 2017. p. 6.

https://archer.chnu.edu.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/2749/Нариси%20з%20історії%20освіти_2017.pdf. (accessed 25 Dec. 2025)

and Romanian intellectual circles. A significant influence on the development of the musical abilities of the Mandychevsky children was exerted by the prominent teacher and musician Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych⁶. He also supported the musical growth of Ciprian Porumbescu. As Ya. Gulin notes, “Professor of choral singing Father Isidor introduced Ciprian Porumbescu to the world of great music both in the seminary and at the university. For Porumbescu, he was the only composer in Bukovyna at that time. Recalling his youth, Porumbescu associated his path as a self-taught musician with the studies that eventually led him to the Vienna Conservatory”⁷. This was a particularly active and productive period in the life and work of Isidor Vorobkevych. As O. Zalutskyi notes, “under his direct supervision and on the basis of his pedagogical activity, many musicians and cultural figures were educated. Among them were the composer and internationally renowned musicologist Eusebius Mandychevsky, the folklorist and composer Porfiry Bazhanskyi, the founder of Romanian classical music Ciprian Porumbescu, as well as the opera singer, conductor and composer Constantin Shandru, and many others”⁸.

For a comprehensive reconstruction of the context of Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych’s formation as a composer, playwright, and folklorist, it is useful to make a brief excursus into the history of the emergence of professional music education in Bukovyna and its dissemination within the region’s educational institutions. As Ya. Melnychuk (Vyshpynska) notes, “the first changes in the establishment of music education in the educational institutions of the region and the introduction of the subject ‘Singing’ as a curricular discipline date back to the early 1840s. The teaching of choral singing was initiated in specialised educational institutions – the theological seminary and the episcopal cantors’ school (daskaliia, or the school of church singers), which was founded in 1838 and reorganised in 1846. It was there that a solid educational basis for mastering choral singing was formed, which constituted an important and integral component of the Divine Liturgy. As a result of formative processes in the system of specialised music education, the school of church singers became one of the leading musical institutions in Bukovyna

⁶ Akatrini, V. M. *Educational and Pedagogical Activity of the Mandychevskyi Family in the Development of Education in Bukovyna. (Translated Title)*. Natsionalna akademiia pedahohichnykh nauk Ukrainy, Instytut pedahohichnoi osvity i osvity doroslykh imeni Ivana Zaziuna, 2023. p. 3.

https://ipood.com.ua/data/avtoreferaty_i_dysertatsii/2023_Akatrini/Akatrini_diser.pdf (accessed 27 Dec. 2025)

⁷ Hulin, Ya. *The Apostle of Enlightenment. (Translated Title)*. Zoloti lytavry, 2000. p. 24.

⁸ Zalutskyi, O. “Sydir Vorobkevych”. *(Translated Title)*. *Musical Local Studies of Bukovyna: A Reader, (Translated Title)*. vol. 8, edited by O. V. Zalutskyi, Chernivtsi National University, 2011, p. 9.

in the field of sacred music. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it developed into an institution that provided thorough general lower-secondary education and methodological training in singing based on a classical foundation"⁹. The researcher confirms these conclusions on the basis of annual reports and documents preserved in the State Archives of the Chernivtsi Region¹⁰.

In addition, the Chernivtsi Gymnasium, founded in 1808, introduced the study of choral singing in 1849. This subject was not compulsory and was offered as an optional course. "Attendance was voluntary, and the pupils of the gymnasium themselves paid the teachers' salaries"¹¹. It was in that same year that Sydir Vorobkevych and his brother Hryhorii began their studies at the Chernivtsi Lyceum (Gymnasium). Later, in 1855, he entered the Theological Seminary in Chernivtsi. Ya. Gulin, presenting a concise biographical outline of the composer's life and creative activity, notes that "it was precisely during this period that his first musical and literary attempts appeared"¹². The Ukrainian musicologist M. Bilynska, who was the first during the Soviet period to undertake a systematic study of the creative legacy of the Bukovynian composer, emphasizes that "as a senior pupil of the gymnasium, Vorobkevych travelled from village to village during each summer vacation and recorded Ukrainian, Romanian and Moldavian (then referred to as Wallachian) folk melodies. Already at that time, he attempted to compose his own original poems and music to these melodies... After graduating from the gymnasium, Vorobkevych, following family tradition, entered the Theological Seminary in Chernivtsi. From the first days of his studies at this institution, he took an active part in choral and literary circles. All the time free from theological studies, the young man devoted to musical self-education. Being fluent in foreign languages, he studied harmony, counterpoint and instrumentation using the textbooks of Dehn, Lobe, Marx, Reicha and others that were well known at the time, and became acquainted with the finest works of classical music, especially choral compositions by Bach, Handel and Haydn, available in the seminary library"¹³. P. Nykonenko, a researcher of the composer's literary legacy, notes that even during his studies at the theological seminary Vorobkevych was deeply "interested in choral conducting and used the student choir as a kind of creative laboratory in which his first vocal-choral

⁹ Melnychuk, Ya. M. *Formation and Development of Music Education in Bukovyna (Late 18th – Early 20th Century)*. (Translated Title). PhD dissertation, Chernivtsi National University, 2009. p. 35.

¹⁰ Melnychuk, Ya. M. *Formation and Development of Music Education in Bukovyna (Late 18th – Early 20th Century)*. (Translated Title). PhD dissertation, Chernivtsi National University, 2009. p. 35.

¹¹ *Musical Local Studies of Bukovyna: A Reader*. (Translated Title). Edited by O. V. Zalutskyi, Ruta, 2004. p. 31.

¹² Hulin, Ya. *The Apostle of Enlightenment*. (Translated Title). Zoloti lytavry, 2000. p. 7.

¹³ Bilynska, M. *Sydir Vorobkevych*. (Translated Title). Muzychna Ukraina, 1982. p. 7.

compositions were tested”¹⁴. “Even Bishop Yevhen Hakman himself became interested in the gifted seminarian”¹⁵ and petitioned the consistory to send Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych to study at the Vienna Conservatory¹⁶. Vorobkevych left for Vienna on 18 July 1868. According to P. Nykonenko, “Bishop Yevhen Hakman arranged his studies with Franz Krenn, kapellmeister of the Court Church of St Michael and professor at the Vienna Conservatory”¹⁷.

In this context, it should be added that this was not Vorobkevych’s first attempt to establish cooperation with conservatory teachers. While serving in the mountain parishes of Davydeny and later Ruska Moldovytisia, he persistently studied music-theoretical subjects and began working on a harmony textbook in Romanian. In the preface to this edition, Isidor Vorobkevych notes that, “having been encouraged by the “Society for Literature and Culture of the Romanian People of Bukovyna”, which aimed to promote national culture in all its spheres, he decided, as a son of his homeland, to contribute to this cause and therefore compiled a textbook on musical harmony, which he submitted for review and publication as early as 1866. My work was sent to the Romanian Conservatory in Bucharest for evaluation. The favorable and encouraging assessment of the Conservatory proved decisive for me”¹⁸. Having received this letter at the end of 1867 and taking into account that the Literary Society of Bukovyna considered his work in need of further revision, especially in linguistic terms, Vorobkevych thoroughly revised the manuscript and corrected and supplemented it in accordance with the requirements for a concise harmony manual. On this occasion, Vorobkevych publicly expressed his sincere gratitude to Ion Sbiera on the pages of the textbook for his prompt and tireless assistance, which he consistently provided in all matters related to the formal preparation of the publication¹⁹. The textbook also brought Vorobkevych his first public recognition – the prize of the “Society for Romanian Culture and Literature” for 1866²⁰.

¹⁴ Nykonenko, P. *The Bukovynian Skylark: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. PP Lysenko M. M., 2011. p. 75.

¹⁵ Nykonenko, P. *The Bukovynian Skylark: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. PP Lysenko M. M., 2011. p. 58.

¹⁶ Nykonenko, P. *Bukovynskyi Zhaivir: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. 2nd ed., PP Lysenko, 2016. p. 70.

¹⁷ Nykonenko, P. *Bukovynskyi Zhaivir: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. 2nd ed., PP Lysenko, 2016. p. 70-71.

¹⁸ Vorobchieviciu, Is. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. VII.

¹⁹ Vorobchieviciu, Is. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. VII.

²⁰ Hulin, Ya. *The Apostle of Enlightenment. (Translated Title)*. Zoloti lytavry, 2000. p. 5.

Overall, as emphasized by scholars of the Bukovynian composer's legacy, the Vienna period proved to be particularly favorable for Vorobkevych. Thus, M. Bilynska notes that "at the Vienna Conservatory Vorobkevych completed a course in harmony and the fundamentals of composition under the guidance of the distinguished teacher Franz Krenn. The young composer frequently consulted him regarding his own creative attempts. Krenn carefully reviewed Vorobkevych's works, approving the melodiousness of his music, the correctness of voice leading, and the naturalness of the harmonic structure"²¹. P. Nykonenko addresses this issue in greater detail and emphasizes that Vorobkevych arrived in Vienna already possessing a fairly high level of theoretical and practical training as a musician and choral conductor. This is confirmed by Vorobkevych's own words: "I thoroughly studied harmony and figured bass (with Dr. Gustav Schilling), studied classical musical works, explored the development of modern music, and, since I had served as a choir director for six full years, I was perfectly familiar with the compositions of Dmytro Bortniansky"²².

In the certificate signed by Franz Krenn and issued to Sydir Vorobkevych on 20 October 1868, it is stated that he "studied harmony both theoretically and practically with tireless diligence and with particularly good results. His church and secular choral compositions written during this period testify to a compositional talent well worthy of attention; in terms of melody and harmonization, they may be regarded as successful. ... It is evident that anyone who is able to compose successfully for singing is also qualified to teach singing. Moreover, since Mr. Sydir Vorobkevych has also studied vocal theory, choral conducting and writing for various voice types with very good results, I, as the head and director of the church choir and of the higher school for vocal studies, can recommend him with full conviction"²³. On the basis of this certificate, Vorobkevych obtained the official status of a music teacher, with the rank of professor of theology, as the theological seminary had the status of a higher education institution²⁴.

After successfully passing the examinations in music-theoretical disciplines at the Vienna Conservatory, Vorobkevych returned to Chernivtsi and immediately began intensive professional activity. He devoted himself enthusiastically to musical and pedagogical work, composing new choral and

²¹ Bilynska, M. *Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. Muzychna Ukraina, 1982. p. 12.

²² Nykonenko, P. *Bukovynskiy Zhaivir: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. 2nd ed., PP Lysenko, 2016. p. 71.

²³ Nykonenko, P. *Bukovynskiy Zhaivir: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. 2nd ed., PP Lysenko, 2016. p. 72.

²⁴ Nykonenko, P. *Bukovynskiy Zhaivir: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. 2nd ed., PP Lysenko, 2016. p. 72.

instrumental pieces, “writing songs and choral works to his own texts and to texts by other authors, composing piano pieces and works for various instrumental ensembles, as well as creating a large number of short stories, novellas and dramatic works”²⁵. He was also deeply engaged in composing music and librettos for the Ukrainian theatre. Numerous testimonies of Vorobkevych’s contemporaries concerning his activity as a teacher and composer can be found in the periodical press and scholarly publications of the time. In particular, A. Mikulich, in the study “*Music in Bukovyna before the founding of the Society for the Promotion of Musical Art (1775–1862)*”, writes: “Only from 1868 did church singing begin to develop and improve significantly, after, thanks to the petitions of the Metropolitan, the Orthodox priest Sydir Vorobkevych had been sent to study at the Vienna Conservatory. After his return, he was appointed professor of singing at the theological seminary and in secondary schools. Sydir Vorobkevych proved himself to be an exceptionally capable teacher and a productive composer”²⁶.

4. Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych as an Educator and Author of Educational Music Publications

Studying Vorobkevych’s works in the field of music-theoretical disciplines – music theory, harmony, as well as songbooks for folk schools, in which the composer provides a concise presentation of the basic principles of solfeggio – and analysing the liturgical compositions written for school choirs, we may conclude that he consistently sought to raise and develop the teaching of singing in schools to a proper professional level and to provide teachers with effective pedagogical tools that would enable high-quality polyphonic children’s singing in educational practice. “Vorobkevych succeeded in fundamentally transforming the methodology of music teaching in schools, turning it into an integral component not only of aesthetic and spiritual education, but also of national education. As a priest and educator, he paid particular attention to the development of church singing as an important foundation of school music education”²⁷. In order to illustrate most clearly Vorobkevych’s views on music education and his assessment of the state of church singing in educational institutions of the region, it is appropriate to refer to documentary sources. In this regard, we present a document published

²⁵ Bilynska, M. *Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. Muzychna Ukraina, 1982. p. 13.

²⁶ Norst, A. *The Society for the Promotion of Musical Art in Bukovyna, 1862–1902. (Translated Title)*. Translated by M. Lytvyniuk, O. Vankevych, and A. Daskaliuk, Knyhy-XXI, 2021. p. 60.

²⁷ Babych, N. D. “The Pedagogical Dimension of the Brothers Sydir and Hryhorii Vorobkevych”. (*Translated Title*). [15 Not the Last of the Mohicans: Educators and Scholars of Bukovyna in the Second Half of the 19th – Early 20th Century. Scholarly Essay], Bukrek, 2010, p. 21.

in the scholarly study by N. Babych entitled “Submission of Sydir Vorobkevych to the Regional School Council concerning the publication of his liturgies”, in which the composer substantiates his vision for the development of music education. The document states: “Music is an important means of education in the modern educational process and in the general system of upbringing of young people. Therefore, modern pedagogy should focus primarily on the cultivation of singing lessons as a means of refining the young heart and shaping the inner spiritual world of the individual. To achieve this goal, two essential conditions are required: first, the presence of professionally trained teachers; and second, the availability of appropriate methodological teaching materials. With regard to the first condition, there is little hope, as educational institutions are forced to rely on the existing professional staff; as for the second condition, the number of suitable teaching manuals published in regional languages remains extremely limited owing to financial constraints.

This circumstance, together with my love for art, the experience gained during many years of teaching, consideration of individual ethical aspects, as well as the necessity to implement the decree of the Regional School Council of 13 September 1877, which calls for particular care for the development of folk church singing, prompted me to compose two liturgies. In this way, I intend to fill an important gap and to offer teachers an appropriate teaching aid, through which the practical implementation of their educational aims may be achieved – namely, the moral refinement of the human heart and the introduction of noble singing into schools and churches.

The musical texture of both liturgies is simple and homophonic. They are intended for performance by children’s voices (soprano and alto), which makes them easily applicable in school practice, and are supported and supplemented by the teacher’s voice (bass).

The undersigned respectfully requests the Regional School Council to grant permission for the publication of these compositions in the interest of raising the level of folk school singing and to entrust the undersigned with responsibility for the promotion of noble singing. ... Chernivtsi, 18 October 1877. Sydir Vorobkevych”²⁸. We may assume that this statement refers to the two liturgies adapted for use in folk schools for two voices (1879), published by the composer and mentioned in the study by Nadiia Babych²⁹. In addition, we were able to identify an 1881 edition by Isidor Vorobkevych

²⁸ Babych, N. D. “*The Pedagogical Dimension of the Brothers Sydir and Hryhorii Vorobkevych*”. (*Translated Title*). [15 Not the Last of the Mohicans: Educators and Scholars of Bukovyna in the Second Half of the 19th – Early 20th Century. Scholarly Essay], Bukrek, 2010, p. 21-22.

²⁹ Babych, N. D. “*The Pedagogical Dimension of the Brothers Sydir and Hryhorii Vorobkevych*”. (*Translated Title*). [15 Not the Last of the Mohicans: Educators and Scholars of Bukovyna in the Second Half of the 19th – Early 20th Century. Scholarly Essay], Bukrek, 2010, p. 25.

entitled *Melodies from the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, arranged for folk schools*. Analyzing these compositions, we may observe that the composer carefully took into account the tessitura of children's voices, their harmonic combination in thirds and sixths, supported by a bass part performed by the teacher, and preserved the compositional structure of the Divine Liturgy in accordance with the canons prescribed in the church rubrics. Vorobkevych's aspiration to fill the folk school with the colourful and melodious sound of children's voices and to enrich spiritual practice in the church was fully realised during his lifetime. As the composer himself wrote about the results of his work: "no matter which school I enter, I hear my songs everywhere; ... it was not in vain and not without purpose that I lived in this world"³⁰. The ideal of forming a harmonious and spiritually rich personality motivated Vorobkevych to systematic and persistent work in the field of music education. "His practical pedagogical activity was innovative for its time"³¹ and was based on a profound understanding of the social mission of education and a sincere belief in its future development.

It should be noted that Vorobkevych was, above all, a priest, pastor and teacher in the full sense of his vocation, a highly educated intellectual deeply concerned with the spiritual and cultural needs of his people. "The composer wrote that he created a total of forty liturgical works in Church Slavonic, Greek and Romanian, only eight of which were published during his lifetime. For his achievements in the field of church music, Father Vorobkevych was granted the right to wear the "red belt" and was later awarded the rank of archpriest"³². For his service to the Church and to education, he attained a number of significant distinctions: he received the rank of archpriest-stavrophor, became a professor at the Theological Faculty of Chernivtsi University, obtained the civil rank of a seventh-class state official, and was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph³³. These facts once again testify to Vorobkevych's outstanding personality and provide grounds for a more in-depth consideration of the role of theological education in his life and creative activity.

In the historical and publicistic work *Historical Sketches of Some Significant Events Regarding the Organisation and Development of the Eastern Orthodox Church under the Austrian Empire*, Nestor Vorobkevych

³⁰ Nykonenko, P. *The Bukovynian Skylark: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. PP Lysenko M. M., 2011. p. 74.

³¹ Nykonenko, P. *The Bukovynian Skylark: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. PP Lysenko M. M., 2011. p. 74.

³² Nazar-Shevchuk, L. "Paths of Return: Father Sydir Vorobkevych". (Translated Title). Mus.art. <https://mus.art.co.ua/shliakhy-povernennia-otets-sydir-vorobkevych> (accessed 2 Feb. 2026)

³³ Hulin, Y. *The Apostle of Enlightenment. (Translated Title)*. Zoloti lytavry, 2000. p. 5.

describes the formation and development of clerical education in Bukovyna. In particular, he examines the establishment of the theological institute and the theological seminary in Chernivtsi, which, “over forty-eight years of their existence, developed in all spheres and reached a high level of academic excellence”³⁴. These institutions underwent further significant reorganization after the founding of Franz Joseph University in Chernivtsi in 1875.

Therefore, the formation of Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych as a composer of sacred music and as a representative of the Eastern Slavic Christian tradition is of particular importance for understanding the specific features of the development of church music culture in Bukovyna during his lifetime and creative activity. In our view, the modal and melodic thinking that shaped Vorobkevych as a composer, artist, and spiritual figure was formed under the influence of several key factors. These include folk music and the vocal traditions of the multicultural environment in which he was raised; his upbringing in a deeply religious milieu, marked by the cultivation of Christian values in the family of his priest grandfather and father, the latter being a highly educated teacher of philosophy at the Chernivtsi Lyceum; early and continuous immersion in church polyphonic singing, characteristic of the Eastern Slavic tradition; and, finally, his studies at the Vienna Conservatory, which provided him with systematic knowledge of the European model of musical harmony and counterpoint. This professional training enabled him to compose sacred choral works, secular compositions, instrumental music, and music for the theatre.

The bibliographic index dedicated to S. Vorobkevych (2021) indicates “that from 1868 to 1902 he taught music and singing in all contemporary secondary educational institutions of Chernivtsi, including the theological seminary, the teachers’ seminary, the gymnasium, the Realschule, and the school for church singers. During his years of pedagogical activity, he published the first German-language textbook on music and singing, *Allgemeine Musiklehre* (1869), which was reprinted many times”³⁵; the Romanian-language harmony textbook *Manual de Armonia muzicală* (1869); and the *Collection of Songs for Folk Schools, Lower Gymnasiums and Realschulen* (1870). In 1889, in Vienna, the *Songbook for Folk Schools* in Ukrainian was published for the first time. It was reprinted many times and was used in schools of Western Ukraine for more than twenty years. An analogous textbook was

³⁴ Vorobchivici, N. *Historical Sketches of Some Significant Events Concerning the Organization and Development of the Eastern Orthodox Church under the Austrian Empire*. (Translated Title). Tipografia universitară i. r. a lui R. Eckhardt, Cernăuți, 1900. p. 45.

³⁵ *Sydir Vorobkevych (1836–1903): bibliografichni pokazhchyk [Sydir Vorobkevych (1836–1903): A Bibliographic Index]*. (Translated Title). Edited by I. Rudko, O. Sanduliak, and O. Havryliuk, 2nd ed., Chernivtsi, 2021. p. 30.

prepared by the composer for Romanian schools under the title *Colecțiune de cântece pentru școlile populare de Isidor Vorobchieviciu*³⁶. Three parts of this songbook, reprinted in Vienna in 1897–1898, are preserved in the collections of the Scientific Library of Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University.

5. Methodological and Didactic Features of Vorobkevych's Educational Materials

Let us dwell in more detail on the Romanian-language textbook *Musical Harmony*, compiled by Vorobkevych on the basis of the fundamental and general principles of music theory and solfeggio, which, by providing a stable foundation, gradually prepare beginners for understanding the basic principles of musical composition and harmony. Realising the importance of this work, Vorobkevych writes in the preface: "For us, Romanians, this is the first book of its kind, and any beginning is rough and imperfect, while the demands of our time are very high and exacting. However, the need for a book of this type was extremely great, because music is also a science based on certain immutable laws, which everyone who seeks to penetrate the depth and essence of music must know"³⁷. In shaping the compositional structure of the textbook, Vorobkevych notes that he followed the principle: "Examine everything and choose the best"³⁸. Contemporary publications on music theory and harmony known to Vorobkevych - namely those by A. Marx, A. Reicha and E. Richter - formed the basis of this work and, to some extent, enabled the author to gather in his edition "*the most essential musical laws and to present them as clearly and accurately as possible, albeit very concisely*"³⁹. Analyzing Vorobkevych's textbook *Musical Harmony*, S. Protsyk notes that "from A. Marx's major textbook Vorobkevych adopted certain structural and terminological principles. From E. Richter's *Lehrbuch der Harmonie* (Leipzig, 1853), some musical examples were borrowed, as well as the method of systematizing the material, which is especially evident

³⁶ *Sydir Vorobkevych (1836–1903): bibliografichniy pokazhchyk* [Sydir Vorobkevych (1836–1903): A Bibliographic Index]. (*Translated Title*). Edited by I. Rudko, O. Sanduliak, and O. Havryliuk, 2nd ed., Chernivtsi, 2021. p. 30-31.

³⁷ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. VIII.

³⁸ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. VIII.

³⁹ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. VIII.

in the second chapter. The influence of A. Reicha, the French theorist, is manifested in the author's orientation toward the study and popularization of folk songs, which organically entered the structure of the educational themes of the third chapter as illustrative material. Vorobkevych believed that only folk creativity is capable of guiding a composer in the right direction, and he consistently promoted these ideas in his theoretical works, choral and instrumental compositions⁴⁰. It should be emphasized that the textbook consists of a preface, three chapters and a conclusion, in which the author addresses general musicological issues, namely "the elements of the doctrine of musical forms and the main genres of vocal music"⁴¹.

Thus, in the first part of the textbook, *General Concepts of Music Education*, general ideas and fundamental notions of music education are presented, preparing beginners for the study of the basics of solfeggio and music theory. This part covers topics that facilitate the mastery of the elements of musical notation, the principles of rhythmic organization, and the possible combinations of note values in different time signatures, as well as examples of articulation techniques and their interpretation. "The author also describes in considerable detail the origin and development of ancient musical notation"⁴². Examples of the notation of dynamics, tempo indications and character markings are provided; in the original edition they are given in their original languages, accompanied by Romanian translations. The textbook explains a range of technical elements, including the use of the fermata sign, octave transposition of a melody, the indication of triplets, the simplification and repetition of musical fragments, and the performance of ornaments such as the gruppetto, mordent and trill, as well as double notes. To denote an upbeat, the author employs the term *anacrusis*, which reflects the music-theoretical tradition of the nineteenth century. Its etymology derives from the Greek ἀνάκρουσις and entered European musical terminology through Latin and French forms (*anacrusis*, *anacrusa*, *anacrouse*). The term denotes an incomplete initial beat and, at the same time, conveys the idea of a dynamic impulse—an upward movement that initiates a musical phrase. This choice

⁴⁰ Vyshpynska, Ya. "The Role of Sydir Vorobkevych in the Development of Music Education in Bukovyna". (Translated Title). *Sydir Vorobkevych (1836–1903): bibliografichnyi pokazhchyk* [Sydir Vorobkevych (1836–1903): A Bibliographic Index], (Translated Title). edited by I. Rudko, O. Sanduliak, and O. Havryliuk, 2nd ed., Chernivtsi, 2021, p. 18.

⁴¹ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (Translated Title). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 198.

⁴² Vyshpynska, Ya. "The Role of Sydir Vorobkevych in the Development of Music Education in Bukovyna". (Translated Title). *Sydir Vorobkevych (1836–1903): bibliografichnyi pokazhchyk* [Sydir Vorobkevych (1836–1903): A Bibliographic Index], (Translated Title). edited by I. Rudko, O. Sanduliak, and O. Havryliuk, 2nd ed., Chernivtsi, 2021, p. 18.

of terminology testifies to Vorobkevych's professional competence in creating a music-theoretical textbook and is consistent with the vocal-choral orientation of his compositional work.

The second chapter, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Harmony*, has the character of a conceptual treatise in which the author reveals the content and essence of music as a phenomenon of art and culture. Vorobkevych analyses the concepts of melody, harmony and figured bass, demonstrating their influence on the architectonics of a composition and on the formation of musical form. He defines music as "an art that uses sounds to convey feelings and ideas; through sounds, music acts upon the human heart. ... It is divided into two main branches: melody and harmony"⁴³. The author conceives melody as a kind of sound arch, in which individual tones are "strung one after another" and form a line that ultimately creates an idea of musical form⁴⁴. For Vorobkevych, the motif appears as the primary structural unit from which the phrase, sentence, period and, finally, the complete musical form are constructed⁴⁵. With regard to harmony, Vorobkevych proposes the following definition: "1) the combination of several different and definite sounds into a pleasant consonance or into a chord; and 2) the property of an entire musical work when it is considered as a succession of chords"⁴⁶. These harmonic relations, in turn, may be designated by numerical figures, which constitute the basis of the doctrine of figured bass. Generalizing the activity of a musician, Vorobkevych distinguishes four types: the practitioner, the virtuoso, the theorist and the composer, thus constructing a hierarchy that ranges from craftsmanship to creative genius. In his view, it is precisely the composer who "is capable of generating new musical feelings and ideas through sounds in a brilliant way"⁴⁷. Summarizing his reflections, Vorobkevych emphasizes that the achievement of mastery in composition requires a constant combination of theory and practice. For this reason, he stresses that

⁴³ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 25-26.

⁴⁴ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 26.

⁴⁵ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 199.

⁴⁶ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 26.

⁴⁷ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 27.

“in this course, theory will always go hand in hand with practice”⁴⁸. The final part of the chapter is devoted to the systematization of modal-tonal and intervallic concepts, including the varieties of the diatonic scale, types of minor, the chromatic scale, intervals and their inversions, as well as consonances and dissonances.

The third chapter, *Musical Harmony*, forms a systematic understanding of the fundamental principles of harmony, including the laws of the circle of fifths, principles of tonal relationships, cadence patterns, and standard procedures for introducing seventh and ninth chords into choral writing. The material is illustrated by folk songs and by excerpts from the author’s own choral compositions, which serve as a practical foundation for mastering the proposed topics: voice leading, examples of voice crossing, the structural role of the bass line, and the harmonization of the diatonic scale in ascending and descending motion. The author harmonizes melodies of authentic Romanian folk songs, offering various solutions for the treatment of the bass and inner voices. In our view, Vorobkevych’s harmonizations of the songs *A Child’s Dream (Visul copilei)* and *Farewell, Motherland (Adio Patriei)* are of particular interest⁴⁹. In these examples, the composer preserves the stylistic character of the original melodies, introduces a variety of modulatory turns in the tenor and bass parts, and creates an effect of harmonic contrast within the unfolding of an identical melodic line. The final part of the chapter is devoted to topics of a more advanced professional level, including modulatory procedures, tonal deviations, and sequences as principal means of harmonic development.

The author pays special attention to polyphonic thinking, in particular to counterpoint, imitation, and canon, which concentrate the practical principles of multi-voice writing. Examples of polyphonic texture include vertical permutation of voices in a four-part setting, the treatment of a fixed voice in movable counterpoint, as well as polyphonic development based on imitative and heterophonic techniques. Vorobkevych also convincingly demonstrates cadence formulas in which harmonic attraction and functional relationships are clearly revealed. It should be emphasized that Vorobkevych’s use of the canonical principle of voice imitation as a means of developing the melodic line in two- and three-part textures occupies an important place in the formation of his educational and methodological materials intended for folk

⁴⁸ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 26.

⁴⁹ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 103-104, 106-107.

schools. In the third part of the Romanian-language songbook *Colecțiune de cântece pentru școlile populare*, the author introduces vocal exercises and canons for two, three, and four voices aimed at developing pupils' skills in part-singing⁵⁰. These materials contribute to the formation of modal-melodic and harmonic hearing, vocal technique, rhythmic stability, and ensemble coordination. The inclusion of imitative polyphonic exercises in school practice by Vorobkevych testifies to the high level of music education in Bukovyna in the second half of the nineteenth century and, to a certain extent, even exceeds the contemporary curricular requirements for the subject *Musical Art* in general secondary education institutions in Ukraine.

In the concluding section of the textbook *Musical Harmony*, Vorobkevych presents a concise yet conceptually significant classification of the basic structural components of musical form - motif, phrase, sentence, and period - and provides an overview of the principal genres of vocal music. Discussing the diversity of ritual and so-called "occasional" songs, as he terms them, Vorobkevych emphasizes that "the Romanian people are among the most singing and song-rich nations"⁵¹. Within the Romanian musical tradition, he singles out two genres that, in his view, most clearly express its distinctive character: the *doina* and the *hora*. Vorobkevych offers a poetic and at the same time analytically precise description of these genres. He defines the *doina* as a melancholic song through which feelings of pain, tenderness, and longing are conveyed. Most *doinas*, he notes, are characterized by a slow tempo and predominantly soft modal coloring, while modulations into a "hard" (major) mode occur only rarely. In this sense, the *doina* reflects the elegiac disposition of the Romanian people, who "sigh for lost times of glory and happiness"⁵². In contrast to the elegiac and contemplative character of the *doina*, the *hora* represents a fundamentally different emotional sphere. It is a song-game that embodies joy, vitality, and collective emotional release. In the *hora*, sadness is transformed into melody and combined with joy in such a way that joy ultimately prevails over longing. The genre is marked by a faster tempo (most commonly 6/8 or 3/8) and a predominantly "hard" modal character. For Romanians, as Vorobkevych emphasizes, the *hora* is primarily

⁵⁰ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Colecțiune de cântece pentru școlile populare*. [Collection of Songs for Folk Schools]. (*Translated Title*). Vol. 3, Retipărire a edițiunii din 1896, în editura i. r. a cărților școlastice, (Viena), 1898. p. 25, p. 69-71.

⁵¹ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 202.

⁵² Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 201.

a hymn of joy - a dance song in which many people “give themselves to the same feeling” and, through collective singing and dancing, express what “everyone has thought and felt”⁵³. Vorobkevych also notes that the dissemination and preservation of Romanian folk musical tradition were historically associated with the activity of the *lăutari*. In Ukrainian musical culture, the bearers of this tradition were wandering *kobzars*; in Bukovyna, however, among the Ukrainian population, their functional and cultural equivalent was commonly referred to as the *lăutar*. At the end of the textbook, Vorobkevych presents this material in a highly poetic and stylistically refined manner, fully revealing his literary talent. His language is polished and expressive, rich in comparisons, figurative imagery, and metaphorical definitions. In particular, he employs such evocative metaphorical expressions as “the golden times of a glorious and happy past” (*mărimile, gloriile și fericirile trecutului*), “burning tears” (*lacrimi fierbinți*), “long and painful sighs” (*suspinuri lungi și dureroase*), and “the depth of our soul” (*adâncul sufletului nostru*)⁵⁴. These artistic images clearly bear the imprint of Romantic aesthetics: they appeal to the emotional memory of the people, intensify nostalgic experiences, and vividly reflect the lexicon and expressive means characteristic of nineteenth-century Romanian Romantic discourse. The same linguistic and stylistic refinement can be observed in Isidor Vorobkevych’s short story *Moșul Nicolai Suceavschi*, which is based on the author’s personal recollections and offers a vivid and insightful portrayal of the Bukovynian *lăutar* Nicolae Picu. Vorobkevych depicts his protagonist’s personality, his virtuoso performance shaped by profound emotional intensity, his life wisdom, and his attitude toward material gain. At the same time, he reveals the broader cultural significance of Picu’s influence on the formation and activity of the so-called “musical guild” he established - a kind of informal music school in Suceava that educated multi-instrumental musicians.

This vivid concluding section addresses the development of vocal genres that originated from song, such as the romance, the ballad, and the aria. Particular attention is given to the semantic role of recitative in vocal art. Vorobkevych emphasizes that “sung, or obbligato, recitative places the highest demands on musical declamation and on the art of singing. Nothing reveals the virtuosity and musical culture of the singer, his understanding of poetry and musical composition, the depth of his emotional world, and the

⁵³ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 202.

⁵⁴ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 202.

breadth of his imagination as clearly as the manner in which recitative is understood and performed”⁵⁵. Vorobkevych also considers the evolution of operatic schools and draws attention to smaller vocal forms related to opera. At the same time, his reflections on the future of church music of the Eastern Orthodox tradition are marked by pronounced optimism. Analyzing the contemporary state of affairs, he stresses that “there is no doubt that musical geniuses will also appear in the Eastern Church who will raise Eastern church music to a proper artistic level”⁵⁶. In order to substantiate these views and to demonstrate the musical richness of the Romanian sacred style, at the end of the textbook Vorobkevych includes—presumably as an authorial example—his own original choral composition for the Liturgy of the Faithful, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth! (Sfînt, sfînt, sfînt Domnul Savaoft)*, written in C major. This work represents a profoundly religious, exalted, and melodically expressive example of church music. It convincingly illustrates how, by means of economical musical resources—essentially through the melodic interaction of a four-part mixed choir and consonant harmonic writing—it is possible to achieve both tenderness and grandeur of sound, flexibility of voice leading, and fluency in the construction of each individual part (see E.g. 1, mm. 1–5). In this score, Vorobkevych employs a number of characteristic compositional devices. These include the frequent use of raised passing tones on the IV and II scale degrees, as well as brief contrasts with the parallel minor, accompanied by increased mobility in the soprano line, where passing unstable tones also appear—namely the raised III and IV degrees of A minor—intensifying the expressive tension and highlighting a temporary change in the tonal plan (see E.g. 1, mm. 11–12). The episode on the words “*bine este*” is particularly delicate and expressive. In measure 15, the soprano and tenor move in parallel sixths through the octave, incorporating raised passing tones on the II, IV, and V degrees. On the word “*cuvîntat*,” Vorobkevych restores a full four-part texture and firmly establishes the dominant function in the principal key of C major (see E.g. 1, mm. 15–16). The composition also contains a modulation to the subdominant key of F major, which further enriches the harmonic palette. In the final four measures, Vorobkevych prepares a classical cadential progression in which the bass assumes a structurally reinforcing role, achieved through a raised passing fourth that resolves smoothly into the dominant. The cadence is formed by a

⁵⁵ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 204.

⁵⁶ Vorobchieviciu, I. *Manual de Armonia musicală*. [Manual of Musical Harmony]. (*Translated Title*). Soțietatea pentru literatura și cultura română în Bucovina, Tiparul lui Rudolf Eckhardt, (Cernăuți), 1869. p. 206.

cadential six-four chord, a dominant seventh with an added sixth, and the concluding tonic. Once again, the soprano and first bass parts are notable for their melodic breadth and expressive brightness (see E.g. 1, mm. 22–23).

E.g. 1

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Sfint!". It is arranged for Soprano and Tenor parts. The tempo is marked "Moderato". The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1 to 5, and the second system covers measures 11 to 23. The lyrics are: "Sfint, sfint, sfint Dom-nul Sa-va-bst ff plu es-te ce-ri-ul, O-sa-na, O-sa-na! bi-ne-e-ste-cu-vin-tat in-nal-ti-me." The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, notes, rests, and dynamics (f, ff, mf, dolce). There are also performance markings like "Moderato" and "Sfint".

Isidor Vorobchieviciu "Sfint!". Manual de Armonia musicală. Cernăuți, 1869. p. 206-207, mm. 1-5, 11-12, 15-16, 22-23.

It should be noted that the tenor part in the printed score contains technical errors: in the bass clef, the pitches *d–e–f–g*, which should sound in the first octave (notated in the treble clef with ledger lines), are engraved incorrectly. In general, a number of technical inaccuracies occurred in the typesetting of the textbook, including incorrect page numbering and several wrong notes.

The textbook *Musical Harmony* is structured on two levels—elementary and advanced. At the elementary level, the author presents the fundamentals of solfeggio and music theory as an indispensable basis for mastering the nature of musical sounds and their interrelationships. At the advanced level, he introduces material that fully corresponds to the title of the textbook. Vorobkevych thus consistently prepares the student to comprehend the laws of harmony and the processes of musical development. He proposes a multilevel system for harmonizing scales, cadential formulas, modulations, and sequences, as well as for strengthening and expanding melodic lines through chordal combinations and figurative patterns. Summarizing the entire body of knowledge on musical harmony, Vorobkevych finally turns to the study of counterpoint, imitation, and canon. These topics integrate the previously presented theoretical material and foster the development of polyphonic thinking, thereby facilitating students' first attempts at creating their own musical compositions.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

The analysis of the structure and content of the textbook provides sufficient grounds to regard Sydir (Isidor) Vorobkevych not only as a composer and pedagogue, but also as an original music theorist who creatively integrated the leading European theoretical concepts of the nineteenth century (A. Marx, A. Reicha, E. Richter) into the educational process and adapted them to the specific needs of the educational system of Bukovyna. A distinctive feature of Vorobkevych's methodology is the systematic involvement of folk song material as a fundamental basis for the formation of students' intonational thinking, harmonic perception and polyphonic skills. This approach clearly demonstrates the author's orientation toward educating a musician-practitioner capable of conscious perception and creative comprehension of musical art. Vorobkevych's textbook *Musical Harmony* may therefore be considered, in the broader context of the development of music-theoretical literature, as one of the early examples of an integrated, European-oriented model of music-theory education in the second half of the 19th century.

Summarizing the results of the present study, it should be emphasized that Isidor Vorobkevych's textbook *Manual de Armonia musicală*, together with the songbooks created for folk schools, represents a coherent and methodologically balanced model of music-theory education aimed at combining theoretical knowledge with the practice of part-singing, the development of modal-harmonic hearing, and the formation of skills in musical text analysis. His publications significantly enriched the system of teaching musical disciplines and provided an essential pedagogical foundation for contemporary educational institutions in Bukovyna.

Vorobkevych's songbooks enjoyed wide popularity among both the Ukrainian and Romanian communities of the region, as they contributed to preserving the national, cultural, and linguistic identity of its peoples. The collections include vivid examples of folk songs as well as the composer's own works set to poems by leading national poets of Ukraine and Romania, including Yu. Fedkovych, T. Shevchenko, M. Eminescu, V. Alecsandri, and others. Following the principle of gradual complication of learning material, the third parts of the *Songbook for Folk Schools* (Ukrainian version) and *Colecțiune de cântece pentru școalele populare* (1898) were enriched with essential elements of music-theoretical knowledge: the basics of musical notation, rhythm, articulation, dynamics, and modal-tonal organization.

The consolidation of theoretical material was achieved through the study of folk and original songs whose melodies contain characteristic intonational patterns, facilitating students' assimilation of the tuning and internal structure of particular modes. A. Kushnirenko, analyzing Vorobkevych's

contribution to the formation of music education in Western Ukrainian lands, notes that the songbooks “played an important role in popularizing Ukrainian folk songs among young people and, in fact, constituted the only teaching manuals for Ukrainian folk schools in Bukovyna and Galicia. ... In the methodological sections of the *Songbooks for Folk Schools*, S. Vorobkevych presents the foundations of music theory in a concise and systematic manner, which had not been done before him”⁵⁷.

These conclusions are consistent with the assessment of P. Nykonenko, who, in his analysis of Vorobkevych’s role in the development of musical upbringing, emphasizes the exceptional significance of the Ukrainian- and Romanian-language songbooks and school collections. As he points out, Vorobkevych’s textbooks substantially contributed to ensuring that folk songs and music resounded in the schools of Bukovyna; their publication was highly appreciated by the progressive public, including the prominent representative of Romanian and Moldavian culture, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu (1838–1907)⁵⁸.

Vorobkevych’s consistent use of folk song material as the most natural and organic repertoire basis for cultivating national identity clearly demonstrates his position in defending the cultural interests of the indigenous ethnic communities of Bukovyna. He successfully combined the folklore foundation with a more advanced pedagogical approach—namely, the systematic formation of two-part singing skills, which laid the groundwork for the development of students’ polyphonic thinking.

The third sections of his songbooks are conceived as practical manuals in solfeggio and elementary music theory. In these sections, Vorobkevych introduces special exercises for developing two-part singing based on the imitative (canonical) principle. The musical material is constructed with an emphasis on polyphonic interaction: he creates mobile and melodically expressive soprano and alto parts designed to develop students’ tonal flexibility, intonational accuracy, auditory self-control, coordination between inner auditory representations and natural vocal production, as well as the ability to maintain one’s part within a two-voice texture. These skills subsequently become the foundation for mastering more complex forms of ensemble singing, including the ability to sustain individual parts in homogeneous and mixed choirs.

Such practical competencies were indispensable for the regular activity of children’s school choirs, particularly in the context of their participation in church services. Vorobkevych’s synthesis of scholarly and aesthetic approaches

⁵⁷ Kushnirenko, A. M., et al. *History of Musical Culture and Education of Bukovyna. (Translated Title)*. Chernivtsi National University, 2011. p. 70.

⁵⁸ Nykonenko, P. *The Bukovynian Skylark: Pages from the Life of Sydir Vorobkevych. (Translated Title)*. PP Lysenko M. M., 2011. p. 74.

in the creation of educational and methodological literature for folk and secondary schooling in Bukovyna underscores his integrity and significance as a teacher-musician, cultural enlightener, and forward-looking figure whose pedagogical vision was far ahead of his time.

The diversity and wide demand for Vorobkevych's music theory manuals, song collections, and harmony textbook demonstrate the scale of his pedagogical thinking, his aspiration to create coherent methodological mechanisms for integrating the disciplines of *Singing* and *Music* at a high theoretical level, and his intention to provide students with both basic and advanced knowledge, treating music not only as a field of artistic practice but also as an object of scientific inquiry, aesthetic perception of the world, and a complex system of sounds, harmonies, and consonances.

The results of the present study allow us to conclude that the system of music-theoretical training developed by Vorobkevych in the second half of the nineteenth century corresponded to the general European educational trends of its time and represented a high level of music education in Bukovyna, while simultaneously reflecting its specific regional context and a mature musical-pedagogical culture. Vorobkevych's experience constitutes an important historical and pedagogical resource for contemporary scholarly research and may serve as a conceptual foundation for rethinking modern approaches to the teaching of music-theoretical disciplines within the systems of music education in Ukraine and Romania.

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FORMATION OF MUSICAL IDENTITY DURING VOCAL TRAINING BASED ON MACHINE INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

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SUMMARY. Modern technologies contribute to the gradual development of vocal skills, which affects the rethinking of traditional learning. Digital algorithms are aimed at obtaining individual musical experience, which affects the formation of musical identity. The purpose of the research is to determine the advantages of artificial intelligence for the development of musical identity, which is associated with taking into account the challenges and prospects for vocal and theoretical schools. The research strategy involved the use of systems analysis methods, observation, the R. Likert scale, ANOVA analysis of variance, and the method of analysis of hierarchies. In the course of the research, it was found that the formation of musical identity using digital instruments is associated with a change in the structure of the educational process, assessment methods and planning of the educational approach, the development of vocal technique, planning of song performance methods and repertoire development. The analysis showed that digital instruments influence the formation of musical identity skills, which are related to creativity and aesthetics of performance, cognitive-analytical and performance capabilities. Adaptation of VocalPitchMonitor, SpectraLayers AI, and AI Artistic Evaluation into the educational process allowed for developing the technique, expressiveness of singing, and focus on creating musical improvisations. Based on the students' results, it was found that the formed level of musical identity was significantly

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higher after training (4.9 and 4.8 points) than before the start of the study (3.0 and 2.7 points). Observations showed that the prospects of machine intelligence in education are associated with an individual approach to learning (0.36) and receiving systematic feedback (0.33). Among the challenges of such training were the formation of a unified sound (0.28) and the development of technocratization of education (0.26). The practical direction of the research is associated with the selection of effective tools for the formation of musical identity in the process of vocal training of second-year students.

Keywords: digital age, music pedagogy, subjectivity, algorithmic composition techniques, musical style, symbiosis of creativity and technology in musical art.

Introduction

In the digital era, the education system is undergoing rapid restructuring, including musical pedagogy. The transition to a new education system is due to the prevalence of digital tools, which are aimed at the general development of musical skills or the improvement of individual ones. The use of modern technologies in the course of musical training contributes to the development of musical identification of students. Musical identification is defined by the concept of cognition of musical works, their classification according to musical features (harmony, musical style, timbre, etc.). The development of musical identity is necessary for improving professional skills, expanding creative opportunities, understanding the value and cultural significance of music. Current research directions are aimed at the formation of musical identity through the creative development of students^{6, 7, 8}. The practical implementation of this approach occurs through the symbiosis of creativity and technology in musical art.

A common approach to developing musical identity has been the use of artificial intelligence (AI), which has contributed to the depth of work with

⁶ Shpyrka, Alina, Larysa Bondarenko, Ganna Kondratenko and Alexandr Shpyrka. "Emotional expressiveness of the vocalist: a cross-sectional study", *Rast Musicology Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 2893–2916, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.12975/rastmd.20219211>

⁷ Şakalar, Alper, and Sevda Gürel. "Academic perspectives on the use of digital platforms and mobile applications in vocal training", *Online Journal of Music Sciences*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 389–404, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.31811/ojomus.1564925>

⁸ Wang, Yang. "Vocal creativity: Analyzing students song making processes in blended learning", *Interactive Learning Environments*, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 2196–2206, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2141267>

musical repertoire⁹, ¹⁰, ¹¹. The positive impact of machine technologies is associated with the possibility of creating contextual feedback, which allows adapting the selection of musical exercises to the level of musical perception of students. The approach stimulates the creation of algorithmic composition techniques that influence the creation or editing of musical works to demonstrate one's own creative skills. Computer technologies allow influencing the algorithms for making musical decisions for an updated sound of the composition.

However, some scientific works are aimed at analyzing the challenges in music pedagogy when using AI¹², ¹³. First of all, the challenges are manifested in the presence of curricula that exclude the consideration of ways to modernize the educational process using digital technologies. This restrains vocalists from musical expression and the search for their own uniqueness, which is associated with the limitations of the student's subjective opinion when choosing a musical work for performance. The digital approach to learning can affect the standardization of performance approaches, the perception of performance techniques. These challenges are most often associated with the lack of digital skills of teachers (students), which affects the settings of learning programs.

However, scientific works are more focused on studying the specifics of the general development of musicians than on the possibility of forming a musical identity using digital instruments. The aspects of the development of the musical identity of vocalists during the performance of musical works of small genres are poorly studied. The purpose of the research is established by evaluating how AI affects students' musical identity development while considering the opportunities and difficulties facing the theoretical and vocal

⁹ Chang, Shuhua, Deli Li and Yongcheng Qi. "Pearson's goodness-of-fit tests for sparse distributions", *Journal of Applied Statistics*, vol. 50, no. 5, pp. 1078–1093, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02664763.2021.2017413>

¹⁰ Bai, Ye. "How does the use of modern technologies affect students' perception of information? The effectiveness of holographic projection technology in music education", *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 35–47, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2024.2402274>

¹¹ Zhang, Yue. "Increasing Emotional Perception in Academic Singing During Vocal Performance: The Use of AI Solutions", *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, vol. 41, no. 19, pp. 12086–12094, 2025b. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2025.2452213>

¹² O'Leary, Emmett and Julie Bannerman. "Online curriculum marketplaces and music education: A critical analysis of music activities on TeachersPayTeachers.com", *International Journal of Music Education*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 39–53, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614241307242>

¹³ Al-Khleifat, Kseniia. "The effects of vocal training on the cognitive and emotional development of young children", *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series Pedagogy and Psychology*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 113–124, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.52534/msu-pp1.2025.113>

schools. Research hypothesis: the confluence of creativity and technology in musical art allows for the development of musical identity through the application of machine technologies.

Literature review

The consideration of musical identity in the digital age is the focus of scientific studies. The emphasis is on the search for the musical style of vocalists and ways to achieve it based on the symbiosis of creativity and technology in musical art. The function of musical identity is associated with the perception of personality through music, the development of one's own style. Musical identity is formed in the process of manifesting one's own characteristics through music. Scientific findings confirm the need to develop the musical identity of vocalists to achieve a professional level of performance^{14, 15, 16, 17, 18}.

The need to change the traditional teaching system in the digital age is highlighted in the following studies: Lv¹⁹, Li and Wang²⁰, Concina²¹, Merchán

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- ¹⁴ Wang, Yang. "Vocal education in higher educational institutions in China: student motivation and creativity", *Interactive Learning Environments*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 813–823, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2098778>
- ¹⁵ Gobinath, A., C. Manjula Devi, S. J. Suthan raja, P. Prakash, M. Anandan, A. Srinivasan. "Voice Assistant with AI Chat Integration using OpenAI", In *2024 Third International Conference on Intelligent Techniques in Control, Optimization and Signal Processing (INCOS)* (pp. 1–6). IEEE, 2024.
- ¹⁶ Irianti, Leni, Abdurrachman Faridi, Hendi Pratama and Suwandi. "Flipped classroom and critical thinking on public speaking class", *Cogent Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2315815>
- ¹⁷ Stevens, Charlotte. "Teachers and teaching: pedagogy, digital skills and professional development", *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 1–3, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2024.2436665>
- ¹⁸ Konovalova, Iryna, Halyna Breslavets, Nataliia Riabukha, Iryna Polska, Vasyl Shchepak and Olena Roshchenko. "The evolution of world music pedagogy in the information society. *BRAIN. Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*, vol. 16, no. (1 Sup1), 99–116, 2025. <http://dx.doi.org/10.70594/brain/16.S1/9>
- ¹⁹ Lv, Hua. "Innovative music education: Using an AI-based flipped classroom", *Education and Information Technologies*, vol. 28, pp. 15301–15316, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11835-0>
- ²⁰ Li, Ping-Ping, and Bin Wang. "Artificial Intelligence in Music Education", *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, vol. 40, no. 16, pp. 4183–4192, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2023.2209984>
- ²¹ Concina, Eleonora. "Effective Music Teachers and Effective Music Teaching Today: A Systematic Review", *Education Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 2, p. 107, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13020107>

Sánchez-Jara et al.²², Perakaki²³. The scientific achievements of Lv²⁴ reflect the need to use intelligent systems in music pedagogy. The advantages of this method are associated with the creation of integrated curricula for the development of student motivation, and regulation of mental load. Emphasis on students' autonomy improves students' outcomes by understanding the uniqueness of music and choosing their own performance style. Li and Wang²⁵ found that using digital technology in the learning process provides an easy way to understand music and increases students' academic performance by 15% compared to traditional learning. The results are related to the intensity of learning, which contributes to the creation of musical variations in accordance with the vocal capabilities of students²⁶. The change from traditional learning to digital tools is associated with the development of student autonomy and motivation. During such training, it is possible to expand professional experience, focusing on algorithmic composition techniques, taking into account the characteristic features of music²⁷. The transformation of the traditional music education system should be associated with a change in focus from music theory to practical classes. The use of machine intelligence contributes to the development of students' creative skills, which reflects the features of constant communication between teachers and students and the ability to choose variable strategies for performing a particular composition²⁸. The improvement of traditional learning with the help of digital tools occurs through the development of artistic skills of musical performance. The use of intelligent tutoring systems affects individual learning, which allows us to understand the conceptual meaning of compositions to choose effective ways to perform a musical composition²⁹.

Therefore, the benefits of AI for the development of vocal skills and the formation of musical identity were considered in the following group of

²² Merchán Sánchez-Jara, Javier Félix Merchán, Sara González Gutiérrez, Javier Cruz Rodríguez and Bohdan Syroyid. "Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Music Education: A Critical Synthesis of Challenges and Opportunities", *Education Sciences*, vol. 14, no. 11, p. 1171, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14111171>

²³ Perakaki, Elissavet. "Exploring flipped learning practices in piano and music theory: A case study of two music teachers in Greece", *Research Studies in Music Education*, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X251342708>

²⁴ Lv, Hua, 2023.

²⁵ Li, Ping-Ping, and Bin Wang, 2023.

²⁶ Li, Ping-Ping, and Bin Wang, 2023.

²⁷ Concina, Eleonora, 2023.

²⁸ Perakaki, Elissavet, 2025.

²⁹ Merchán Sánchez-Jara, Javier Félix Merchán, Sara González Gutiérrez, Javier Cruz Rodríguez and Bohdan Syroyid, 2024.

studies: Zhang³⁰, Jude³¹ Genelza³². Zhang³³ states that the academic manner of singing with the help of digital instruments is formed on the basis of increased emotional perception. The development of emotionality of performance occurs on the basis of the development of timbral uniformity, sound dynamics, orientation to verbal imagery, originality of melody, intonation pattern. The development of vocal skills is possible on the basis of the joint use of the platforms Meet Evita, OpenAI MuseNet, DeepSinger. In Jude's³⁴ study, the analysis was focused on another technology – Vocaloid, which made it possible to synthesize the voice to search for technical differences in the performance of different compositions. In order to form a musical identity, Vocaloid contributed to the processing of natural language, vocal timbre, which forms its own style during the performance of compositions³⁵. The use of computer technologies allows for analyzing the characteristics of the voice to control the quality of vocal performance. This allows for automatically identifying errors in vocal singing and adjusting the selection of musical repertoire³⁶.

The features of the formation of vocalists' musical identity and ways of expressing themselves through music were studied in the works of Forbes et al.³⁷, Konurova and Xomidov³⁸, Mínguez-Alcaide and Bobowik³⁹. The authors of Forbes et al.⁴⁰ note that musical identity is formed on the basis of independent perception of music and understanding of methods of vocal performance. The process involves listening to music, its comprehension, which affects the understanding of the value of music, methods of its performance.

³⁰ Zhang, Lele. "Compositional tools based on artificial intelligence for choral artistic education: Enhancing creative skills in choral arrangements", *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, vol. 56, 101768, 2025a. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101768>

³¹ Jude, Gretchen. "Future Voices to Come: AI Singing After Miku", In *How Vocaloid Works* (pp 63–86). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-92727-0_4

³² Genelza, Genesis. "A systematic literature review on AI voice cloning generator: A game-changer or a threat?", *Journal of Emerging Technologies*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 54–61, 2024.

³³ Zhang, Lele, 2025a.

³⁴ Jude, Gretchen, 2025.

³⁵ Jude, Gretchen, 2025.

³⁶ Genelza, Genesis, 2024.

³⁷ Forbes, Melissa, Jason Goopy and Amanda E. Krause. "Becoming singular: Musical identity construction and maintenance through the lens of identity process theory", *Psychology of Music*, vol. 53, no. 5, pp. 746–761, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356241267863>

³⁸ Konurova, Leyla, and Zokir Xomidov. "A holistic approach to the formation of vocalists of performing culture", *Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 58–61, 2024. <https://webofjournals.com/index.php/1/article/view/776>

³⁹ Mínguez-Alcaide, Xavier, and Magdalena Bobowik. "Social identity, collective self-esteem, and musical preferences in electronic dance music culture: The role of emotions", *Psychology of Music*, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356251361754>

⁴⁰ Forbes, Melissa, Jason Goopy and Amanda E. Krause, 2024.

In contrast, the study of Mínguez-Alcaide and Bobowik⁴¹ indicates that musical identity is formed on the basis of musical preferences. This allows for a more correct understanding of the emotions and moods of the composition for further performance. Based on the selected repertoire, one can develop one's own musical values and musical style for self-expression. It is possible to form a musical identity based on understanding not only the technical features of performance but also artistic specificity. This provides the opportunity to perceive music through artistic images, composer's ideas, which affects the reflection of aesthetic consciousness. Paying attention to the structure of performing culture allows one to convey the depth and content of the performance, taking into account the vocalist's inner experiences⁴².

However, the introduction of AI for the development of musical identity is associated with certain challenges, which are considered in the studies of Metin et al.⁴³, Rui⁴⁴. The scientist Rui⁴⁵ notes that the use of digital technologies has a large number of limitations for teaching vocal music. The results are related to the complexity of adapting virtual technologies into the educational process. The lack of mechanisms for adapting technologies complicates the processes of processing sounds, tone, rhythm of performance since there is no modeling experience to improve the vocal skills of each student. Metin et al.⁴⁶ stated that the problems of integrating modern technologies for music education are related to the lack of algorithms for taking into account the emotional state of vocalists, since stress factors affect the quality of performance. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure a combination of interactive classes with traditional ones, which will allow controlling the processes of voice tremor.

Based on studying published research materials, the importance of integrating modern technologies in music education was established. However, aspects of developing musical identity using AI are not sufficiently studied from a practical point of view. Attention should be paid to the possibility of using existing digital tools in music education and taking into account their advantages and disadvantages for the combined study of musical identity.

⁴¹ Mínguez-Alcaide, Xavier, and Magdalena Bobowik

⁴² Konurova, Leyla, and Zokir Xomidov, 2024.

⁴³ Metin, Emine, Kemal Uygur, Erdoğan Okur, Bilge Metin and Bülent Gündüz. "Temperament and voice quality in patients with vocal fold nodules", *Journal of Voice*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2024.08.005>

⁴⁴ Rui, Yu. "Simulation of e-learning in vocal network teaching experience system based on intelligent Internet of things technology", *Entertainment Computing*, vol. 50, 100711, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2024.100711>

⁴⁵ Rui, Yu, 2024.

⁴⁶ Metin, Emine, Kemal Uygur, Erdoğan Okur, Bilge Metin and Bülent Gündüz, 2024.

Methods

The results of the research were obtained based on a combination of qualitative analysis and experimental methods. System analysis was used to assess the features of the transformation of vocal training in the age of machine intelligence and the skills of musical identity that can be developed when using machine intelligence. The analysis process included studying the features of vocal training with and without the use of digital technologies, which was reflected in the optimization of volumetric information. The process included assessing the relationship between all elements. The significance of the developed musical identity skills that can be formed during vocal development was identified using the R. Likert scale, with a 7-point scale (5.5 – 7.0 points – high level; 3.5-5.4 – medium level; below 3.4 – low level). The process included comparing the importance of the skills according to the author and based on existing research^{47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53}. According to the author, musical identity skills were established in general, taking into account the functionality of interactive tools and the achievement of possible student performance. Based on existing studies, an analysis of the materials was conducted to prioritize the skills that can be formed when using machine intelligence. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was chosen for comparison. When the calculated critical value (5.99) is exceeded, a difference between the indicators will be observed⁵⁴.

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- ⁴⁷ Borkowski, Alex. "Vocal Aesthetics, AI Imaginaries: Reconfiguring Smart Interfaces", *Afterimage*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 129–149, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aft.2023.50.2.129>
- ⁴⁸ Alsaleh, Abdullah. "The impact of technological advancement on culture and society", *Scientific Reports*, vol. 14, no. 1, p. 32140, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-83995-z>
- ⁴⁹ Canyakan, Seyhan. "The role of AI in creative processes: ethical and legal perspectives in the music industry", *Journal of Music Theory and Transcultural Music Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 143–158, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15031855>
- ⁵⁰ Maychyk, Ostap, Tetyana Slyusar, Oleksandr Voitovych and Olha Katrych. "Development of the technique of forming the professionalism of a pop artist: Vocal discourse", *Convergences-Journal of Research and Arts Education*, vol. 17, no. 33, pp. 89–104, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.53681/c1514225187514391s.33.239>
- ⁵¹ Fox, Mark, Ganesh Vaidyanathan and Jennifer Breese. "The impact of artificial intelligence on musicians", *Issues in Information Systems*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2024. https://doi.org/10.48009/3_iis_2024_121
- ⁵² Wang, Yang, 2024.
- ⁵³ Singer, Jonathan. "Podcasting in social work education for clinical skill development", In M. Fox & J. B. Singer (Eds.), *Podcasting in Social Work Education* (pp. 51–72). London: Routledge, 2025. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003530275-6/podcasting-social-work-education-clinical-skill-development-jonathan-singer>
- ⁵⁴ Pandey, Sumit, and Kuldeep Sinha. "Developments in Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Experimental Design: A Comprehensive Overview", *Journal of Advanced Research in Applied Mathematics and Statistics*, vol. 8, no. (3&4), pp. 8–13, 2023. <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/api/file/viewByFileId/2037033>

$$F = \frac{MS_b}{MS_w},$$

MS_b – mean square value between groups;

MS_w – mean square value within groups.

In order to form students' musical identity using modern technologies, it was planned to include VocalPitchMonitor, SpectraLayers AI, AI Artistic Evaluation in vocal training. For the purpose of selecting technologies, an analysis of technological capabilities and their availability for use in the educational process was conducted. The emphasis was on the possibility of processing vocal sounds, artistic expressiveness and creating vocal improvisations, which was focused on students' understanding of music and the possibility of independent creative expression. In order to assess the level of musical identity formation, 37 students from. Students studied vocal performance in the 2nd year, which allowed them to understand general vocal techniques and expand their own vocal capabilities during their studies. In order to determine the level of formed musical identity, it was planned to compare the features of the students' performance of Ukrainian and world songs of small genres. The criteria for assessing musical identity were selected based on its general features, focusing on the materials^{55, 56, 57, 58}. Therefore, 12 expert teachers assessed the transmission of the emotional and semantic content of the composition, adherence to vocal academic culture, and consideration of individual approaches to interpretation. The maximum score that students could receive was 5 points. The final scores of students before and after the research were formed during the exam, which was held in a practical format, namely, it involved the performance of musical works of small genres. The duration of the exam was 8 hours. The list of 20 compositions before and after the research was the same, which allowed us to assess the level of understanding by students of the methods of performing songs to

⁵⁵ Chang, Zhenhua. "The use of online vocal training programs as a means to develop creative thinking and vocal prowess", *Interactive Learning Environments*, vol. 31, no. 10, pp. 7214–7225, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2064514>

⁵⁶ Liang, Yi. "Collaborative music making in the digital age: fostering creativity in vocal ensembles", *Interactive Learning Environments*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 615–630, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2024.2353195>

⁵⁷ Casebourne, Imogen, Shengpeng Shi, Michael Hogan, Wayne Holmes, Tore Hoel, Rupert Wegerif and Li Yuan. "Using AI to support education for collective intelligence", *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 1597–1629, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40593-024-00437-7>

⁵⁸ Noufi, Camille, Lloyd May and Jonathan Berger. "A model of vocal persona: context, perception, production", *Frontiers in Computer Science*, vol. 7, 1575296, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomp.2025.1575296>

preserve musical identity (Appendices 1-2). The comparison of the results before and after the study was carried out using ANOVA analysis calculations.

The prospects and challenges of using AI for the development of musical identity were determined by the authors of the research on the basis of observation of the implementation of the educational process. The data obtained on the basis of observation became the basis for determining their significance, taking into account the score from 0 to 1. Additionally, the authors took into account the adaptability index (from 0 to 1), which provided to determine the level of adaptation of individual perspectives and the prospects for eliminating challenges in the process of vocal training. Comparison of the results of observation and assessment of the adaptability index became possible on the basis of taking into account the confidence interval. Using the method of analysis of hierarchies, it was possible to evaluate the importance of the advantages of the presented training. The matrix was built taking into account the average value (W^*) and the normative value ($W^*_{standard}$)⁵⁹.

E.g. 2

$$W^*_{standard} = \frac{W_i^*}{\sum W_n^*}$$

W_i^* – average value of that advantage;

$\sum W_n^*$ – the sum of calculated average values formed based on the weight of the advantages.

Results

Approaches to music education are being transformed by the use of interactive tools. They have an impact not only on changing traditional teaching reforms but also on the features of vocal performance. The development of vocal skills should be based on a structured approach, which is associated with understanding the features of general vocal techniques and the formation of individual characteristics. Scientific studies^{60, 61} reflect the importance of using

⁵⁹ Yang, Gedan, and Li Xiangming. "Graduate socialization and anxiety: insights via hierarchical regression analysis and beyond", *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 50, no. 7, pp. 1365–1381, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2375563>

⁶⁰ Cipta, Febby, Yudi Sukmayadi, Rita Milyartini and Tri Indri Hardini. "Optimizing AI-powered music creation social media to amplify learning content", *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran, dan Pembelajaran*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 881–892, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v10i3.12332>

⁶¹ Tian, Jie. "Digital Transformation Perspective on Art-Science Integration' Empowering Innovative Talent Cultivation in Vocational Music Education", *Journal of Sociology and Education*, vol. 1, no. 7, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.63887/jse.2025.1.7.35>

artificial intelligence (AI) in the theoretical and practical training of vocalists, the development of individual methods of vocal performance. Intelligent systems have the advantage of controlling each approach to vocal performance, which allows taking into account the correctness of singing and correcting possible errors directly during classes. The development of basic vocal skills provides priority areas for the development of vocal mastery. However, another group of scientists^{62, 63, 64, 65} notes that the priority value of smart technologies lies in the possibility of forming a musical identity. In practice, it is implemented through work with vocal improvisations, taking into account the techniques for developing musical creativity. Changing approaches to the formation of vocal identity under the influence of interactive systems can contribute to the development of the timbre of sound, taking into account the development of sound shades. The development of flexibility of intonation, metrorhythmic principles, clarity of articulation affects the observance of the algorithmic technique of performing the composition for the development of one's own vocal style.

Changing approaches to the formation of vocal identity under the influence of interactive systems can contribute to the development of the timbre of sound, taking into account the development of sound shades. The development of flexibility of intonation, metrorhythmic principles, clarity of articulation affects the observance of the algorithmic technique of performing the composition for the development of one's own vocal style. As indicated in Table 1, the change in the traditional reform of education is also associated with ensuring the flexibility and dynamism of the educational process, combining various musical disciplines for the development of analytical and creative musical skills. AI has also influenced

⁶² Aliksiichuk, Olena, Tetiana Borysova, Zhanna Kartashova, Olena Priadko, Mariia Kuziv and Svitlana Chaban-Chaika. "Modern Digital Approaches to Training Music Teachers: Evolution from Classical to Interactive", *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, vol. 7, no. S11, 273–296, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iS11.201>

⁶³ Burnard, Pamela and Elizabeth Mackinlay. "Performing Ethical Response-ability in Music Education Research: Who Cares and What Matters?", *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 110–127, 2025.

⁶⁴ Mygdanis, Yannis. "Design-Based Research in Music Education: Theoretical Foundations, Methodological Perspectives, and Practice Implications", *Futurity Education*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 90–114, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.57125/FED.2025.06.25.05>

⁶⁵ Fan, Cunjia, and Lei Shi. "Technological and managerial aspects of the digital transformation in music education: A big data perspective", *Journal of Computational Methods in Sciences and Engineering*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 1075–1086, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14727978251322025>

the features of the development of vocal singing technique^{66, 67, 68, 69, 70}. Thus, the educational process has become local and aimed at taking into account the features of the performance of each vocal sound. The selection of vocal warm-ups and exercises has become individual, taking into account the performance style of an individual student. Table 1 provides more detailed features of the development of vocal skills under the influence of algorithmic systems (Table 1).

Table 1

Change criteria	The educational process before the start of AI implementation	The educational process after the implementation of AI
Structure of the educational process	The process is aimed at classroom learning for all students in the classroom at once	The process is aimed at individual vocal training
Evaluation system	Emphasis on the subjectivity of assessing students based on completed test and exam tasks Lack of constant individual feedback and episodic feedback when solving general tasks	Emphasis on receiving personalized assessment during vocal tasks in real time Availability of constant information about the level of knowledge of students based on receiving continuous reports

⁶⁶ Shiyao, Wang, and Zuraimy Mohamed Noordin. "The influence and impact of the Orff-music method on teaching and learning in music education course in higher education in China", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, vol. 14, no. 6, pp. 1805–1817, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i6/21971>

⁶⁷ Lulu, Wang, Peerapong Sensai and Watchara Homhuan. "Education and Literacy Transmission of Chinese Pansori in Chaoxian Ethnic Group", *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 185–192, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.12n.4p.185>

⁶⁸ Qian, Chun. and Mingke Jiang. "Exploring the effects of digital game-based learning on music education", *Studies in Social Science & Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 6–9, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.56397/SSSH.2024.05.02>

⁶⁹ Zhang, Xiyuxing, Yuntao Wang, Yuxuan Han, Chen Liang, Ishan Chatterjee, Jiankai Tang, Xin Yi, Shwetak Patel and Yuanchun Shi. "The earsavas dataset: Enabling subject-aware vocal activity sensing on earables", *Proceedings of the ACM on Interactive, Mobile, Wearable and Ubiquitous Technologies*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 1–26, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3659616>

⁷⁰ Frytsiuk, Vasyl, Iurii Kshyvak, Iryna Baranovska, Olena Teplova, Anna Novosadova and Anna Khilya. "Digital Ecosystems for Music Teacher Training: ICT, Social Media, and Online Learning Environments", In *Environment. Technology. Resources. Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference*, vol. 2, pp. 137–144, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17770/etr2025vol2.8598>

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Change criteria	The educational process before the start of AI implementation	The educational process after the implementation of AI
Planning a training approach	Training is conducted in accordance with the approved program, maintaining the repertoire and sequence of topics	The training is based on the principles of flexibility and dynamism, taking into account the performance of students in the analyzed period
Development of vocal technique	Emphasis on the gradual development of vocal technique with the performance of general exercises	Emphasis on the specific study of vocal singing details, focusing on the performance of individual exercises
Planning execution methods	Attention is paid to vocal exercises for the overall development of vocal technique	The development of vocal technique is aimed at freedom of performance, which promotes individual and non-standard singing
Repertoire development	Giving preference to original performances of musical works	Searching for approaches to individual performance, taking into account the peculiarities of singing

Features of the transformation of vocal training in the age of machine intelligence

Source: compiled by the authors based on studies of^{71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83}

⁷¹ Cipta, Febbry, Yudi Sukmayadi, Rita Milyartini and Tri Indri Hardini, 2024.

⁷² Tian, Jie, 2025.

⁷³ Aliksiichuk, Olena, Tetiana Borysova, Zhanna Kartashova, Olena Priadko, Mariia Kuziv and Svitlana Chaban-Chaika, 2025.

⁷⁴ Burnard, Pamela and Elizabeth Mackinlay, 2025.

⁷⁵ Mygdanis, Yannis, 2205.

⁷⁶ Fan, Cunjia, and Lei Shi, 2205.

⁷⁷ Shiyao, Wang, and Zuraimy Mohamed Noordin, 2024.

⁷⁸ Lulu, Wang, Peerapong Sensai and Watchara Homhuan, 2204.

⁷⁹ Frytsiuk, Vasyi, Iurii Kshyvak, Iryna Baranovska, Olena Teplova, Anna Novosadova and Anna Khilya, 2025.

⁸⁰ Johansen, Geir. "School Music Education and the Society of Tomorrow: The Necessity of Navigating in Chaos", In Aróstegui, José Luis, Catharina Christophersen, Jeananne Nichols, Koji Matsunobu and Geir Johansen (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of School Music Education*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529674842.n2>

⁸¹ Liu, Li. "Current Situation and Innovative Methods of Brass Music Teaching Based on Network Information Technology", *Journal of Electrical Systems*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.52783/jes.683>

⁸² Sai, Ying. "Online music learning based on digital multimedia for virtual reality", *Interactive Learning Environments*, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 1751–1762, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2127779>

⁸³ Jiayu, Ou. "Performing abilities of a student vocalist and their classification", *Paradigm of Knowledge*, vol. 1, no. 65, 2025. [https://doi.org/10.26886/2520-7474.1\(65\)2025.4](https://doi.org/10.26886/2520-7474.1(65)2025.4)

Interactive approaches to vocal training are aimed at developing musical identity, which opens up new opportunities for vocalists. The development of musical identity is associated with students' understanding of their own capabilities at each stage of training, which is associated with the individualization of the educational process. Conditions are created for students to form a unique manner of performance, taking into account their strengths. The variety of machine learning strategies contributes to the expanded perception of vocal approaches, methods of emotional performance. They also provide the creation of optimal technical methods of vocal performance. Focusing on the algorithms of machine tools for vocal production, it is possible to provide spectral analysis of the voice, taking into account dynamics, emotional expression to expand the flexibility and uniqueness of singing. Sequential performance of exercises, depending on the formed skills of students, forms stable singing, which is reflected in the musical identity.

At the same time, the importance of interactive technologies in the formation of vocal skills is more significant for the development of creative skills, which are the basis of musical identity^{84, 85, 86}. The development of creative skills occurs on the basis of the development of physiological, aesthetic methods of performance. The symbiosis of creativity and technology affects the consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of students' vocal performance for the possibility of performing extraordinary techniques of academic performance. The development of creative skills occurs on the basis of students' interest in working with various musical works, developing confidence during performance. Creative skills develop under the influence of available approaches to vocal performance, which allows for understanding musical compositions to create new vocal arrangements. Digital tools affect the understanding of the performance process and the choice of approaches to emotional performance, which forms musical identity. Analysis of scientific articles showed that the possibility of developing musical identity based on AI is higher^{87, 88, 89}. Achieving vocal individuality is possible on the basis of creating appropriate conditions for creative thinking, which is associated with the processing of timbre, intonation, rhythm, etc. to understand the level of one's own singing and the selection of effective tools for its improvement. The manifestation of one's own individuality also occurs through interactive technologies providing the opportunity to choose the level of emotionality of

⁸⁴ Maychyk, Ostap, Tetyana Slyusar, Oleksandr Voitovych and Olha Katrych, 2024.

⁸⁵ Wang, Yang, 2024.

⁸⁶ Singer, Jonathan, 2025.

⁸⁷ Borkowski, Alex, 2023.

⁸⁸ Canyakan, Seyhan, 2024.

⁸⁹ Fox, Mark, Ganesh Vaidyanathan and Jennifer Breese, 2024.

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performance, which forms aesthetic flexibility. Constant control over the performance technique ensures an understanding of the value of music, its subtleties for the formation of musical identity. Table 2 shows the musical identity skills that can be developed during vocal training using intelligent systems. The data in Table 2 reflect the general skills that should be developed by vocalists during the formation of musical identity. The scores were given on a 7-point Likert scale, where scores of 5.5 – 7.0 reflect a high level of possibility of a certain skill based on musical identity due to the use of digital tools. The data in Table 2 are not related to student performance but reflect the possibility of development when using AI tools. The author's assessment was taken into account, based on the definition of the relationship between the capabilities of digital tools and the impact on the acquisition of possible skills. The author's assessment involved an analysis of the features of digital technologies not as separate technical means but as a complex educational environment. This provided an analysis of the logic of music education, taking into account artificial intelligence as an indicator of the development of musical competencies. The assessment, formed on existing studies, reflects the results of other works from the point of view of the various skills studied that were developed during the period of musical training using modern technologies.

Table 2

Developed skills	Impact on musical identity	Author's assessment	Assessment based on existing studies	F(5.99, p=0.05)
Cognitive and analytical skills	Provide understanding of the characteristics of a particular sound Creating sound models for an updated vocal sound	6.8	6.3	0.70
Performance capabilities	Creation of various vocal techniques based on control of vocal physiological (breathing, articulation) and sound (intonation, pitch) parameters	6.5	6.7	
Creative opportunities	Creating vocal improvisations Changing existing vocal performance styles	6.5	6.4	

Developed skills	Impact on musical identity	Author's assessment	Assessment based on existing studies	F(5.99, p=0.05)
Aesthetic performance	Analysis of vocal performance techniques helps to choose the most effective strategies for artistic and emotional performance. Comparison of vocal performance methods helps to choose the most expressive approaches	6.3	6.2	

Musical identity skills that vocalists can develop when using machine intelligence

Source: compiled by the authors based on studies of^{90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96}

Based on the features of vocal singing indicated in Table 2, a musical identity is formed, which allows students to focus on certain musical styles to achieve uniqueness of performance. Cognitive and analytical skills, according to the authors of the research (6.7 points), have an impact on the development of musical identity through understanding the features of performance based on continuous control. In the future, the approach provides the possibility of independent control of performance based on the analytical information obtained. The positive impact of AI on performance capabilities, which, based on the analysis of published research, have priority importance (6.7 points), is associated with the formation of a unique singing style, taking into account the individuality of the performer's voice. The development of creative possibilities has an impact on the development of musical identity through individual self-expression; aesthetics of performance – artistic self-expression. Therefore, the use of AI tools with creative approaches to performance contributes to the development of musical art individually for each vocalist. The obtained ANOVA

⁹⁰ Borkowski, Alex, 2023.

⁹¹ Alsaleh, Abdullah, 2024.

⁹² Canyakan, Seyhan, 2024.

⁹³ Maychuk, Ostap, Tetyana Slyusar, Oleksandr Voitovych and Olha Katrych, 2024.

⁹⁴ Fox, Mark, Ganesh Vaidyanathan and Jennifer Breese, 2024.

⁹⁵ Wang, Yang, 2024.

⁹⁶ Singer, Jonathan, 2025.

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results of 0.70 do not exceed the critical value of 5.99, which shows the absence of a difference between the author's assessment and the assessment obtained on the basis of existing studies. Thus, the research confirmed the possibility of developing musical identity skills using artificial intelligence.

In order to understand the challenges and prospects in the formation of the musical identity of vocalists, the authors selected the tools of intelligent systems for the formation of vocal skills. The use of interactive tools in the educational process was aimed at the development of cognitive-analytical skills, performance capabilities, creative capabilities, and aesthetics of performance. The development of the specified criteria of musical identity became possible through the implementation of specialized vocal exercises offered by digital tools. The educational process provided for the use of Ukrainian and world music of various genres, which expanded the vocal capabilities of vocalists. The training was implemented for 2nd year students from, who had fundamental academic singing skills but did not have the appropriate level of in-depth knowledge for a high level of musical competence. The educational process was implemented for 10 weeks, which included classes four times a week (Figure 1).

Figure 1

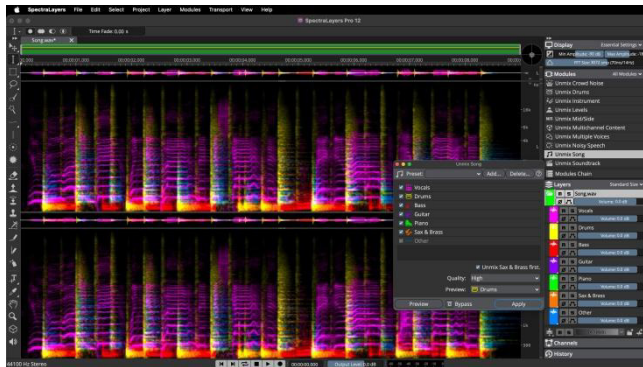


a)

LIUBOV KANIUKA, TAMARA KOVAL, OLHA VASYLENKO,
SVITLANA BOROVIK, VOLODYMYR HUMENIUK



b)



c)

AI technologies for developing vocal skills

Note: a) VocalPitchMonitor; b) SpectraLayers AI; c) AmperScore AI
Source:^{97, 98, 99}

The choice of VocalPitchMonitor, SpectraLayers AI, AI Artistic Evaluation allowed for adhering to the vocal academic culture during the development of vocal skills. The combination of different tools made it possible to form not only the complexity of the educational process but also influenced the development of a diverse repertoire, namely, Ukrainian and world music of small genres. The use of Voice Analysis AI allowed for controlling the sound specificity, which was manifested in tracking the purity of intonation, compliance with the necessary dynamics and sound support. The development of vocal skills using

⁹⁷ AmperScore AI, 2025. <https://aithenas.com/tools/amper-score>

⁹⁸ SpectraLayers AI, 2025. <https://www.steinberg.net/spectralayers>

⁹⁹ VocalPitchMonitor, 2025.

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tadaoyamaoka.vocalpitchmonitor>

VocalPitchMonitor was ensured through the formation of graphs, which provided visual perception. The graphs allowed for tracking the accuracy of singing in accordance with the specified vocal parameters.

The use of SpectraLayers AI for the development of musical identity was aimed at achieving intonation-dynamic expressiveness. The program allowed students to achieve balance in vocal performance, which was associated with maintaining the correct level of emotional performance. The processing of musical information was based on spectral diagrams, which allowed students to independently analyze vocal performance. With the help of the program, it became possible to take into account vocal nuances, the style of compositions, and eliminate extraneous noise for better sound processing.

AmperScore AI technology was used to process the aesthetic component that affects the uniqueness of vocal performance. The technology was applied to achieve a harmonious sound, which allowed for combining the specificity of the musical work and individual performance methods. The platform contributed to the creation of musical improvisations to achieve unique vocal singing.

After the completion of the students' vocal training, it was planned to determine the level of the formed musical identity. To assess the parameters of identity, indicators of the transmission of the emotional and semantic content of the composition, the preservation of vocal academic culture, and taking into account individual approaches to interpretation were selected. Ukrainian and foreign songs of small genres were selected for analysis. The selection of works was random from 20 proposed for performance, which were characterized by the same level of complexity (Appendix 1). During the exam, 37 students were required to perform one Ukrainian and one world song, which were indicated in the exam ticket. The grades were given from 1 to 5 by expert teachers (12 people), who did not participate in the research, which excluded their interest in providing the expected results. Expert teachers were qualified to provide a reasoned assessment of the level of song performance, as they had more than 10 years of experience in teaching vocalists and preparing them for competitive performances. Appendix 2 provides data on each of the 37 students, taking into account the grades before vocal training and after vocal training. The assessment did not use a specialized methodology; the results were obtained during observation by expert teachers. The transfer of the emotional and semantic content of the composition was assessed based on the transmitted mood of the original musical work, the level of preservation of the main dynamics. The assessment was also influenced by the emotionality indicator, which included the reflection of the emotions existing in the musical work and the students' own experiences. Compliance with vocal academic culture was associated with taking into account musical vocal rules (intervals, intonation, rhythm, etc.), students' control of the performance technique, and

clarity of pronunciation. Individual approaches to interpretation were assessed from the point of view of the harmonious combination of the author's style of performing individual elements with original interpretations. Table 3 presents the summarized final results regarding the determined level of musical identity of students, which was observed before the beginning of the research and after vocal training using digital technologies. Comparison of results before and after vocal training was carried out using ANOVA (F). If the calculated values exceed the critical value (5.99), the level of musical identity differs before and after the study.

Table 3

Type of music	Before vocal training	After vocal training	F(5.99, p<0.05)
Ukrainian songs			
Conveying the emotional and semantic content of the composition	3.3	4.9	121.1
Adherence to vocal academic culture	3.1	5.0	
Taking into account individual approaches to interpretation	2.5	4.8	
Average value	3.0	4.9	
World songs			
Conveying the emotional and semantic content of the composition	2.8	5.0	97.96
Adherence to vocal academic culture	2.4	4.3	
Taking into account individual approaches to interpretation	3.0	5.0	
Average value	2.7	4.8	

Features of the formed level of students' musical identity during the performance of Ukrainian and world songs

Source: compiled by the authors

Comparison of the features of the performance of Ukrainian and world music of small genres showed that machine intelligence contributed to the development of musical identity in students. During the performance of Ukrainian songs (romances, humorous songs), students maintained a high level of vocal academic culture, which was reflected in the voice production, preservation of the purity of performance, intonation, and artistic singing. During the performance, poeticity and intimacy were preserved, which influenced the

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transmission of emotionality and semantic load of the composition. The performance of world songs was characterized by taking into account individual approaches to interpretation, which was associated with understanding the depth of the compositions not only through the text, but also through the melody. The emotional and semantic content of the songs was conveyed through the observance of correct articulation, timbre, and breathing, which influenced the development of the artistry of the performance.

After the training, an assessment of its prospects and general challenges that were formed during the training was carried out. The results were presented directly by the authors of the research, taking into account the approaches to organizing training, the features of its implementation and the perception of materials by students. The information was formed on the basis of observation of the training process, which allowed assessing the significance of the criteria and the index of adaptability of prospects and challenges in the further training process. In the research, the significance of the criteria was determined based on the features of the influence of possible prospects on improving the quality of music training and the influence of individual challenges without taking them into account on the deterioration of the training process. The significance of the criterion (gradation from 0-1 with the distribution limits 0-0.1 – low impact; 0.11-0.3 – medium impact; more than 0.33 – high impact) was considered high if taking into account individual prospects or challenges in learning ensured a change in the overall result of the learning process. The adaptability index is an indicator of the complexity of integrating an individual indicator of prospects into the learning process or the complexity of avoiding a certain challenge in music pedagogy. The adaptability index was estimated from 0 to 1, where the interval 0.1-0.3 – corresponds to low adaptation of advantages or challenges to the learning process; 0.4-0.7 – medium adaptation; 0.7-1.0 – high adaptation. The final results are presented in Table 4. Additionally, the correlation between the indicators of prospects was revealed based on the method of analysis of hierarchies.

Table 4

Prospects and challenges	Significance of criteria	Adaptability index
<i>Prospects</i>		
Individual learning approach	0.36	0.82
Obtaining systematic feedback based on intelligent algorithms	0.33	0.91
Formation of expanded creative approaches to vocal performance	0.31	0.92

Prospects and challenges	Significance of criteria	Adaptability index
<i>Challenges</i>		
Possibility of ethical violations	0.24	0.73
Development of technocratization of education	0.26	0.79
Lack of specialized training programs with AI application	0.22	0.86
The risk of forming a unified sound	0.28	0.81

Assessment of the benefits and challenges of music pedagogy using digital tools. Source: compiled by the authors

Taking into account the results of the observation, it was found that AI has significant advantages for the educational process, which consists in forming the individuality of performance and expanding vocal skills based on creative approaches. Musical competence is formed under the influence of constant control, which corrects the technical features of performance and the possibility of achieving creative approaches to performance. The advantages of vocal training using AI are formed on the basis of developing students' motivation, which allows students to experiment with vocal styles, combining different approaches to performance. The challenges of using AI are related to the lack of thoughtful approaches to their adaptation to existing vocal strategies. More attention is paid to ethical and legal aspects, which should be associated with rethinking the ways of changing existing musical works for vocal performance by respondents. Comparison of indicators with each other, focusing on the value of the confidence interval, showed the absence of significant deviation between the values. The importance of the advantages was presented in Table 5 based on the use of the method of analysis of hierarchies. The method of analysis of hierarchies allowed the authors to identify the most influential advantages of training. The assessment was carried out based on the indicator of the importance of the criteria. In accordance with the hierarchy analysis matrix, the most important advantage was assigned a score of 4, the less important one – 1. The method used is conditional, but justified by the importance of the criteria, which was determined by the authors in Table 4. The scoring depends on the quantitative determination of the weight on the basis of a numerical scale. The method was used to assess the most effective advantage in comparison with others for initial adaptation to the educational process.

Table 5

Advantages	Individual learning approach	Obtaining systematic feedback based on intelligent algorithms	Formation of expanded creative approaches to vocal performance	<i>W</i>	<i>W_{standard}</i>
Individual learning approach	1	4/2	3/1	3.36	0.41
Obtaining systematic feedback based on intelligent algorithms	2/4	1	2/1	1.38	0.33
Formation of expanded creative approaches to vocal performance	1/3	1/2	1	0.69	0.26
Sum	1.83	3.5	6	3.05	1.0

Hierarchy analysis method for determining the advantages of digital tools in the educational process

Source: compiled by the authors

The applied method of analysis of hierarchies showed the greatest impact on ensuring quality learning by providing an individual approach ($W_{standard} = 0.41$) and receiving systematic feedback based on intelligent algorithms ($W_{standard} = 0.33$). Such advantages are aimed at the ability to form one's own performance style, to understand music more deeply for improved interpretation.

Discussion

The results obtained correlate with the hypothesis regarding the positive impact of computer systems on the development of musical identity. The obtained research results reflect that machine intelligence had an impact on changing the vocal education system. First of all, this was manifested in the peculiarities of the structure of the educational process, which was aimed at individual vocal training, monitoring the level of students' knowledge, and ensuring flexibility and dynamism of learning. The changes also affected the approaches to the development of vocal technique, which included taking into account individual vocal details, respecting freedom of performance, and searching for an individual singing style based on the existing repertoire. Therefore, the use of VocalPitchMonitor, SpectraLayers AI, AI Artistic Evaluation technologies

in the educational process within the framework of the research made it possible to form fundamental academic singing skills. The need to use modern intellectual capabilities for the development of vocal skills was also noted in the study of Tang¹⁰⁰. The author indicated that AI allows for focusing on individual vocal approaches, which improves the experience of perceiving music. Smart education contributes to the creation of personalized learning for the independent development of vocal skills. Similar results are considered in the work of Kojima et al.¹⁰¹, but on the example of specific platforms. The use of TensorFlow and Create ML influenced the possibility of correcting vocal data and individual processing of sounds.

Our research was based on the development of musical identity using AI. The study indicates that musical identity skills using AI can manifest themselves in cognitive-analytical development (6.8 points), development of performing (6.5 points) and creative (6.5 points) capabilities, and aesthetics of performance (6.3 points). The results obtained are similar to the study by Yang¹⁰². The author states that digital instruments affect the development of practical musical skills, developing rhythmic abilities. Noufi et al.¹⁰³ stated that musical identity is formed on the basis of a context-sensitive set of vocal behavior patterns. This is due to the processing of different vocal compositions for expressive performance, which ensures the reproduction of musical individuality. Alsaleh¹⁰⁴ emphasized that musical identity is formed on the basis of understanding the cultural characteristics of music. Understanding cultural diversity contributes to the analytical perception of music to take into account its value during further performance.

However, the author Zong¹⁰⁵ believes that musical identity can be formed by improving individual vocal skills. Therefore, when using digital instruments, attention should be paid to the accuracy of pitch, rhythmicity of singing, and specific timbre. Our research also took into account the possibility

¹⁰⁰ Tang, Kuok Ho Daniel. "Implications of artificial intelligence for teaching and learning", *Acta Pedagogica Asiana*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 65–79, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.53623/apga.v3i2.404>

¹⁰¹ Kojima, Tsuyoshi, Shintaro Fujimura, Yusuke Okanoue, Otsuki Shuya, Ryohei Yuki, Kazuhiko Shoji, Ryusuke Hori, Yo Kishimoto and Koichi Omori. "Objective assessment of pathological voice using artificial intelligence based on the GRBAS scale", *Journal of Voice*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 561–566, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2021.11.021>

¹⁰² Yang, Xiting. "The perspectives of teaching electroacoustic music in the digital environment in higher music education", *Interactive Learning Environments*, vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 1183–1193, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2115080>

¹⁰³ Noufi, Camille, Lloyd May and Jonathan Berger, 2025.

¹⁰⁴ Alsaleh, Abdullah, 2024.

¹⁰⁵ Zong, Lijia. "Evaluation on the Effect of Enhancing Vocal Music Training Experience with Virtual Reality Technology", *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (IJWLTT)*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 1–20, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJWLTT.382590>

of using digital platforms to develop vocal skills and form musical identity. However, attention was paid not only to the development of technical singing skills (VocalPitchMonitor) but also to artistic expressiveness (SpectraLayers AI) and the creation of musical improvisations (AmperScore AI).

Taking into account the results of the scientific work of Zhang et al.¹⁰⁶, the need to use AI for the development of vocal skills was established. The use of technology affects the ability to analyze students' vocal activity, taking into account the accuracy of performance. The use of EarSAVAS technology provides an analysis of one's own singing and a depth of understanding of musical works. According to Casebourne et al.¹⁰⁷, the use of algorithmic tools can affect the loss of one's own identity. This occurs based on the choice of untested platforms, which affect the avoidance of a unique style and are oriented towards the choice of a mixed performance format. Challenges in learning can be associated with the lack of depth of the musical work and the individuality of the approach to its performance.

Digital technologies help to avoid discrepancies between practical and theoretical classes, but create new challenges in teaching¹⁰⁸. Along with this, they do not focus on the relevance of the curricula, which limits the possibility of choosing the appropriate repertoire.

The analysis of published studies with our research showed the transformation of music pedagogy using digital tools. However, our research was focused on the development of students' musical identification in the process of using AI. The academic paper presented a justification of the challenges and advantages of such training, focusing on student assessment. Future studies will be focused on determining the features of musical identity formation under the influence of traditional and interactive learning, taking into account the characteristics of different musical styles.

Conclusion

The conducted research demonstrated that artificial intelligence influences the creation of favorable conditions for the development of musical identity. A new aspect of the research is aimed at creating practical conditions for the development of the musical identity of vocalists under the influence of

¹⁰⁶ Zhang, Xiyuxing, Yuntao Wang, Yuxuan Han, Chen Liang, Ishan Chatterjee, Jiankai Tang, Xin Yi, Shwetak Patel and Yuanchun Shi, 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Casebourne, Imogen, Shengpeng Shi, Michael Hogan, Wayne Holmes, Tore Hoel, Rupert Wegerif and Li Yuan, 2025.

¹⁰⁸ Boltsi, Aggelik, Konstantinos Kalovrektis, Apostolis Xenakis and Periklis Chaikalis. "Digital tools, technologies, and learning methodologies for education 4.0 frameworks: A STEM oriented survey", *IEEE Access*, vol. 12, pp. 12883–12901, 2024.

machine intelligence. The conducted research demonstrated the features of the transformation of vocal training using digital technologies that contribute to the formation of musical identity in the individual. Thus, the structure of the traditional educational process, which was represented by collective training, changed to the organization of individual vocal training. Assessment took place during the performance of tasks, which provided the possibility of flexibility and dynamism of the educational process. Interactive training during vocal training was focused on the development of vocal details, freedom of performance and taking into account individual approaches to the performance of musical works. It was found that such training influenced the development of cognitive-analytical skills, performing and creative abilities, and aesthetics of performance, which reflect the basic skills of musical identity. Based on the skills formed, vocalists are oriented towards understanding musical works and choosing creative approaches for their performance. Empirical data contributed to confirming the effectiveness of the platforms VocalPitchMonitor, SpectraLayers AI, and AI Artistic Evaluation in vocal training for the development of musical identity. The process was implemented on the basis of control during vocal training for the peculiarities of sound formation, artistry of performance and creation of musical improvisations. It was established that the level of musical identity of students improved, which was associated with adherence to the stylistics of performance of Ukrainian and foreign music and the manifestation of one's own individuality.

The use of computer technologies in the educational process has affected the prospects of such training, which was initially assessed from the point of view of obtaining an individual approach to learning, the formation of expanded creative approaches to vocal performance and the possibility of receiving feedback to correct errors. However, the challenges of such training are associated with the risk of technocratization of education and the formation of a unified sound that does not ensure the individuality of performance. The limitations of the results obtained are related to the analysis of the features of the development of musical identity using AI, which excludes the consideration of traditional approaches. However, comparing the results of students before and after the research partially allowed for resolving this research gap and establishing the impact of AI on the development of the musical identity. The prospects of the academic paper can be aimed at analyzing the specifics of the development of musical identity of vocalists who have an initial level of vocal skills and a developed level of vocal capabilities. Additional attention will be paid to the interaction between the level of development of musical identity and existing musical genres.

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APPENDIX 1

List of musical works for students to perform before and after vocal training

Ukrainian songs:

Oh in The Cherry Orchard (lyrical song)
God Eternal (religious song)
Oh, the Little Well Out in the Field (domestic song)
Oh, Under The Cherry Tree (humorous song)
A Cossack Rode Across the Danube (historical song)
Hey Girl, Where Are You Going? (domestic song)
Little Cossack (humorous song)
Verbychenka (lyrical song)
Oh, Hryts, Don't Go to The Youth Evenings (lyrical song)
Oh, The Reapers Are Working On the Hill (humorous song)

World songs:

La Paloma (lyrical song)
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (cradle song)
La Marseillaise (patriotic song)
Silent Night (ritual song)
Greensleeves (domestic song)
Rock-a-bye Baby (cradle song)
Loch Lomond (domestic song)
Unchained Melody (lyrical song)
Yankee Doodle (patriotic song)
Clair de Lune (lyrical song)

FORMATION OF MUSICAL IDENTITY DURING VOCAL TRAINING BASED
ON MACHINE INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

APPENDIX 2

Clear primary data on student performance

Table 2.1

Features of musical identity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	Average value
<i>Ukrainian songs</i>																																						
Conveying the emotional and semantic content of the composition	3.2	3.5	3.7	3.2	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.1	3	2.9	3.3	3	3.2	3.3	3.8	3.4	3.5	3	3.2	3.1	3.1	3	3.3	3.5	3.4	3	3.2	3.7	3.2	3	3.1	3.8	3.2	3.1	3.6	3	3.7	3.3
Adherence to vocal academic culture	3	2.9	2.7	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.4	3.1	3	3.3	2.9	3	3.2	3.1	3.8	3.2	2.9	3	3.4	2.7	2.9	3.6	3.1	3.2	3.2	3	3.2	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.2	3.5	3.7	3	2.9	3.1
Taking into account individual approaches to interpretation	2.2	2.7	2.9	2	2.5	3.1	2.8	3.5	3	3.1	2.6	2.2	2.4	3	2.9	2.7	2.5	2	2.3	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.9	3.2	2.5	2.4	2	2.7	2.9	2.2	2.5	2.1	2	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.1	2.5
<i>World songs</i>																																						
Conveying the emotional and semantic content of the composition	3.2	3.3	2.8	2.5	3.4	2.6	3.9	3.7	2.5	2.1	2.6	2.7	2.8	3	3.2	2.7	2.9	3	2.2	2.8	3.2	2	2.8	2.9	3	3.4	3.1	2.5	2.2	3	2.4	2.9	2.3	2.3	2.8	3	2.4	2.8
Adherence to vocal academic culture	2.5	2.7	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.9	2.1	2.4	2.6	3	2.1	2	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.1	2	2.5	3	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	3	2.9	2.7	3	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.4
Taking into account individual approaches to interpretation	3.5	3	3.2	3.3	3.7	3.8	3	2.3	2.8	3.4	3.2	2.9	3	3.9	2.4	2.2	3	2.7	3.3	2.5	3.3	3.7	3	2.8	2.6	3.1	3	3.2	2.4	2.7	3	2.7	2.8	3.1	3.2	2.5	3	3.0

Primary data of students before training

Table 2.2

Features of musical identity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	Average value	
<i>Ukrainian songs</i>																																							
Conveying the emotional and semantic content of the composition	5	5.2	5.3	4.8	4.7	4.6	5	4.9	5	4.7	4.8	5	5	4.9	5	4.7	4.5	5	4.9	5	5	4.7	4.8	5	4.7	4.6	5	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.5	5	5	4.9	4.7	7.8	5	4.9	
Adherence to vocal academic culture	5	4.9	5	5	4.8	4.7	5	5	5	4.9	5	4.6	5	5	5	4.9	5	5	5	4.9	5	5	4.9	4.9	5	5	5	4.9	5	5	5	4.9	4.8	5	5	4.9	5	5	5.0
Taking into account individual approaches to interpretation	4.7	5	5	4.8	5	4.9	4.7	5	5	4.9	4.7	4.8	5	5	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.8	4.7	4.9	5	4.8	5	4.9	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.8	5	5	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.9	5	5	4.9	4.8	
<i>World songs</i>																																							
Conveying the emotional and semantic content of the composition	4.9	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	4.9	5	5	4.7	5	4.9	5	5	5	5	5	4.7	5	5	4.9	4.9	5	4.7	5	5	5	4.8	4.9	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5.0
Adherence to vocal academic culture	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.2	5	4.3	4.1	4	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.3	4.2	4.7	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.7	4.6	4.2	4	4.1	4.3	4	4.3	
Taking into account individual approaches to interpretation	4.9	5	5	4.7	5	5	4.9	5	4.8	4.8	5	5	4.6	5	5	5	4.8	4.9	5	4.7	4.5	4.8	4.7	5	5	5	4.9	5	5	4.9	5	5	4.7	5	5	4.8	5	5.0	

Primary data of students after training

BUILDING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF FUTURE MUSIC TEACHERS USING DIGITAL AND MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGIES WITH THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHOREOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS

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SUMMARY. The research presents the results of a pedagogical experiment aimed at improving the training of future music teachers in the context of digitalization of education and interspecific integration of arts. The relevance of the study is determined by the need to build a professional competence of future music teachers in the context of digital transformation of education and integration of artistic practices. The aim of the study was to identify and experimentally verify pedagogical conditions that ensure the effectiveness of the training of future music teachers. These conditions are a set of organizational, methodological, and technological factors (integration of digital and multimedia technologies, combination of musical and choreographic activities, development of reflection using multimedia, use of blended learning), which contribute to the development of students' key competencies. Research methods: pedagogical experiment (summative and formative stages), questionnaire, observation, statistical processing of results (Fisher's φ^* -criterion, t-test, Cohen's d). The results showed a significant increase in the level of professional competence in the experimental group (EG): the share of

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students with a sufficient level increased from 47.0% to 72.2% (+25.2%), while the increase was only +6.2% in the control group (CG). The largest changes were recorded in communicative (+27.4%), as well as musical and choreographic (+26.8%) competencies. Statistical analysis confirmed the reliability of the differences ($p < 0.01$; Cohen's $d = 6.03$). Integration of digital and multimedia technologies with artistic practices, in particular elements of choreography, is an effective means of training future music teachers. The academic novelty is the integrated approach to the development of six competencies (digital, musical and pedagogical, artistic and creative, musical and choreographic, communicative, and reflective) and their experimental verification. Prospects for further research are related to the development of interdisciplinary courses and the expansion of the sample to other higher education institutions (HEIs).

Keywords: music pedagogy, music teachers, choreography, professional competence, innovative technologies, multimedia tools.

1. Introduction

Building of professional competence of future music teachers is a multidimensional process that encompasses the development of pedagogical, musical, performing, and creative skills in the face of modern challenges. AN increasing number of researchers note the need to update the training of music teachers by integrating digital and multimedia technologies.⁶

Currently, researchers emphasize that the digitalization of education contributes to the personalization of learning, expands the possibilities of creative self-realization of students, and increases the effectiveness of the development of pedagogical competencies. In particular, Blanco García et al.⁷ prove that digital, as well as artistic and musical competencies are complementary components of the training of a modern teacher. The study by Luo et al.⁸ shows that the use of multimedia tools (audio, video, interactive programmes) increases students' involvement and develops their readiness

⁶ Pankiv, Liudmyla. "Features of the use of modern information technologies in the process of training future teachers of music and choreography." *Bulletin of the T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium"* 175.19 (2023): 155–160.
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⁷ Blanco García, Yurima, Serrano Pastor, Rosa M., & Casanova López, Óscar. "Toward a transversal education model: A review of digital and artistic-musical competencies (2014–2024)." *Arts Education Policy Review* 126.4 (2025): 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2025.2459917>

⁸ Luo, Yan, Liu, Yaoping, Siripala, Wannaporn, Namtubtim, Noppavan, & Shen, Yi. "Incorporating multimedia learning into music teacher training program in rural Fujian." *Frontiers in Education* 10 (2025): 1531359. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2025.1531359>

to implement innovations in their own practice. Váradi et al.⁹ draws similar conclusions, demonstrating an increase in the level of ICT competence of music teachers during distance learning during the pandemic.

In a systematic review, Liu et al.¹⁰ emphasize that the effectiveness of digital tools in music education is determined not so much by their presence, but by the method of use. This is consistent with the results of O'Leary¹¹, who emphasizes the need to develop critical thinking and technological literacy of teachers.

At the same time, an interdisciplinary approach is relevant: the involvement of choreographic elements (movement, dance) in music and pedagogical training. According to Bilostotska¹², there is a fundamental connection between music and choreography, therefore it is important for future teachers to understand music not only as an accompaniment, but as a content-generating component of choreographic art. Such integration, as Ukrainian and foreign authors note, promises a more holistic training of specialists capable of working creatively and effectively in new educational conditions.

The aim of the study is to substantiate and determine the pedagogical conditions for building of professional competence of future music teachers through the integration of digital and multimedia technologies with the involvement of choreographic elements.

The aim was achieved through the fulfilment of the following research objectives:

- Analyse the current state of the problem in domestic and foreign research, identifying key trends in the use of digital and multimedia technologies in music and pedagogical training.
- Determine the possibilities of integrating choreographic elements into the process of professional training of music teachers as a factor in the development of their artistic and creative, as well as musical and choreographic competence.

⁹ Váradi, Judit, Józsa, Gabriella, Fodor, Adrienne Sz., Molnár-Tamus, Viktória, & Szücs, Timea. "Investigating music teachers' ICT skills and technical possibilities in online music education during the COVID-19 pandemic." *Heliyon* 9.2 (2023): e16463. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e16463>

¹⁰ Liu, Yihan, Tran, Van Cuong, Szabó, Norbert, & Tóth, Ali. "The use and effectiveness of digital tools in elementary music education: A systematic review." *Music & Science* 8 (2025): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20592043251363338>

¹¹ O'Leary, Emmet. "Considering the possibilities and problems of AI in music education: The need for critical literacies." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 24.3 (2025): 138–164. Retrieved from: <https://act.maydaygroup.org/considering-the-possibilities-and-problems-of-ai-in-music-education-the-need-for-critical-literacies/>

¹² Bilostotska, O. V. "Essence of professional competence of future music teacher." *Педагогічні Науки: Реалії та Перспективи* 75.5 (2020): 39–44. <https://doi.org/10.31392/NPU-nc.series5.2020.75.03>

- Experimentally verify the effectiveness of combining digital and multimedia tools with elements of choreography to increase the level of professional competence of future music teachers.

2. Literature review

Global research shows that digitalization has become one of the leading trends in music education, but views on its role and boundaries differ significantly. The bibliometric analysis of Ma & Wang¹³ systematized four main trends: interactivity, creativity, adaptability, and inclusiveness. Luo et al.¹⁴ held a similar position, who emphasize the increase in student motivation through multimedia formats. At the same time, their results contradict the conclusions of Kakimova et al.¹⁵: the authors indicate that technologies are effective only if teachers are pedagogically prepared and cannot replace live artistic communication.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the rethinking of technological training for music teachers. Váradi et al.¹⁶ and Biasutti et al.¹⁷ emphasize that some teachers have become leaders in digital learning, while others have retained only basic skills. Similarly, Hash¹⁸ warns that the success of distance learning depends not on the platform, but on the ability to integrate it into the specifics of the music subject. Therefore, technologies have potential, but need methodological support.

¹³ Ma, Yidi, & Wang, Chengliang. "Empowering music education with technology: A bibliometric perspective." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12.345 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04616-2>

¹⁴ Luo, Yan, Liu, Yaoping, Siripala, Wannaporn, Namtubtim, Noppavan, & Shen, Yi. "Incorporating multimedia learning into music teacher training program in rural Fujian." *Frontiers in Education* 10 (2025): 1531359. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1531359>

¹⁵ Kakimova, Laura, Sydykova, Rosa, Akhmetova, Aimkul, & Zhakaeva, Saltanat. "The use of modern digital technologies in the training of future music teachers." *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University. Series "Physics"* 56 (2024): 2150–2159. <https://doi.org/10.54919/physics/56.2024.215ya0>

¹⁶ Váradi, Judit, Józsa, Gabriella, Fodor, Adrienne Sz., Molnár-Tamus, Viktória, & Szücs, Timea. "Investigating music teachers' ICT skills and technical possibilities in online music education during the COVID-19 pandemic." *Heliyon* 9.2 (2023): e16463. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e16463>

¹⁷ Biasutti, Michele, Antonini Philippe, Roberta, & Schiavio, Andrea. "E-learning during the COVID-19 lockdown: An interview study with primary school music teachers in Italy." *International Journal of Music Education* 41.2 (2023): 242–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614221107190>

¹⁸ Hash, Phillip. M. "Remote learning in school bands during the COVID-19 shutdown." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 68.4 (2021): 381–397. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429420967008>

Christophersen¹⁹ and Pankiv²⁰ converge in the assertion that innovations should not displace the traditional artistic component, but should deepen it. In contrast, Ma & Wang²¹ emphasize the benefits of radical digital integration, where technology acts not as a tool, but as a learning environment. So, the common idea of most authors is the need for a balance between the technological and artistic components, but the boundary of this balance is interpreted differently.

Ukrainian and foreign studies agree on the importance of interspecific integration. Mikulinska et al.²² and del Barrio & Arús²³ prove that the combination of music and movement develops rhythmicity, creativity, and empathy. Their approaches are close to the positions of Yu et al.²⁴ and Muzyka²⁵, who emphasize the integrity of professional training through the synthesis of music, choreography, and digital tools. However, Marievych et al.²⁶ emphasize that digital tools should only be auxiliary — excessive technologization can reduce the emotionality of the artistic experience. In general, most authors recognize the advantages of multimedia for interactivity and student

¹⁹ Christophersen, Catharina. "Educating music teachers for the future: The crafts of change." In Mäki, I., Nikkanen, R., & Blix, G. (eds.) *Music Education as Craft: Reframing Theoretical and Practical Knowledge* (p. 63–74). Cham: Springer, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67704-6_6

²⁰ Pankiv, Liudmyla. "Features of the use of modern information technologies in the process of training future teachers of music and choreography." *Bulletin of the T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium"* 175.19 (2023): 155–160. <https://doi.org/10.58407/231903>

²¹ Ma, Yidi, & Wang, Chengliang. "Empowering music education with technology: A bibliometric perspective." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12.345 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04616-2>

²² Mikulinska, Olha, Lisovska, Nina, & Troshchenko, Volodymyr. "Musical competence of future choreography teachers as an artistic and pedagogical problem." *Pedagogical Sciences: Theory, History, Innovation Technologies* 1.105 (2021): 426–433. <https://repository.sspu.edu.ua/handle/123456789/11397>

²³ Barrio del, Luis, & Arús, M. Eugénia. "Music and movement pedagogy in basic education: A systematic review." *Frontiers in Education* 9 (2024): 1403745. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2024.1403745>

²⁴ Yu, Xiaofei, Ma, Ning, Zheng, Lei, Wang, Licheng, & Wang, Kai. "Developments and applications of artificial intelligence in music education." *Technologies* 11.2 (2023): 42. <https://doi.org/10.3390/technologies11020042>

²⁵ Музика, Юрій. О. "Оптимальні педагогічні умови підготовки майбутніх учителів до реалізації інтегрованого підходу у навчанні народної хореографії." *Академічні Візії* 39 (2025): 37–45. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15121037>

²⁶ Marievych, Nataliia, Kuziv, Mariia, Doroshenko, Tetiana, Aliksiichuk, Olena, Borysova, Tetiana, & Fedorchuk, Viktoriia. "Training future primary school teachers to organize game-based music activities." *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională* 14.1 (2022a): 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/14.1/505>

motivation^{27,28}, but point to gaps in interdisciplinary methodology: mechanisms for harmonizing digital platforms with choreographic practice have not been developed. Schiavio et al.²⁹ emphasize that true innovation does not require new programmes, but a new pedagogical culture, where technological literacy is combined with creative thinking.

Therefore, two lines can be traced in the literature: an optimistic one^{30,31}, which sees digitalization as a catalyst for development, and a cautious one^{32,33,34}, which emphasizes the risks of losing emotionality and artistic authenticity. The synthesis of these positions that forms the methodological background for further research into the integration of digital and choreographic practices into music pedagogy.

3. Methods and Materials

The study was conducted in three consecutive stages: summative, formative, and control. At the summative stage, the initial level of professional

²⁷ Luo, Yan, Liu, Yaoping, Siripala, Wannaporn, Namtubtim, Noppavan, & Shen, Yi. "Incorporating multimedia learning into music teacher training program in rural Fujian." *Frontiers in Education* 10 (2025): 1531359. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2025.1531359>

²⁸ Marievych, Nataliia, Nesterovych, Bohdan, Turchyn, Tamara, Kryvosheya, Tetiana, Shyshova, Olha, & Nadon, Viktoriia. "Management of the play activity of primary schoolchildren: A critical look at Ukrainian trends from the point of view of international experience." *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională* 14.1Sup1 (2022b): 328–348. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/14.1Sup1/554>

²⁹ Schiavio, Andrea, Biasutti, Michele, & Antonini Philippe, Roberta. "Creative pedagogies in the time of pandemic: A case study with conservatory students." *Music Education Research* 23.2 (2021): 167–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2021.1881054>

³⁰ Ma, Yidi, & Wang, Chengliang. "Empowering music education with technology: A bibliometric perspective." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12.345 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04616-2>

³¹ Luo, Yan, Liu, Yaoping, Siripala, Wannaporn, Namtubtim, Noppavan, & Shen, Yi. "Incorporating multimedia learning into music teacher training program in rural Fujian." *Frontiers in Education* 10 (2025): 1531359. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2025.1531359>

³² Kakimova, Laura, Sydykova, Rosa, Akhmetova, Aimkul, & Zhakaeva, Saltanat. "The use of modern digital technologies in the training of future music teachers." *Scientific Herald of Uzhorod University. Series "Physics"* 56 (2024): 2150–2159. <https://doi.org/10.54919/physics/56.2024.215ya0>

³³ Christophersen, Catharina, Aróstegui, José Luis, Holdhus, Kari, Kenny, Ailbhe, Knudsen, Jan Sverre, Lindgren, Monica, Väkevä, Lauri, & Viig, Tine Grieg. "Music teacher education for the future: Reflections on change." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 22.3 (2023): 7–40. <https://doi.org/10.22176/act22.3.7>

³⁴ Marievych, Nataliia, Kuziv, Mariia, Doroshenko, Tetiana, Aliksiichuk, Olena, Borysova, Tetiana, & Fedorchuk, Viktoriia. "Training future primary school teachers to organize game-based music activities." *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională* 14.1 (2022a): 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/14.1/505>

competence of future music teachers was determined, initial indicators were recorded for six key components (digital, musical and pedagogical, artistic and creative, musical and choreographic, communicative, reflective). At the formative stage, an experimental methodology was introduced that combined digital and multimedia technologies with the involvement of choreographic elements in the educational process. The control stage involved repeated measurement of competencies to identify the dynamics and statistically verified effect of the methodology.

The practical effectiveness of the experimental programme was increased by using a set of digital and multimedia tools, combining interactivity, creativity, and interdisciplinarity. These tools helped to organize students' musical and choreographic activities in a blended learning format – from creating scores to collective dance productions, online performances, and multimedia assessment.

Table 1 shows the main resources, their functional purpose, forms of students' work, and expected results.

Table 1

Item No.	Name of resource / platform	Type of technology	Functional purpose	Forms of student work	Expected results / competencies
1	Padlet	Multimedia interactive whiteboard	Collective creation of musical material, exchange of audio and video fragments, group discussion	Group projects, peer review	Development of communicative and digital competencies
2	MuseScore	Interactive music editor	Creation, editing and arrangement of scores; preparation of musical fragments for choreographic items	Individual practical tasks	Musical and pedagogical, artistic and creative competencies
3	Audacity / Logic Pro X	Audio editors	Processing of vocal and accompaniment recordings, creation of phonograms for dance productions	Individual and group projects	Artistic and creative and reflective competencies

4	Zoom / Google Classroom	Distance learning platforms	Conducting interactive classes, online concerts, joint discussion of choreographic productions	Seminars, group classes, online performances	Communicative and digital competence
5	YouTube, Vimeo, AR platforms (Merge EDU, ARloopa)	Multimedia resources and AR/VR tools	Analysis of video lessons, demonstration of movements, visualization of dance patterns	Independent work, reflective analysis	Musical and choreographic, reflective competence
6	Canva / Genially	Visual multimedia tools	Creation of educational presentations, posters, video posters for music and choreographic projects	Group mini-projects	Development of digital and artistic and creative competence
7	Podcasts (Spotify, Anchor)	Audio platforms for educational content	Listening to thematic audio podcasts on music pedagogy and choreography	Individual tasks with further discussion	Reflective, musical and pedagogical competence

Digital and multimedia resources used in the process of training future music teachers

* Developed by the authors

The use of these resources ensured a comprehensive coverage of the educational process — from technical (creation of musical fragments and video materials) to creative and reflective components. So, digital and multimedia technologies became not only an auxiliary tool, but a leading means of forming professional competence, combining musical, pedagogical, and choreographic components.

3.1. Research design

Pedagogical experiment was the main method that ensured the verification of the effectiveness of the integrated methodology. It involved the organization of two groups: experimental (EG) and control (CG), where the integrated use of digital and multimedia technologies in combination with choreographic practices was introduced only in the EG.

Questionnaire survey was used to identify students' subjective perception of the level of their own competencies, attitude to digital tools, and readiness for the integration of music and movement. The questionnaires contained closed and open questions, which allowed combining quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Pedagogical observation – was carried out during practical classes, where multimedia programs, interactive tasks and choreographic exercises were used. This made it possible to assess the dynamics of student involvement, their creative activity and communicative skills.

Statistical analysis – was used to confirm the reliability of the results obtained. The Fisher angular transformation criterion φ^* , the t-test for independent samples, and the Cohen's d effect coefficient were applied, which allowed us to assess the strength of the impact of the implemented methodology.

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3.2. Research sample

The general population consisted of students of the bachelor educational programme Musical Art and Choreography of higher education institutions (HEIs) of Ukraine. From this population, 200 students were selected using the method of purposeful selection from two leading pedagogical universities — Dragomanov Ukrainian State University and Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University. The choice of these institutions is determined by the fact that they have powerful art and pedagogical schools that combine musical, choreographic, and digital training, as well as experience in implementing innovative forms of learning.

The sample included 2nd-3rd-year undergraduate students, as at this stage they have already mastered basic music theoretical and pedagogical subjects, have formed primary professional skills, but are still actively building professional competence. This makes it possible to effectively assess the dynamics of changes under the influence of the experiment.

The selection was carried out according to the following criteria:

- studying in one educational programme (Musical Art and Choreography);

- absence of significant differences in previous academic performance (average score within 80–85);
- approximately the same level of mastery of digital instruments, as well as basic musical and choreographic skills (determined by the results of the entrance questionnaire and diagnostics);
- voluntary participation in the study.

The EG and CG were formed taking into account the principle of equivalence: the initial indicators of professional competence levels did not differ statistically ($p > 0.05$), which ensured the validity of the comparison of results.

3.3. Research tools

The following were used to implement the experimental programme:

- Multimedia platforms (Zoom, Google Classroom, Padlet) for interactive interaction and exchange of educational materials;
- Music software (MuseScore, Audacity, Logic Pro X) — for creating and analysing musical material;
- Digital resources on choreography (video lessons, movement simulations, interactive exercises), which were integrated into the educational process;
- Assessment methods — an author's map for assessing the formation of competencies, which took into account six components, as well as standardized tests on pedagogy and digital literacy;
- Statistical analysis formulas: Fisher's ϕ^* test for testing differences in percentages; t-test for independent samples for comparing mean values between groups; Cohen's d coefficient for assessing the strength of the impact.

The level of professional competencies was determined by using an author's assessment map developed taking into account six components (digital, musical and pedagogical, artistic and creative, musical and choreographic, communicative, and reflective). Each component was assessed on a three-point scale of levels:

- 1 - initial (fragmentary knowledge, low activity in digital artistic activities),
- 2 - reproductive (stable performance of tasks according to the model, partial independence),
- 3 - sufficient (conscious, independent, creatively justified use of technologies and artistic means).

Table 2

Criterion	Indicators	Levels of development
Knowledge of digital tools	Knowledge of MuseScore, Padlet, Canva, Audacity	1 – knows individual tools; 2 – confidently uses the main ones; 3 – integrates them into creative tasks
Practical skills	Creating multimedia products	1 – with the help of a teacher; 2 – partially independently; 3 – completely independently, with creative additions
Reflection and self-monitoring	Evaluates the effectiveness of one's own work	1 – does not implement; 2 – partially; 3 – systematically applies reflection

Fragment of the assessment map (example for digital competence)

* Developed by the authors

The questionnaire included 18 questions (open and closed), covering three blocks: self-assessment of the level of competences (on a scale of 1–5); attitude to digital technologies and choreographic integration; willingness to use multimedia in one's own pedagogical activities.

Example of a question: *“How regularly do you use online platforms (Padlet, MuseScore, Canva) in the process of creating educational resources”*

The answers were recorded on a five-point scale (1 – never, 5 – constantly).

The validity of the instruments was checked by expert assessment (5 teachers of music and pedagogical subjects, 3 choreographic pedagogy, 2 ICT specialists). The consistency of the experts' assessments was 0.87 (Kendall W coefficient), which indicates a high level of internal consistency of the indicators. The reliability of the questionnaire was checked by calculating Cronbach's α coefficient = 0.84, which corresponds to high internal consistency of the scale.

4. Results

Analysis of the dynamics of the levels of professional competence of future music teachers in the EG and CG showed a significant difference in the results. At the summative stage, both groups had a similar distribution of levels: the reproductive level dominated (more than half of the students), a significant proportion was at the initial level, and the sufficient level was represented by less than a fifth of the participants. This indicates the initial conditions of the experiment, when most students needed targeted work to improve their professional competence (Table 3).

Table 3

Item No.	Competencies	CG, % (before)	CG, % (after)	Change	EG, % (before)	EG, % (after)	Δ (change, pp)
1	Digital	50.2	59.8	+9.6	49.5	74.2	+24.7
2	Musical and pedagogical	53.1	61.0	+7.9	52.8	72.1	+19.3
3	Artistic and creative	48.7	60.1	+11.4	49.0	70.3	+21.3
4	Musical and choreographic	45.0	54.5	+9.5	44.7	71.5	+26.8
5	Communicative	46.2	55.0	+8.8	45.9	73.3	+27.4
6	Reflective	51.0	60.4	+9.4	50.7	71.8	+21.1
	Total competence	49.0	58.5	+9.5	48.8	72.2	+23.4

Dynamics of the development of professional competence of future music teachers by types of competencies at the beginning and end of the experiment (in %)

* Developed by the authors

The obtained data demonstrate a significant difference in the dynamics of the development of professional competencies. In the CG, the increase was on average only +9.5 pp, while in the EG - +23.4 pp, that is, more than twice as much. The most noticeable changes were recorded in communicative (+27.4 pp) and musical-choreographic (+26.8 pp) competencies, which indicates the success of combining digital and choreographic practices. Significant improvement is also observed in digital (+24.7 pp), artistic and creative (+21.3 pp), and reflective (+21.1 pp) competencies, while the corresponding indicators do not exceed +11.4 pp in the CG.

Overall, the proportion of the EG students with a sufficient level of professional competence increased from 48.8% to 72.2%, while it increased only from 49.0% to 58.5% in the CG. This indicates a statistically significant effectiveness of the implemented methodology and confirms that the integration of digital and multimedia technologies with choreographic elements contributes to a comprehensive increase in the professional competence of future music teachers.

The generalized data (Table 4) demonstrate changes in the levels of professional competencies of future music teachers after the experiment. The reproductive level prevailed (56–61%) at the summative stage, a significant proportion of students had the initial level (20–23%), while the sufficient level fluctuated within 18–22%. This indicates the same starting conditions and the need to improve students' training.

Table 4

Competence	Summative stage (%)			Control stage (%)		
	Sufficient level	Reproductive level	Initial level	Sufficient level	Reproductive level	Initial level
Digital	20	58	22	50	45	5
Musical and pedagogical	22	56	22	48	46	6
Artistic and creative	19	61	20	46	48	6
Musical and choreographic	18	59	23	55	40	5
Communicative	19	58	23	56	41	3
Reflective	21	57	22	49	46	5

Generalized results of the level of professional competencies of future music teachers (N=100, EG)

* Developed by the authors

At the formative stage, the EG observed a significant increase in the sufficient level in almost all competencies, especially in communicative, as well as musical and choreographic, where the number of students with high indicators more than doubled. At the same time, the share of the initial level decreased significantly, which testifies to the effectiveness of the implemented pedagogical conditions. In the CG, the dynamics of changes is minimal: a slight increase in the sufficient level and an almost unchanged share of the initial. This indicates that traditional training provides only gradual progress, while experimental conditions give a significantly better result.

The practical impact of the methodology was assessed by analysing the dynamics of the use of digital and multimedia tools by students before and after the experiment. This made it possible to determine which technologies were most actively integrated into the educational process and contributed to the development of professional competencies (Table 5).

Table 5

Item No.	Digital tool	Before the experiment	After the experiment	Δ (change, pp)
1	MuseScore (music score editor)	42.0	78.5	+36.5
2	Padlet (online collaboration)	28.7	71.2	+42.5
3	Canva / Genially (visual multimedia)	31.5	69.0	+37.5
4	Zoom / Google Classroom	88.0	94.5	+6.5
5	Audacity / Logic Pro X	25.4	63.8	+38.4
6	YouTube / AR platforms	36.9	75.1	+38.2
Average indicator	—	42.1	75.3	+33.2

Use of digital and multimedia tools by students before and after the experiment (EG, % of the total number)

* Developed by the authors

The data show that after the formative stage, students in the EG used digital tools much more actively, especially those related to collaboration (Padlet), multimedia creation (Canva, Genially), and musical editing (MuseScore). The increase is on average more than 30 pp, which confirms the practical effect of integrating technologies into the educational process.

To check the statistical reliability of the obtained data, the Fisher's angular transformation criterion (φ^*), t-test for independent samples and the Cohen's effect size (d) were applied. The results confirmed that the increase in the proportion of students with a sufficient level of professional competence in the EG is statistically proven and reliable: $\varphi^* = 2.56 \geq \varphi_{cr} = 2.31$ ($p \leq 0.01$). The t-test also showed a significant difference between the CG and the EG after the formative stage ($t = -10.45$; $p < 0.001$). The calculation of the Cohen effect size ($d = 6.03$) demonstrated an extremely strong influence of the experimental method on the development of professional competence of future music teachers. So, the integration of digital and multimedia technologies with choreographic elements has proven its effectiveness in the students' training.

After participating in the experimental programme, students demonstrated not only an increase in the level of competencies, but also significant changes in attitudes: increased interest, belief in one's own abilities, and understanding of the pedagogical value of technologies (Table 6). So, the experiment had both a cognitive and motivational effect.

Table 6

Indicator (on a scale of 1–5)	Before the experiment (M±SD)	After the experiment (M±SD)	t	p
Interest in using digital tools	3.4 ± 0.8	4.6 ± 0.5	10.2	<0.001
Confidence in one's own skills	3.1 ± 0.9	4.4 ± 0.6	9.8	<0.001
Perception of digital technologies as a pedagogical resource	3.5 ± 0.7	4.7 ± 0.4	11.0	<0.001
Convinced of the feasibility of combining music and choreography through digital means	3.2 ± 0.8	4.5 ± 0.5	10.6	<0.001

Changes in students' attitudes towards the use of digital technologies (EG, n=100)

* Developed by the authors

The obtained results indicate a significant increase in the positive attitude of the EG students towards the use of digital technologies in learning. The average level of interest increased from 3.4 ± 0.8 to 4.6 ± 0.5 points, i.e. by +1.2 points ($t = 10.2$; $p < 0.001$), which reflects a noticeable increase in motivation for digital activity. Confidence in one's own skills increased from 3.1 ± 0.9 to 4.4 ± 0.6 points (+1.3 points), and the perception of digital technologies as a pedagogical resource increased from 3.5 ± 0.7 to 4.7 ± 0.4 points (+1.2 points), with high statistical significance ($t = 11.0$; $p < 0.001$). The largest shift was recorded in the indicator of conviction in the feasibility of combining music and choreography through digital means – from 3.2 ± 0.8 to 4.5 ± 0.5 points (+1.3 points; $t = 10.6$; $p < 0.001$). In general, there is a pronounced positive dynamics of all four indicators: the average increase was about +1.25 points on a five-point scale, which indicates not only the development of digital skills, but also a change in students' value orientations towards the conscious use of technologies in artistic and pedagogical activities.

During the observation, teachers noted that students became more proactive in creating multimedia projects, more often offered their own options for choreographic accompaniment, actively used video analysis of performances and self-assessment. The increase in communicative interaction during group classes in Zoom and Padlet was the most noticeable. The students associated some difficulties with technical barriers (unstable Internet connection, lack of licensed software), but most of them noted that these problems did not reduce motivation for digital learning.

5. Discussion

The low level of professional competence of future music teachers remains one of the main problems of art education.^{35,36} Researchers see the reasons in the inertia of educational programmes³⁷ and the insufficient development of digital literacy.³⁸ Our results confirm both theses and complement them: what is decisive is not the mere fact of the presence of technologies, but their integration with creative activities, in particular choreography. Sandberg-Jurström et al.³⁹ proposed a transversal model of digital and artistic competencies, but it is based mainly on students' self-assessment. Our experiment, based on objective growth indicators (digital competence +24.7 pp, musical-choreographic +26.8 pp), empirically confirmed the effectiveness of such an integration model. On the other hand, Zhang et al.⁴⁰ believe that the main barrier is not the methodology, but the attitude of teachers towards technology. We partially agree: attitude is indeed an important factor, but our data showed that a change in attitude is possible through practical involvement in digital choreographic projects (increased interest in technology from 3.4 to 4.6 points; $p < 0.001$).

³⁵ Christophersen, Catharina, Aróstegui, José Luis, Holdhus, Kari, Kenny, Ailbhe, Knudsen, Jan Sverre, Lindgren, Monica, Väkevå, Lauri, & Viig, Tine Grieg. "Music teacher education for the future: Reflections on change." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 22.3 (2023): 7–40. <https://doi.org/10.22176/act22.3.7>

³⁶ Melnyk, Khrystyna P. "Formation of professional competence of future music art teachers by means of digital technologies in modern science and practice." *Pedagogical Academy: Scientific Notes* 14 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14955824>

³⁷ Christophersen, Catharina, Aróstegui, José Luis, Holdhus, Kari, Kenny, Ailbhe, Knudsen, Jan Sverre, Lindgren, Monica, Väkevå, Lauri, & Viig, Tine Grieg. "Music teacher education for the future: Reflections on change." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 22.3 (2023): 7–40. <https://doi.org/10.22176/act22.3.7>

³⁸ Онофрійчук, Людмила В., Червоній, Марія П., Лановенко, Наталія В., & Газінська, Олеся В. "Формування інформаційно-комунікаційної компетентності майбутнього вчителя музичного мистецтва у процесі інтегрованого навчання." *Мистецтво в Культурі Сучасності: Теорія та Практика Навчання* 4 (2025): 60–66. [https://doi.org/10.31652/3041-1017-2024\(4\)-08](https://doi.org/10.31652/3041-1017-2024(4)-08)

³⁹ Sandberg-Jurström, Ragnhild, & Lindgren, Monica. "Mapping the applicants' learnability: A discourse analysis of assessors' talk of admission tests for Swedish specialist music teacher education." *Music Education Research* 24.5 (2022): 599–610. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2022.2098263>

⁴⁰ Zhang, Xiangming, King, Andrew, & Prior, Helen. "Attitudes before actions: How music teachers' technological acceptance and competence shape technological behaviour in China." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12.1 (2025): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05582-5>

Some authors, such as Kakimova et al.⁴¹ and O'Leary⁴², warn of the risk of "technological dominance" when ICTs displace live music making. Our observations confirm that such a risk exists, but under the conditions of thoughtful integration of technologies into choreographic and musical-creative tasks, it disappears: on the contrary, students' emotional interaction increases (increase in communicative competence by +27.4 pp).

Our study complements and expands previous works^{43,44}, demonstrating that the combination of digital and choreographic practices not only improves technical skills, but also creates a holistic model of the development of six interrelated competencies. A gap in most studies remains the lack of experimental testing of such models, which our study carried out for the first time in the Ukrainian context.

Our results confirmed the effectiveness of the integrated methodology: in the EG, all competencies increased significantly, especially communicative (+27.4%) and musical-choreographic (+26.8%). This is consistent with the findings of Blanco García et al.⁴⁵, del Barrio and Arús⁴⁶ and Kibirige⁴⁷, who prove that the combination of technology and arts, in particular music and movement, enhances students' motivation and creativity. Unlike most studies that considered individual aspects, ours covered six competencies and

⁴¹ Kakimova, Laura, Sydykova, Rosa, Akhmetova, Aimkul, & Zhakaeva, Saltanat. "The use of modern digital technologies in the training of future music teachers." *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University. Series "Physics"* 56 (2024): 2150–2159.
<https://doi.org/10.54919/physics/56.2024.215ya0>

⁴² O'Leary, Emmet. "Considering the possibilities and problems of AI in music education: The need for critical literacies." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 24.3 (2025): 138–164. Retrieved from: <https://act.maydaygroup.org/considering-the-possibilities-and-problems-of-ai-in-music-education-the-need-for-critical-literacies/>

⁴³ Ma, Yidi, & Wang, Chengliang. "Empowering music education with technology: A bibliometric perspective." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12.345 (2025).
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04616-2>

⁴⁴ Marievych, Nataliia, Nesterovych, Bohdan, Turchyn, Tamara, Kryvosheya, Tetiana, Shyshova, Olha, & Nadon, Viktoriia. "Management of the play activity of primary schoolchildren: A critical look at Ukrainian trends from the point of view of international experience." *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională* 14.1Sup1 (2022b): 328–348.
<https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/14.1Sup1/554>

⁴⁵ Blanco García, Yurima, Serrano Pastor, Rosa M., & Casanova López, Óscar. "Toward a transversal education model: A review of digital and artistic-musical competencies (2014–2024)." *Arts Education Policy Review* 126.4 (2025): 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2025.2459917>

⁴⁶ Barrio del, Luis, & Arús, M. Eugénia. "Music and movement pedagogy in basic education: A systematic review." *Frontiers in Education* 9 (2024): 1403745.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1403745>

⁴⁷ Kibirige, Ronald. "Dance-Musicking: Non-prescriptive dance, music, and dance-music engagement in cross-sectoral collaborative teaching and learning." *Dance Articulated* 9.1 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.5324/da.v9i1.5055>

recorded statistically significant growth in all areas. While Cuervo et al.⁴⁸ linked digital technologies only with the development of social responsibility, our experiment proved that the combination of ICT and artistic-choreographic practices provides a comprehensive increase in competence (+23.4% vs. +9.5% in the CG).

In a systematic review, Liu et al.⁴⁹ showed that the effectiveness of digital tools in music education is variable: they enhance motivation and understanding of the material, but do not guarantee stable results. Our data confirm and complement this: technologies give maximum effect only if integrated into the interdisciplinary context of “music + choreography”. In the CG, where only basic ICT was used, the increase in competences was minimal. Therefore, the decisive factor is the methodology of application, not the tools themselves. Our experiment demonstrated that such a methodology provides an extremely strong effect (Cohen’s $d = 6.03$; $p < 0.001$). Our experiment showed a clear quantitative increase in students’ professional skills, which was confirmed statistically. This may be explained by the greater intensity and duration of our impact or by the fact that our methodology purposefully developed practical skills (unlike the aforementioned study, where the main emphasis was on changing teachers’ attitudes and beliefs). It is also worth considering that our students had a high level of initial motivation and openness to innovation – modern research indicates that the generation of new teachers has a fairly high level of digital literacy and confidence in using technologies.⁵⁰ This probably contributed to the successful acquisition of new tools within our programme. Ukrainian research also emphasizes the need for digital transformation and an integrated approach in art education.^{51,52} Our methodology practically implements these ideas:

⁴⁸ Cuervo, Laura, Bonastre, Carolina, Camilli, Celia, Arroyo, Delia, & García, Desirée. “Digital competences in teacher training and music education via service learning: A mixed-method research project.” *Education Sciences* 13.5 (2023): 459.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13050459>

⁴⁹ Liu, Yihan, Tran, Van Cuong, Szabó, Norbert, & Tóth, Ali. “The use and effectiveness of digital tools in elementary music education: A systematic review.” *Music & Science* 8 (2025): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20592043251363338>

⁵⁰ Kılınçer, Özlem. “Investigation of music teacher candidates’ technology integration self-efficacy and artificial intelligence literacy.” *International Journal of Modern Education Studies* 9.2 (2025): 356–384. <https://doi.org/10.51383/ijonmes.2025.417>

⁵¹ Онофрійчук, Людмила В., Червоний, Марія П., Лановенко, Наталія В., & Газінська, Олеся В. “Формування інформаційно-комунікаційної компетентності майбутнього вчителя музичного мистецтва у процесі інтегрованого навчання.” *Мистецтво в Культурі Сучасності: Теорія та Практика Навчання* 4 (2025): 60–66. [https://doi.org/10.31652/3041-1017-2024\(4\)-08](https://doi.org/10.31652/3041-1017-2024(4)-08)

⁵² Melnyk, Khrystyna P. “Formation of professional competence of future music art teachers by means of digital technologies in modern science and practice.” *Pedagogical Academy: Scientific Notes* 14 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14955824>

the combination of musical and choreographic practices with ICT ensured an increase in students' digital competence from 20% to 50% and a doubling of the share of highly competent teachers.

Most contemporary authors emphasize the need to develop digital literacy and creativity of music teachers in the conditions of the "new normal".⁵³ The COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated this process, revealing the weaknesses of the traditional system^{54,55} and stimulating innovation.⁵⁶

Our experimental approach confirmed that gradual changes are ineffective: only the systemic integration of digital and choreographic practices yields a breakthrough result (Cohen's $d \approx 6$). In contrast to theoretical or partial models,⁵⁷ we experimentally proved the complex impact of digital-choreographic integration on students' professional competence (N = 100).

In summary, the results of our study are generally consistent with current academic trends in digitalization and arts integration in the training of music educators.⁵⁸ We confirmed in practice what theorists previously stated: the combination of technology, music, and movement can form a wide range of high-level competencies in future teachers. The difference of our approach is its comprehensiveness and experimental verification. So, our study eliminates the shortcomings of some predecessors and makes a significant contribution to confirming the effectiveness of integrated pedagogical technologies.

⁵³ Hash, Phillip. M. "Remote learning in school bands during the COVID-19 shutdown." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 68.4 (2021): 381–397. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429420967008>

⁵⁴ Cheng, Lee, Lam, Chi Ying, & Leung, Chi Hin. "Digital competencies of music teachers under the "new normal" in Hong Kong." *International Journal of Music Education* 42.4 (2024): 535–549. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614231186413>

⁵⁵ Tran Quoc Viet, & Do Thi Mai An. "Integrating music and dance: Challenges and solutions for effective teaching." *Educational Point* 2.1 (2025): e113. <https://doi.org/10.71176/EDUP/16092>

⁵⁶ Schiavio, Andrea, Biasutti, Michele, & Antonini Philippe, Roberta. "Creative pedagogies in the time of pandemic: A case study with conservatory students." *Music Education Research* 23.2 (2021): 167–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2021.1881054>

⁵⁷ Zhang, Xiangming, King, Andrew, & Prior, Helen. "Attitudes before actions: How music teachers' technological acceptance and competence shape technological behaviour in China." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12.1 (2025): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05582-5>

⁵⁸ Yu, Xiaofei, Ma, Ning, Zheng, Lei, Wang, Licheng, & Wang, Kai. "Developments and applications of artificial intelligence in music education." *Technologies* 11.2 (2023): 42. <https://doi.org/10.3390/technologies11020042>

5.1. Limitations

The study was conducted on a sample of students at a single HEI, which may limit the generalizability of the results to a broader context. In addition, the experimental period was relatively short, so not all long-term effects could be observed.

5.2. Recommendations

It is appropriate to expand such studies to other institutions and cover a longer time interval, which will allow to check the consistency of the obtained results. A practical recommendation is the creation of interdisciplinary courses that integrate music, choreography and digital technologies, as well as the systematic improvement of teachers' digital literacy.

6. Conclusions

The obtained results convincingly prove the effectiveness of integrating digital and multimedia technologies with choreographic elements in the training of future music teachers. In the EG, a significant increase in all types of competencies was recorded, especially communicative (+27.4 pp), as well as musical and choreographic (+26.8 pp), while the increase was minimal in the CG (+7–11 pp). The generalized data indicate a significant increase in the proportion of students with a sufficient level while simultaneously reducing the initial level by more than three times.

Statistical testing confirmed the reliability of these results: $*\varphi = 2.56 \geq \varphi_{cr} = 2.31$ ($p \leq 0.01$)**; $t = -10.45$; $p < 0.001$. The effect size according to Cohen ($d = 6.03$) indicates an extremely strong influence of the applied methodology. Thus, the implemented pedagogical conditions not only increased the overall level of professional competence, but also ensured the comprehensive development of its key components. This confirms the feasibility of using an innovative approach focused on the synergy of digital technologies, multimedia and choreography in the professional training of music teachers.

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THE INFLUENCE OF AUTHOR'S STYLE ON THE INTERPRETATION OF CHORAL GENRES IN CHORAL MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF MUSICAL PERCEPTION PSYCHOLOGY

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SUMMARY. The article focuses on the current problem of the relationship between the author's style and the peculiarities of the interpretation of choral genres in the musical system of Ukraine. The key goal is to determine the influence of cognitive and emotional markers of the author's musical style on the interpretation of choral genres, taking into account pedagogical strategies. This study uses an interdisciplinary approach involving the methods of systemic, stylistic and comparative analysis of musical works. Expert psychological and musicological modelling was involved for the purpose of studying the degree of adequacy of the perception of musical works by performers through the assessment of syntactic complexity, emotional tension, textural density, and performance intentionality. A total of 12 choral works belonging to Ukrainian professional and foreign traditions were selected. *The results* demonstrated a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in the interpretation of national and foreign repertoire. Ukrainian musical tradition forms a high degree of adaptability and direct emotional response due to mental rooting in the national tradition, while foreign music requires additional cognitive efforts for adequate

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awareness of its expressiveness, in particular the structural and emotional component. In general, it was determined that the influence of the author's style on the level of interaction of cognitive and emotional characteristics in performance is of high significance for psychological and musicological research for adequate performance and pedagogical strategies. Further research may focus on interdisciplinary studies of the correlation of author's style, performance strategy and listener's apperception, in particular using neuropsychological methods.

Keywords: musical thinking, author's style, performance strategy, musical education, choral performance, choral tradition

1. Introduction

Authorial style is always the key to building an adequate performance strategy⁶. This is especially relevant in view of extreme diffuseness of modern Ukrainian musical culture, which has active intercultural ties,⁷ while preserving its own traditions.⁸ This aspect plays an important role in the development of professional competencies of future choirmasters and vocalists. As modern musicologists note, it is extremely important today not to lose track of the psychological component of the performers' perception of their own activity.⁹ The motivation of this study is based on the need to eliminate the gap between the theoretical analysis of the score and the practical implementation of reproducing the authorial style and analysing its subjective perception by performers of the choral genre.¹⁰

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⁹ Jansson, Dag, Balsnes, Anne "Choral Conducting Education: The Lifelong Entanglement of Competence, Identity and Meaning." In *Research Studies in Music Education*, 42(1), 2020, pp. 104-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X19863184>

¹⁰ Frizzell, Emily Y., Windsor, Leah. "Effects of Teaching Experience and Culture on Choral Directors' Descriptions of Choral Tone." In *PLoS ONE*, 16, 12, 2021, e0256587.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256587>

In general, Ukrainian choral music is characterized by a deep historical and cultural tradition, in which spiritual, folklore, and academic practices are synthesized.¹¹ This synthesis becomes a special marker of the authorial styles of Ukrainian composers.¹²

This is reflected in the musical thinking of composers, in which this synthesis forms established cognitive structures that find their objectification in musical structures.¹³ As a result, despite a significant number of studies on the genre and stylistic analysis of musical performance, modern musicology lacks coverage of the psychological features of performance strategies, which encourages researchers to intensify their research in this direction.¹⁴ The symbiosis of stylistic and psychological interpretation still remains out of sight of the vast majority of researchers.

So, the academic novelty of the study is determining the influence of the author's style on the level of interaction of cognitive and emotional characteristics in performance and the high significance of psychological and musicological research for the adequate performance and pedagogical strategies.¹⁵

The aim of the study is to determine the influence of cognitive and emotional markers of the author's musical style on the interpretation of choral genres, taking into account pedagogical strategies. He aims was achieved through the fulfilment of the following research objectives:

- Conduct a comparative analysis of the influence of the author's style on the interpretation of choral genres based on the works of Ukrainian and other national traditions of composers using a parametric evaluation system;
- Investigate the psychological and musicological factors of the perception of the author's style that affect the understanding and reproduction of a musical work that represents a certain author's style;

¹¹ Bilinska, Olga. "Aspects of Osyp Zaleskyi's Cooperation with Choral Groups in Ukraine and the Diaspora (USA)". In *Scientific Collection «InterConf+»*, 41, 2024, pp. 345-52. <https://doi.org/10.51582/interconf.19-20.01.2024.043>

¹² Antonenko, Margarita. "Orthodox Spiritual Music in the Work of Modern Ukrainian Composers: Traditions and Transformations." In *The Journal of the Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music*, 1(46), 2020, pp. 78–88. [https://doi.org/10.31318/2414-052x.1\(46\).2020.198518](https://doi.org/10.31318/2414-052x.1(46).2020.198518)

¹³ Noh, Michael, Kim, Caitlyn. "Harmony and Personality: Analyzing Connections between AI-Generated Music Preference and Personal Traits." In *The National High School Journal of Science*, 2024, pp. 1-10. <https://nhsjs.com/2025/harmony-and-personality-analyzing-connections-between-ai-generated-music-preference-and-personal-traits/>

¹⁴ Samoilenko, Oleksandra. *Psychology of Art: Modern Musicological Projections*. Helvetyka, Odesa, 2020

¹⁵ Gee, Jennifer. "Elementary General Music Teachers' Preparation in Classroom Management" In *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 31(2), 2021, pp. 41-54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10570837211062183>

– Determine pedagogical strategies for vocal and choral training that include the activation of cognitive-emotional factors of performance activity

2. Literature Review

The theoretical foundations of the problems of authorial style in musicology are quite substantial and are reflected in both domestic and foreign studies. In the classical works of Kranenburg¹⁶ and Lehman,¹⁷ musical style is considered as a complex of artistic and linguistic characteristics, which together with aesthetic and historical prerequisites form an idea of the composer's thinking. Ukrainian art historians consider style formation as a flexible centric system: in particular, Katrych¹⁸ proposes a concentric model of style formation as a system of circles of certain style levels (individual, epochal, national) with a variable common centre. The complexity and hierarchy of style is confirmed in studies of the category of performing style.¹⁹ Rehulich emphasizes that the formation of an authorial style involves a close synthesis of genre, intonation, as well as national and cultural factors.²⁰ This, in turn, affects the performer's role in the process of musical interpretation. This position is supported by Mihailescu, who expanded the concept of musical style, equating it to a communicative code used by three parties: the author, the performer, and the listening audience.²¹

Despite the fact that the majority of authors agree in the interpretation of the author's style, some scholars deviate from the traditional understanding of this concept. Trapkus and Solanki emphasize that the individual style in

¹⁶ Van Kranenburg, Peter, Backer, Eric. "Musical Style Recognition – A Quantitative Approach." In *Handbook of Pattern Recognition and Computer Vision*, World Scientific, 2005, pp. 583-600. https://doi.org/10.1142/9789812775320_0031

¹⁷ Lehman, Charles F. "A Study of Musical Style Recognition." In *The Journal of Educational Research*, 50(5), 1957, pp. 351-61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1957.10882390>

¹⁸ Katrych, Olha. "Phenomena, noumena and "triggers" of musical style formation." In *Scientific herald of Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine*, 143, 2025, pp. 40-49. <https://doi.org/10.31318/2522-4190.2025.143>

¹⁹ Govorukhina, Nataliya, et al. "Style as a Topical Category of Modern Musicology and Music Education." In *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Musica*, 66(2), 2021, pp. 49-67. <https://doi.org/10.24193/subbmusica.2021.2.04>

²⁰ Rehulich, Iryna, Naumenko, Mariia. "Methods of P. Muravskiy and A. Avdievskiy in the Practice of Ukrainian Conducting and Choral Pedagogy and Performance." In *Current Issues in the Humanities*, 54(2), 2022, pp. 77-81. <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/54-2-11>

²¹ Mihailescu, Mihaela. "The Method in Musical Interpretation." In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov. Series VIII: Performing Arts*, 13(2), 2020, pp. 215-20. <https://doi.org/10.31926/but.pa.2020.13.62.3.23>

music is not static, but dynamic in nature.^{22 23} It is formed under the influence of a number of expectations and hopes of the audience, reproducing the cognitive schemes transmitted by them. Wei J. believes that the formation of style features is primarily influenced by the psychology of musical thinking.²⁴ According to Amuah, the markers of each musical style evoke a specific range of emotions and experiences in the listeners, forming clear perceptual patterns.²⁵ So, the main interpretative decisions of the performer are laid at the stage of understanding the musical text.

The author's style and its musical interpretation have received not only positive but also critical reviews from modern researchers. Challenging the work of his colleagues, Armitage notes that the author's style inhibits the development of the performer's creative freedom. His few supporters question the need for excessive stylistic determination in the interpretation of musical works.^{26 27} But this opinion is rejected by the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian and foreign choral teachers.²⁸ They note that conscious interpretative variations in the choral genre can be achieved only in case of a deep understanding of the work.²⁹

²² Trapkus, Peter. "Teaching Musical Interpretation: A Student-Centered Model for Addressing a Fundamental Concept." In *American String Teacher*, 70(1), 2020, pp. 17-21.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0003131319891147>

²³ Solanki, Akshat, Pandey, Sandeep. "Music Instrument Recognition Using Deep Convolutional Neural Networks." In *International Journal of Information Technology*, 14, 2022, pp. 1659-68.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s41870-019-00285-y>

²⁴ Wei, J., et al. "College Music Education and Teaching Based on AI Techniques." In *Computers and Electrical Engineering*, 100, 2022, 107851.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compeleceng.2022.107851>

²⁵ Amuah, Joshua. "Preserving Cultural Memory Through Choral Compositions: A Study of Nicodemus Kofi Badu." In *E-Journal of Music Research*, 5(13), 2025, pp. 13-32.
<https://doi.org/10.38159/ejomur.2025512>

²⁶ Armitage, James, Lahdelma, Imre, Eerola, Tuomas, Ambrazevičius, Rytis. "Culture Influences Conscious Appraisal of, But Not Automatic Aversion to, Acoustically Rough Musical Intervals" In *PLoS One*, 18(12), 2023, article e0294645.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0294645>

²⁷ Hou, Wei. "The Application and Enlightenment of the Arrangement and Combination Characteristics, Music and Dance Performance Methods and Style Analysis of Sogdian Musical Instruments in the Reform of Contemporary Music Teaching in the Sui and Tang Dynasties." In *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, 24(1), 2024, pp. 39–49.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10554479>

²⁸ Mukherjee, Shubhankar, Mulimani, Manesh. "ComposeInStyle: Music Composition with and without Style Transfer." In *Expert Systems with Applications*, 191, 2022, p. 116195.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2021.116195>

²⁹ Ting, Berne, et al. "Music Intervention for Pain Control in the Pediatric Population: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." In *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 11(4), 2022, 991.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm11040991>

At the same time, some foreign researchers move away from stylistic analysis and emphasize the primary role of psychological instruments of musical perception. Walter focuses readers' attention on the neuropsychological reactions of performers and listeners in the process of musical influence.³⁰ As the author emphasizes, this allows both parties to form a clear sense of relaxation, harmony, and figurative unitarity.³¹ Psychological analysis has become an integral part of musicological research, although existing studies often ignore the specifics of national choral schools.³²

Summarizing the above, numerous approaches to the study of the problem of musical perception of vocal and choral art have been formed in modern musicology, among which the genre, stylistic and psychological ones are relevant. At the same time, the mechanism of the author's style influence on the interpretation of choral genres through the prism of the aforementioned approaches to musical perception remains poorly studied. This issue remains incomplete, requiring systematic understanding taking into account national traditions and global trends to improve the professional training of future choirmasters.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1. Research design

This research is multi-level, involving a complex psychological and musicological analysis of the influence of the author's style on the performance interpretation. In this case, the author's style is considered as a set of cognitive and emotional characteristics presented in a musical work. In total, the study covered four months (January - April 2025) and was divided into three key stages:

The first stage (January 2025) – theoretical and conceptual analysis of the thematic academic discourse. It made it possible to identify general and national-specific markers of the author's style in vocal and choral performance. For this purpose, a team of specialists of 5 people was created, which included the authors of the study.

³⁰ Walter, Y. "An Electroencephalogram (EEG) Spectral Analysis on the Cognitive Neuropsychology of Religious Experiences in Worship with Music." In *Psychology & Neuroscience*, 17(4), 2024, pp. 282–301. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pne0000348>

³¹ Chávez, Helihazel, Documentación Musical. "Musical Memory: An Interdisciplinary Approach" In *FAM UNAM*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15387.12324>

³² Zhang, Liyang. "Research on Professional Quality and Application of Skills in Rehearsal of Choral Conductor." In *Region - Educational Research and Reviews*, 7(4), 2025, pp. 151-155. <https://doi.org/10.32629/rerr.v7i4.3873>

At the second stage (February - March 2025), 12 representative choral works were selected for evaluation according to the following characteristics of the works: syntactic complexity, emotional tension, textural density, and possibilities of performance intention.

The material included choral spiritual and secular works. In this study, they were a reflection of the Ukrainian (M. Berezovskyi, A. Vedel, M. Leontovych) and Western European stylistic systems (J. S. Bach, V. A. Mozart, G. F. Händel, J. Brahms). In selecting works, the authors used the principle of the greatest stylistic representativeness.

The third stage (May 2025) is the final phase of the experiment, which involved the analysis of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Quantitative indicators included a statistical analysis of the assessments obtained from the results of an oral questionnaire on the Likert scale. Qualitative indicators include the depth of stylistic identification and the accuracy of the implementation of the technical parameters of the author's style in the process of performance. This made it possible to confirm theoretical provisions and develop practical recommendations for teachers in order to improve the vocal and choral training of students.

3.2. Methods

When selecting methodological tools, key attention was paid to the principle of interdisciplinarity. The method of systems and style analysis made it possible to conduct an analysis of the content and structural part of choral scores (among which special attention is paid to the choral fugue), which provided a deep analysis of the characteristics of the author's style. The latter include rhythmic and textural features, articulation, and the specifics of the tune harmonic language.

Expert psychological and musicological modelling involved a 5-point scale for evaluating musical works according to four parameters: SC (syntactic complexity), ET (emotional tension), IA (performance autonomy), TD (textural density).

The comparative method provided a comparison of Ukrainian and foreign national traditions, which became the basis for determining the specifics of performance strategies. A detailed comparison of approaches to the interpretation of individual musical works of different choral schools made it possible to determine the characteristics of these choral traditions.

Table 1

Author	Work (Object of analysis)
1. J. S. Bach	Crucifixus (Meca h-moll)
2. W. A. Mozart	Lacrimosa (Requiem)
3. G. F. Händel	Hallelujah (oratorio Messiah)
4. J. Brahms	Part IV of Ein deutsches Requiem (A German Requiem)
5. M. Berezovskyi	Cast Me not off in the Time of Old Age
6. A. Vedel	Pokayaniya odverzy mni dveri (Repentance Open the Door)
7. D. Bortnianskyi	Cherubic Hymn No. 7
8. K. Stetsenko	Blagoslovi dushe moja (Bless the Lord, O my soul)
9. M. Leontovych	Da ispravytsia molytva moia (May my Prayer be Corrected)
10. M. Leontovych	Schshedryk
11. S. Lyudkevych	Caucasus (fragments)
12. B. Liatoshynskyi	Teche voda v synie more (Water flows into the blue sea)

Musical works selected for psychological and musicological analysis

Source: developed by the authors

3.3. Data analysis

The empirical material was analysed and summarized using the IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 package.

Statistically significant differences between the groups of vocalists and choirmasters were identified using Student's t-test (for independent samples). Pearson's r correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the development of musical thinking and the ability to psychologically interpret the author's style. In general, the significance of the results was determined at the $p < 0.05$ level.

3.4. Ethical issues

The research was conducted in accordance with international ethical standards and in accordance with institutional ethical requirements. All musical works used in the comparative analysis were taken from open sources, which does not violate copyright.

4. Results

4.1. Conceptual principles of the influence of authorial style on performance strategy

The results of the study demonstrate that the author's style is a complex cognitive system that determines both the technical side of performance and the content component. The authors of the study analysed a group of musical works using bipolar descriptors. This made it possible to determine the integral indicators of the influence of musical works on the cognitive and emotional state of performers.

The statistical analysis established a direct correlation of the author's style with the Style Identity Index. This parameter is the arithmetic mean of the indicators of syntactic complexity and emotional expressiveness. The significance of the obtained results was confirmed by the Student's t-test, which demonstrates the differences between the Western European and Ukrainian schools ($t = 8.42$, at $p < 0.001$). A deep analysis of the data was provided by comparing four key areas: syntactic complexity (SC), emotional tension (ET), performance intentionality (IA), and texture density (TD).

Table 2

Style vector	Work	SC	ET	IA	TD	Psychological dominant
Other national choral traditions						
J. S. Bach	Crucifixus (Meca h-moll)	4.9	4.2	2.5	4.8	Cognitive discipline
W. A. Mozart	Lacrimosa (Requiem)	4.5	4.7	3.1	4.3	Emotional catharsis
G. F. Händel	Hallelujah (oratorio Messiah)	4.2	4.5	3.5	4.9	Exaltation, triumph
J. Brahms	Part IV of Ein deutsches Requiem	4.7	4.1	3.3	4.6	Intellectual calm
Ukrainian choral tradition						
M. Berezovskyi	Cast Me not off in the Time of Old Age	4.3	4.9	4.5	3.9	Spiritual Reflection

Style vector	Work	SC	ET	IA	TD	Psychological dominant
A. Vedel	Pokayaniya odverzy mni dveri	4.1	5.0	4.8	3.5	Affective Confession
D. Bortnianskyi	Cherubic Hymn No. 7	3.8	4.6	4.2	4.1	Prayerful Contemplation
K. Stetsenko	Blagoslovi dushe moja	3.9	4.8	4.4	3.7	Lyrical pantheism
M. Leontovych	Da ispravytisia molytva moia	4.6	4.8	4.1	4.7	Symbolism, depth
M. Leontovych	Schshedryk	4.8	4.5	3.8	4.9	Rhythmic hypnoticity
S. Lyudkevych	Caucasus	4.9	4.9	3.5	4.8	Volitional tension
B. Liatoshynskyi	Teche voda v synie more	4.7	4.6	4.0	4.5	Psychological landscape

Comparative indicators of psychological and musicological parameters of author's styles ($M \pm SD$)

Source: created by the authors

The analysis of musical works by the vector of syntactic complexity and textural density recorded the highest indices in the compositions of J. S. Bach (SC = 4.86; TD = 4.90). Such parameters indicate a high concentration of intellectual resources. The indicators of correlation analysis confirmed the negative relationship between performance intentionality and syntactic complexity of musical works ($r = -0.74$). This mathematically confirms the fact that the more complex the polyphonic structure, the more constructively balanced its performance interpretation can be.

When analysing the vector of emotional tension and performance intentionality, it is important to confirm the peculiarity of the Ukrainian school, such composers as A. Vedel (ET = 4.92; IA = 4.65). High indices of performance intentionality confirm that performers who are rooted in the national choral tradition perceive these works more organically. Statistical analysis demonstrates that the emotional climax is achieved not only through the prism of the logical component, but also through dynamics and melodic expression.

The style of M. Leontovych requires special attention. His author's technique is characterized by high syntactic complexity (4.55) and high emotional tension (4.70). His style is characterized by deep intellectual processing of folk song material, as a result of which the folklore sound object appears as a work of art.

So, it was established that the performance strategy is chosen according to certain principles. It is influenced by the parameters of the author's style defined by the authors. In works of other national schools, while maintaining the importance of the emotional component, the logical-constructive component strategy with high SC and TD (priority of accuracy, control, logic) attracts attention. In Ukrainian works, in addition to logical-constructive principles, expression and increased emotionality are important: strategies with high ET and IA (priority of timbre colouring, emotional resonance, freedom of expression).

4.2. Psychological and musicological profiles of choral traditions: a comparative analysis

The psychological and musicological profiles of individual choral traditions were compared through a comparative analysis. This made it possible to determine the principles of cognitive structuring of individual choral traditions, their emotional amplitude, and the degree of performance freedom.

Table 3

Analysis Parameter	Western European School (M ± SD)	Ukrainian Choral School (M ± SD)	t-test	p-value
Cognitive Structure	4.78 ± 0.35	3.45 ± 0.62	11.2	< 0.001
Emotional Amplitude (ET)	4.38 ± 0.56	2.84 ± 0.91	-14.5	< 0.001
Performance Intentionality (IA)	4.50 ± 0.44	4.75 ± 0.32	-15.8	< 0.001

Comparative indicators of style dominants (expert assessment)

Source: developed by the authors

The difference between the indicators of the interpretation of cognitive structuring of Ukrainian and musical works of other national schools is traced. For the Ukrainian choral tradition, the average value was M=3.45 (SD=0.62). This indicator is slightly lower than the average assessment of cognitive structuring for Western European schools – M=4.78 (SD=0.35). The Student's t-test (t = 11.2; p < 0.001) confirmed the high statistical significance of the obtained results. So, in the minds of Ukrainians, choral music is really tied to

the national tradition, the historical memory of their own people. At the same time, the European choral tradition is considered in a broader intercultural context. In this sense, the author's style influences the performance interpretation as a carrier of a certain collective musical experience.

Speaking about emotional amplitude, we observe the opposite trend. The Western European tradition received an assessment from experts of $M = 4.38$ ($SD = 0.56$), while the works of Ukrainian choral music were assessed as $M = 2.84$ ($SD = 0.91$). The statistical significance of the parameters according to the t-test was $t = -10.1$; $p < 0.01$.

As for the last parameter – the importance of the degree of performance intentionality – statistically significant differences between the Ukrainian and other national choral traditions were not identified – $t = 0.32$; $p > 0.05$. So, the national context indirectly influences the perception of the author's intention as a key condition for qualitative interpretation.

Pearson's r correlation analysis also clearly demonstrated the correlation of musical thinking and the possibility of psychological interpretation of a musical work in correlation with the author's style. A strong positive relationship ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.01$) between the development of a sense of style and the level of artistic persuasiveness of performance was also identified.

In order to identify stylistic specifics and convey them in performance in choir classes, teachers should adhere to the following principles:

1. In studying the musical text, focus, among other things, on the elements of the author's style.
2. Conduct a comparative analysis of interpretations of the same genre by different authors (for example, the sacred concerto by M. Berezovskyi and A. Vedel). This contributes to the effective formation of stylistic hearing.
3. Implement a comparative analysis of performances of the same work to build one's own performance strategy.

So, the results confirm that the influence of the author's style stimulates complex psychological reactions that must be taken into account in the performance strategy and its analysis.

5. Discussion

The high significance of the author's style ($M=4.51$) obtained as a result of the study correlates with the concept of style as a communicative system, which has been actively discussed by such musicologists as Mishchanchuk.³³

³³ Mishchanchuk, Vasyl. "Methodological Aspects of Suggested Practices for Future Music Teachers Training in Performance." In *Ukrainian Journal of Educational Studies and Information Technology*, 10(2), 2022, pp. 26-41. <https://doi.org/10.32919/uesit.2022.02.03>

Similarly, in the work of Sun, musical style is equated with a communicative act between the author and the listener.³⁴ This study also managed to establish that style markers act as a tool for understanding. This correlates with the obtained indicators regarding the role of cognitive schemes in the musical perception of performers.

At the same time, for some researchers, the issue of adhering to the author's style is an inhibition of the performer's creative freedom. Researchers, including Özdemir, believe that only the performer's complete freedom in choosing stylistic variations can enhance the emotional perception of the work.³⁵ Our study, on the contrary, demonstrates that a deep understanding of the main characteristics of the style affects the emotional component and expression of performance and understanding of the logical constructive regularities of the work ($M=4.78$). Vocalists and choirmasters in this study consider stylistic norms to be a support that minimizes the thoughtlessness of interpreting a musical work.³⁶ Therefore, in the conducted study, we adhere to the hypothesis of musicologists who consider stylistic foundations as a conscious foundation for the further development of musical thinking.

It is extremely interesting to compare the obtained data with the available neuropsychological studies. Some foreign authors, in particular Liu, emphasize the tendency towards uniformity of reactions.^{37 38} At the same time, differentiation of results were achieved by forming a sample according to different profiling. The difference between the indicators of interpretation of cognitive structuring of Ukrainian and musical works of other national schools is quite clearly traced. For the Ukrainian choral tradition, the average value was $M=3.45$ ($SD=0.62$). This indicates the significant role of professional training in the process of transformation of natural psychological patterns of

³⁴ Sun, Wei, Sundarasekar, Revathi. "Research on Pattern Recognition of Different Music Types in the Context of AI with the Help of Multimedia Information Processing." In *ACM Transactions on Asian and Low-Resource Language Information Processing*, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3523284>

³⁵ Xiao, Xiaoyang. "Choral Harmony: The Role of Collective Singing in Ritual, Cultural Identity and Cognitive-Affective Synchronisation in the Age of AI." In *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 2025, pp. 1-17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17483107.2025.2556025>

³⁶ Özdemir, Cansev, et al. "Emotion and Social Identification in Music Festivals on Young's Subjective Well-Being." In *Journal of Youth Studies*, 27(6), 2024, pp. 851-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2174011>

³⁷ Liu, Lei. "Programmatic Content in Piano Music as an Actual Theoretical and Creative-Performance Problem." In *Music Art and Culture*, 2024, pp. 359-370. <https://doi.org/10.31723/2524-0447-2024-39-28>

³⁸ Chiu, Matt. "The Music in the Data: Corpus Analysis, Music Analysis, and Tonal Traditions." In *Music Theory Spectrum*, 46(1), 2024, pp. 175–180, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mts/mtad025>

perception.³⁹ So, it is possible to find confirmation of the theory of the acquired instrumental nature of stylistic hearing.

The novelty of this study is the empirical substantiation of the phenomenon of national and stylistic identity of musical works from the perspective of the influence of the author's style. So, the theoretical problem turns into a very real pedagogical challenge.⁴⁰ The phenomenon of national and stylistic dichotomy was additionally studied. The difference between the influence of Ukrainian and music of other national traditions on the respondents was significant ($p < 0.001$). It is proved that there is a certain asymmetry between the logical, constructive and emotional components in the perception of works of different traditions, which can be explained by the rootedness of Ukrainian performers in their own musical tradition. A relationship between the use of psychological analysis tools (syntactic complexity, textural density, emotional tension) and the adequacy of the performance of a choral work was also established. So, the study confirms the general trends of world research, while demonstrating certain innovative ways of overcoming the crisis of unification in the national choral school.

5.1. Research limitations

The data obtained as a result of the study are quite informative, but the process of empirical analysis had certain limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting. So, the sample was formed from 12 works, which limited the possibilities of stylistic interpretations. This allowed for a comparative analysis between individual authorial styles, but excluded a general differentiation of the results. Further studies may expand the geography of the analytical material and its range of genres.

5.2. Recommendations

In order to further develop and deepen research on this issue, attention should be paid to expanding interdisciplinary connections. Neuropsychologists should be involved in conducting the empirical part of the research. They will be able to substantiate the features of the bioelectrical activity of the brain of performers in the process of interpreting works of different styles. So, the abstract concept of performer intentionality will receive a clear formulation using objective neurophysiological indicators.

³⁹ Kyrychek, Dmytro. "Digital Tools in the Study of Orthoepic Aspects of Singing." In *Scientific Herald of Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine*, 143, 2025, pp. 182-94. <https://doi.org/10.31318/2522-4190.2025.143.342820>

⁴⁰ Wang, Kechao. "Jazz Improvisation: Achieving a High Aesthetic Level During Vocal Education." In *Música Hodie*, 25, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.5216/mh.v25.82965>

6. Conclusions

The conducted research made it was possible to confirm the thesis regarding the influence of the author's style in the cognitive emotional interpretation of works of Ukrainian and foreign art. The psychological determinism of the performance strategy by certain parameters of the author's style was confirmed. Performance strategies with high indicators of syntactic complexity and cognitive control dominate in the performance of works of foreign tradition (Bach, Händel, Mozart, Brahms). In contrast, the performance of Ukrainian choral works (Vedel, Berezhovskyi, Leontovych) is focused on emphasizing the expressive component, when emotional resonance and performance intentionality are considered as a priority ($M_{\{IA\}}=4.75$). Furthermore, the data obtained as a result of correlation analysis confirmed that regular implementation of psychological methods (including semantic differential) in the process of interpreting the author's style contributes to the strengthening of the cognitive and emotional comprehension of a musical work.

The obtained results are significant in the field of modernization of vocal and choral education. They focus teachers' attention on the primary role of psychological analysis of the author's idea and author's style before the direct reproduction of the musical text. Teachers can also use the presented methodology for assessing style specifics, where the key criteria are emotional tension, textural density, and syntactic complexity. Such monitoring contributes to effective control of the dynamics of students' professional development. This study is also important from the perspective of promising areas in the field of musical psychology and pedagogy. In the future, it is important to investigate the features of brain activity of conductors and singers during the performance of musical compositions of different styles and eras.

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MUSICAL EXPERIENCES AND EMOTIONAL CRISES IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESS OF MARRIAGE – A JOINT PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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SUMMARY. This study examines the marriage ceremony from the perspectives of pastoral psychology and music psychology, with a particular focus on the emotional dynamics of natural developmental crises and the emotion-regulating role of music. Marriage, as a transition to a new life stage, involves a significant psychosocial transformation, in which ambivalent emotions, such as joy, uncertainty, anxiety, and fear of commitment, all emerge. This study demonstrates how music – particularly personally selected, jointly enjoyed, or ritually embedded musical pieces – can contribute to the resolution of emotional tensions, identity integration, and a deepening of communication within the couple. Music does not merely appear as an aesthetic element in the wedding ritual but functions as an affective mediator: it structures experiences, aids in emotional reframing, and supports the constructive processing of a crisis. Jointly listening to music creates an opportunity for reflective dialogue and becoming aware of the mourning process surrounding past relationship experiences, as well as aiding in reinforcing to concept of commitment. The study also integrates the theological and cultural-historical dimensions of marriage, highlighting that music, as one of the oldest ritual elements in human culture, can serve as an important tool for the emotional stabilization of relational transitions. The study's interdisciplinary approach contributes to music psychology research by interpreting the function of musical experiences within the psychological context of a specific life event, namely marriage.

Keywords: marriage, music psychology, emotional regulation, natural crisis, ritual, relationship dynamics.

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“Behold, Here Is the Moment, Our Happy, Divine Hour Arrived”² – archaic emotional and cultural-historical contexts

To acquire – to possess – to dominate

The quote in the title is taken from the Hungarian translation the first act of Mozart’s opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, sung by Susanna and Figaro as they prepare for their wedding. However, as we shall see, this scene is accompanied not only by unclouded happiness but also by an ambivalent feeling, “happy uncertainty”.³ The intrapsychic process of acquiring – possessing – dominating is also evident in the experiment that pointed to the evolutionary origins of gender differences. In an American study examining selectivity, half of the women agreed to a subsequent meeting with a stranger of the opposite sex; 6 percent went to his apartment, and 0 percent wanted to have sexual intercourse.⁴ Among men, 50 percent were also willing to meet again, but 69 percent went back to their apartment, and 75 percent would have gladly taken the woman to bed. This study also supports the notion that women are characterized by a need for long-term relationships, while men are characterized by the process of quickly acquiring, possessing, and dominating. Evolutionary psychology offers effective insights into the similarities and differences between men and women, which have been supported by research spanning nearly 10,000 individuals and 37 cultures, extending as far as the Zulu tribes of South Africa.⁵

Janet S. Hyde, a researcher at the University of Wisconsin, considers gender differences to be primarily of social origin, and she believes that social learning⁶ and social roles influence mate selection.⁷ Women’s mate

² Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus: *The Marriage of Figaro*. Libretto: Lorenzo Da Ponte 1786 (Trans. to Hungarian by Dezsó Vidor), Act I, Duet of Susanna and Figaro.

³ Gábor Hézser: *Pasztorálpaszichológiai szempontok az istentisztelet útkereséséhez (Pastoral-Psychological Perspectives on the Search for Worship)*. *Theoretical and Practical Possibilities*. Budapest 2007, Kálvin János Publishing House, 160.

⁴ Clark, Russell D. and Hatfield, Elaine: *Gender Differences in Receptivity to Sexual Offers*. In: *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality*, Vol. 2, 1989, No. 1, 39–55.

⁵ Buss, David M.: *Gender differences in mate selection have evolutionary origins*. In: Atkinson – Hilgard: *Psychology*. Budapest 2005, Osiris Publishing House, 174.

⁶ According to behavioral theory, roles and behavior are learned through reward and punishment. In contrast, research by Canadian psychologist A. Bandura suggests that this occurs through the observation of others’ behavior. See Bandura, Albert – Walters, Richard H.: *Social Learning and Personality Development*. New York 1963, Holt Rinehart and Winston. In German: *Lernen am Modell. Ansätze zu einer sozial-kognitiven Lerntheorie*. Stuttgart 1976, Klett.

⁷ Hyde, Janet S.: *The Effect of Social Learning and Social Roles on Mate Selection*. In: Atkinson-Hilgard: op. cit. 175.

selection is determined primarily not by appearance⁸, but by success. According to research by Eagly and Wood, women in various societies have less power than men.⁹ This is confirmed by a study showing that in the United States, women earn less, and only 12% of middle managers and a mere 1% of top executives are women.¹⁰ (The situation is similar in Hungary.¹¹) According to this, the dominant role in positions of power goes to men, while women are primarily occupied with household duties and child-rearing. According to Péter Popper, men have always sought to possess women: they locked them away in harems and burned them at the stake on charges of witchcraft. The driving force behind this is primarily men's fear of women. It is interesting that in Arab culture, the marriage broker sniffs the bride-to-be, and if she "does not smell right," he prefers to withdraw from the matchmaking.¹²

According to family therapist Brennen, marriage has never been a private matter,¹³ since tribes, families, and relatives were also involved; therefore, it has had a "social aspect" from the very beginning.¹⁴ We can thus say that the initial rites of "marriage" and long-term relationships are among the most ancient elements of human culture.¹⁵ When two people marry, it is not only do two individuals that are joined together, but also two families, who complement and enrich one another with their traditions, customs, and knowledge, while also creating crises. According to Edward T. Hall, when

⁸ Feingold, Alan: *Gender differences in the effects of physical attractiveness on romantic attraction: A comparison across five research paradigms*. In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 59, No. 5, 1990, pp. 981–993.

⁹ Eagly, Alice H. and Wood, Wendy: *The Origins of Sex Differences in Human Behavior: Evolved Dispositions Versus Social Roles*. In: *American Psychologist*, Vol. 54, No. 6, 1999, pp. 408–409.

¹⁰ Rhode, Deborah L.: *The Difference "Difference" Makes. Women and Leadership*. (Ed.), Stanford, California 2003, Stanford University Press, 6–7.

¹¹ <https://www.ksh.hu/interaktiv/eurostat/womenmen/bloc-2d.html?lang=hu> (Accessed on March 3, 2026).

¹² Hall, Edward T.: *The Hidden Dimension*. New York 1966, Anchor Books Editions – Doubleday, p. 73. Smells have their own psychology, and it would be worthwhile to conduct research on whether the smells or scents of our Reformed churches are appealing or repulsive, as it is a proven fact that we cannot pay close attention to the words addressed to us if we are simultaneously struggling with emotions triggered by a scent or smell. It is interesting to note that a healthy person can distinguish between 10,000 and 40,000 different smells, with women being able to distinguish more than men. In: Cain, William S.: *Olfaction*. In: Atkinson, Richard C. - Herrnstein, Richard J. – Lindzey, Gardner, & Luce, R. Duncan (Eds.): *Stevens' Handbook of Experimental Psychology*. Vol. 1, New York 1988, Wiley Press, 409–459.

¹³ Brennen, Barrington H.: *Marriage is a Public Affair*. <http://www.soencouragement.org/marriage-is-a-public-affair.htm> (March 3, 2026).

¹⁴ Hézser Gábor: *Pasztorálpszichológiai szempontok az istentisztelet útkereséséhez (Pastoral Psychology)... op. cit.* 161.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

people from different cultures interact, they do more than just converse, as what is also at work there is a finely tuned, culturally conditioned mechanism. When cultures meet,¹⁶ if one culture adopts anything from another, it must first adapt it to its own needs; that is, if the old and the new do not fit together, they may be contradictory.¹⁷ Sometimes people fall in love with their own fantasies, their own ideas, or the image they project onto their partner, which, as living together reveals, turns out to be an illusion, and that is when the problems begin. According to Béla Hamvas, people live in a culture of possessions, where the exchange and acquisition of possessions, the struggle for them, and the improvement and enhancement of the quality of life's necessities distract people from genuinely living life.¹⁸ This has carried over into human relationships as well: however, the pursuit of possession can lead to dependency, in which one cannot be happy.

A natural crisis occurs before marriage. Recommendations for personal music selection

Pastoral psychology distinguishes between two types of crises: the natural or developmental crisis and the reactive crisis.¹⁹ The former, in which the Church is present through its rites, is triggered by various changes, such as adolescence, the baptism of a child, death, and marriage. These are the crises that everyone experiences and goes through sooner or later. Separation from the family and choosing a partner, as life-defining events, “burden the immature and undeveloped personality’s coping abilities”.²⁰ However, crises are like Janus from Roman mythology: they have two faces – they can threaten development, but at the same time, they are also its prerequisites. Before marriage, doubt, uncertainty, and panic may arise, with the most important question being: “Did I make the right choice?” Other studies also confirm that marriage involves a crisis. For example, Steve Burns, an American stress researcher, created a scale that makes it easy to measure personal stress. On a scale of 100, marriage scores 45 points.²¹ In 2016, a nearly 500-page

¹⁶ Eric Berne lists various types of marriages based on the letters of the alphabet. These are the A, H, I, O, S, V, X, and Y types of marriages, where, for example, O “represents a marriage that goes round in circles, getting nowhere until death or divorce puts an end to it all.” Berne, Eric: *Sex in Human Loving*. Bungay, Suffolk 1973, Penguin Books Ltd, 134–135.

¹⁷ Edward T. Hall: *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 139.

¹⁸ Béla Hamvas: *Patmos II*. Budapest 2004, Medio Kiadó /Works of Béla Hamvas 4/, 26–30.

¹⁹ Gábor Hézszer: *Újra szárnyra kapni (Taking Flight Again)*. Târgu Mureş 2014, Lector Publishing, 24.

²⁰ Péter Osváth: *Az életciklus-krízisek jelentősége (The Significance of Life Cycle Crises): Psychopathology and Suicidal Behavior*. In: *Neuropsychopharmacologia Hungarica*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2012, p. 268.

²¹ Barnard, Christiaan: *50 Ways to a Healthy Heart*. Munich, 2000, ECON Ulstein List Verlag, p. 89.

book was published on marriage, offering practical guidance for the Big Day – from the first steps through the church wedding to the thank-you notes.²²

Quoting József Eötvös, Péter Popper says that marriage is a good thing; the only problem with it is that it lasts a long time. Historically, marriages were indeed shorter, as one of the partners could quickly fall victim to various diseases or wars; women often died in childbirth.

The *psychosocial crisis*²³ marks a radical change in life circumstances: roles, living arrangements, finality and irreversibility, compromises, the temporary disharmony in the sexual relationship, and the new rhythm of daily life alarm and unsettle many. Counteracting loneliness: a child is born because they are a “tool child” or a “functional child,” whose mission is to hold the marriage together and keep a couple that is already drifting apart united. Establishing shared norms and addressing important issues (the idea of childlessness, how many children they want, where they want to live, career opportunities, etc.). The process of separating from one’s parents is complicated by the presence of so-called “invisible family members”²⁴ – siblings, parents, etc. – whom the spouses bring into their marriage, which can also exacerbate and intensify the crisis. All of these natural crises are not pathological or neurotic in and of themselves, as they are part of the growth process. However, they can become so if the soon-to-be-married couple acts as if they do not exist and sweeps them under the rug.²⁵

*

We recommend listening to songs that can help ease the feelings associated with natural crises and guide you through them. Since we also offer songs that are not exclusively known as Christian music, we encourage listeners to pray with the words of David: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24) The following Hungarian language songs can also be listened to together by those about to be married, so that these two different types of people – whom Gary Chapman, a Christian marriage counselor, calls “dead seas” (where information arrives but no reaction follows) and “babbling brooks” (unable to hold onto

²² Weiss, Mindy and Levine, Lisbeth: *The Wedding Book: An Expert’s Guide to Planning Your Perfect Day—Your Way*. New York 2016, Workman Publishing, 1.

²³ Hézszer Gábor: *A pásztori pszichológia gyakorlati kézikönyve (A Practical Handbook of Pastoral Psychology)*. Budapest 1995, Kálvin János Publishing House, 127.

²⁴ Kozma Zsolt: *Pojmenika*. Cluj-Napoca 2000, Misztótfalusi Kis Miklós Press Center, 55.

²⁵ Márti Csanády: *Kincsünket cserépedényben őrizzük (We Keep Our Treasure in Earthen Vessels)*.” <https://ujember.hu/kincsunket-cserepedenyben-orizzuk/> (March 3, 2026).

information on their own)²⁶ —can experience their feelings together. Nothing demonstrates how important the feeling of love is to humanity better than the text of the Latin poem “*Song to the Muses*,” found in Oxford’s Bodleian Library, which dates from the 5th century and is one of the oldest written records of secular music.²⁷

Table 1

Number	Title	Author	Context
1.	<i>Esküvő</i>	Sztevanovity Zorán	Sharing the blessing received from You
2.	<i>Egyszer</i>	Rúzsza Magdi – Presser Gábor	You could propose to me / You could buy me a diamond ring / And then you could pretend / As if you really existed
3.	<i>Sokat vártam rád</i>	Durkó Heléna & Tóth Dávid	You are the one God gifted me
4.	<i>Eljön a nap</i>	Varga Ildikó & Kovács Elena	God, protect their steps, guide their lives
5.	<i>Hogyan mondjam el neked</i>	Szenes Iván	“How can I tell You, / What cannot be, / For there are no words, / Only imagination” ²⁸
6.	<i>Most kell eldöntenem</i>	Demjén Ferenc	It’s up to you whether you win or lose with me... I’ll take care of you.
7.	<i>Köszönöm, hogy vagy nekem</i>	Bon Bon	And I know that I’m staying here for good.
8.	<i>Átfaad vagyok</i>	Csézy	Life is carefree when I’m waiting for a partner

Divorce as a Traumatic Factor

According to clinical psychologist Kitty Almásy, the more someone rejects the possibility of divorce, the greater the risk to their marriage.²⁹ Those preparing for marriage may be unsettled by statistics indicating that

²⁶ Chapman, Gary D.: *A házasság négy évszaka (The Four Seasons of Marriage)*. (Trans. Zsuzsanna Mirnics), Budapest 2017, Harmat Publishing, 141–142.

²⁷ Menuhin, Yehudi and Davis, Curtis W.: *The Music of Man*. Ontario, Canada 1979, Methuen Publications 2330, Milland Avenue, Agincourt, 78.

²⁸ <https://songbook.hu/lyrics/86064/hogyan-mondjam-el-neked> (Accessed on March 3, 2026).

²⁹ Kitty Almási: *Hűtlenség (Infidelity)*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNMMyuEFa7vQ> (Accessed on March 3, 2026).

nearly half of all marriages end in divorce.³⁰ According to a Eurostat survey, recent demographic data show that in recent decades the number of marriages has decreased in the EU, while the number of divorces has increased. At the same time, an increase in the proportion of children born to cohabiting couples has also been observed.³¹ All of this may trigger a further natural crisis among those planning to marry. The possibility of marital breakdown must be taken into account, but with appropriate prevention, this too can be avoided. Throughout church history, Protestants have often been accused of readily separating quarreling spouses. According to Péter Nádudvari,³² divorce is a possibility, but he adds: “If we do not want to stumble here, let us not go against Scripture, and although human laws list many reasons, let us hold fast only to Scripture”.³³

The teachings of Scripture can be embodied in everyday married life, as illustrated by the following two short stories: the first was shared with his readers by Harold J. Sala, and it testifies to an important form of “prevention”. On their fiftieth wedding anniversary, the husband was asked what the secret to a long marriage was. He recounted that on their wedding day, his father-in-law had given him a gift, saying that it contained everything he needed to know about marriage. The wedding gift was none other than a gold watch, on the face of which was the following inscription: “Say a few kind words to Sarah! That is the secret to a good marriage”.³⁴ Furthermore, Barbara de Angelis, an American psychologist, recommends kissing our partner for at least 20 seconds every day. This releases positive energy.³⁵

“It’s as if I’m not living my own life” – according to psychotherapist Mária Angster,³⁶ her patients often say this in therapy, and they themselves don’t know the exact reason why their relationships are falling apart.³⁷ As noted above, nearly half of all marriages end in divorce, which means that half of young people getting married come from families where divorce has

³⁰ According to Coelho, “even the most beautiful melody in the world will sound terrible if the strings are out of tune.” In: Coelho, Paulo: *The Spy*. (Trans. Viktória Nagy), Budapest 2016, Atheneum Publishing, 111.

³¹ Eurostat: *Marriage and divorce statistics*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Marriage_and_divorce_statistics (Accessed on March 3, 2026).

³² Péter Nádudvari (c. 1670–1726), Transylvanian Reformed presbyter, ecclesiastical writer.

³³ Sándor Bíró – Mihály Bucsay – Endre Tóth – Zoltán Varga: *A Magyar Református Egyház története (The History of the Hungarian Reformed Church)*. Sárospatak 1995, Theological Academy of the Reformed College of Sárospatak, 250–251.

³⁴ Sala, Harold J.: *Something More Than Love*. Denver 1983, Accent Publishing, 103.

³⁵ Barnard, Christiana: *op. cit.* 159.

³⁶ Mária Angster – Chair of the Research Committee of the International Society of Constellation Work (ISCA).

³⁷ Mária Angster: *A családállítás (Family Constellation)*. In: Emőke Bagdy – Zsuzsanna Mrinics – Erika Nyitrai (Eds.): *Transperszonális pszichológia és pszichoterápia Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy*, Budapest 2011, Kulcslyuk Publishing, 487.

already occurred, and this has an impact on their decision to marry. The parent who left the family earlier is present in the young people's lives, as they either return by the time of the wedding or do not attend it. Whether their absence or their presence, it reopens painful wounds in the lives of those about to marry.

Before marriage, both have surely experienced the end of several relationships. That is why it is important to fully grieve and mourn these, as an encounter with a former first love can disrupt the marital relationship – for example, if it signals “how emotionally significant a role that person still plays in our lives”.³⁸ It can also happen that nothing came of the first love, yet the person remains emotionally anchored to it. A lack of commitment can therefore also stem from the fact that emotional detachment from the previous love has not occurred. The greatest danger to the individual and the relationship is posed by “momentary or prolonged emotional tensions”,³⁹ which attack our mental balance.

As the number of divorces, as *social interactions*,⁴⁰ increases, the number of remarriages among those getting married is also rising. The “phantom image of the first wedding”⁴¹ can disrupt the harmony of the second wedding. The worst thing is when both the pastor and the couple try to sweep the “phantom image of the first wedding” under the rug. Therefore, a pastoral conversation is essential, during which there may be a process of saying goodbye to the first marriage and wedding, as well as “burying” and mourning those emotions.

Although there are ups and downs and crises in relationships and marriage, the solution is not to walk away, but rather the true art lies in trying to pull the relationship out of this low point (Popper). Endre Gyököcssy, when discussing marriage, explains that “love must be learned” in order to save us from “coupled loneliness,” uncertainty, a sense of being lost, and feelings of desolation and alienation.⁴² Listening to music together or individually provides an opportunity to devote time to our feelings and to each other, and to create the space and time for a breakthrough toward one another, for a love that endures with one another.

³⁸ Ferenc Pál: *A magánytól az összetartozásig (From Solitude to Belonging)*. Budapest 2014, Kulcslyuk Publishing, 16.

³⁹ Péter Popper: *Lelkek és göröngyök (Souls and Pebbles)*. *Psychological Writings*. Budapest 2005, Saxum Publishing, 54.

⁴⁰ Babbie, Earl: *A társadalomtudományi kutatás gyakorlata (The Practice of Social Research)*. (Trans. Gábor Kende and Margit Szaitz), Sixth, revised edition, Budapest 2008, Balassi Publishing, 112.

⁴¹ Hézsér, Gábor: *A pásztori pszichológia gyakorlati kézikönyve (Pastoral Psychology)... op. cit.* 162.

⁴² Endre Gyököcssy: *Magunkról magunknak (About Ourselves, for Ourselves)*. Budapest 1998, Szent Gellér Publishing House, 137–138.

Scriptural elements of the marriage ceremony

In the Old Testament, marriage is described as “*the day of the heart’s joy*” (Song of Songs 3:11); nevertheless, there is no “independent and general term designating the institution of marriage.”⁴³ The לֵב שִׂמְחָה, that is, the *joyful heart*, strengthens the immune system and protects health, for a cheerful heart is good medicine (Prov 17:22). The expression חֲסֵר לֵב, meaning “*lack of heart*,” does not refer to emotional coldness related to love, but rather to thoughtlessness (Prov. 10:13). When Delilah, for example, complains to her husband, Samson, that אֵין אֶתְּךָ, אֵין אֶתְּךָ, meaning “*your heart is not with me*,” she means “you do not share your secrets with me”.⁴⁴ The expression עַל-לֵב הַנֶּעֱרַךְ, “*to his heart*,” belongs to the language of love, which signifies not only beautiful words but also aspiration.⁴⁵

According to Tillich, the “father-figure God” who appears at the dawn of creation,⁴⁶ who created man as male and female, emphasizes in Genesis 1:27 both unity and sexual difference. Legally, the man is בֶּעַל אִשָּׁה, that is, *he possesses the woman* (Gen. 21:3), who is בְּעֵלִית בֶּעַל, the man’s property (Gen. 20:3).⁴⁷ The man and woman belong to each other as the body and the rib, which is why in the Old Testament, marriage is not simply a relationship but a community,⁴⁸ denoted by the concept of the covenant. This is also emphasized in Malachi 2:14, where it refers to the woman to whom her husband was unfaithful as וְאִשְׁת׃ בְּרִיתֵךְ (the woman of the covenant). Andreas J. Kostenberger also highlights the idea of the covenant in his study, in which he formulates five fundamental principles regarding God’s marriage

⁴³ Wolff, Hans Walter: *Anthropology of the Old Testament*. Gütersloh 1973, Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 205.

⁴⁴ Wolff, Hans Walter: *op. cit.* 73.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴⁶ Tillich, Paul: *Létfátorság (The Courage to Be)*. (Trans. István Szabó) Budapest 2010, Theological Literary Association, 266.

⁴⁷ According to studies by McKee and Sherriff, in 1957, 93% of male participants rated men as slightly or significantly superior to women. 86% of female respondents indicated the same. In: McKee, John -P. Sherriffs, Alex C.: *The differential evaluation of males and females*. In: *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 25, 1957, No. 3, 356–371. Interestingly, in 1985, Werner and LaRussa repeated the study and observed that men were still rated as superior to women, although the gender gap had narrowed. In: Werner, P. D. & LaRussa, G. W.: *Persistence and change in sex-role stereotypes*. In: *Sex Roles*, Vol. 12, 1985, No. 9–10, pp. 1089–1100.

⁴⁸ According to Dymphna Cusack, true marriage is “ecstasy and security.” In: Cusack, Dymphna: *Ketten a halál ellen (Two Against Death)*. (Trans. Miklós Vásárhelyi) Bucharest 1968, Irodalmi Könyvkiadó, 251.

covenant.⁴⁹ The New Testament equivalent of this is *κοινωνία*⁵⁰, which means that “in marriage, there must be a constant flow in the sexual, spiritual, material, and every other realm in which the partners live alongside one another, but also within one another and for one another.”⁵¹

The consequences of the Fall do not leave marriage untouched, for mutual accusations and leading one another into sin, difficulties in bearing children, domination within marriage, and laborious work are all consequences of sin.⁵² At the same time, part of the formal ceremony of the wedding was that the bride appeared veiled (Gen 24:65), followed by music, noise, and revelry (Jer 7:14; Mk 2:18–20). The groom paid the bride’s father a *מָהָר*, that is, a *betrothal gift*,⁵³ which formalized the engagement⁵⁴ and brought the groom’s rights into effect; he then proceeded solemnly to the wedding feast (Matt 25:1), and the wedding celebration lasted seven days (Judg 14:12). Nevertheless, we do not know much about the wedding ceremony itself.

Under the heading “*Marriage as a Moderated Sexual Ethos*” Theissen presents three statements made by the Apostle Paul to the early Christians regarding marriage, which Paul “formulated from the perspective of his own self-restraint”.⁵⁵ According to the apostle, within marriage, obligations are bilateral even in the sexual sphere: “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.” (1 Cor 7:4) The verb *ἐξουσιάζει* (*ἐξουσιάζω*, *ν*) means *to have the right or power over something, to have control over something, to exercise power or dominion*.⁵⁶ Thus, the spouse surrenders their own *ἐξουσιάζω* on the altar of reciprocity. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul sees the meaning of sexual life within marriage not in procreation, but in the sexual union itself. This is why he admonishes

⁴⁹ The permanence, sanctity, intimacy, reciprocity, and exclusivity of marriage. Kostenberger, Andreas J.: *The Bible’s Teaching on Marriage and Family*. <https://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF11J34.pdf> (Accessed on March 3, 2026).

⁵⁰ *κοινωνία* – community, close (inner) relationship, brotherhood, sense of community, participation, sympathy, help. In: Varga Zsigmond J. (ed.): *Görög–magyar szótár (Greek–Hungarian Dictionary)*. Budapest 1996, Kálvin János Publishing House, 547.

⁵¹ Zsolt Kozma: *Pojmenika. op. cit.* 53.

⁵² Zsigmond J. Varga: *op. cit.* 576.

⁵³ According to Exodus 22:16, the *bridal price* was a fixed amount known to everyone: “If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall pay the bridal price and marry her.” Deuteronomy 22:29 sets the bride price at fifty shekels of silver.

⁵⁴ “*I betroth you*” can also be translated as “I legally acquire for myself”: *אָשֶׁר אֶרְשֶׁתִּי לִי* (2 Sam 3:14), *וְאֶרְשֶׁתִּיךָ לִי* (Hos 2:2).

⁵⁵ Theissen, Gerd: *Az őskeresztyénség élményvilága (The World of Experience and Forms of Behavior in Early Christianity.) The Psychology of Early Christianity*. (Trans. Csaba Szabó) Budapest 2008, Kálvin János Publishing House, 420–422.

⁵⁶ Zsigmond J. Varga: *op. cit.* 335.

spouses not to abstain from sexual intimacy for long periods, as this gives Satan an opportunity to tempt them: “Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to fasting and prayer; then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” (1 Cor 7:5) At this point, Theissen states that the purpose of marriage is sexual relations.

We supplement Theissen’s – or more precisely, the Apostle Paul’s – thoughts with the words of Péter Popper, who, citing Milán Füst,⁵⁷ stated that marriage is like a four-legged table; if any one leg is missing, the table tips over. These are as follows: a shared or similar lifestyle, love (and acceptance), sexuality, and economic partnership. In summary, we can say that a happy marriage is a state of grace that is given to a person as a gift.

The Christian Interpretation of Marriage

In his letter to Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch⁵⁸ recommends that marriage should not take place without the bishop’s consent and the community’s knowledge, and that “all this should be done for the glory of God”.⁵⁹ Tertullian,⁶⁰ who in his work *Ad uxorem*⁶¹ (written around 203) asked his wife to remain a widow after his death, and later, in his work *De monogamia*,⁶² engaged in a sharp debate against women and men who remarried, similarly to Ignatius of Antioch, urged for the necessity of a bishop’s consent before marriage. St. John Chrysostom⁶³ honored virginity and abstinence from sexual relations until the day of marriage as a sign of triumph.⁶⁴ The purpose of the marriage rite was to solidify the betrothal relationship, to transform it into a more secure and lasting institution, and to emphasize the solemnity of the marriage itself.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Milán Füst (1888–1967), writer, poet, aesthetician.

⁵⁸ Saint Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–c. 107), Bishop of Antioch until his death.

⁵⁹ Ignatius: *The duties of husbands and wives*.

https://biblehub.com/library/ignatius/the_epistle_of_ignatius_to_polycarp_and_the_ephesians/chapter_v_the_duties_of_husbands.htm (Accessed on March 3, 2026).

⁶⁰ Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225), Latin patristic thinker, one of the apologists.

⁶¹ Tertullian: *Ad uxorem*. (Translated by the Rev. S. Thelwall)

[http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0160-0220,_Tertullianus,_Ad_Uxorem_\[Schaff\],_EN.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0160-0220,_Tertullianus,_Ad_Uxorem_[Schaff],_EN.pdf) (Accessed on March 3, 2026).

⁶² Rankin, David: *Tertullian and the Church*. New York 1995, Cambridge University Press, 163–165.

⁶³ John Chrysostom (c. 344–407), theologian, Church Father, Patriarch of Constantinople.

⁶⁴ Chrysostom, John St.: *On Marriage and Family Life*. (Translated by Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson), New York 2003, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 12–13.

⁶⁵ Lajos Dolhai: *A házasság szentségének liturgiátörténete (The Liturgical History of the Sacrament of Marriage)* https://www.epa.hu/02900/02970/00888/pdf/EPA02970_vigilia_2014_08_566-572.pdf (Accessed on March 3, 2026).

St. Thomas Aquinas drew the foundations of his doctrine of marriage from Roman law, expanding upon them with Christian teaching. Thus, the purposes of *procreatio prolis and communicatio operum*, as known in Roman law, were linked to the teachings⁶⁶ of *in quantum inter fidelis est, significatio Christi et ecclesiae*.⁶⁷ In the time of the Angelic Doctor, marriage became a sacrament, the purpose of which was “the establishment of a marital union that is indissoluble”,⁶⁸ and according to Roman canon law, “*nudus consensus facit nuptias*,” that is, it is contracted by mutual consent.⁶⁹ According to the Council of Trent, the betrothed must prepare for marriage through confession,⁷⁰ and on the wedding day, the priest receives the couple at the church door.

According to historian Steven E. Ozment, “*in fact, it was not Protestantism that was the first intellectual movement to come to the defense of the institution of marriage*”,⁷¹ Luther, who after taking his monastic vows had declared that “*by God’s grace I do not desire a wife*”,⁷² later denied the sacramental nature of marriage, calling it a *secular matter* and treating it as a civil affair.⁷³ Although the reformer called marriage “God’s most beloved gift”,⁷⁴ he did not regard it as a sacrament.⁷⁵ He emphasized this in his work **Esketési Könyvecske** (Booklet on Marriage), published in 1529 along with the **Small Catechism**, where he refers to the wedding and marriage as a “worldly matter” (*weltlich Ding*).⁷⁶

⁶⁶ Dezső Buday: *A házasság bölcselete (The Philosophy of Marriage)*. (Study) Budapest 1901, Published by Zsigmond Politzer, 76–77.

⁶⁷ Procreation and Community Service... Among the Faithful, as a Sign of Christ and the Church.

⁶⁸ Niesel, Wilhelm: *Az evangélium és az egyházak (The Gospel and the Churches. A Textbook of Symbolism)*, (Trans. Tamás Juhász), Cluj-Napoca 1979, University-Level Unified Protestant Theological Institute, 101.

⁶⁹ Huebner, Rudolf: “*A History of Germanic Private Law.*” (Translated by Francis S. Philbrick), New Jersey 2000, The Lowbook Exchange, Ltd., 598–599.

⁷⁰ Article 7: *The Sacrament of Marriage*. II. 1622.

⁷¹ Ozment, Steven: “*When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe.*” Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1983, 6.

⁷² Walther, Vilmos: *Luther jelleme (The Character of Luther)*. Budapest 2007, Bik Publishing House, 54.

⁷³ Lajos Müller: *A keresztyén házasság (Christian Marriage)*. Budapest 1921, Apostol-Nyomda Részvénytársaság, 5.

⁷⁴ Martin Luther: *Asztali beszélgetések (Table Talks)*. (ed. Zoltán Csepregi et al.), Budapest, 2014, Luther Publishing House, 678.

⁷⁵ Martin Luther: *Az egyház babiloni fogságáról szóló könyvecske (A Treatise on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church)*, (Trans. Endre Masznyik), Budapest 2005, Aeternitas Publishing, p. 85.

⁷⁶ Martin Luther: *Esketési könyvecske az egyszerű lelkészek számára (A Small Book on the Sacrament of Baptism for Simple Pastors)*. In: Pröhle Károly: *Luther Márton négy hitvallása The Four Confessions of Martin Luther*. Budapest 1996, Press Department of the Evangelical Church in Hungary, 104–107.

John Calvin, like Luther, although he did not regard marriage as a sacrament,⁷⁷ is considered innovative in that he placed the authority to legislate on marital matters within the joint jurisdiction of the civil government and the church.⁷⁸ In his work *Regulations on Marriage*, published in 1546, the Geneva reformer expounded on the impediments to marriage, with particular regard to age and parental consent.⁷⁹ Nothing demonstrates the extent to which Calvin emphasized the “*ordinatio et institutio divina*” perspective regarding marriage better than the fact that the Geneva ecclesiastical court he established granted a divorce in only 26 cases over nearly two decades (1541–1566).⁸⁰

Conclusion

At the ultimate intersection of the theological, psychological, and cultural-historical analyses presented in this study, music appears not merely as an accompanying phenomenon, but as a relational and affective force field. Marriage, as a natural developmental crisis, is an emotional transition in which uncertainty, joy, a sense of loss, and hope are all present simultaneously. Music can play a prominent role in the integration of these complex affective dynamics.

The structuring function of music lies in the fact that it provides a temporal framework for the experience: it marks the beginning, the climax, and the conclusion. At the same time, from a neuropsychological perspective, it is one of the most effective tools for emotional regulation. Listening to music together – especially when it comes to melodies with personal significance – activates autobiographical memory, enhances empathic resonance, and promotes emotional synchronization between the couple. Music, therefore, is not merely sound but a relational space.

The ambivalent emotions preceding marriage, the “happy uncertainty,” can be reframed through musical mediation. A well-chosen song or piece of music is capable of transforming anxiety into hope, uncertainty into trust, and individual narratives into a shared story. Music thus also serves an identity-

⁷⁷ John Calvin: *Institutio 1536*. (Trans. András Victor) Budapest 1936, Published by the Hungarian Reformed Church, 249–250.

⁷⁸ Béla Nagy Sándor: *Kálvin egyházkormányzati alapelvei (Calvin's Principles of Church Government in Practice. With Special Reference to the 1541 Ordinances of the Geneva Church)*. In: *Theologiai Szemle*, New Vol. 3, 1959, Nos. 9–10, 328–329.

⁷⁹ Balázs Dávid Magyar: *Kálvin neveléstanának újszövetségi vonatkozásai (New Testament References in John Calvin's Pedagogy)*. In: *Református Szemle*, Vol. 106, No. 3, 2013, pp. 256–282.)

⁸⁰ Kingdon, Robert: *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1995. 7.

integrating function: it constructs a “we” experience from the “you” and “I” experiences.

The relationship between ritual and music deserves special attention. Marriage is not merely a legal or social act, but a performative event in which music becomes the vehicle for the inexpressible. Melodies often sound where verbalization falters. Music thus has a transcendent function in the marriage ritual: it connects the individual emotional world with the communal and spiritual dimensions.

A relevant question for future research in music psychology may be how to empirically measure the impact of listening to music together on crisis resolution prior to marriage and on subsequent relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, it could be investigated to what extent ritual music contributes to long-term relationship resilience.

In summary, it can be said that in the process of marriage, music is not a decorative element but rather an affective and relational infrastructure. It forms a sonic bridge between the past and the future, uncertainty and commitment, individual history and a shared life journey. In this sense, music not only accompanies but also shapes the psychological reality of the birth of marriage.

Translated from Hungarian by Juliánna Köpeczi

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MUSIC LISTENING AND WELL-BEING: A LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF MUSIC

PITER SEMBIRING¹ 

SUMMARY. Music listening has been increasingly recognized as an important psychological activity associated with emotional regulation and mental well-being. This literature review examines the relationship between music listening and psychological well-being by synthesizing findings from previous empirical and theoretical studies. The review focuses on three key dimensions: emotional regulation, psychological well-being, and the underlying mechanisms explaining music-induced well-being. The analysis demonstrates that music listening functions as an adaptive strategy for managing emotional states, reducing stress, and supporting positive psychological experiences. In addition, musical engagement contributes to broader dimensions of well-being by facilitating self-reflection, strengthening social connectedness, and enhancing subjective quality of life. The reviewed literature also highlights several mechanisms through which music influences psychological outcomes, including emotional processing, cognitive reflection, and neurobiological responses. By integrating findings across multiple research perspectives, this article proposes a conceptual synthesis that clarifies the multidimensional role of music listening in promoting psychological well-being and mental health.

Keywords: Emotional regulation, mental health, music listening, music psychology, psychological well-being

1. Introduction

Music listening is a pervasive activity embedded in everyday human life across cultures and social contexts. Individuals engage with music in various situations, including leisure activities, emotional reflection, social interaction, and personal regulation of mood. Within contemporary research

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in music psychology, listening to music is no longer understood merely as a passive auditory activity but rather as a complex psychological process involving emotional, cognitive, and physiological responses. Empirical studies have demonstrated that musical experiences can significantly influence affective states, emotional perception, and psychological functioning, indicating that music listening may contribute to broader aspects of psychological well-being ²

One of the most widely investigated aspects of music listening concerns its relationship with emotional experience. Music possesses a distinctive capacity to evoke, shape, and regulate emotional states through various psychological mechanisms, including emotional contagion, episodic memory, and aesthetic appraisal. These mechanisms illustrate how listeners actively interpret musical structures and associate them with personal meanings and memories. As a result, music listening often functions as a form of emotional regulation, enabling individuals to manage stress, alter mood states, and enhance feelings of relaxation and pleasure. Such findings highlight the important role of musical engagement in supporting emotional processes and everyday psychological functioning ³.

In recent decades, interdisciplinary scholarship has further expanded the investigation of music listening beyond emotional response toward broader questions of mental health and psychological well-being. Research in neuroscience, psychology, and music therapy has increasingly demonstrated that musical engagement may contribute to improved psychological outcomes, including reductions in stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Additionally, music listening has been associated with enhanced positive affect, cognitive stimulation, and improved quality of life in diverse populations. These findings suggest that music listening represents a meaningful and accessible activity through which individuals may support their mental and emotional health ⁴

In psychological research, well-being is generally conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social

² Yoo et al. "Benefits of Personal Music Listening for Family Caregivers of Critically Ill Patients during the Post-COVID Era." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 14, 2023; Gustavson et al. "Mental Health and Music Engagement: Review, Framework, and Guidelines for Future Studies." *Translational Psychiatry*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2021.; Peters et al. *The Impact of Musicking on Emotion Regulation: A Systematic Review*, 2024.

³ Tan et al. "Music's Dual Role in Emotion Regulation: Network Analysis of Music Use, Emotion Regulation Self-Efficacy, Alexithymia, Anxiety, and Depression." *Depression and Anxiety*, vol. 2024, no. 1, 2024.; Miranda. "Neuroticism, Musical Emotion Regulation, and Mental Health." *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind, and Brain*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2021, pp. 59–73.

⁴ Särkämö. "Musical Leisure Activities to Support Cognitive and Emotional Functioning in Aging and Dementia." *Music and Dementia*. Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 103–121.; Maury and Rickard. "The Benefits of Participation in a Choir and an Exercise Group on Older Adults' Wellbeing in a Naturalistic Setting." *Musicae Scientiae*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2022, pp. 144–171.

dimensions of human functioning. Scholars often distinguish between hedonic well-being, which relates to experiences of pleasure and positive emotional states, and eudaimonic well-being, which refers to meaning, personal growth, and psychological fulfilments. Musical experiences have been suggested to contribute to both dimensions by offering opportunities for emotional expression, aesthetic appreciation, and reflective engagement. Through these processes, music listening may serve not only as a form of entertainment but also as a psychological resource that supports resilience and subjective well-being ⁵.

Furthermore, recent studies have emphasized the active role of listeners in shaping their emotional experiences through music. Individuals frequently select music intentionally to influence their emotional states, such as reducing tension, coping with negative emotions, or enhancing motivation and concentration. This intentional use of music reflects the role of listening practices as strategies of emotional self-regulation in everyday life. Consequently, music listening can be understood as an accessible and widely used psychological tool that individuals employ to regulate mood and maintain emotional balance ⁶.

Despite the growing body of literature addressing the psychological benefits of music listening, existing research remains dispersed across several academic domains, including music psychology, neuroscience, and music therapy. Many studies focus on specific contexts, such as clinical interventions, emotional responses to music, or patterns of everyday listening behaviour. As a result, a comprehensive synthesis of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings remains necessary in order to clarify how music listening contributes to psychological well-being. Integrating these perspectives is essential for developing a broader conceptual understanding of the mechanisms through which musical engagement supports emotional and psychological functioning.

Therefore, this article aims to review and synthesize existing literature concerning the psychological benefits of music listening, with particular attention to its relationship with well-being. By examining theoretical perspectives and empirical findings across multiple disciplines, this study seeks to provide an integrative understanding of how music listening contributes to emotional

⁵ Martínez-Castilla et al. "The Efficacy of Music for Emotional Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Lockdown in Spain: An Analysis of Personal and Context-Related Variables." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, 2021; Hugelius et al. "The Power of Radio to Promote Health and Resilience in Natural Disasters: A Review." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 16, no. 14, 2019, p. 2526.

⁶ Freitas et al. "Music Therapy for Adolescents with Psychiatric Disorders: An Overview." *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2022, pp. 895–910.; Agres et al. "Music, Computing, and Health: A Roadmap for the Current and Future Roles of Music Technology for Health Care and Well-Being." *Music & Science*, vol. 4, 2021.

regulation, mental health, and overall psychological well-being. Such a synthesis is expected to contribute to ongoing discussions in music psychology and musicology regarding the broader role of musical experience in human life.

2. Conceptualizing Music Listening and Psychological Well-Being

2.1. Music Listening as a Psychological Experience

Music listening represents one of the most widespread forms of musical engagement and constitutes a fundamental aspect of human interaction with music. Unlike instrumental performance or compositional activity, listening to music does not require formal training or technical expertise, which allows individuals from diverse cultural and social backgrounds to engage with musical experiences. Despite its apparent simplicity, music listening involves complex perceptual and cognitive processes that integrate auditory perception, emotional interpretation, and contextual meaning-making. Within the field of music psychology, listening to music is therefore understood as an active psychological process in which listeners interpret musical structures and expressive cues in relation to their personal experiences and cultural frameworks ⁷.

From a cognitive perspective, musical perception involves the organization of auditory information into meaningful patterns, including melody, rhythm, harmony, and timbre. These elements are processed through interactions between perceptual mechanisms and learned musical expectations. Listeners develop internalized schemas that allow them to anticipate musical events, interpret expressive qualities, and derive aesthetic meaning from musical structures. Consequently, music listening is not merely a passive reception of sound but rather an interpretative activity shaped by memory, attention, and cultural familiarity ⁸.

Furthermore, research on everyday musical behaviour suggests that individuals incorporate music listening into many aspects of daily life. Music accompanies a wide range of activities such as studying, commuting, exercising, and relaxation. In these contexts, listeners use music to structure their experiences, influence mood, and enhance engagement with their

⁷ Hargreaves. "Musical Imagination: Perception and Production, Beauty and Creativity." *Psychology of Music*, vol. 40, no. 5, 2012, pp. 539–557.; Juslin and Sloboda. "Music and Emotion." *The Psychology of Music*. Elsevier, 2013, pp. 583–645.

⁸ Brattico and Varankaitė. "Aesthetic Empowerment through Music." *Musicae Scientiae*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2019, pp. 285–303.; Wardani et al. "Karawitans' Musician Brain Adaptation: Standardized Low-Resolution Electromagnetic Tomography Study." *IAES International Journal of Artificial Intelligence*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2023, pp. 23–33.

surroundings. These patterns of everyday musical behaviour demonstrate that music listening functions as a psychological resource that individuals integrate into their daily routines to support emotional and cognitive functioning ⁹.

2.2. Emotional Mechanisms in Music Listening

One of the most distinctive characteristics of music listening lies in its capacity to evoke and regulate emotional responses. Emotional experiences associated with music have been widely examined in music psychology, where scholars seek to explain how abstract auditory patterns can generate powerful emotional reactions in listeners. Unlike other forms of communication, music conveys emotional meaning primarily through structural and expressive elements such as tempo, dynamics, rhythm, and melodic contour. These musical features interact with listeners perceptual and cognitive processes to produce emotional responses that may vary depending on individual experience and cultural background ¹⁰.

Several theoretical models have been proposed to explain the mechanisms underlying musical emotions. Among the most influential frameworks is the BRECVEMA model, which identifies multiple psychological pathways through which music can induce emotional responses ¹¹. These mechanisms include brainstem reflexes, emotional contagion, evaluative conditioning, episodic memory, visual imagery, emotional expectancy, and aesthetic judgment. According to this model, musical emotions emerge from the interaction of perceptual processes, cognitive associations, and affective responses that occur during the listening experience ¹².

In addition to emotional induction, music listening also plays an important role in emotional regulation. Individuals frequently select music strategically in order to modify or maintain their emotional states. For example, listeners may choose calming music to reduce stress or energetic music to

⁹ Roesse and Merrill. "Consequences of the COVID-19 Lockdown in Germany: Effects of Changes in Daily Life on Musical Engagement and Functions of Music." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 18, no. 19, 2021, p. 10463.; Taruffi. "Mind-Wandering during Personal Music Listening in Everyday Life: Music-Evoked Emotions Predict Thought Valence." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 18, no. 23, 2021, p. 12321.

¹⁰ Juslin. "From Everyday Emotions to Aesthetic Emotions: Towards a Unified Theory of Musical Emotions." *Physics of Life Reviews*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2013, pp. 235–266.; Susino et al. "Emotional Responses to Music: The Essential Inclusion of Emotion Adaptability and Situational Context." *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2025, pp. 451–483.

¹¹ Völker. "Measuring Emotional Music Experience: Spreading Activation and BRECVEMA Mechanisms." *Psychology of Music*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2022, pp. 631–649.

¹² Janković and Mađarev. "The Role of Affective Dimensions in the Aesthetic Experience of Music." *Psychological Perspectives on Musical Experiences and Skills*. Open Book Publishers, 2024, pp. 27–46.

enhance motivation. Such practices demonstrate that music listening can function as an accessible strategy for managing emotional experiences in everyday life. Research has consistently shown that individuals employ music listening as a tool for coping with negative emotions, maintaining positive mood, and facilitating emotional expression ¹³.

2.3. Music Listening and Psychological Well-Being

The relationship between music listening and psychological well-being has increasingly attracted scholarly attention across disciplines such as psychology, neuroscience, and music therapy. Psychological well-being is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that encompasses emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of human functioning. Within contemporary psychological theory, researchers frequently distinguish between two primary perspectives: hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being. Hedonic well-being emphasizes pleasure, happiness, and life satisfaction, whereas eudaimonic well-being focuses on personal growth, meaning, and psychological fulfillment ¹⁴.

Musical engagement has been suggested to contribute to both dimensions of well-being. In the context of hedonic well-being, listening to music may enhance positive affect and reduce negative emotional states.

Many individuals report experiencing enjoyment, relaxation, and emotional comfort when listening to music, which contributes to their overall sense of happiness and emotional balance. From a eudaimonic perspective, music can also facilitate reflection, identity formation, and meaningful aesthetic experiences that contribute to personal development and psychological insight ¹⁵.

Empirical studies further indicate that music listening may influence various indicators of psychological health. Research has demonstrated associations between music listening and reductions in stress, improvements in mood, and enhanced emotional resilience. These findings suggest that music listening may serve as a supportive factor in maintaining mental well-being, particularly in contexts where individuals experience psychological pressure or emotional challenges ¹⁶. Consequently, music listening can be viewed as a meaningful psychological activity that contributes to broader dimensions of human well-being.

¹³ Hennessy et al. "Music and Mood Regulation during the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic." PLOS ONE, vol. 16, no. 10, 2021.

¹⁴ Ryan and Deci. "On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being." Annual Review of Psychology, vol. 52, no. 1, 2001, pp. 141–166.

¹⁵ Lamont. "Emotion, Engagement and Meaning in Strong Experiences of Music Performance." Psychology of Music, vol. 40, no. 5, 2012, pp. 574–594.

¹⁶ Granot et al. "'Help! I Need Somebody': Music as a Global Resource for Obtaining Wellbeing Goals in Times of Crisis." Frontiers in Psychology, vol. 12, 2021.

2.4. Everyday Music Listening and Emotional Regulation

Beyond theoretical discussions of musical emotion and well-being, research on everyday music listening provides important insights into how individuals actively use music in their daily lives. Studies on everyday listening behaviour reveal that people frequently engage with music in order to regulate emotions, structure social experiences, and enhance cognitive performance during routine activities. These patterns demonstrate that music listening is deeply embedded in daily life and serves practical psychological functions¹⁷.

One of the most significant functions of everyday music listening concerns emotional self-regulation. Individuals often select specific music in response to their emotional needs, such as reducing feelings of stress, alleviating sadness, or increasing energy and motivation. Music may also facilitate emotional processing by allowing listeners to reflect on personal experiences or memories associated with particular songs. Through these processes, music listening becomes a mechanism through which individuals actively shape their emotional states and psychological experiences¹⁸.

Moreover, technological developments such as digital streaming platforms have further expanded the role of music listening in everyday life. Access to extensive music libraries enables listeners to curate personalized listening environments that correspond to specific moods, activities, or emotional goals. As a result, music listening increasingly functions as a flexible and individualized strategy for supporting psychological well-being within contemporary lifestyles. These developments highlight the continuing relevance of studying music listening as an important component of emotional regulation and mental health in modern societies¹⁹.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative literature review approach to examine existing research concerning the relationship between music listening and psychological well-being. Literature review methods aim to synthesize theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in order to construct a comprehensive understanding of a research topic. Within academic research,

¹⁷ Schäfer et al. "The Psychological Functions of Music Listening." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 4, 2013.

¹⁸ Henry et al. "Music in Mood Regulation and Coping Orientations in Response to COVID-19 Lockdown Measures Within the United Kingdom." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, 2021.

¹⁹ Hennessy et al. "Music and Mood Regulation during the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic." *PLOS ONE*, vol. 16, no. 10, 2021.

literature reviews are widely used to integrate knowledge from multiple studies and identify conceptual patterns across existing scholarship ²⁰.

In this study, the literature review was conducted using a thematic narrative approach. This approach allows researchers to analyse and organize scholarly findings into conceptual categories that reflect key themes within the literature. Through this method, the study aims to identify how previous research has conceptualized music listening as a psychological activity and how such experiences relate to emotional regulation and psychological well-being ²¹.

3.2. Data Sources and Search Strategy

The literature analyzed in this study was collected from major academic databases that index peer-reviewed research in music psychology and related disciplines. These sources included Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, and Web of Science-indexed publications. The use of multiple databases increases the reliability of literature review studies by ensuring broad coverage of relevant academic publications ²²

The search process employed several keyword combinations relevant to the topic of this study, including music listening, music and emotion, music and well-being, psychological benefits of music, and music and mental health. These keywords were selected based on their frequent use within research in music psychology and music therapy literature. Using targeted search terms allows researchers to identify relevant studies that address the psychological functions and effects of music listening.

3.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and academic quality of the selected literature, several inclusion criteria were applied during the selection process. First, the literature had to consist of peer-reviewed journal articles or scholarly academic books. Second, the selected studies needed to examine the relationship between music listening and psychological or emotional processes. Third, publications from the fields of music psychology, cognitive neuroscience, and music therapy were prioritized because these disciplines provide the most substantial theoretical and empirical insights into the psychological impact of musical experiences ²³.

²⁰ Snyder. "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines." *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 104, 2019, pp. 333–339.

²¹ Braun and Clarke. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2006, pp. 77–101.

²² Snyder. "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines." *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 104, 2019, pp. 333–339.

²³ Koelsch. "Brain Correlates of Music-Evoked Emotions." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2014, pp. 170–180.

Studies that focused primarily on musical performance, composition, or purely technical aspects of music theory were excluded, as the primary objective of this study was to investigate listening experiences rather than other forms of musical participation.

3.4. Data Analysis

The collected literature was analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify patterns and conceptual relationships within a body of literature by organizing findings into recurring themes. This method is frequently used in qualitative research and literature reviews to structure complex scholarly discussions into coherent analytical categories. Through this analytical process, the reviewed studies were organized into several thematic dimensions, including emotional mechanisms of music listening, the role of music in emotional regulation, and the contribution of musical engagement to psychological well-being. By synthesizing findings across these thematic categories, this study seeks to provide an integrative perspective on how music listening contributes to emotional and psychological functioning.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Emotional Regulation

A substantial body of literature indicates that one of the most prominent functions of music listening relates to emotional regulation. Music should not merely be understood as an aesthetic stimulus; rather, it operates as a psychological resource that enables individuals to manage affective states in everyday life. Empirical findings demonstrate that music listening is consistently associated with mood modulation, stress reduction, and the enhancement of positive emotional experiences across diverse populations and social contexts. Research examining the psychological functions of music listening suggests that individuals frequently use music as a tool to stabilize emotions, alleviate anxiety, and cope with psychological pressures arising from daily activities. This perspective highlights the importance of music as an adaptive mechanism for affective regulation in human experience ²⁴.

Neuropsychological evidence further supports this interpretation by demonstrating that music influences neural systems associated with emotional processing and stress responses. Physiological reactions to music, including changes in autonomic nervous system activity, indicate that music can reduce

²⁴ Schäfer et al. "The Psychological Functions of Music Listening." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 4, 2013.

cortisol levels and promote states of relaxation. These findings strengthen the argument that music functions as a stimulus capable of modulating emotional responses through specific neurobiological pathways. Within the context of mental health interventions, music has also been employed as a strategy to improve emotional stability and to mitigate psychological distress among individuals experiencing anxiety-related conditions or chronic stress ²⁵.

Meta-analytic research on music-based interventions further demonstrates that structured engagement with music can significantly influence stress-related outcomes. Quantitative analyses indicate that music interventions produce moderate to strong effects in reducing both psychological and physiological indicators of stress. These results confirm that music should not be viewed solely as a form of entertainment, but also as a psychological intervention with therapeutic potential in the domain of mental health ²⁶.

Complementary systematic reviews focusing on anxiety reduction also report that music listening can significantly decrease anxiety levels in both clinical and everyday contexts. This effect is largely attributed to music capacity to redirect attention away from negative stimuli while simultaneously fostering emotional stabilization and psychological comfort ²⁷.

Taken together, these findings suggest that emotional regulation represents a central psychological mechanism underlying the relationship between music listening and mental well-being. Music therefore functions as an affective regulation tool that enables individuals to manage emotional experiences in a constructive and adaptive manner.

4.2. Psychological Well-Being

Beyond emotional regulation, literature consistently demonstrates a strong association between musical engagement and psychological well-being. Numerous studies indicate that involvement with music contributes to improved quality of life, increased feelings of happiness, and enhanced overall mental well-being. These findings suggest that the role of music extends beyond immediate emotional responses and encompasses broader psychological outcomes that may influence long-term well-being.

Comprehensive reviews investigating the relationship between music, health, and well-being emphasize that musical engagement can enhance psychological well-being through multiple mechanisms, including the stimulation

²⁵ Filippis and Foysal. "Associations between Music Listening Habits and Mental Health: A Cross-Sectional Analysis." *OALib*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2025, pp. 1–29.

²⁶ de Witte et al. "Effects of Music Interventions on Stress-Related Outcomes: A Systematic Review and Two Meta-Analyses." *Health Psychology Review*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2020, pp. 294–324.

²⁷ Harney et al. "Is Music Listening an Effective Intervention for Reducing Anxiety? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Controlled Studies." *Musicae Scientiae*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2023, pp. 278–298.

of positive emotional experiences, stress reduction, and the strengthening of social connections. In addition, music provides a medium for self-expression that allows individuals to process emotional experiences in reflective and meaningful ways ²⁸.

Within the broader context of mental health, participation in musical activities has also been shown to support psychological well-being among both general populations and vulnerable groups. Research indicates that engagement in activities such as listening to music or singing can enhance feelings of social connectedness and reinforce personal identity. These processes highlight the important social dimension of musical engagement in shaping subjective experiences of well-being ²⁹.

Further investigations suggest that music contributes to psychological well-being through complex cognitive and emotional processes. Listening to music often facilitates reflective engagement with personal experiences, the retrieval of autobiographical memories, and the construction of meaning in relation to one's life circumstances. Such reflective processes play a critical role in the development and maintenance of enduring psychological well-being ³⁰.

Research examining the relationship between music listening habits and mental health also demonstrates that certain patterns of musical engagement are associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. Individuals who actively use music as a strategy for emotional regulation tend to report better mental health outcomes compared to those who engage with music in a more passive manner ³¹. Overall, the literature suggests that music serves as a significant contributor to psychological well-being through a combination of emotional, cognitive, and social processes.

4.3. Mechanisms of Music-Induced Well-Being

Although the beneficial relationship between music and psychological well-being has been widely documented, the mechanisms explaining this relationship remain an active area of investigation within literature. Existing studies suggest that the positive effects of music on well-being emerge from several interrelated psychological mechanisms.

One key mechanism concerns the influence of music on cognitive and emotional systems associated with stress regulation. Neuropsychological

²⁸ MacDonald. "Music, Health, and Well-Being: A Review." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2013.

²⁹ Daykin et al. "What Works for Wellbeing? A Systematic Review of Wellbeing Outcomes for Music and Singing in Adults." *Perspectives in Public Health*, vol. 138, no. 1, 2018, pp. 39–46.

³⁰ Gustavson et al. "Mental Health and Music Engagement: Review, Framework, and Guidelines for Future Studies." *Translational Psychiatry*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2021.

³¹ Vandana et al. "Music Therapy as a Viable Alternative Medicine for Improving Psychological Well-Being." *Journal of Pioneering Medical Sciences*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2025, pp. 7–20.

research indicates that music can affect brain activity related to emotion, attention, and memory processing. The activation of these neural systems allows music to modulate emotional responses and contribute to greater psychological stability ³².

In addition, music functions as a medium through which individuals can process emotional experiences via cognitive reflection. Listening to music is frequently associated with introspective processes that allow individuals to gain deeper insight into their emotional states. Such reflective engagement may facilitate the development of self-awareness and enhance individuals' capacity for emotional regulation ³³.

Another mechanism relates to the social functions of music. Musical engagement often operates as a social resource that fosters interpersonal connections, reinforces group identity, and promotes feelings of belonging. These social dynamics play a critical role in shaping broader experiences of psychological well-being ³⁴.

Within therapeutic contexts, music has also been implemented as a tool for improving mental health outcomes through music therapy approaches. These interventions demonstrate that music can facilitate emotional expression, reduce psychological tension, and support improvements in psychological well-being ³⁵.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the positive effects of music on psychological well-being cannot be attributed to a single mechanism. Instead, they emerge from the interaction of emotional, cognitive, neurobiological, and social processes that collectively shape the psychological impact of music in human life.

4.4. Conceptual Contribution of the Article

Based on the synthesis of the reviewed literature, this article offers a conceptual contribution by clarifying the relationship between music listening and psychological well-being. Previous studies have often examined the

³² Rebecchini. "Music, Mental Health, and Immunity." *Brain Behavior & Immunity – Health*, vol. 18, 2021.

³³ Rossi et al. "Personality Characteristics, Music Listening, and Psychological Well-Being: A Systematic and Scoping Review." *Research in Psychotherapy: Psychopathology, Process and Outcome*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2024.; Shan et al. "The Association between Music Listening at Home and Subjective Well-Being." *Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 14, no. 9, 2024.

³⁴ Zhang et al. "Impact of Music-Based Interventions on Subjective Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis of Listening, Training, and Therapy in Clinical and Nonclinical Populations." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 16, 2025.

³⁵ Basile. "Beneficial Effects of Music in the Healing Process of Traumatic Injuries: Perceptual Control of Suffering and Possible Abatement of Disability Conditions." *La Clinica Terapeutica*, vol. 174, no. 6, 2023, pp. 531–536.

effects of music in isolation, focusing separately on emotional, cognitive, or social outcomes. In contrast, the present review integrates these diverse findings into a unified conceptual framework that highlights three central mechanisms: emotional regulation, psychological well-being enhancement, and the underlying psychological processes that explain music's impact on mental health. The principal contribution of this review lies in demonstrating that the relationship between music and well-being is inherently multidimensional. Music does not merely function as an emotional stimulus but also operates as a medium for cognitive reflection and social interaction, both of which play crucial roles in shaping individuals' experiences of psychological well-being. By synthesizing these perspectives, the article provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the psychological role of music and opens new directions for future research examining the mechanisms through which music contributes to mental health and human flourishing.

5. Conclusion

The present review highlights the significant role of music listening as a multidimensional psychological resource that contributes to emotional regulation and overall psychological well-being. The synthesis of previous studies indicates that music functions not only as an aesthetic experience but also as a mechanism through which individuals manage emotional states, cope with psychological stress, and construct meaningful personal experiences. Furthermore, the literature suggests that the impact of music on well-being emerges through interconnected emotional, cognitive, social, and neurobiological processes. By integrating these perspectives, this review provides a clearer conceptual understanding of how music listening contributes to mental health and everyday well-being. The findings emphasize the importance of considering music listening as a relevant psychological activity in contemporary well-being research and highlight the need for future studies to further explore the mechanisms through which musical experiences influence human psychological functioning.

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THE EMBODIMENT OF NEGATION IN THE *SCHERZO STRUMENTALE* FROM THE OPERA *MEFISTOFELE* BY ARRIGO BOITO

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SUMMARY. This article examines the musical and dramaturgical characterization of Mephistopheles in Arrigo Boito's opera *Mefistofele* (1868), with particular focus on the *Scherzo strumentale* from the *Prologue*. Drawing on Boito's own writings and the *Disposizione scenica*, the study explores how the composer constructs the figure of Mephistopheles as the embodiment of universal negation — the eternal No opposing Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. The analysis traces the musical means by which Boito portrays this spirit of denial: the disruptive rhythmic patterns, the major-minor harmonic dualism, the staccatissimo articulation, and the sarcastic vocal writing that together define the character's identity. The article also addresses the philosophical and literary dimensions of the Faust-Mephisto relationship, arguing that Boito conceives Mephistopheles not merely as an external force of evil but as an organic counterpart to Faust, whose denial paradoxically generates knowledge and moral growth. The study situates Boito's opera within the broader European cultural context of the second half of the 19th century, highlighting the composer's innovative synthesis of music, text, and stagecraft in his representation of the Mephistophelean archetype.

Keywords: *Mefistofele*, Boito, *Scherzo Strumentale*, Negation

The confrontation between light and darkness, between good and evil, has preoccupied the worlds of philosophy, literature, and the arts for centuries. A vast area of this confrontation has inspired, in various forms, the evolution of the Faustian myth from the Renaissance to the present day. In this evolution, the opera *Mefistofele*, composed by Arrigo Boito (1842-1918) and strongly influenced by European cultural trends in the second half of the 19th century, adds important nuances to the theme of the fatal pact.

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Boito, as the sole author of the musical composition and libretto, argues in *Prologo nel teatro*³ that the subject is inexhaustible because it is universal and eternal. Although the work is based on Goethe's literary work, an important aspect that paves the way for the interpretation of an essential component of the Faustian myth in the opera is the condensed presentation of the character Mephistopheles, who is of equal importance to the main character, Faust. Thus, Boito explains: "Just as Faust's type is inexhaustible, so is that of Mephistopheles. Mephistopheles is as old as the Bible and Aeschylus. Mephistopheles is the serpent in Eden, he is Prometheus' eagle. Mephistopheles is the doubt that generates knowledge, he is the evil that generates good. Everywhere you find the spirit of denial, there is Mephistopheles. Job has a Mephistopheles called Satan, Homer has one called Thersites, Shakespeare has one called Falstaff... Mephistopheles is the incarnation of that eternal *No* in the face of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness."⁴ Boito's description of the Mephistophelean character is valuable because it can provide the key to his own interpretation of the Faustian myth.

The Mephistophelean figure has appeared in human culture since ancient times, which demonstrates its fundamental nature. With the first Faust came the first Mephisto. Also, just like Faust, he appears in many forms. These are shaped by the Faustian traits of the character he supports, and from this we can conclude that the Faust-Mephisto relationship is organic, interdependent. For Faust to exist, Mephisto is needed, and for Mephisto to exist, Faust is needed. Mephisto's dominant trait is the spirit of denial, but he is also "the doubt that generates knowledge, the evil that generates good."⁵ Ultimately, through his actions, Mephisto helps Faust choose the right path, giving the impression that he is helping him get back on the right track, even if, at first glance, this seems paradoxical.

³ *The Prologue in the Theatre* is a relatively short dialogic text, approximately six pages in length, which, although dense and concentrated, provides essential information about the way Arrigo Boito relates to the Faustian myth. The characters involved are a Theatre Critic, a Spectator, and the Author. The text, which was not designed for stage performance, has a clearly explanatory purpose: the composer intended to anticipate and clarify certain aspects that he assumed the audience would discuss after the performance. For this reason, the prologue takes on a controversial tone. It contains both questions that readers of the libretto or spectators of the opera might raise, as well as the answers that the author himself wished to provide. Thus, Boito took advantage of the publication of the libretto two months prior to the 1868 premiere to offer, through the *Prologue in the Theatre*, a presentation of the reasons that led him to undertake the creation of this unconventional opera.

⁴ Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele, Opera in un Prologo e cinque atti da rappresentarsi al R. Teatro della Scala*, Milano, Ricordi, p. 36-37.

⁵ Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele, Opera in un Prologo e cinque atti da rappresentarsi al R. Teatro della Scala*, Milano, Ricordi p. 36.

Mephistopheles' influence can be viewed from two main perspectives. On the one hand, we can see Mephisto as a separate, external entity that tries to influence Faust and lead him down the desired path. On the other hand, Mephistopheles can be conceived as part of Faust's inner world. It is possible to consider him a representative of Faust's repressions, which appear at the turning point the hero experiences at the beginning of the work, either as his shadow or, from a manichean perspective, as Faust's dark half. Although this interpretation – psychological, we might say today – was not widespread at the time of the opera's appearance, the seeds of it were present. An early stage of this approach can also be found in the romantic way of relating to the inner universe of the human being, with its various levels, such as, for example, the situation of the double, called *Doppelgänger* in German. *Doppelgänger* initially consisted of the supposed existence of an identical double of a person, but then it also took on the meaning of the existence of an inner double, a hidden side. It is important to note that, throughout the work, multiple perspectives on the relationship between Faust and Mephistopheles are presented. Boito conceptualizes the essence of the human being as driven by a profound thirst for universal and eternal knowledge, drawn to the moral dualities of existence, and engaged in a continual search for absolute and ultimate spiritual fulfillment.⁶

The analysis will now turn to the moment of Mephistopheles' first appearance in the performance, prior to the pact he establishes with God. He makes his own presentation in the *Prologue* that precedes the work, a fragment in which, through the entwinement of music with dramaturgical elements, the composer manages to reach the metaphysical background of the birth of the Universe. The music of the *Prologue* evokes a sense of cosmic resonance, within which the forces of Good and Evil emerge through a profound and intense confrontation, later finding expression in the characters of the opera. The fragment dedicated to the appearance of Mephistopheles is the *Scherzo strumentale* whose bouncy orchestral introduction, full of sharp humor, prepares the appearance of the devil.

The importance of this section lies in the fact that it introduces the character who gives the work its name and dominates the entire performance. He is supported by a musical portrayal that reflects key aspects of his characterization, elements that can be recognized throughout the musical piece, especially in moments where the presence of evil is suggested. An example of such a fragment is presented below. The following bars are taken from the opening of the orchestral introduction.

⁶ Edoardo Buroni, *Arrigo Boito librettista, Un'indagine linguistica tra testo poetico e testo musicale*, Università degli Studi di Milano, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Dipartimento di Filologia Moderna, 2008-2009, p. 112.

Allegretto
♩ = 144

p secche
p

Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, Prologue, Scene II, m. 1-4.

Mephistopheles' entrance is accompanied by a radical musical contrast to the ecstatic atmosphere emanating from the forces of Good at the end of the first part of the *Prologue*. The auditory backdrop against which the character makes his appearance induces the energy of universal negation, through a mysterious play of shadows and sound "sparks", starting with a perfect, harmonic fifth, executed in a rudimentary, repetitive rhythm (anapest formed on beats 1 and 2) by horns and bassoons, followed by a response from the flute and piccolo with a short sound in the high register. The orchestral density for this moment composed in *F major* is considerably reduced, and the indications for the instrumental attack becomes *secche*, *staccatissimo*, in the short, fast melodic passages also constructed from perfect intervals. The fleeting transitions from the wind instruments to the string instruments draw the orchestra into a subtle game of contrasts. Repeated accents on the third beat, in a 3/8 meter, together with the *tenuto* marking on the second beat, contribute to the disruption of the order normally imposed by the ternary meter.

The third beat stands out prominently also because it is taken over from the horns and bassoons by the piccolo and solo flute; the high notes, adorned with short appoggiaturas, flicker delicately yet piercingly, anticipating the flashes of satanic fires that are encountered repeatedly, such as the flames along the road to Mount Brocken in *La notte del Sabba*.

The instrumental dialogue then shapes a lively figuration that comes to a halt in an open, ascending passage, interrupted on a weak beat with a questioning character. This figure is repeated sequentially, giving rise to a series of successive leaps in the opposite direction, accompanied by a contrapuntal line built from alternating descending and ascending scalar motifs.

⁷ All musical examples are taken from Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, *Opera in un Prologo e cinque atti da rappresentarsi al R. Teatro della Scala*, Milano, Ricordi.

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E.g. 2



Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, Prologue, Scene II, m. 9-12. from A

The musical material presented in this way conveys a sense of disorder, while the *staccatissimo* articulation lends an apparently light, almost humorous character to the musical discourse; upon closer inspection, however, profound sarcasm emerges. This rhetoric suggests a breaking of order, a forcing of boundaries both in the structure of the microcosm and the macrocosm.

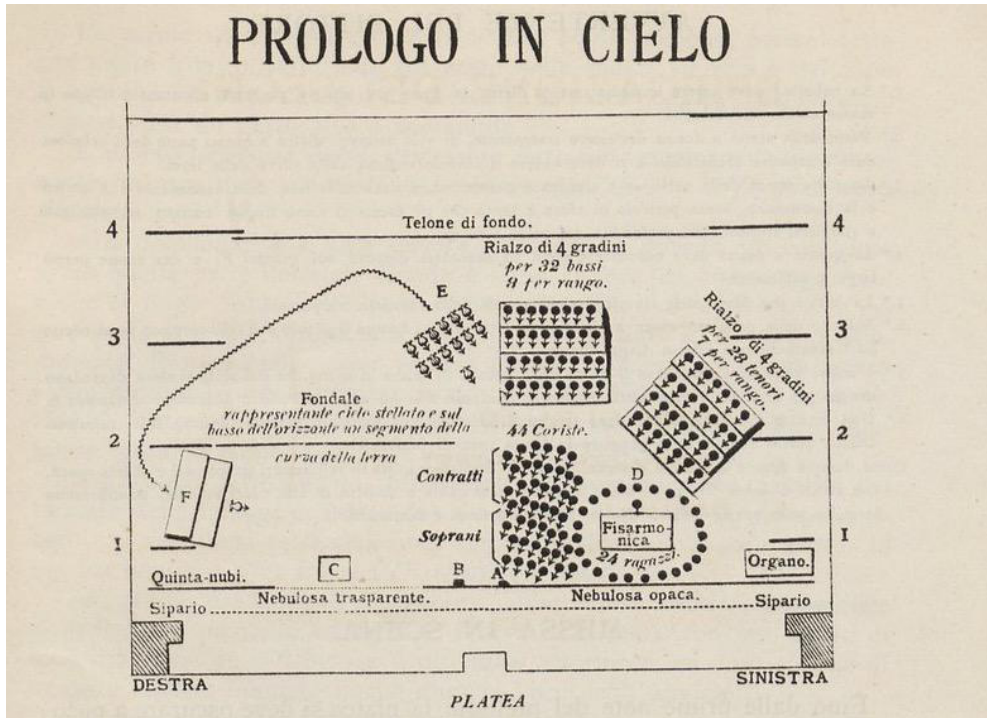
When Mephistopheles appears, the harmonic play repeatedly oscillates between major and minor with the tonic on the note A. The placement on the major chord at the end of the phrase seems like a joke, because it comes after a suspense created by the pauses that seem to stop time in its tracks. The harmonic content of this oscillation is part of the dualism that represents one of the threads with which Mephistopheles' garment is woven, and such a musical moment was chosen for his entrance on stage.

E.g. 3



Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, Prologue, Scene II, m. 21-24. from A

His profile can be glimpsed in the darkness, alone and loving this solitude. Mephistopheles' relegation to the shadows during the glorification of God by the Heavenly Phalanxes appears to be consistent with one of the possible etymologies of his name: *mé fotofilés*, meaning enemy of light.



Giulio Ricordi, *Disposizione scenica per l'opera Mefistofele di Arrigo Boito*, Ed. Ricordi, p. 5.

The *Disposizione scenica*⁸ accurately determines the location where the character will appear, raised one meter above the stage with the aid of a trapdoor. Mephistopheles appears in the center of the space created by the image of the nebula, slightly to the left (point C in the drawing above), creating the impression, at first, of a phantom emerging from darkness. The uncertainty created by the apparent harmonic and rhythmic indecision, as well as the semi-darkness, contribute to Mephistopheles' lack of contour in the first moments of his appearance. In the same line of thought, Boito wants him to be static, almost immobile, with only a few facial expressions revealing his thoughts during the dialogue that follows.

⁸ *Disposizione scenica* is a volume of over one hundred pages in which the composer meticulously records detailed instructions regarding the stage arrangement of the set, the characters, and the crowds, as well as their attitudes and appearance.

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The short orchestral introduction preceding the moment of his appearance contains many of the elements that characterize the protagonist's behavior, including the mocking style in which he will deliver his speech. The relaxed atmosphere shifts with the terrifying expression of the diminished seventh chord built on the seventh scale degree, followed by the dominant seventh chord of *D major*, which appears simultaneously with Mephistopheles' first ironic reply, imitating the Heavenly Phalanxes. Here too, in this satanic recitation of a religious text, we can observe an aspect of the dualism that characterizes Boito's thinking and work. Also, as we learn from the *Disposizione scenica*, Mephistopheles is dressed in a black cloak, similar to those worn by clergy, on whose hem he steps firmly, a gesture that highlights his contempt for sacred symbols. The auditory effect created by the descending intonation of a major third – starting from the fundamental of the diminished chord on the seventh scale degree to the fundamental of the dominant chord (*D major*) – by the ponderous, weighty bass voice gives a deeply derogatory meaning to the manner of address.

Mephistopheles stares intently at the bright upper part of the nebula, uttering his first words after entering the scene: *Ave, signor*. These words come as a mocking echo to the praise of God offered by the angelic voices that preceded him.

E.g. 5

MEFISTOFELE (coi piè fermi sul lembo del suo mantello)

Lento

A - - ve, Si - gnor.

Lento

mf

a piacere

Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, Prologue, Scene II, m. 25-28. from A

Mephistopheles sings the first part of the monologue, accompanied by the familiar musical motifs that contributed to the preparation of his appearance. He takes up the playful atmosphere created by the orchestra and, adding a touch of irony, apologizes for the lack of elevation in his language and appearance, which cannot be compared to that of the Cherubs. The section is written in

D major, in 3/8 time signature. The vocal line is full of vigor and, due to its instrumental character, impresses with its bravura. The lively and energetic theme, taken from the *scherzo strumentale*, develops through the sequential-ascending repetition of the first phrase, at a distance of a fourth, thus giving strength and vitality to this moment. The interrogative rhythmic-melodic motifs, with their downward arc, beginning and ending on the weak beat, enhance the metrical accents in the following measures, attributing determination and a fighting spirit to the character. The mocking tone of Mephistopheles' speech is very well highlighted at the end of this part when, by means of a *rallentando* that seems to stop time in its tracks, the word "high" – which coincides with the *D* sound, the highest note so far – the irony of the cherubim being suggested by the major-minor dualism in this section.

E.g. 6

M

leggermente rall. *a tempo* *rall.* *a tempo*

che in-ghir-lan - da i cri - ni degli al - ti che - ru - bi - ni;

leggermente rall. *col canto* *a tempo*

Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, Prologue, Scene II, m. 41-44. from A

Also, in contrast to those who praised God in a musically balanced speech, Mephistopheles sings ironically in twenty lines of paired rhymes, the alternation between hendecasyllabic lines and seven-syllable lines creating a sense of imbalance.

*Ave, signor, perdona se il mio gergo
 Si lascia un po' da tergo
 Le superne teodie del paradiso;
 Perdona se il mio viso
 Non porta il raggio che inghirlanda i crini
 Degli alti cherubini:*⁹

⁹ Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, Prologo, 4 atti ed Epilogo, Milano, Ricordi, 1944, p. 8.

An interesting aspect of Mephistopheles' response to the heavenly song is that he sarcastically asks for forgiveness three times, as a counterpoint to the one reciting *Kyrie eleison*. Boito later used this technique of distorting liturgical aspects in the development of the character Iago in Verdi's opera *Otello*, for which he wrote the libretto.

Mephistopheles also apologizes for the fact that he might "let out a whistle." This is an element that Boito introduced in his opera, as it is not present in Goethe's work. While Goethe's Mephisto limited himself to verbal sarcasm, Mephistopheles' whistling adds a more pronounced note of irony and even impertinence to the character. It is a gesture that amplifies the insult and emphasizes the defiant attitude.

Moreover, he must possess the artistry of a master rhetorician, as "the linguistic and metalinguistic aspects are an essential part of the character."¹⁰ His persuasive tactics often hinge on insinuating, versatile language, coupled with rigorous argumentation. In this vein, Mephistopheles hypocritically apologizes for his "jargon", which he presents as inadequate when measured against the elevated discourse of heavenly beings. The same applies to his whistling: though he frames it as a flaw requiring apology, it functions as a calculated instrument of manipulation.

Whistling is also a form of protest that lends itself perfectly to the spirit of denial. Boito explained the role of whistling as early as 1864 in the *Figaro* magazine, where he shows that whistling is a manifestation that humans have had since ancient times, have now, and will continue to have as long as they exist: "... women learned it from the song of the first nightingale, men from the hissing of the snake, and Joseph, Moses, Samson, David, and Job were all actors who were more or less whistled at... No one should be surprised then that the whistling of our first parents has come down to us and that today it deafens us in our theaters with such vehemence that until the last day that two human lips exist, whistling will exist on earth..."¹¹ He then justifies the existence of whistling as a counterbalance to applause: "If we have two loud palms to applaud the wonders of beauty, it is fair and honest that we have a pair of lips to whistle the clumsiness of ugliness."¹² Even if the context here is not his work *Mephistopheles*, the ideas can be applied exactly.

Glory, O Lord, forgive if my poor speech, / Falls short of the sublime / The heavenly Hymns
the choirs sing above; / Forgive if my face fails to display / The radiance that crowns the
golden hair / Of the high cherubim (it.) [tr. n.].

¹⁰ Edoardo Buroni, *Arrigo Boito librettista, Un'indagine linguistica tra testo poetico e testo musicale*, Università degli Studi di Milano, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Dipartimento di Filologia Moderna, 2008-2009, p. 149.

¹¹ Piero Nardi, *Arrigo Boito, Tutti gli scritti*, A. Mondadori Editore, 1942, p. 1113.

¹² *Ibidem*.

As for laughter, it is clearly not something befitting heavenly beings. Although Mephistopheles provokes them, they will not stoop to his level to laugh or mock him, as this would constitute a victory for Mephistopheles.

Mephistopheles then continues, minimizing both the importance of man and of the Earth, over which man considers himself master. The orchestra plays a melancholic waltz in *B flat major* – a moving and warm melody, performed by the low strings. The waltz seems like a sigh, a distant echo of joys and deeply human dramas, gathered in a bouquet whose richness of events, ideas, and feelings Mephistopheles tramples decisively and emphatically. He recites harsh, devastating verses, *recto tono*, repeated in rhythmic formulas that require metrical alternation. The mocking text is based on hemiola and, in contrast to the *legatissimo* of the melody sung by the orchestra in *pianissimo*, the singer attacks each note *tenuto* and with force. At this point, Mephistopheles says proudly, pointing to the curvature of the Earth: *Il Dio piccin, della piccina terra*¹³. He also compares man to an insignificant insect, but one that shows “superb vanity” when it sings its “trill in the grass.”

As for the “trill”, it presents a particularly intriguing element. In the older Faustian legends, Mefistopheles’ arrival was foreshadowed by the sound of jingling, which signaled his impending presence. Boito adopted this auditory motif to mark Mefistopheles’ appearance, employing the jingling effect in the orchestra – specifically through the flute and piccolo – during the character’s first entrance. The trill, in a sense, echoes this jingling, and by attributing it to the human figure in this passage, Mefistopheles imbues it with sinister connotations, aligning it with the forces of Evil. The orchestral accompaniment disrupts the waltz and now merges with Mefistopheles’ discourse, depicting the erratic leaps of an insignificant insect – a cricket. Rapid sixteenth-note figures, spaced by repeated ascending octave intervals and returning to the third, trace the hesitant, faltering path of the tiny creature in contrast to humanity. The orchestral depiction continues with two trills, drawn both from the sounds of nature and from the Faustian legends. These trills serve as an auditory bridge between the natural world and the supernatural, reinforcing the character’s diabolical presence.

What Mephistopheles attacks with fervor is one of the most precious human attributes: Reason. Boito gives this moment special importance in the *Disposizione scenica*, asking the soloist to use all his vocal power, like thunder, starting from the moment when he labels man as “conceited dust”, in order to strongly emphasize that Reason is what makes man consider himself above other creatures and is the faculty that helps him investigate

¹³ The petty God of the petty earth (it.)(tr. n.).

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the mysteries of the universe. Mephistopheles compares it to an illusion produced by drunkenness. The impact is all the greater as the two words, *illusione* and *ragione*¹⁴ rhyme. The juxtaposition of the Mephistophelian trill with this mockery of human Reason in the music is particularly compelling. The word *Ragione* (Reason) is uttered starkly, twice, each time on a descending perfect fifth, accompanied by the strident, sforzando trill of the piccolo. The repetition of the word *Ragione* – now a minor third lower and set against an unstable, modulating harmonic backdrop – evokes the human fall from grace as depicted through the diabolical lens. Mephistopheles expresses his utter contempt with a menacing interjection, delivered with vocal force in the acute *F* of the bass voice. At this moment, the orchestra recalls the opening interval of the *Prologue* – the octave – which resurfaces in the lower strings as Mephistopheles addresses the Divinity. As illustrated in the example below, the octave precedes the direct address to the *Maestro Divino*, underscoring that these two opposing forces are now locked in dialogue.

E.g. 7

M

Lento $\text{♩} = 48$

Ah! Si, Ma - es - tro di - vi - no,

Lento $\text{♩} = 48$

pp legatissimo

Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, Prologue, Scene II, m. 41-43. from C

The acoustic image shifts abruptly: the *tempo* slows to *lento*, the dynamics diminish precipitously, as the recitative concludes Mephistopheles' exposition. In a muffled, fading sonority, his voice growing ever more subdued, Mephistopheles nears the end of his speech, maliciously revealing that the degradation of human existence affects even him. Man has fallen so low that the demon can no longer be bothered to tempt him into evil. This is musically rendered through the vocal line's descending melody, which sinks to the low

¹⁴ Illusion and reason (it.) [tr. n.].

notes of the bass voice (*B \flat* , *B \flat*), while the accompaniment plays altered chords with an oscillating chromatic motion in the treble (*D-D \sharp -E-E \flat -D-D \sharp -E-E \flat -D*). The effect underscores the spiritual and moral descent Mephistopheles describes, as harmony and melody dissolve into instability.

Following this criticism of human reason – which man wields to survive and to impose meaning on his existence, oscillating between darkness and light, good and evil – Mephistopheles delivers an almost human admission: he lacks the motivation to tempt humanity further. Within this observation lies a trace of irony, as his words are accompanied by the same musical motif from his first appearance and from the moment he mockingly apologized for his “inferior” language compared to the “exalted celestial beings.” This passage erupts in a sudden *forte*, brief yet explosive – three measures of triplets, energetic and brimming with vitality, abruptly disrupting the somber recitative. An ascending octave leap, followed by a descent to the fifth, both articulated in a punctuated, emphatic rhythm, once again evoke sarcastic polemics. The musical gesture underscores Mephistopheles’ derisive detachment, reinforcing his diabolical wit.

E.g. 8

Come prima

di ten - tar - lo al mal.

Come prima

Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*, Prologue, Scene II, m. 48-50. from C

For a diabolical figure with chivalrous pretensions, it is beneath him to tempt one who has already fallen. Though his nature compels him toward evil, this universal wretchedness no longer brings him joy. More than that, he feigns innocence, as if he bore no responsibility for humanity’s downfall. A notable distinction arises here between Goethe and Boito: while the former employs the verb “to torment”, Boito chooses “to tempt”, lending Mephistopheles a subtler, less radical embodiment of evil.

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OPERA AS THE THEME FOR A MUSICAL-THEATRICAL OPUS

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SUMMARY. The article examines special theme of the opera genre, associated with the relationship between music and words in it. It became an impetus for the reformist aspirations of composers, while simultaneously revealing another hypostasis of opera as a special system of professional and psychological relations between participants in a creative project. The involvement of a genre-axiological approach, which is aimed at identifying the process of reassessment of values at each stage of the development of musical art, allows us to comprehend the originality of *Capriccio* by R. Strauss. The composer's latest composition appears as a rethinking of previous experience against the background of operas by F. L. Gassmann, A. Salieri and W. A. Mozart with various versions of a similar theme. The inconsistency with the concept of "chamber quality", the absence of a plot and character development in the traditional sense, the unresolved content motive of choice demonstrates the author's individual concept, which does not fall under the established genre-style models.

Keywords: the relationship between music and words, opera as a professional-psychological phenomenon, genre-axiological approach, reassessment of values, compositions by R. Strauss, F. L. Gassmann, A. Salieri, W. A. Mozart.

Introduction

The origins and early development of opera shaped its genetic code: the interaction of various art forms and the inseparable connection between music and words. While the former provided the conditions for the genre's existence and identity, the latter played a decisive role in opera's self-definition within the system of theatrical-stage performances and in overcoming the crises that inevitably arise when cultural paradigms change.

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The path taken by opera has been reflected in encyclopaedic publications, monographs, and articles devoted to the creative work of outstanding composers and touching on a wide range of topics. The works of this kind served as a foundation for the research of subsequent generations. However, studied in various aspects as a sociocultural phenomenon, opera has also emerged as a unique system of professional and psychological relationships, without which the realization of a creative project is impossible. This refers to the partnership between the composer and the poet / librettist, singers with the authors of the composition and with each other, with the impresario / theatre director, and so on. The details of the “inner life” of opera as a functionally organized structure are known from a kaleidoscopic array of incidental observations by musicologists. For example, composers’ rework of arias at the request of singers, their rivalries, the need to take into account the specific capabilities of opera groups or the demands of theatre management, not to mention the tensions that arise between the composers and the lyricists. All this integral part of what is called opera typically remains outside the established notions of the genre and is preserved or perceived as anecdotes, in the broad sense of the word. Amusing stories that evoke smiles today reflect the far from simple world of theatrical life. It was precisely this world that inspired composers’ imaginations to create operas whose content revealed a different side of the genre’s existence and explored problems hidden from the public in assessing the existing traditions or implementing conceived ideas.

These reflections were prompted by R. Strauss’s last musical and stage composition *Capriccio* (1940/1941), subtitled as “a conversation play for music.” The German composer and conductor’s supreme professionalism and expertise in opera theatre, his embrace of diverse subject matter, and his openness to experimentation and innovation allow us to appreciate *Capriccio* as a romantic poeticization of operatic and theatrical life. While the Prologue *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916) presents backstage life in an ironic and comic light, in *Capriccio* the recurring theme of choosing between love for music and love for poetry imbues the simple plot with the aura of an inspired story. Even a quick glance at R. Strauss’s operatic legacy evokes surprise at such an unusual “summary” of the path travelled.

The last opera is striking in its uncharacteristic elegiac quality. It is undisturbed by the young authors’ attacks on the seasoned theatre director, by parodying the clichéd ways of Italian opera, or by diminishing the operatic plot’s pathos with the details of everyday life and relationships. It is precisely this quality that imbues *Capriccio* with nostalgic notes of reminiscence. It seems this quality led R. Bletschacher to write of *Capriccio* as of the great composer’s farewell to everything he held dear as a musician, even to his life. In his opinion, “this is not simply R. Strauss’s farewell. It is the farewell of an era. During the

most horrific desecration of Western culture, surrounded by the nightmares of barbarism, an old man, unprotected from all the weapons of secular power, attempts to defend himself in the name of an eternal devotion to tolerance and humanity.”²

In the collection of critical reviews of the premieres of R. Strauss's operas, the last section summarizes the assessments of the composer's creative work existing at that time and his reaction to the position of critics.³ Pointing out the mistakes of many authors, F. Messmer notes that the composer was considered either a modernist or an artist who took a “step back” in *Der Rosenkavalier* or resorted to unexpected experiments, as in *Ariadne auf Naxos*.⁴ Despite this, the experience of direct perception of the master's operatic compositions, the author emphasizes, imprints their story as a cultural fact. Complementing this thesis, we can say that owing to this, musical history appears not in statics, but in the dynamics of changes in artistic and aesthetic guidelines and evaluation criteria. Against this background, the last two decades can be called a time of reassessment of the legacy and creative position of R. Strauss.

In this regard, G. Brosche's monograph, in which the author seeks to characterize all of the composer's works, is instructive. He prefaces them with an examination of the musician's personality, an overview of the created work, the stages of his life and career, and the current cultural and musical situation, by giving a vivid title of “Richard Strauss and his ‘competition’” to the section.⁵ This comprehensive nature of the research task explains the absence of detailed analyses of the operatic compositions themselves, although their substantial list is reasonably limited. The information is primarily limited to the story of their creation and the composer's intentions, a clarification of the orchestral composition, and a detailed description of the plot with quotations of the characters' lines. The research approach chosen by the scholar does not detract from the value of his monograph, which allows one to imagine the composer's musical and stage legacy in its diversity of narrative motifs and genre references.

L. Lütteken takes a different perspective on the life and creative work of R. Strauss in the short but rich in content book.⁶ The composer's peculiar

² Bletschacher, Richard. *Apollons Vermächtnis: vier Jahrhunderte Oper*. Wien, Ueberreuter, 1994, p. 437.

³ Messmer, Franzpeter. *Kritiken Zu Den Uraufführungen Der Bühnenwerke von Richard Strauss*. Pfaffenhofen, W. Ludwig, 1989, p. 316–320.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 318

⁵ Brosche, Günter. *Richard Strauss. Werk und Leben*. Wien, Edition Steinbauer, 2008, p. 41.

⁶ Lütteken, Laurenz. *Richard Strauss: Die Opern. Ein musikalischer Werkführer*. München, Verlag C. H. Beck, 2013.

“exclusion” from the general artistic and aesthetic processes of the last century’s music, due to his music’s close connection to tonality, prompts the musicologist to examine the composer’s contradictory image that has emerged in the scholarly literature. For some, the scholar writes, R. Strauss “betrayed modernity,” while for others, he “embodies a musical mastery rooted in the Bavarian tradition, which, with this understanding of craft, rightfully distanced itself from the upheavals of the modern era and consciously rejected them.”⁷

From today’s perspective, the composer’s attitude toward the past of the culture appears as a reflection on the long path of development, not in the form of established and therefore predetermined forms, genres, methods of work with thematism, and so on, but in the constant process of transforming what was already discovered. In this context, his “farewell,” like the “farewell of an era,” should be understood as the completed cycle of metamorphoses of the archetypes that defined the musical and creative consciousness of the New Age. This extended historical period demonstrates not only the consolidation of what has been discovered, but also the plasticity of the transition to a new quality. L. Lütteken writes about the search for a “new form of plasticity” in the understanding of J. Goethe and explains: “Clarity in the sense of accessibility for understanding, dialogue and communication was meant.”⁸ Therefore, according to the researcher, R. Strauss preserves tonality “as a code of temporary sociability.”⁹ Developing his observations further, the author points to the appearance of “gestural music” in the first compositions (*Feuersnot*, *Salome*, *Der Rosenkavalier*), understanding by this dance music that “can and should be communicative even beyond words (and yet not without them).”¹⁰ The consequence of such new plasticity is the rejection of any genre norms, and “each opera appears as an individual, inexpressible form of such brightness.”¹¹

At the same time, some other ideas of J. Goethe have shown their relevance for understanding the relationship between modern musical thinking and cultural experience. In particular, the well-known work of Goethe-nature philosopher *The Metamorphosis of Plants* allows us to comprehend the transformation of the initial thesis when artists repeatedly turn to similar plot motifs during a certain historical period. The involvement of a genre-axiological approach, which is aimed at identifying the process of reassessment of values at each stage of the development of musical art, including within the framework

⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

⁸ Lütteken, Laurenz. *Richard Strauss: Die Opern. Ein musikalischer Werkführer*. München, Verlag C. H. Beck, 2013, p. 11.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 12.

¹¹ Ibid.

of composers' creativity, helps to understand the essence of innovations in the era of changing the artistic paradigm not only with a frank rejection of tradition, but also with the preservation of its obvious features.

Results

The author's preface to the score of *Capriccio* contains a veiled hint about the meaningful idea chosen by R. Strauss. We are talking about the libretto of the abbot de Casti *Primo le parole, dopo la musica*, which is mentioned in connection with the reformation of Ch. W. Gluck. Giving advice to performers, the maestro asks to pay attention to the importance of words in his composition and demands clear pronunciation.¹² More detailed explanations can be found in the monograph by G. Brosche. Citing information from the composer's long correspondence with St. Zweig, he points to the writer's proposed different version of the title than de Casti's – *Prima la musica, poi le parole*.¹³ Expanding the emerging parallels, the scientist names the opera of the same name by A. Salieri and *Der Schauspieldirektor* by W. A. Mozart. Among other interesting details, R. Strauss mentions works by E. T. A. Hoffmann that are similar in their problems. The relevance of this theme for the famous romantic writer is reinforced by his composing practice and experience as a musical director of an opera group. Thus, the accumulated facts testify to the relevance of questions regarding the essence of opera as a special professional and psychological phenomenon, the integrity of which is based on the co-creation of artists of different professions and roles, starting from the 18th century.

According to the preserved information, one of the first references to this issue can be considered the composition *L'opera seria* (1769) by F. L. Gassmann, the revival of which is demonstrated by the performance practice of the present. Owing to this, the past appears as a process of searching for the new through rethinking / reassessment of the established. A similar trend can be traced in musicology, since the experience of studying the accumulated opera legacy allows us to evaluate the composer's achievements in a broad artistic and aesthetic context. As an example, we will cite a thorough article by L. Tufano¹⁴, which, first of all, provides brief information about the

¹² Strauss, Richard. *Capriccio*. Ein Konversationsstück für Musik in einem Aufzug von Clemens Krauss und Richard Strauss, op. 85, Orchester Partitur. [Musical score]. Mainz, B. Schotts Söhne, 1942.

¹³ Brosche, Günter. *Richard Strauss. Werk und Leben*. Wien, Edition Steinbauer, 2008, p. 201.

¹⁴ Tufano, Lucio. "Sulle Tracce Di Oranzebe. *L'Opera Seria* Di Calzabigi E Gassmann (Vienna, 1769)." *Antonio Boroni E Il Suo Dramma Giocoso "L'Amore in Musica"*, edited by Milada Jonášová, Praga, Český Krumlov, 2016, pp. 137–164.

availability of primary sources for *L'opera seria* by F. L. Gassmann / R. Calzabigi and modern performances. However, the research idea is focused on revealing the genre features of this composition as one of the examples of the so-called metatheatre characteristic of the Baroque era. The presence of two plots, the combination of comedy and opera seria, which is supposedly inscribed in a comic frame, the close interaction between them due to the participation of the leading characters, the inconsistency of the chosen role and timbre, the choice of names with meaning for the characters in order to mark their fate or nature, etc. are aimed at discrediting the established tradition of opera seria, its "stilted" plots, frozen vocal forms that did not correspond to the dynamics of the course of stage events, and the difficult position of those who sought to create a new opera performance. But from a historical distance this polemic between the effectiveness of the comic and the pathos of the "serious" is perceived as a struggle for the renewal of the existing tradition beyond the declaration of reformist ideas (which were emphasized by Ch. W. Gluck / R. Calzabigi in *Alceste*, staged in 1767 in Vienna). At the same time, the "meta-" technique allowed F. L. Gassmann / R. Calzabigi to critically illuminate the relationships formed in the theatre and opera environment between members of a creative group gathered to implement a certain project. Actually, comic opera, drawing on the experience of *commedia dell'arte*, full of improvisational inventions, clashes and misunderstandings in outlining masked characters, revealed the genre multifunctionality. At the plot level in *L'opera seria* it manifests itself in revealing the flaws of human nature, at the compositional and dramaturgical level – in avoiding statics due to the activation of the ensemble and the approach of a mosaic change in the stage situation, the rejection of the traditionally interpreted piece structure, and the reliance on a stage free from clear structural regularities. F. L. Gassmann demonstrates the jewel-like perfection of the composer's writing, adhering to the features inherent in Baroque opera: the breadth of cantilena phrases, brilliant virtuoso technique, flexibility of recitative-aria expressions, accuracy of the portrait image of the character. However, attention to the word and acting create that "dissonance" of meanings, through which the grotesque is generated, and with it the comic nature of the situations and the lowering of the high tone of "serious" opera.

The range of problems accumulated in the opera house, both purely genre-related and professional-human, raised in *L'opera seria* was reflected in two subsequent compositions, written by order of Emperor Joseph II for a holiday in honour of the Governor-General of the Netherlands. These are the operas by A. Salieri / G. Casti *Prima la musica e poi le parole* and by W. A. Mozart / J. G. Stephani *Der Schauspieldirektor*. Their competition-premieres took place on February 7, 1786 in the exquisitely decorated Orangery of

Schönbrunn Castle in Vienna. It is believed that the general theme and comic genre were suggested by the customer and were supposed to reflect theatrical life behind the scenes. At the same time, a comparison of Italian opera buffa and German singing play was envisaged, that is, the emphasis in the genre aspect compared to the composition by F. L. Gassmann was transferred to the plane of national priorities. Without retelling the generally known information, we will focus only on the authors' disclosure of the everyday life of everyone involved in the creation of "Her Majesty Opera."

The unity of the theme determines the attention to various substantive moments while maintaining the dependence of the operatic composition on the performers. Therefore, their struggle for engagement and recognition of their primacy in art is invariably accompanied by a clash of interests. A. Salieri / G. Casti focus on the motive of finding agreement between the composer and the poet in the conditions of the need to write an opera in four days, which, firstly, excludes any possibility of a creative approach to a new composition, pushing the authors to combine random poetic lines to the finished music according to the principle of component correspondence, and secondly, reflects the established dependence of artists on unexpected offers. W. A. Mozart / J. G. Stephani follow the path of showing similar situations during the casting of actors and opera singers for a new theatrical project: competition, patronage, bargaining for payment for participation in performances, belittling the advantages of other applicants, etc. Therefore, the action is divided into a purely "dramatic" one, when the actresses and their partners demonstrate their skill in dialogues of different nature, and the one of a "singing play", which combines singing with spoken lines. The turn of the authors of *Der Schauspieldirektor* to well-known texts refers to the existing practice of the so-called pasticcio, predicts the recognizability of the content, the nature of the passage and the roles of the characters. Similarly, the lyrical and insightful Ariette (No. 1) with its motifs of separation and resolute devotion is contrasted with the joyful and inspired, full of love Rondo (No. 2).¹⁵ However, if the reconciliation of the applicants for the participation in the performance occurs in *Prima la musica e poi le parole* due to the recognition by the prima donna of opera seria of the skill and breadth of the acting role of the young representative of opera buffa, then in W. A. Mozart's singing play only the director's threat to abandon his plan brings everyone to their senses. One way or another, all the considered 18th-century operas end with a finale-reconciliation.

¹⁵ Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Der Schauspieldirektor*. Klavierauszug mit Text von Aug. Horn. [Musical score]. Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, [ca. 1890]. Retrieved from: [https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/1/1b/IMSLP846808-PMLP56725-Mozart_-_Der_Schauspieldirektor_\(Vocal_Score,_Horn\).pdf](https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/1/1b/IMSLP846808-PMLP56725-Mozart_-_Der_Schauspieldirektor_(Vocal_Score,_Horn).pdf) (accessed 21 Feb. 2026).

Against this background, the emerging parallels with *Capriccio* by R. Strauss, where the creation and staging of an opera for the birthday of Countess Madeleine is envisaged, only enhance its unique originality. Despite the clashes between the poet Olivier and the musician Flamand, each of whom considers his art to be the most important, moreover, the poet does not hide his dissatisfaction with the setting of his sonnet to music, which “destroys” the harmony of rhyme he found, this confrontation is shrouded in feelings of love, rivalry for the hand and heart of a young beauty. So the problem of the final verdict in favour of music or words turns into a problem of Madeleine’s choice between the admirers. Actually, her reflections, although voiced in the last monologue of the heroine, who is looking for answers and is in a dialogue with her other “self” in the mirror, are the emotional and semantic core of the author’s concept. Therefore, the attacks with unflattering criticism on the director of the La Roche theatre, the Count’s rejection of the opera and his inclination towards the maids of Melpomene, the satirical illumination of the Italian duet, the story of the prompter Monsieur Taupe about his difficult life, etc. do not violate the lyrical-romantic mood of the composition. On the contrary, all such scenes, skilfully inlaid into the plot of the one-act composition and argued by the sequence of its development, are perceived like pages from an album or a cycle of novellas. By the way, the plot is also rethought, which, based on the established tradition, should provide for the presence of intrigue, the sequence of resolving the declared conflicts, the development of characters, the relationships of the heroes, etc. From this point of view, nothing happens in the plot of *Capriccio*. The competition of the poet and the musician in talent not for the sake of recognition or success with the public, but for the sake of conquering the female heart, which determines the exposition phase, undergoes a metamorphosis at the end of the opera due to the motive of choosing the beloved one. The change in the vector of meanings reveals the hidden symbolism of the two figures that are key to the main theme of the composition, because they personify the eternal question for the opera genre “Is the word or the music first?” – a question that has no answer due to the inseparable integrity of these two beginnings. It is no coincidence that the authors of *Capriccio* – R. Strauss and C. Krauss – put the insoluble dilemma, which gave rise to many disputes and initiated reformist searches, into the mouth of the Countess, who must decide on her choice: “I was covered with their love, like with a light net connected with poems and music. And must I break it? Haven’t I become entangled in it? Choose one? The generous Flamand with his wonderful eyes? The passionate Olivier with his extraordinary intelligence? <...> Choose one and lose the other. But maybe gains are always associated with losses? <...> Oh, reflection of Madeleine in love, can you give me

advice, can you help me to find an ending for their opera? And is there such an ending that would not be trivial?"¹⁶

The wheel of plot events made its turn, but has not exhausted its energy, putting three dots at the end, as if in anticipation of a new impetus to the movement. Therefore, it remains unknown who the Countess will prefer, because in his philosophical understanding of the essence of the opera R. Strauss creates a situation of constant intellectual and psychological balancing between the conditionally real relationships of the characters with their complex feelings and the virtual-mental process of understanding the inseparability of two essential components of the genre – words and music/music and words. Regardless of the emphases and chosen priorities, their relationship determined the paths of the development of the opera genre.

Conclusion

The genre-axiological approach proposed in the article allows us to comprehend the reassessment by the masters of the current cultural experience. For F. L. Gassmann / R. Calzabigi, the main thing was not only to show the moral and psychological deformation of the established relationships among performers, but also the exhaustion of the aesthetic and artistic principles of opera seria, for which the audience (conditionally present) was introduced into the second plot, which contributed to the failure of the new composition. A. Salieri / G. Casti decline a complex plot intrigue and a large number of characters. Flexible recitative mono-dialogical statements in the conditions of a dynamic stage do not exclude the use of cavatina, aria, rondo. The leading idea becomes the possibility of combining both "seria" and "buffa" in one composition. Finally, W. A. Mozart / J. G. Stephani emphasize the promising positions of the singing play, within which a natural interaction of the dramatic and musical principles is achieved. All the compositions, as a conclusion, affirm the ability of the participants in the opera project to reject their own ambitions for the sake of art.

In such a historical context, *Capriccio* appears as both a creative imitation of previous experience and a visualization by means of opera of the composer's reflections and response to one of the most polemical questions in the history of the genre's development. The result is the compositional uniqueness of the composition which in terms of time does not correspond to the concept of "chamber quality", and the unhurried stringing of individual scenes, connected only by the external circumstance of preparation for a

¹⁶ Strauss, Richard. *Capriccio*. Conversazione per musica in un atto. Libretto di Clemens Krauss e Richard Strauss. Versione italiana ritmica di Fedele D'Amico. Retrieved from: https://www.dicoseunpo.it/S_files/Capriccio.pdf (accessed 21 Feb. 2026), p. 67–68.

hypothetical performance, does not fall under any known opera model. Therefore, *Capriccio* by R. Strauss / C. Krauss draws a line under previous creative discussions and at the same time opens one of the new pages in the history of opera owing to an individual concept that contributed to the transformation / reassessment of genre forms.

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THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF MUSICAL CREATION: BETWEEN DATA AND MEANING (II)¹

SEBASTIAN ANDRONE-NAKANISHI² 

SUMMARY. Building on the conceptual framework established in Part I—where informational transfer, context, and the Informational Transfer Device (ITD) are defined within the composer–performer–audience circuit—Part II shifts the focus from what is transmitted to how meaning is produced through transmission. It examines the listener’s perceptual and cultural filters, as well as the performer’s interpretive agency, as mechanisms that reshape musical data and produce additional layers of significance. Part II develops a pragmatic vocabulary for this level of musical communication (including notions such as informational inertia and informational gravity) and considers its relevance for functional and syncretic arts, where music interacts with image, text, space, and interactivity. Finally, it proposes concrete applications for composers and performers—ranging from rehearsal strategies and improvisational constraints to programmatic framing and interdisciplinary workflows—showing how shaping informational flow may sharpen expressivity, support reception, and facilitate collaboration in film, theatre, installation, and video games.

Keywords: Meaning-Making in Music, Perceptual and Cultural Filters, Interpretive Agency, Informational Inertia and Gravity, Functional and Syncretic Arts, Applied Composition Strategies, Audience Reception and Framing, Interdisciplinary Collaboration.

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<https://studia.reviste.ubbcluj.ro/index.php/subbmusica/article/view/9357>

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1. The Informational Transfer Device (ITD): Composer, Performer, Audience

The Informational Transfer Device (ITD) represents an entity that functions simultaneously as both a transmitter and receiver of information, facilitating its exchange and transformation within an interactive process. The ITD can be any system capable of actively processing, filtering, and retransmitting information, contributing to its modification and reinterpretation based on the context in which it operates.

The ITD functions as a bidirectional network between the composer, performer, and audience, with each playing an active role in musical communication. In other words, in the musical process, information does not flow in a single direction but is continuously transferred and transformed between composer, performer, and audience. The composer creates and encodes musical ideas, the performer decodes and transmits them through expressivity and technique, while the audience perceives and reinterprets them through the lens of their own experiences and sensitivities. Thus, music becomes a living phenomenon, constantly shaped through this exchange of information.

This model explains how musical ideas are created, mediated, and reinterpreted, influencing one another within a complex circuit of meanings and sonic experiences. Consequently, music is not merely a singular act of creation but a continuous process of adaptation and reformulation.

The Composer as an Autonomous ITD

The composer is not merely a passive transmitter of musical information but an autonomous ITD, capable of translating conceptual or emotional ideas into coherent sonic structures. Inspired by diverse stimuli—whether images, narratives, historical contexts, or personal experiences—the composer encodes these elements into a musical language, which is then decoded by the performer and reinterpreted by the audience.

A striking example of how extramusical inspiration can be transformed into a complex orchestral language is *Circus Maximus* by John Corigliano. This work evokes the atmosphere of a Roman stadium, employing compositional techniques designed to convey not only the physical dimensions of the space but also the explosive energy of the events held there. By using spatially distributed orchestration, where instruments are arranged to create a sense of circular motion, Corigliano successfully translates architectural space into an acoustic experience while also capturing the decadent nature of Roman entertainment. The tension and violence of these spectacles are amplified through brutal sonorities, aggressive fanfares, and fragmented rhythms, reflecting the decline of a civilization.

In a different aesthetic realm, *Harmonielehre* by John Adams illustrates an approach in which the composer's mental imagery serves as the foundation for an expansive sonic construction. Inspired by a dream in which an oil tanker rises from the water and launches into space like a rocket, Adams translates this symbol of ascension into an orchestral work characterized by a constant rhythmic drive and a progressive expansion of thematic material. This musical process reflects not only the idea of physical propulsion but also a gradual intensification of harmonic tension, culminating in a burst of luminous sonorities. The resulting structure is not merely a direct illustration of the dream's imagery but a metaphor for the continuous evolution of music, recalling post-Romantic tradition but reinterpreted through the lens of repetitive minimalism.

Another example of how extramusical inspiration is transformed into musical language is *Ad Absurdum* by Jörg Widmann. In this work, the composer explores the boundaries between virtuosity and noise, creating a sonic world in which the extreme technical difficulty of performance becomes a manifestation of absurdity. The musical material is constructed in a way that makes it seem as though the performer is struggling against their own instrument, caught in a cycle of extreme accelerations, impossible gestures, and dense textures that undermine the traditional meaning of virtuosity. This approach not only tests the limits of instrumental expressivity but also raises questions about musical perception — at what point does sound remain music, and when does it become noise?

These examples make it evident that extramusical inspiration is not mechanically transferred into music but undergoes a complex transformation, shaped by the aesthetics and intentions of each composer. Whether it involves the evocation of a historical space, the interpretation of a dreamlike image, or the exploration of instrumental limits, each of these works demonstrates the complexity of **informational transfer** in the compositional process. However, this process does not end with the completion of the score; the performer becomes the essential link that revives the music, bringing it to life through a series of artistic decisions that can amplify or refine the composer's original intentions.

The Performer as an Active Mediator

The performer is not a passive transmitter but an active mediator who transforms the latent information within the score into a living sonic experience. While the score contains precise data about musical structure, the performer infuses it with expressivity, shaping it through interpretative gestures, articulation techniques, and timbral choices.

This stage of informational transfer is essential, as the performer can amplify or diminish certain dimensions of the original message, thereby influencing the final perception of the musical work. Every interpretative decision—from tempo and dynamics to articulation and phrasing—contributes to the shaping of the auditory experience, adding a personal dimension to the act of performance.

In jazz, for example, improvisation plays a fundamental role in this process of transfer, transforming the performer into a co-creator of the sonic material. Here, the interaction between musicians becomes a spontaneous dialogue, where each musician responds to the ideas of the others, adapting in real time to the dynamic shifts within the ensemble. This flexibility ensures that the performer is not merely a conduit for musical information but an active agent who modifies, reshapes, and enriches the sonic content. Paul F. Berliner highlights this dynamic interaction, explaining that:

Just as the progression's varied timbral colors provide a rich setting for the head, they also highlight the features of solos. Moreover, the chords' pattern of change and its undulating scheme of harmonic tension and release create constant rhythmic motion, adding momentum to the performance.³

A saxophone solo in a jazz session is not merely an execution of a premeditated idea but an **organic construction**, guided by the performer's **intuition and reactions**, as well as the subtle responses of fellow musicians within the ensemble.

In classical music, the performer has the freedom to choose which elements of a work to emphasize, whether phrasing, timbre, or the accentuation of certain harmonic tensions. For example, a performance of a Beethoven sonata can vary significantly depending on the pianist's intentions and sensitivity—they may opt for a broader tempo, a more expressive legato, or a sharper attack in certain passages, thus transforming the overall perception of the piece. Similarly, a conductor can reconfigure the **sonic balance** between different sections of an orchestra, altering the relationships between themes and harmonies, thereby offering the audience a **distinct perspective** on a well-known composition.

In avant-garde music, the boundaries between composer and performer become even more fluid, and the process of **informational transfer** takes on an even more open-ended nature. The works of John Cage, for example, require the performer to actively participate in the creation of musical

³ Berliner, Paul F. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994.

meaning, either through the use of chance operations or through decision-making processes that are not strictly dictated by the score. In *4'33"*, the performer becomes an **observer** of silence and ambient sounds, transforming each listener into a co-participant in the artistic act. In other works, the performer's choices regarding the order of musical sections or the manipulation of sonic parameters result in unique and unrepeatable structures from one performance to another. This flexibility extends the performer's role beyond mere score execution, granting them the status of **co-author** of the musical experience.

This redefinition of the performer's role is further reinforced by an extension of freedoms to the listeners themselves, with Cage going so far as to transform them into **active agents** of the musical experience. As Kyle Gann observes:

Not only did Cage grant anarchic freedoms to the composer and necessarily also to the performer, he even extended them to listeners, who, in the notorious silent piece *4'33"* (1952), are invited to discover music wherever they may within the ambience of the 'performance'—in coughs, grunts, rustles, natural sounds, which acquire new meanings when the context of an 'art-work' is added to them.⁴

Thus, in Cage's vision, music is no longer merely the result of a process controlled by the composer and executed by the performer, but rather a **dynamic and open-ended act**, one that constantly reconfigures the boundaries between creation, execution, and reception.

Regardless of musical style, the performer is not simply a transmitter of the composer's intentions but an **active filter** through which musical information is adapted, nuanced, and recontextualized. Whether in the expressive freedom of a classical pianist, the spontaneity of a jazz improviser, or the guided aleatoric procedures of an avant-garde performer, each interpreter plays a crucial role in the process of informational transfer, imparting to its **uniqueness and irreproducibility**.

This complexity of interpretation is reflected in the classification of ITDs as either autonomous or subordinate. For example, a performer can be considered autonomous when improvising or engaging in experimental music, having the freedom to shape the sonic material according to their artistic vision. Conversely, they become subordinate when required to strictly follow a composer's score, striving to reproduce the composer's original

⁴ Gann, Kyle. *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010.

intentions as faithfully as possible. This balance between autonomy and subordination is not fixed but varies depending on the aesthetic of each work and the interpretative traditions of each musical style.

The Audience as a Reinterpretive ITD

The audience is not a passive recipient of musical information but actively participates in the process of interpretation and meaning-making. Depending on each listener's cultural background, experiences, and sensitivities, the meaning of a musical work can vary significantly.

For instance, the perception of a Beethoven symphony differs depending on the listener's level of musical training. A trained musician may focus on structure and compositional techniques, analyzing stylistic details. A general audience member is more likely to respond to dramatic intensity, engaging emotionally with the music. In contrast, a listener unfamiliar with classical music may find it confusing or unapproachable, lacking familiarity with its sonic language.

This idea reflects the degree of informational transferability, which depends on the similarity between the transmitter and the receiver.

Beyond transmitter-receiver compatibility, another essential factor in informational transfer is its directionality. Unidirectional transfer occurs when information is transmitted without feedback, such as when an untrained listener is exposed to contemporary music without prior explanation. In contrast, bidirectional transfer involves both parties actively participating, as in the musical dialogue between composer and performer. Meanwhile, multidirectional transfer involves mutual interaction between multiple factors, creating a complex system, as seen in interdisciplinary collaborations between musicians, visual artists, and choreographers.

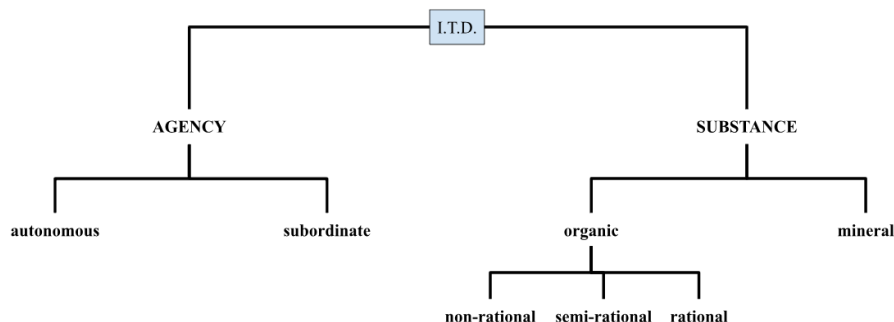
As seen in the following example, this diversity of informational transfer is also reflected in the classification of Informational Transfer Devices (ITDs), which are divided into two main categories:

1. The first category is determined by their autonomy (agency, the operative cause).
2. The second category is defined by the material from which they are made (substance, the material cause).

ITDs can be autonomous, possessing an independent capacity for processing and interpreting information, or subordinate, relying on an external factor for operation. Additionally, ITDs can be either mineral or organic—the latter being further classified into non-rational, semi-rational, and rational, depending on the degree of information processing involved.

THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF MUSICAL CREATION:
BETWEEN DATA AND MEANING (II)

Figure 1



The diagram classifies I.T.D. into Agency (autonomous vs. subordinate) and Substance (organic—further divided by rationality—or mineral).

We can conclude that in music, the Informational Transfer Device (ITD) describes the **dynamic relationship** between the composer, performer, and audience, with each of these agents participating in informational transfer in a distinct manner:

The **composer** functions as a transmitting ITD, translating sources of inspiration—whether external or internal—into a musical language, which then becomes available for decoding and interpretation.

The **performer** acts as an intermediary ITD, taking the latent information from the score and reconfiguring it into a sonic act, infusing it with expressivity and individuality.

The **audience** becomes a receptive and reinterpreted ITD, filtering musical information through their own experiences and sensitivities, thereby contributing to the resemanticization of the artistic act.

One of the most evident ways to apply the ITD model is in this relational framework, yet it can also function on an internal, structural level within music itself—whether in composition (for the composer), interpretation (for performers and conductors), or reception (for the audience). In this sense, a theme, a structure, or even a formal musical element can also act as an ITD, transferring and transforming information throughout a musical work.

The ITD concept provides a valuable conceptual framework for understanding communication processes in music. Music is not merely a finished product but a living process of informational transfer, in which the composer, performer, and audience form an interactive network of **adaptation, filtering, and reinterpretation**.

This framework not only explains the mechanisms of musical creation but can also be extended to other artistic fields, offering a method for analyzing cultural and semantic dynamics in various contexts.

2. Meaning in the Process of Informational Transfer

Although information can be transferred as a set of objective data, meaning involves an interpretative dimension. This distinction is particularly relevant in the musical context:

The **sensory and cognitive filters** of the audience determine how music is perceived.

The **emotional resonance** of a piece varies based on the listener's personal experiences.

Cultural contextualization contributes to the generation of meaning.

These aspects demonstrate that the process of informational transfer is **not linear** but rather subject to complex filtering mechanisms that redefine and reshape the initial significance of the musical message.

From the perspective of cognitive processing, sound perception is not merely a reflection of an acoustic signal but rather an active interpretation — a process in which information is captured, organized, and reconfigured according to a set of internal and external factors. Through perception and representation mechanisms, music becomes more than just a succession of sounds; it gains meaning through connections established between the listener's affective memory, pre-existing cultural models, and the context in which it is heard.

Thus, music does not merely communicate but also transforms meaning depending on the receiver. While a composer may construct a work with a clear intentionality, that intentionality can be distorted or reinterpreted by the audience, depending on their cultural background, previous experiences, or even their emotional predisposition. This phenomenon resembles the Kuleshov effect (discussed in Part I), in which the meaning of an image is shaped by the sequential context in which it is placed. Similarly, in a musical context, a chord, timbre, or sonic gesture may change in perception and interpretation depending on what precedes or follows it.

Moreover, the informational nature of music allows for a unique form of interaction between creators and listeners, one based on a complex transfer of **informational energy**. In physics, **inertia** is the force that keeps an object in motion or at rest; in music, informational inertia can be understood as the **persistence** of certain perceptual, stylistic, or cultural **patterns** that

influence how a work is received. On the other hand, **informational gravity**, as suggested by research on the **fundamental forces** in musical creation, may refer to the **natural attraction** between semantic and emotional elements that provide unity to a musical discourse.

In this context, the composer is not merely a transmitter of musical information but also an **architect of a perceptual space** in which the audience is invited to engage and project their own meanings. Therefore, in functional music, where the goal is to integrate music into a larger artistic ensemble (such as film, theater, or video games), the composer must be aware not only of their musical message but also of how it interacts with the **other informational layers** of the project.

The meaning in the process of musical informational transfer cannot be regarded as univocal or deterministic but rather as the result of a dynamic interaction between transmitter, receiver, and the context in which the music unfolds. In this equation, the listener plays an active role, reconstructing and reinterpreting information based on their own frame of reference, making every musical experience inherently unique and unrepeatable.

3. Applications for Composers and Performers

Composers and performers can apply the principles of informational transfer to enhance the impact of their works, both in terms of reception and expressivity. Informational transfer in music is not merely a process of communication but also one of transformation, in which information is filtered, reshaped, and adapted to its expressive environment. In this sense, both composers and performers function as informational transfer devices, each playing an active role in filtering and conveying an artistic message.

Furthermore, the transfer of information in music is not a passive exchange but a dynamic interaction in which meaning is continuously constructed, modified, and adapted. Performers introduce their own expressive nuances, audiences bring their personal and cultural perspectives, and historical and technological developments further influence musical perception. As a result, the final meaning of a musical work is never fixed but remains open to transformation, making music a living and evolving form of communication.

Applications for Composers

1. Integration of Extramusical Elements

Enhancing the semantic complexity of a musical work by translating concepts from other fields into musical language. Just as an apple can serve as a source of inspiration through symbolic or textural analogies, a composer can transfer meanings from an extramusical context into a coherent sonic discourse.

2. Use of Evocative Titles and Programmatic Elements

Titles can influence the audience's perception of a work, creating a semantic framework that guides the listening experience. As demonstrated in *The Pines of Rome* by Ottorino Respighi, a title can act as a "gravitational center" that shapes the interpretation and assimilation of the music.

3. Experimentation with Unconventional Forms

Exploring innovative musical structures can encourage creative reception by the audience. Inspired by the principle of informational transfer, composers can develop hybrid forms in which different layers of sonic material interact in a synergistic manner.

4. Transformation and Adaptation of Sonic Information

Just as information is altered and reinterpreted in the process of informational transfer, composers can use techniques such as fragmentation, citation, recycling, and manipulation of musical material to create a complex experience. An example would be incorporating a recognizable structure (such as a Baroque theme) within a modern harmonic and timbral context.

Applications for Performers

1. Awareness of the Role as a Mediator

The performer is not merely an executor but an active agent in the process of informational transfer. Through their approach to a score, they can emphasize certain semantic elements, guiding the audience's perception and shaping the expressive intent of the music.

2. Improvisation Exercises Based on Limited Data

Just as partial information can stimulate the interpretation and reconstruction of a message, improvisation under constraints can develop a performer's adaptability and creativity. For example, the performer may improvise using only a specific interval or a particular articulation type to explore new expressive possibilities.

3. Exploration of Dynamics and Timbre as Tools for Amplifying Meaning

Dynamics and timbre are essential components of informational transfer in music. A performer can manipulate these parameters to alter the perception of a musical passage, transforming it into a personal and subjective experience.

4. Interactive Rehearsals and Audience Feedback

Artistic performance is not a one-way process; it involves an ongoing dialogue between performer and audience. By engaging in open rehearsals or actively involving listeners, the performer can gain insight into how their artistic message is received and adjust its delivery accordingly.

5. Informational Transfer Exploration Exercises

A performer can experiment with improvisations based on extramusical concepts (for example, the notions of "falling" or "gravity") to deepen their understanding of musical gestures and create new connections between sound and perception.

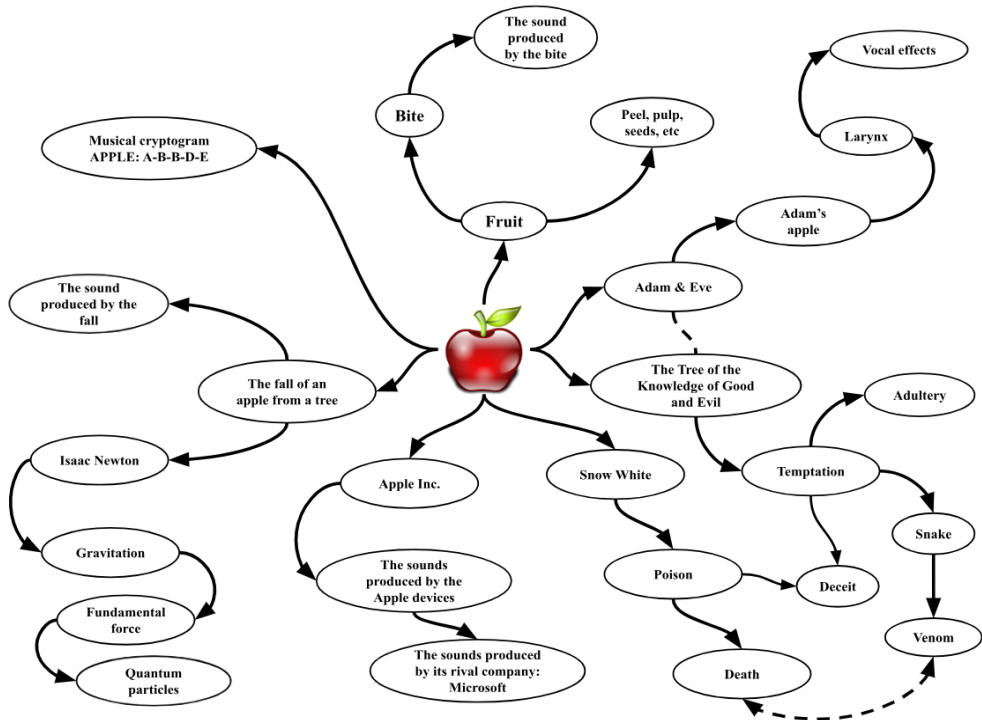
Creative Scenarios: The Informational Transfer of an Idea into Music

Let us imagine a scenario in which composers are asked to create a musical work using an apple as their primary source of inspiration. The only requirement is that, after completing their compositions, they must explain how this fruit has been transferred into their music. The resulting works would then be performed in three different concerts:

1. **Without any information about the music** – The audience listens without knowing anything about the source of inspiration.
2. **With only the titles of the pieces** – The audience is given only the titles, which provide an initial semantic layer for understanding.
3. **With both titles and composers' explanations** – The audience receives detailed insights into how the idea was musically translated.

The following figure illustrates just a fraction of the information that can be extracted from the proposed source of inspiration. This is made possible by the **properties of the human mind**, particularly two of its most fascinating aspects: **richness and associative access**.

Figure 2



A visual representation of the rich associative connections that can emerge from the concept of an apple, illustrating how composers might derive musical inspiration from their historical, scientific, mythological, and cultural meanings.

Richness refers to the theory that a vast number of thoughts and experiences a person has had still exist somewhere in their memory.

Associative access means that thoughts can be retrieved through semantic or perceptual associations—memories can be triggered by related words, categorical labels, a smell, an old song, a photograph, or even seemingly random neural priming that brings them into the field of consciousness.

A composer focused on **narrative composition** could explore the symbolism of the apple in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, where the fruit becomes a **central plot device**. In this version, the apple is not only poisoned but also a **tool of manipulation**—the prince uses it to deceive the stepmother and present himself as Snow White's savior.

The music could reflect this duality—attraction and danger—through a seductive theme that gradually transforms into a threatening motif. The moment of the bite could be marked by a sudden dissonance and tense silence. Moreover, if the role of the prince is emphasized, a subtle leitmotif representing him could appear in harmonies associated with the apple, intensifying as his plan unfolds. The composition would thus highlight not only temptation and tragedy but also the **power dynamics within the story**.

These perspectives demonstrate how an awareness of the **richness and associative** access of the human mind can open a universe of possibilities. This is the essence of informational transfer in music—the ability to **transform an idea, a symbol, or a sound into a meaningful artistic experience**.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that informational transfer is not only a fundamental principle of musical creation but also a key mechanism in the perception and interpretation of artistic expression. Music does not exist in a vacuum but within a continuous exchange of information between composer, performer, and audience. This dynamic makes each artistic act a living process, constantly being reconfigured and reinterpreted.

A crucial aspect of this analysis is the applicability of the concept of the Informational Transfer Device (ITD) in syncretic arts, where music interacts directly with other forms of artistic expression. In works such as theater, film, ballet, installation art, or video games, each artistic element—whether musical, visual, narrative, or performative—transfers information and influences the others. In this context, awareness of informational transfer mechanisms becomes essential for all creators involved.

In interdisciplinary projects, the interaction between music and other artistic forms plays a vital role in defining and enhancing artistic meaning. In opera and ballet, for instance, music does not function merely as a soundtrack but as a cohesive element that supports dramaturgy and choreography, establishing an organic balance between the auditory and visual dimensions. Whether through a leitmotif accompanying a character or a musical theme evolving alongside the narrative, music has the power to add emotional depth and shape the audience's perception of scenic events.

In film, the soundtrack does more than accompany the image; it actively influences it, altering the visual and emotional perception of a scene. Music can function as a subtle guide, directing the spectator's attention, heightening tension, suggesting hidden meanings, or even contradicting the

visual message to create intentional ambiguity. Whether reinforcing an emotional state or giving symbolic weight to a moment, film music is an integral part of cinematic language, contributing to the creation of an immersive experience.

In theater, music and sound serve as extensions of dramaturgical discourse, amplifying the atmosphere and emphasizing the inner states of characters. In contemporary performances, where the boundaries between theater and other art forms are increasingly fluid, sound can function as a meta-narrative commentary, a sensorial texture that enhances action, or even an element of scenic reality distortion. Whether through live music, electroacoustic compositions, or integrated sound effects, every sonic detail influences audience perception and the dynamics of the performance.

In video games, where the player's interaction with the virtual environment is essential, music must function dynamically, adapting in real time to the user's actions. Unlike film, where music is linear, in games, it must respond to rhythmic changes and create fluid transitions between different moments of gameplay. Whether through an adaptive ambient soundtrack that intensifies with tension levels or through sound effects that provide immersive feedback, the auditory dimension contributes to the realism and emotional involvement of the player.

In all these syncretic art forms, mastering informational transfer mechanisms is not merely an advantage but a necessity. Understanding how music interacts with other artistic elements and influences audience perception is crucial for creating coherent and expressive works. An artist who is aware of these mechanisms and can control them effectively not only optimizes their own contribution but also collaborates more efficiently with other creators, ensuring the organic integration of music into the overall artistic structure.

When the creators of syncretic art forms become aware of the informational flows circulating between disciplines, they can better harness the potential of each artistic medium. Instead of functioning as separate entities, music, image, movement, and text can interact organically, avoiding oversaturation, redundancy, or loss of narrative and emotional coherence. A clear understanding of how information is transmitted and reinterpreted between the various components of an interdisciplinary work not only facilitates balance among them but also enhances expressivity and authenticity. Such an approach optimizes the artistic outcome while also opening new avenues for creative exploration, providing audiences with more profound and captivating experiences.

Thus, the braking and acceleration of informational transfer must be managed with mastery, ensuring that the final product is not merely a collage of disparate elements but a cohesive work where each artistic component contributes in a balanced manner to the whole. This awareness, combined

with a careful application of informational transfer principles, has the potential to redefine the way syncretic works are conceived and perceived in the 21st century.

In conclusion, by deepening their understanding of these concepts, composers, directors, scenographers, and all those involved in artistic creation can become more aware of the impact of each artistic choice on the overall work. Only through this approach can works be created where music, imagery, and narrative converge into a coherent common language, maximizing both artistic expressivity and audience impact.

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MUSICAL TIME IN ALGORITHMIC AND AI-GENERATED MUSIC: FROM DETERMINISTIC TO EMERGENT TEMPORALITY

KATERYNA CHEREVKO¹ 

SUMMARY. This article examines musical time in algorithmic composition and AI-generated music, focusing on the shift from deterministic algorithmic models of the twentieth century to emergent generative models of the twenty-first century. Musical temporality is considered as the outcome of computational procedures that organize musical processes through algorithmic and statistical models. The study employs a comparative analytical approach combining theories of musical time, research on algorithmic composition, and studies of artificial intelligence in music. Analysis of works by Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson, and by Iannis Xenakis shows that twentieth-century algorithmic composition produces a deterministic type of musical time characterized by procedural generation and structural fixity. In contrast, AI-generated music demonstrates an emergent temporality in which temporal structures arise during the generative process through probabilistic and data-driven models. The article proposes a conceptual distinction between deterministic algorithmic time and emergent AI-generative temporality, offering a framework for understanding the transformation of musical time in contemporary digital culture.

Keywords: musical composition, musical time, musical temporality, algorithmic composition, AI-generated music, compositional models.

Introduction

Musical art of the second half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries has been marked by an active interaction with modern technologies and the rapid development of computational systems. This interaction has significantly expanded traditional compositional methods and contributed to the emergence of new artistic forms and approaches to musical creativity.

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In this context, the use of computer technologies in music composition and the emergence of algorithmic compositions have become particularly significant. In such works, formalized procedures are employed to generate musical structures. Although algorithmic approaches to music creation have a long prehistory, their full integration into compositional practice occurred with the development of electronic and computer music in the mid-twentieth century (Aung et al., 2025; Galanter, 2003, 2008; Nierhaus, 2009). This period was also marked by a significant expansion of the sonic domain due to the emergence of artificial sound sources and digital sound processing technologies.

Pioneers of computer music, Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson, created one of the first computer-generated compositions, *Illiad Suite* (1955–56), which initiated the further development of algorithmic approaches to composition. As Roads notes, “a composition algorithm serves as a generative engine for music creation”².

In the twenty-first century, algorithmic thinking in music has undergone significant transformations with the emergence of artificial intelligence technologies and AI-generated composition³. These developments have not only opened new possibilities for composition but have also changed traditional notions of creativity, authorship, and the temporal organization of musical works. While classical algorithmic composition is based on deterministic rules, contemporary AI models – particularly deep neural networks – operate through statistical analysis of large musical datasets, forming probabilistic models of temporal and structural development.

Thus, algorithmic composition, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century as a system of deterministic procedures, has transformed in the twenty-first century into a fundamentally new phenomenon – AI-generated composition based on artificial intelligence and machine learning. These technological shifts are not merely instrumental but also lead to a profound transformation of musical temporality that requires theoretical reconsideration.

Algorithmic musical compositions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries therefore form two paradigmatic approaches grounded in different conceptions of musical time: deterministic algorithmic time and AI-generative temporality. Their fundamental differences become a key to understanding the nature of musical time in contemporary musical art.

² Roads, Curtis. *Composing Electronic Music: A New Aesthetic*. Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 325.

³ Mycka, Joanna, and Jacek Mańdziuk. “Artificial Intelligence in Music: Recent Trends and Challenges.” In *Neural Computing and Applications*, vol. 37, 2025, pp. 801–839. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00521-024-10555-x>.

The methodology of the study is based on a conceptual-analytical approach to musical temporality as a result of algorithmic and generative processes. The focus is placed on the way musical time is organized as a consequence of the application of algorithms of different nature. The research is conducted in the form of a comparative typological analysis that contrasts two historically successive yet fundamentally different modes of algorithmic thinking: deterministic procedural algorithmic time in the music of the second half of the twentieth century and probabilistic, statistically conditioned time in AI-generated music of the twenty-first century. The analytical perspective focuses on the structural aspects of the organization of musical time, considering musical material primarily as a temporal process. Particular attention is given to the principles of temporal structure formation (projected or emergent), the relationship between local and global temporal processes, as well as the role of repetition, variability, and perceptual processes in shaping the temporal coherence of a musical work. The theoretical interpretation of the results draws on a combination of musicological and cognitive approaches to the study of time, within which musical temporality is understood as a multi-level structure that includes formal, perceptual, and cultural dimensions.

This study adopts an integrated theoretical framework that combines historical, technical, perceptual, and cultural perspectives on musical temporality in algorithmic and AI-based composition. First, it draws on theories of algorithmic composition that conceptualize music as the outcome of formalized procedures and rule-based systems. In these approaches, musical time is typically projected within the compositional model as part of a predefined structural design. Foundational work in computer-assisted and formalized composition therefore treats temporality as an explicitly designed parameter rather than an emergent process (Hiller & Isaacson, 1959, 1993; Xenakis, 1992; Roads, 2015; Nierhaus, 2009; Galanter, 2003; Fernández & Vico, 2013).

Second, the framework incorporates research on AI-based music generation, which documents the transition from rule-oriented systems to statistical and data-driven models such as deep neural networks. In these systems, musical events are generated incrementally on the basis of learned probabilistic dependencies, often resulting in locally coherent but less strongly predetermined global temporal organization (Briot, Hadjeres, & Pachet, 2019; Herremans, Chuan, & Chew, 2017; Mycka & Mańdziuk, 2025).

Third, musicological and cognitive theories of musical time are employed to address perception and interpretation, emphasizing the listener's role in constructing temporal coherence through processes such as repetition, expectation, and metric structuring (Kramer, 1988; Clarke, 2005; London, 2012; Margulis, 2014; Zbikowski, 2017).

Taken together, these perspectives allow AI-generated musical time to be interpreted as probabilistic, emergent, and perceptually mediated, rather than fully predetermined by a formal compositional structure.

Conceptual model of musical temporality

A fundamental characteristic of a musical work is its unfolding in time, which is determined not only by the duration of sounding but also by the structural organization of musical material and the specific features of its perceptual reception. Temporality forms the space in which a musical work acquires form and meaning, while musical thinking itself gains a direction of development.

Drawing on the traditional trajectory of the musical work's existence – *composer* → *performer* → *listener* – it is possible to identify a multiplicity of temporal levels that interact in the processes of musical creation and reception. Such an approach allows the musical work to be considered as a system of interacting temporal levels in which different layers of temporality overlap and together shape the integrity of the artistic process.

In the works of Jonathan Kramer⁴, musical time in contemporary music is described as a system of different temporalities that may coexist within a musical work. He emphasizes that time in modern music appears not only as a linear succession of moments (*absolute time*), but also as a plurality of temporal forms. One such model is *vertical time*, in which musical events are not clearly differentiated into past, present, and future but are perceived as relatively autonomous fragments that do not necessarily follow an overarching chronological logic of musical unfolding.

The psychological dimension of temporality becomes particularly significant in the research of Eric Clarke⁵, who interprets the listener as an active participant in the formation of musical experience. In this perspective, the temporal dimension emerges not only from the musical text itself but also from the interaction with the listener's cognitive processes, which organize connections, accents, and meaningful contours. Elizabeth Margulis⁶ highlights the role of memory, repetition, and expectation as mechanisms that structure the experience of time in music. Musical time, therefore, is formed through the interaction between musical events and the listener's perceptual processes.

⁴ Kramer, Jonathan D. *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies*. Schirmer Books, 1988.

⁵ Clarke, Eric. *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

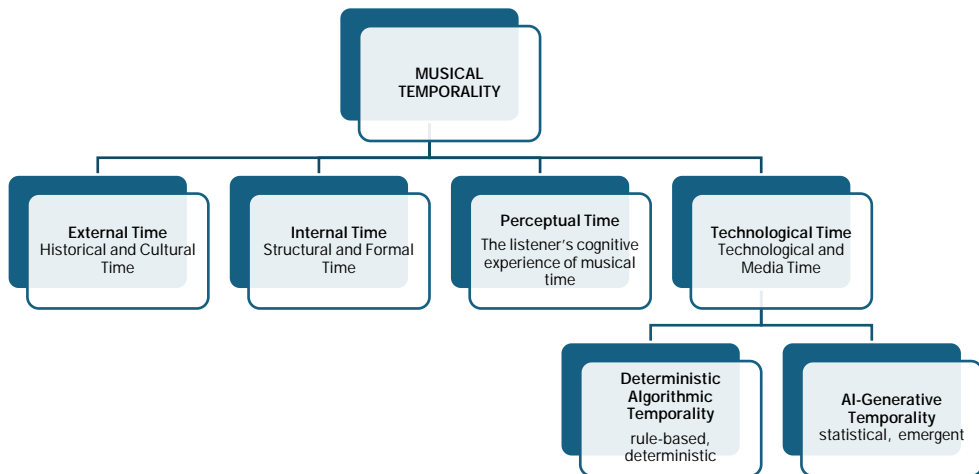
⁶ Margulis, Elizabeth Hellmuth. *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

MUSICAL TIME IN ALGORITHMIC AND AI-GENERATED MUSIC:
FROM DETERMINISTIC TO EMERGENT TEMPORALITY

The concept proposed by Justin London⁷ further expands this understanding by emphasizing the dual nature of musical time: its physical parameters coexist with cognitive models, particularly metric organization, which is formed in the listener's mind. Lawrence Zbikowski⁸ develops the cognitive approach in musicology and draws attention to the listener's ability to structure sequences of sounds into coherent and meaningful patterns that shape the temporal organization of a musical work.

Drawing on these approaches, musical temporality may be understood as a system of interacting levels (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Conceptual model of interacting levels of musical temporality

Within this model, algorithmic and AI-generated composition operate primarily at the level of technological temporality while simultaneously interacting with perceptual and structural temporal processes.

⁷ London, Justin. *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁸ Zbikowski, Lawrence M. *Foundations of Musical Grammar*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

Algorithmic Temporality in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Music

Contemporary media and computational technologies significantly transform the principles of organizing musical time. In algorithmic and AI-generated composition, the temporal organization of music is increasingly determined by computational processes that generate musical events rather than exclusively by traditional metric or performative parameters. In such practices, musical time acquires the characteristics not only of an artistic but also of a technological construct that may function partially independently of direct compositional intention.

Algorithmic and AI-generated composition introduce new models of temporality in which the logic of musical unfolding is determined not only by the composer's intention but also by algorithmic or statistical processes that organize the order and duration of musical events. In these practices, the temporal structure of a work is increasingly shaped by computational mechanisms, transforming conceptions of authorship, structure, and musical time in contemporary musical culture.

Deterministic Algorithmic Time in Twentieth-Century Music

A new model of organizing musical time emerged in the mid-twentieth century with the development of algorithmic composition. As C. Roads⁹ notes: "The process of composition is essentially creative decision-making: up or down, long or short, sparse or dense, loud or soft, same or different, etc. Out of a universe of possibilities, we choose specific elements and order them in time to construct a musical morphology. Computer-assisted composition means delegating certain decisions to the computer".

In such practices, temporality is determined not by intentional dramaturgy or the psychology of perception but by formalized procedures. A musical work emerges as the result of applying an algorithm, while time functions as a parameter embedded within the structure of the compositional model. As Nierhaus¹⁰ observes: "...an algorithm may be, based on the abovementioned definitions, very generally described as a formalizable and abstracting procedure which – applied to the generation of musical structure – determines the field

⁹ Roads, Curtis. *Composing Electronic Music: A New Aesthetic*. Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 337.

¹⁰ Nierhaus, Gerhard. *Algorithmic Composition: Paradigms of Automated Music Generation*. Springer, 2009, p.2.

of application of algorithmic composition”. Thus, in algorithmic composition musical time becomes a parameter embedded within the procedural structure of the compositional model.

Algorithmic composition typically relies on formal structures, mathematical models, stochastic procedures, and graphical and computational transformations. These approaches generate a deterministic type of musical time in which form emerges as a consequence of a formal procedure rather than from the development of musical thought in the traditional sense.

In early examples of computer and algorithmic composition, musical time appears not as a dramaturgical development of events but as a formalized parameter produced by the operation of a programmatic or mathematical procedure. In the works of Lejaren Hiller and Iannis Xenakis, temporality is generated at the level of the algorithmic model itself, which allows this type of musical time to be described as procedurally determined temporality.

Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson: Algorithmic Order and Procedurally Determined Time

In the computer-generated composition *Illiic Suite* (1955–56), created by Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson, musical time emerges not as the result of compositional development but as a consequence of the algorithmic organization of musical parameters. The temporal organization is determined by a formalized system of rules operating at the level of an algorithmic model. As Gerhard Nierhaus¹¹ notes in his analysis of *Illiic Suite*: “Each of the movements, so-called “experiments,” was dedicated to the realization of a special musical concept. In “experiment four,” Hiller and Isaacson use Markov models of variable order for the generation of musical structure. Amongst others, these Markov models serve to select notes under various musical aspects, like the succession of skips and stepwise motions, the progression from consonant to dissonant intervals or even sound textures, which can be related to a tonal center in order to establish a distinct tonality”.

In this composition, rhythmic relationships, durations, and formal segments are determined by the logic of a computational process that regulates permissible combinations of intervals and temporal values. Each experiment is constructed according to a specific set of rules. For example, the contrapuntal techniques of Josquin des Prez and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina serve as the basis for the first two experiments, while the subsequent experiments

¹¹ Ibid., p. 72.

rely on more flexible algorithmic procedures for generating musical structures. The authors¹² themselves describe the compositional idea of the work as a gradual transition from randomness to order: “The music so produced was arranged to start with random white-note music [meaning here the white keys on a piano] and then by the successive addition of counterpoint rules was forced to progress gradually to more and more cantus firmus settings. We thought this procedure would provide an example of how order or redundancy might be brought into a musical texture”.

In this work, musical time functions as a structural variable embedded within the algorithm, and its organization is determined by a system of formal rules. This is manifested in the absence of traditional temporal tension and teleological direction in the musical process. Although the algorithm produces ordered temporal structures, these structures are perceived more as the result of a procedural mechanism than as a process of musical development.

Thus, in *Illiad Suite* the algorithm acts as a structural regulator of time, while musical form emerges as the outcome of a computational procedure. In this case, time is deterministic and procedurally organized, which allows it to be interpreted as one of the early examples of algorithmic temporal thinking in twentieth-century music.

Stochastic Algorithmic Time in the Works of Iannis Xenakis

Another type of algorithmically organized time is realized in the stochastic compositions of Iannis Xenakis, particularly in works such as *Pithoprakta* (1955–56), *Achorripsis* (1957), and *ST/10-1, 080262* (1962). In these compositions, the organization of musical time is based on mathematical models derived from physics and probability theory, which determine the parametric distribution of sonic events within the temporal continuum. Xenakis conceptualized stochastic composition as the application of mathematical models and probability distributions to musical structure, thereby expanding algorithmic composition beyond rule-based procedures toward probabilistic systems¹³.

A representative example is the orchestral work *Pithoprakta*, in which temporal organization is based on statistical modeling of the motion of sound masses by analogy with the kinetic theory of gases. The work is written for an

¹² Hiller, Lejaren, and Leonard Isaacson. “Musical Composition with a High-Speed Digital Computer.” In *Machine Models of Music*, edited by Stephan M. Schwanauer and David A. Levitt, MIT Press, 1993, p. 9.

¹³ Xenakis, Iannis. *Formalized Music: Thought and Mathematics in Composition*. Pendragon Press, 1992.

expanded orchestral ensemble of forty-six string instruments, two trombones, and percussion, and unfolds as a sequence of large-scale sonic textures separated by structural articulations, producing a segmented temporal organization.

Individual instrumental parts are governed by probabilistic distributions governing density, pitch, and duration. As a result, musical time is articulated not as a sequence of individual events but as a continuous macro-process of evolving sonic texture. Within this model, temporal organization is not constructed through thematic development or linear dramaturgy. Instead, it emerges as a statistically organized field in which temporal meaning arises at the level of the global dynamics of the sound mass, through changes in density, intensity, and spectral distribution.

This type of temporality is characterized by:

- the absence of stable metric organization;
- the predominance of macro-temporal processes over local event-based structures;
- the perception of time as fluctuations in the density and intensity of sonic events;
- the subordination of local variability to an overarching mathematical regularity.

Despite the apparent randomness at the level of individual events, stochastic time in Xenakis's works remains structurally determined at the level of the model: parameters, boundaries, and probability distributions are specified in advance and do not change during performance or perception. In this sense, randomness functions not as a manifestation of indeterminacy but as a tool for implementing a pre-defined structural logic.

Thus, stochastic time in Xenakis's music may be understood as a form of model-controlled temporality, in which probabilistic processes operate within strictly predefined mathematical constraints. In this sense, Xenakis's stochastic compositions represent a distinctive type of algorithmic time that differs from the procedural logic of *Illiad Suite* while sharing a fundamental feature with it – the independence of temporal organization from the dramaturgical logic of listener perception.

The *UPIC system*, developed by Xenakis in the 1970s, represents an extreme case of algorithmic construction of musical time. In compositions created using *UPIC*, temporality is projected directly in graphical form: the horizontal axis corresponds to time, the vertical axis to pitch, and the shapes of drawn lines determine the dynamics of sonic processes. A representative example is *Mycenae Alpha* (1978), in which the temporal structure is fixed in a visual model prior to sounding and is reproduced algorithmically without the mediation of performative interpretation. In such a model, musical time

functions as a spatially constructed object rather than as a process emerging in performance or perception. In this sense, the graphical temporality of *UPIC* represents a limiting form of deterministic algorithmic thinking and marks the boundary between the algorithmic temporality of the twentieth century and the emergent temporality of AI-generated music in the twenty-first century.

The procedural models of Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson, the stochastic systems of Iannis Xenakis, and the graphical projection of time in *UPIC* together illustrate how twentieth-century algorithmic composition conceptualized musical temporality as a formally constructed structure. In these approaches, musical time is determined by predefined models – procedural, statistical, or graphical – rather than emerging through performance or listener-oriented temporal development. This paradigm of model-based temporality forms the conceptual background against which AI-generated musical time of the twenty-first century emerges.

Musical Time in AI-Generated Music

Music generated by contemporary artificial intelligence systems demonstrates a fundamentally different type of temporal organization compared to deterministic algorithmic compositions of the twentieth century. Whereas classical algorithmic composition relied on predefined rules and formal procedures, AI-based music generation is based on statistical dependencies between musical events (probabilistic relationships between notes, chords, and other parameters) identified through the analysis of large corpora of musical data. In this context, musical time ceases to be a predesigned structure and instead emerges as a probabilistic process formed directly at the moment of generating musical material.

In AI music generation systems, temporal organization arises from the computation of conditional probabilities between successive musical events: notes, chords, timbres, or sound fragments, rather than from the realization of a predesigned formal structure. This generative principle is implemented in contemporary machine-learning models, including recurrent neural networks (LSTM), transformer architectures, and diffusion models¹⁴. These approaches are employed in both symbolic and audio-based music generation systems such as Magenta, MuseNet, and MusicLM.

¹⁴ Fernández, José D., and Francisco Vico. "AI Methods in Algorithmic Composition: A Comprehensive Survey." In *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research*, vol. 48, 2013, pp. 513–582.

Such models do not operate according to compositional logic in the traditional music-theoretical sense and do not have access to semantic or cultural-historical categories. As noted by Briot et al.¹⁵, in contemporary AI music generation systems the musical process unfolds iteratively: each subsequent event is generated step by step on the basis of a limited local context rather than on a global representation of the work's form. In this sense, temporality in AI-generated music emerges as a probabilistic unfolding of a sequence of musical events rather than as the realization of a predesigned form.

The predominantly local (step-by-step) character of this temporal organization is also confirmed by functional typologies of contemporary automated music generation systems. In the classification proposed by Herremans et al.¹⁶, musical composition is understood not as a single formal structure unfolding in time, but as a set of distinct functional processes such as melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre, each of which can be algorithmically modeled relatively autonomously. Such decomposition reveals a fragmented mode of musical time in which temporality is formed at the level of individual algorithmic operations rather than as the realization of a predesigned teleological form.

Analytically, this implies that musical time in AI composition does not follow the principles of thematic development or dramatic direction. Even in models capable of retaining relatively long contexts, temporal coherence remains predominantly local and statistical rather than hierarchically organized. Unlike a human composer or deterministic algorithmic systems of the twentieth century, an AI model does not maintain a macro-temporal perspective of the work as a unified conceptual structure; instead, it operates through a sequence of musical events in which each subsequent moment is determined by probabilistic selection rather than functional necessity.

In a broader cultural dimension, AI-generated musical time also acquires a specific status. Unlike human creativity, which functions within the historical continuum of musical style, algorithmic models do not occupy a position within cultural time: they do not develop style or enter into dialogue with tradition, but merely model probabilistic configurations of already existing material. As a result, musical time partly loses the characteristics of historical directionality and appears as a simulation of stylistic temporal regimes.

¹⁵ Briot, Jean-Pierre, Gaëtan Hadjeres, and François-David Pachet. *Deep Learning Techniques for Music Generation, Computational Synthesis and Creative Systems*. Springer, 2019.

¹⁶ Herremans, Dorien, Ching-Hua Chuan, and Elaine Chew. "A Functional Taxonomy of Music Generation Systems." In *ACM Computing Surveys*, vol. 50, no. 5, 2017, pp. 1-30.

An important aspect of AI-generated music is the perceptual formation of temporal meaning. Such models do not consciously produce meaning and lack the capacity for reflection; however, listeners tend to interpret the generated material in terms of repetition, development, or expectation. Consequently, temporal coherence emerges not within the algorithmic system itself but at the intersection of algorithmic generation and human perception, which gives this type of musical time a hybrid character.

The analysis presented above allows the temporal logic of AI-generated music to be summarized through several key characteristics.

Table 1

Characteristic	Description
Probabilistic	Temporal organization is based on statistical relationships between musical events rather than deterministic compositional rules.
Emergent	Temporal structures arise during the generative process instead of being predetermined by a formal compositional plan.
Acultural	AI models do not occupy a historical position within musical culture and therefore simulate stylistic configurations without participating in the evolution of style.
Hybrid	Temporal coherence emerges through the interaction between algorithmic generation and human perception.

Typological Characteristics of AI-Generated Musical Time

Therefore, AI-generated music represents a new type of temporality that cannot be adequately described either through the categories of deterministic algorithmic time of the twentieth century or through traditional musicological models of form and development. This type of time emerges as an emergent property of statistical processes and significantly transforms our understanding of musical form, authorship, and the very nature of temporal thinking in the musical art of the twenty-first century.

Two Regimes of Algorithmic Musical Time: Deterministic and Statistical

A comparative analysis of twentieth-century algorithmic composition and AI-generated music of the twenty-first century reveals a fundamental shift in temporal logic. Although both practices rely on computational procedures, the type of musical time they produce is qualitatively different. The main differences between these two regimes of algorithmic musical time can be summarized in the following comparative table.

Table 2

Dimension	20th-Century Algorithmic Composition	21st-Century AI-Generated Music
Nature	deterministic	statistical
Source of organization	formal rules, mathematical models	data-driven learning
Type of temporality	structural, procedural	probabilistic, emergent
Temporal logic	systematically predictable	variable, fluctuating
Authorship model	composer → algorithm	algorithm → listener (perceptual actualization)

Two Regimes of Algorithmic Musical Time: Deterministic and Statistical

In deterministic algorithmic composition of the twentieth century, musical time is projected in advance and fixed in the form of a procedure. Even in stochastic models, the temporal continuum remains controlled and structurally predictable. In this context, the algorithm functions as a tool for realizing the composer's intention, while temporality is derived from a formal model.

By contrast, in musical practices based on artificial intelligence, temporality emerges not as the realization of a predetermined plan but as the result of the statistical reproduction of probable relationships. Temporal organization often lacks a stable macrostructure and manifests itself through fluctuations, variable transitions, or unpredictable transformations. This indicates a shift in the very logic of algorithmic time from projected to emergent.

Another fundamental difference between these two types of algorithmic temporality concerns the role of the listener in the formation of temporal meaning. In deterministic algorithmic compositions of the twentieth century, temporal structures exist independently of the act of perception. In the case of AI-generated music, however, the situation is fundamentally different. The algorithm produces only a potential temporality: a set of events in which no clearly defined dramaturgical or semantic logic is embedded. It is the listener who, drawing on cultural experience, memory, and expectations, constructs an imagined temporal coherence. In this sense, musical time ceases to be exclusively a property of the work itself and appears instead as a joint product of algorithmic generation and human perception. This allows us to formulate the central thesis of the study: temporality in AI-generated music cannot be reduced to an algorithmic structure alone but is formed in the act of human perception. From this perspective, musical time appears as a multi-layered process encompassing compositional projection, algorithmic generation, and perceptual actualization.

Thus, in the twenty-first century, musical time increasingly functions not as a predetermined structural form but as an interpretive space in which the listener assumes the role of an active co-creator of temporal meaning. This implies a shift from objectified algorithmic time to perceptually actualized temporality, fundamentally transforming traditional conceptions of composition, form, and authorship in music.

Conclusions

The theoretical reconsideration of musical time as a key category of algorithmic and AI-generated composition is focused on identifying the fundamental differences between deterministic algorithmic models of the twentieth century and emergent generative models of the twenty-first century. The proposed approach makes it possible to view the algorithm not merely as a technical tool but as a factor that shapes specific types of musical temporality.

An analysis of the works of Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson, and Iannis Xenakis demonstrates that deterministic algorithmic time of the twentieth century is characterized by procedurality, structural fixity, the dominance of macrotemporal processes, and a fundamental independence from both performative interpretation and listener perception. In Hiller's works, musical time appears as the result of executing formalized rules, whereas in Xenakis's stochastic compositions it functions as a statistically organized field in which randomness operates within the framework of a predefined mathematical

model. The *UPIC system* represents the extreme case of this paradigm, in which musical time is entirely projected in spatial-graphic form and acquires the status of a fixed object.

The generalization of these approaches makes it possible to formulate a model of deterministic algorithmic time as structurally controlled temporality, in which the musical process unfolds not as the result of a composer's intention but as the realization of an algorithmic model. This model defines the historical boundary of twentieth-century algorithmic thinking while simultaneously creating the theoretical conditions for further transformations of musical time in the digital era.

Against this background, AI-generated music of the twenty-first century emerges as a fundamentally different type of temporality, in which temporal structures are not projected in advance but arise during the process of generation on the basis of statistical, learning-based, and data-driven models. Such musical time possesses an emergent character, and its coherence increasingly depends on the perceptual activity of the listener.

The main contribution of the study lies in the conceptual differentiation between deterministic algorithmic time and emergent AI-generated musical time, as well as in demonstrating their historical continuity and fundamental differences. The proposed typology makes it possible to consider contemporary musical practices not as a radical break with the tradition of algorithmic composition but as its profound reinterpretation, in which the very status of musical time changes – from a structurally predetermined object to a dynamic process formed at the intersection of algorithms, data, and listener experience.

Future research may focus on a deeper analysis of specific AI-generative systems, the study of the listener's role in constructing temporal meaning, and the application of the proposed model to intermodal and multimedia practices in contemporary digital culture.

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THE TRANSFORMATION OF MALAYSIAN CHINESE NEW YEAR SONGS FROM RITUAL SOUNDTRACK TO PLATFORMED HAPPINESS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

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SUMMARY. Malaysian Chinese New Year songs have historically functioned as ritual soundscapes embedded within domestic, communal, and commercial festive environments. They reinforce symbolic themes of prosperity, reunion, renewal, and cultural continuity within Malaysia's diasporic Chinese communities. In recent years, however, these festive songs have undergone a visible transformation in both structure and circulation. No longer confined to broadcast media and physical distribution, they now circulate within algorithm-driven digital platforms that privilege visibility, engagement, and participatory replication. This study examines how contemporary happy Malaysian Chinese New Year songs are being reshaped within platform-based media ecosystems, with particular attention to the rise of school- and community-produced viral festive songs. Drawing on participatory culture theory, phantomization theory, and cultural production studies, the research adopts qualitative cultural–textual analysis to compare institutional festive productions with grassroots digital content. The findings suggest that the transformation of festive songs does not represent cultural erosion but rather a structural redirection toward participatory expressions of communal happiness. Repetition, simplified musical hooks, visually recognizable festive imagery, and collective choreography emerge as adaptive strategies aligned with digital circulation logics. Educational institutions increasingly function as decentralized cultural production hubs, contributing to the ongoing evolution of festive traditions. The study positions Malaysian Chinese New Year songs as dynamic cultural forms that are continuously reimaged within the platform era.

Keywords: Chinese New Year songs, participatory culture, platformization, Malaysian Chinese identity, digital media, ritual music

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Introduction

Chinese New Year songs have long functioned as ritual soundscapes that structure festive time, mediate diasporic belonging, and sustain intergenerational memory within Malaysian Chinese communities. Far beyond commercial entertainment, these songs operate as cyclical cultural markers that sonically announce renewal, reunion, prosperity, and moral continuity. Within ritual theory, repetition is not merely aesthetic recurrence but a symbolic reactivation of communal identity across temporal cycles (Bell, 2009; Turner, 1969)^{3 4}. Each annual return of familiar melodies reaffirms collective belonging, embedding affective memory within patterned sonic form. In Malaysia's plural society, Chinese New Year music has therefore historically functioned both as intra-community bonding and as a visible cultural expression within the broader national soundscape.

Since decades ago, Malaysian Chinese New Year songs were produced within broadcast-era media infrastructures recording studios, television networks, and radio programming where cultural production followed institutionalized distribution channels. These songs often featured extended melodic structures, lyrical storytelling, orchestral arrangements, and narrative progression reflecting separation–reunion temporal arcs (Lee, 2017; Tan, 2018)^{5 6}. The ritual dimension was embedded not only in lyrics but also in compositional length, tonal modulation, and ceremonial pacing. Such musical forms were aligned with the temporal rhythm of festive gatherings, temple visits, and family reunions, reinforcing symbolic coherence between sound and social practice.

However, the transformation of media infrastructures in the digital era has fundamentally altered the conditions under which festive music is produced, circulated, and experienced. The rise of platform-based ecosystems such as YouTube and TikTok has introduced algorithmic curation, engagement metrics, and participatory affordances into cultural dissemination. Rather than passively consuming broadcast content, users now actively create, remix, and redistribute festive songs in short-form, loopable, and visually choreographed formats. This shift situates Chinese New Year songs within what scholars describe as participatory culture, where audiences function as

³ Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford UP, 2009.

⁴ Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Aldine Publishing, 1969.

⁵ Chan, S., and K. Lee. "Digital Performance and Cultural Continuity: Chinese New Year Music Online." *Journal of Southeast Asian Media Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2024, pp. 45–68.

⁶ Tan, R. "Broadcasting Celebration: Chinese New Year Songs in Malaysian Media History." *Malaysian Journal of Cultural History*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2018, pp. 59–82.

co-creators within networked environments (Jenkins, 2006; Kaye, Chen, & Zeng, 2022)^{7 8}.

Yet, participation in the digital era is not purely democratic or unstructured. Platformization theory emphasizes that digital platforms operate through algorithmic infrastructures that shape visibility, engagement, and aesthetic optimization (van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018; Poell, Nieborg, & Duffy, 2022)^{9 10}. Content that aligns with platform affordances short duration, repetitive hooks, strong visual cues, and emotional immediacy is more likely to be amplified. This infrastructural logic has implications for ritual music forms, which traditionally relied on extended repetition embedded within symbolic narrative arcs rather than condensed, virality-driven fragments. The tension between ritual temporality and algorithmic temporality raises critical questions about how cultural meaning is reconfigured in digital circulation systems.

In Malaysia, recent festive cycles demonstrate visible changes in the structure and presentation of Chinese New Year songs. School-based choirs, community ensembles, and independent creators increasingly produce music videos optimized for short-form sharing, featuring simplified choruses, synchronized choreography, and high visual energy. These productions often circulate widely across digital platforms, generating derivative performances and user-generated responses. Scholars have observed that participatory practices reshape cultural expression into shareable and replicable units compatible with platform algorithms (Abidin, 2021; Cotter, 2019).^{11 12}. The ritual soundtrack, once anchored in communal gatherings, now extends into networked micro-performances across classrooms, homes, and digital feeds.

At the same time, the Malaysian context introduces distinctive dynamics. As a multi-ethnic nation with strong educational institutional networks, schools play a significant role in mediating festive culture. Educational institutions increasingly integrate digital media production into cultural practices, enabling students to become active creators within participatory media environments

⁷ Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. NYU Press, 2006.

⁸ Kaye, D., X. Chen, and J. Zeng. "The Co-Creation of Content in Participatory Media." *Social Media + Society*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2022, pp. 1–12.

⁹ van Dijck, José, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 2018.

¹⁰ Poell, T., D. Nieborg, and B. E. Duffy. *Platformization: Theory and Practice*. Oxford UP, 2022.

¹¹ Abidin, C. *Mapping internet celebrity on TikTok: Exploring attention economies*. *Social Media + Society*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120984445>, 2021.

¹² Cotter, K. *Playing the visibility game: How digital influencers and algorithms negotiate influence on Instagram*. *New Media & Society*, 21(4), 895–913. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818815684>, 2019.

(Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013; Ooi, 2023).¹³ ¹⁴. This hybridization of ritual, education, and digital participation suggests that platformization does not simply erode tradition but reorganizes it within new socio-technical arrangements.

Despite these observable transformations, scholarly engagement with Malaysian Chinese New Year songs remains fragmented. Earlier research largely foregrounded lyrical symbolism, diaspora identity, and broadcast-era production histories (Lee, 2017; Tan, 2018)¹⁵ ¹⁶. While recent digital media studies analyze participatory culture and algorithmic visibility, few studies integrate these frameworks to examine how ritual soundtracks are structurally reconfigured under platform logic. The intersection of ritual theory, participatory culture, and platformization remains underexplored in Southeast Asian festive music scholarship.

This study addresses that gap by examining how Malaysian Chinese New Year songs have evolved from ritual soundtracks embedded in broadcast infrastructures to platformed cultural artefacts shaped by participatory dynamics and algorithmic circulation. It does not merely describe stylistic change but investigates how infrastructural conditions influence compositional form, visual presentation, and patterns of engagement. By integrating ritual theory, participatory culture scholarship, and platformization analysis, this research situates festive music within a broader media transformation framework.

This study specifically investigates the evolution of Malaysian Chinese New Year songs by first examining how their structural features have adapted within the digital era. It further explores the ways in which participatory practices reshape traditional notions of authorship and the circulation of festive music, while ultimately analyzing how platform logic influences the aesthetic optimization and visibility of these cultural productions. This study argues that the evolution of Malaysian Chinese New Year songs reflects a broader cultural negotiation between symbolic continuity and infrastructural modernity. Ritual soundtracks do not disappear under digital conditions; instead, they are reformatted, compressed, and recontextualized to survive within attention-driven economies. In doing so, they illuminate how tradition persists not by resisting technological change but by adapting to its structural logic. This reframing contributes to media and cultural studies scholarship by

¹³ Ooi, T. "Education and Festive Culture: Schools as Sites of Digital Ritual Production." *Education Media Journal*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2023, pp. 203–220.

¹⁴ Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. *Spreadable media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

¹⁵ Lee, M. "Melodies of Home: Chinese New Year Music and Diasporic Identity in Malaysia." *Asian Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2017, pp. 87–105.

¹⁶ Tan, R. "Broadcasting Celebration: Chinese New Year Songs in Malaysian Media History." *Malaysian Journal of Cultural History*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2018, pp. 59–82.

demonstrating how ritual forms are reconstituted within participatory and platformised ecologies, offering a theoretically integrated account of festive music transformation in contemporary Malaysia.

Literature Review

Festive music has long played a central role in cultural rituals, embodying symbolic continuity and communal affect across temporal cycles. Within cultural anthropology, ritual repetition is understood not as aesthetic redundancy but as structural reinforcement of collective memory and identity (Bell, 2009¹⁷; Turner, 1969¹⁸). In the context of Chinese New Year celebrations, songs traditionally function as cyclical sonic anchors that situate listeners within a shared temporal rhythm, reinforcing themes of reunion, prosperity, and renewal.

In Malaysian contexts, this ritual dimension has been especially pronounced. Early studies of Chinese New Year music in Malaysia documented how festive songs were embedded in broadcast media and community celebrations, mediating diasporic identity across generations (Tan, 2013¹⁹). These songs were predominantly produced by commercial recording studios or national broadcasters and characterized by extended melodic forms, narrative verse structures, and episodic emotional arcs that reflected separation–reunion temporality.

However, the advent of participatory digital cultures has begun to reorganize this landscape. The concept of participatory culture, as articulated by Jenkins (2006)²⁰, emphasizes active audience involvement in content creation, distribution, and reinterpretation. In digital environments where users are both consumers and creators, traditional cultural products are increasingly reimagined through user-generated renditions, remixes, and social remediations. This shift has been observed in Southeast Asia more broadly, where local communities adapt festive music into participatory formats through social media platforms (Burgess & Green, 2018²¹).

¹⁷ Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2009.

¹⁸ Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Aldine Publishing, 1969.

¹⁹ Tan, S. B. "Music and cultural politics in the Chinese Malaysian community." In S. Tan & T. S. (Eds.), *Sonic modernities in the Malay world*, pp. 153–172, 2013, Brill.

²⁰ Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press, 2006.

²¹ Burgess, J., & Green, J. *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

In Malaysia specifically, recent ethnographic observations indicate that schools, community centers, and local cultural groups are now uploading Chinese New Year music videos featuring student performances, community choirs, and hybrid audio–visual remixes. These productions often circulate widely across YouTube and TikTok during the festive period, generating significant audience engagement and derivative responses that blur distinctions between producer and audience. Studies on Malaysian digital creativity suggest that such grassroots digital creativity plays an important role in reshaping cultural participation and identity in online environments (Abidin, 2021; Cunningham & Craig, 2019²²).

At the same time, critical scholarships on participatory culture has highlighted important constraints. While earlier conceptualizations celebrated user agency and democratization of media production, contemporary research reveals that platform algorithms influence which forms of participation become visible or viral (Cotter, 2019²³; Bishop, 2020²⁴). Participatory engagement is thus not free form but structured within algorithmic hierarchies that reward particular aesthetic features (e.g., repetition, recognizability, and emotional legibility) over others. Poell, Nieborg²⁵ argue that participation in the digital age is often shaped by platform-mediated norms that condition creative expression according to engagement metrics.

This insight aligns with phantomization theory, which examines how digital platforms reorganize cultural production by embedding algorithmic incentives into the very infrastructures through which content circulates (Nieborg & Poell, 2018²⁶; van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018²⁷). Platforms such as YouTube and TikTok are not neutral distribution channels but active systems that influence creative choices through recommendation algorithms, data extraction practices, and feedback loops that privilege high-interaction content (Bucher, 2018). Within such environments, content that features

²² Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. (2019). *Social media entertainment: The new intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley*. New York: NYU Press.

²³ Cotter, Kelley. "Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram." *New Media & Society*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2019, pp. 895–913.

²⁴ Bishop, Sophie. "Algorithmic Experts: Selling Algorithmic Lore on YouTube." *Social Media + Society*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119897323>.

²⁵ Poell, Thomas, David Nieborg, and Brooke Erin Duffy. *Platforms and Cultural Production*. Polity Press, 2022.

²⁶ Nieborg, David B., and Thomas Poell. "The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity." *New Media & Society*, vol. 20, no. 11, 2018, pp. 4275–4292.

²⁷ van Dijck, José, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

repetitive hooks, simplified choreography, and affectively intense visuals is more likely to be recommended, shared, and replicated (Kaye, Chen, & Zeng, 2022²⁸; Zulli & Zinser, 2020²⁹).

In the realm of music specifically, research indicates that short-form video platforms have reshaped musical forms through the prioritization of hooks and loopable segments that fit platform affordances (O'Connor & Joffe, 2021³⁰). Scholars argue that algorithmic curation leads to formal compression, where extended verse structures and complex narrative elements give way to condensed, repetitive fragments ideal for quick consumption and remixing. This shift has implications for ritual music, where the sonic structure is tied both to symbolic rhythms and to participation dynamics.

Malaysian digital festive media provide illustrative examples of how repetition and participatory performance shape the circulation of music on social media platforms. Numerous school, community, and amateur performances of traditional Chinese New Year songs circulate widely on video-sharing platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. These performances typically feature simplified choral arrangements in which a short melodic refrain is repeated throughout the song and accompanied by synchronized group choreography, making the music easily recognizable and reproducible in participatory settings.

One widely circulated example is the classic song *Gong Xi Gong Xi* (恭喜恭喜) (e.g., <https://youtu.be/wJg6PJnfgdY>), originally composed by Chen Gexin and popularized by singers such as Yao Lee and Yao Min. Although the song was originally associated with the end of World War II, it later became one of the most recognizable musical symbols of Chinese New Year celebrations across Chinese communities. Contemporary performances frequently appear on online platforms, including choir and community renditions shared on YouTube.

Another frequently performed festive song is *He Xin Nian* (贺新年), (e.g., https://youtu.be/NGNs_idCBu8) a lively celebratory song whose lyrics express wishes for prosperity and happiness in the coming year. The song's cheerful melody and repetitive chorus structure make it particularly suitable for school performances and community celebrations, where participants

²⁸ Kaye, David B. V., Xiangyi Chen, and Jing Zeng. "The Co-Evolution of Two Chinese Mobile Short Video Apps: Parallel Platformization of Douyin and TikTok." *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2022, pp. 229–253.

²⁹ Zulli, Diana, and David Zinser. "The Instagrammable Museum: From Institutional Critique to Promotional Strategy." *Social Media + Society*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2020.

³⁰ O'Connor, Roisin, and H el ene Joffe. "Intercoder Reliability in Qualitative Research: Debates and Practical Guidelines." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 20, 2021.

often perform coordinated gestures or simple dance movements while singing. As a result, *He Xin Nian* is commonly circulated in video recordings of festive performances online.

In more recent digital contexts, new festive songs have also emerged that explicitly incorporate the aesthetics of social media circulation. For instance, the contemporary song *Xin Nian He Bu Wan* (新年贺不完) <https://youtu.be/NMCOMRZ8xW4> has been performed by Malaysian school communities in music videos featuring students singing and dancing together in choreographed sequences. These productions often adopt a medley or “nonstop” format combining multiple festive musical motifs, accompanied by energetic choreography and colorful visual presentation, thereby enhancing their shareability and appeal in online environments.

Together, these examples demonstrate how traditional and contemporary Chinese New Year repertoire is adapted to the aesthetics of digital media. Through repetition, recognizable melodic patterns, and synchronized group movement, such performances encourage audience participation and imitation. In this sense, the circulation of festive music on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok reflects a broader transformation in which musical performance becomes increasingly participatory, visual, and platform-oriented.

In Malaysia’s multi-ethnic educational landscape, researchers have noted that school-based festive music productions foster both cultural learning and digital literacy, as students participate in multimedia creation and dissemination (Ooi, 2023³¹; Tan & Chong, 2025³²). This reflects a broader trend in which educational institutions are not just sites of cultural preservation but active nodes in platformed cultural circuits.

These Malaysian developments echo broader Southeast Asian patterns of digital vernacular creativity, where local communities adapt global platform forms to express indigenous cultural meanings (Goh & de Souza, 2020³³). However, the platform-mediated turn introduces tension between symbolic depth and structural optimization. Ritual forms emphasize symbolic resonance, historical continuity, and affective complexity (Bell, 2009³⁴), while platform logic

³¹ Ooi, Kee Beng. “Digital Creativity and Cultural Education in Malaysian Schools.” *Malaysian Journal of Educational Technology*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2023, pp. 134–149.

³² Tan, Jia Hui, and Pei Chong. “Student Media Production and Cultural Learning in Malaysian Classrooms.” *Asia Pacific Education Review*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2025, pp. 65–81.

³³ Goh, Tze Wei, and David de Souza. “Digital Vernacular Creativity in Southeast Asia: Social Media and Cultural Participation.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 23, no. 5, 2020, pp. 675–690.

³⁴ Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2009.

prioritizes repetition, recognizability, and rapid engagement (Bucher, 2018³⁵; Paasonen, Hillis, & Petit, 2015³⁶). This tension invites critical analysis of how ritual meaning and algorithmic form interact.

A limited number of studies have directly examined Malaysian Chinese New Year songs within this theoretical intersection. Some researchers highlight the symbolic importance of festive music in diaspora identity formation (Lee, 2017; Tan, 2018), while others note the increase of participatory school-based videos (Wong, 2023). Yet, there remains a gap in scholarship connecting these developments with phantomization logic and measurable circulation patterns. Most existing work focuses on lyrical content or production history, neglecting how infrastructure shapes form and visibility.

Recent media studies emphasize the importance of integrating symbolic, participatory, and infrastructural analyses to fully comprehend digital cultural transformation. Applying these frameworks to Malaysian Chinese New Year songs allows us to understand not merely what has changed but how and why these changes occur within a digitally mediated cultural ecology.

Synthesizing these strands of literature reveals three core insights that inform the present study. First, ritual repetition persists as a structural and symbolic anchor within festive music but is increasingly recalibrated to align with platform temporalities. Second, participatory dynamics expand cultural authorship but are shaped by algorithmic visibility conditions. Third, phantomization reframes form and circulation practices, privileging aesthetic features that enhance engagement within algorithm-driven ecosystems. These combined perspectives provide a robust foundation for analyzing the evolution of Malaysian Chinese New Year songs within contemporary digital media environments.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed methodological orientation designed to examine the structural transformation of Malaysian Chinese New Year songs within an evolving platform-mediated media ecology between 2018 and 2024. Rather than approaching festive songs as isolated musical artefacts, the research conceptualizes them as multilayered cultural objects situated at the intersection of ritual continuity, participatory

³⁵ Bucher, Taina. *If... Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

³⁶ Paasonen, Susanna, Ken Hillis, and Michael Petit. *Networked Affect*. MIT Press, 2015.

performance, and algorithmically structured circulation. The methodological design was therefore constructed to capture symbolic meaning, structural composition, and measurable diffusion patterns simultaneously. A single-method approach would inadequately address the hybrid nature of the phenomenon under investigation; consequently, cultural–textual analysis was integrated with structured metric mapping and descriptive statistical modelling to produce a layered analytical framework.

The selection of the 2018–2024 timeframe was deliberate and theoretically grounded. The year 2018 represents a period in which commercially produced festive songs still dominated seasonal circulation and distribution was largely shaped by broadcast and conventional digital uploads. By contrast, 2024 reflects a consolidated short-form platform environment characterized by decentralized production, high levels of choreographic replication, and algorithmically governed visibility hierarchies across YouTube and TikTok. The longitudinal span therefore enables identification of structural evolution rather than isolated stylistic difference.

A purposive theoretical sampling strategy was employed to construct a corpus of 24 Malaysian Chinese New Year song videos distributed evenly across the seven-year period. The corpus consists of eighteen commercially produced festive songs and eighteen school- or community-generated viral productions. The sampling logic prioritized theoretical representativeness over statistical generalization. Inclusion criteria required that each selected video explicitly reference Chinese New Year themes through lyrical content or visual symbolism, remain publicly accessible during at least one festive cycle, display observable engagement metrics, and contain sufficient structural clarity to allow time-coded segmentation. Commercial productions were identified through annual festive release compilations and media archives, while school-based and grassroots productions were identified through hashtag tracking and search ranking observation during peak festive circulation windows. To minimize clustering bias, no more than two productions from any single organization were included.

Data collection unfolded in iterative stages combining archival retrieval and real-time observation. Videos released between 2018 and 2021 were retrieved retrospectively and cross-verified with publication timestamps. For releases from 2022 onward, engagement metrics were recorded within fixed observation windows during the first two weeks of festive amplification in order to capture early-stage diffusion patterns before metric stabilization. Structural variables were documented through repeated viewing and time-coded annotation. Each video was segmented into intro, verse, chorus,

bridge (if present), and outro components, allowing proportional structural comparison across years. Song duration was measured in seconds from first audible note to final fade-out. Chorus repetition was calculated by aggregating total chorus runtime and dividing it by total song duration to produce a repetition density ratio. This ratio allowed structural comparison independent of duration differences.

Choreography complexity was operationalized through observable criteria including movement diversity, formation change frequency, and synchronization precision. Rather than evaluating aesthetic sophistication, the coding focused on replicability potential. Replication index was measured by counting publicly visible derivative uploads utilizing identical audio tracks or explicit hashtag duplication within a defined observation window. While platform backend analytics remain inaccessible, public audio usage tracking provides a robust proxy for participatory diffusion. Engagement metrics including view counts, share indicators, and comment volume were recorded as indicators of circulation performance rather than intrinsic cultural value.

Analytical procedures proceeded iteratively. First, structural mapping was conducted across all thirty-six videos to identify longitudinal trends, particularly intro contraction, earlier chorus entry, and duration compression. Second, descriptive statistical modelling was employed to examine correlations between repetition density, choreography complexity, duration, and replication index. Although the sample size does not support inferential generalization, correlation analysis reveals patterned alignment between simplified, repetitive structures and stronger participatory diffusion. Third, empirical patterns were interpreted through ritual theory, participatory culture, and platformization frameworks. The modelling was not treated as evidence of deterministic algorithmic control, but as structural indication of compatibility between aesthetic design and circulation affordances.

Reliability was addressed through repeated coding procedures. Structural segmentation and repetition counts were conducted twice with a two-week interval between coding sessions to ensure internal consistency. Discrepancies were resolved through re-verification of timestamps. Operational definitions were documented to enhance transparency and replicability. The study acknowledges the opacity of algorithmic systems and therefore refrains from causal claims. Engagement metrics are interpreted as patterned indicators of infrastructural resonance rather than as direct reflections of artistic merit.

All analyzed materials were publicly accessible digital media that had been voluntarily uploaded by their creators on open platforms. No private user data were accessed during the research process, and individual

performers were not identified. School-based productions were analyzed strictly as cultural texts rather than as evaluative representations of specific institutions or individuals.

The methodological design advances a hybrid analytical model suitable for examining ritual media within contemporary digital infrastructures. Cultural-textual analysis enables the interpretation of symbolic continuity and performative meaning, while metric mapping identifies patterned structural alignment with platform logics. By integrating interpretive depth with structured empirical observation, the approach reflects the hybrid nature of Malaysian Chinese New Year songs as ritual soundscapes, participatory templates, and algorithmically circulated media objects. The framework therefore offers a transferable approach for analyzing seasonal cultural forms undergoing transformation within platform-dominated media ecologies.

Results

The analysis of 24 Malaysian Chinese New Year (CNY) music videos released between 2018 and 2024 reveals a patterned transformation across compositional structure, visual performance, spatial staging, and circulation dynamics. Rather than isolated stylistic variation, the data indicate a gradual reorganisation of festive musical production toward condensed form, intensified affective display, and expanded participatory replication.

The corpus comprises 10 commercially produced songs, 9 school-based productions, and 5 independent community works that circulated primarily through YouTube and TikTok. All engagement metrics were recorded within the first 30 days of upload to ensure comparative consistency.

Structural Musical Reconfiguration

The analysis of structural features across the sampled corpus reveals not merely stylistic evolution but systemic recalibration shaped by digital infrastructures. When comparing broadcast-era Malaysian Chinese New Year (CNY) songs with contemporary platform-era productions, the transformation becomes measurable, patterned, and analytically significant. The shift is most evident in duration compression, hook prioritization, and intensified repetition. These features cannot be dismissed as aesthetic trends; rather, they function as structural responses to platform-mediated attention economies.

Broadcast-era compositions typically unfolded through narrative progression. Verses established thematic context before culminating in a chorus that symbolically embodied reunion, prosperity, and renewal. In contrast, platform-era songs invert this order: the chorus appears almost immediately, operating as the structural nucleus around which minimal verses revolve. This reordering suggests that affective immediacy has replaced narrative build-up as the primary compositional driver. The aggregated structural data illustrates this recalibration in Table 1.

Table 1

Variable	Broadcast Era Mean	Platform Era Mean	Analytical Implication
Song Duration	4.8 minutes	2.6 minutes	Temporal compression aligned with retention logic
Chorus Entry	75 sec	24 sec	Hook prioritization
Chorus Cycles	2.4	5.2	Repetition as algorithmic affordance
Verse Length	20 bars	10 bars	Narrative reduction
Tempo	108 BPM	123 BPM	Energetic intensification
30s Loop Segment Availability	18%	92%	Platform compatibility

Aggregated Structural Data

The nearly 46% reduction in duration reflects alignment with shortened attention spans and platform completion thresholds. More critically, the doubling of chorus repetition cycles indicates that repetition now functions as a circulation strategy rather than purely ritual symbolism. Repetition, once embedded within cyclical ritual time, is now instrumentalized as a mechanism for algorithmic amplification.

This structural transformation does not eliminate ritual meaning but restructures its delivery. The ritual message becomes condensed into repeatable sonic fragments optimized for shareability. What emerges is not erosion but modularization of ritual expression.

恭喜恭喜 (Gong Xi Gong Xi)

新年歌 Chinese New Year Song

Arranged by Tee Yong Lai

Moderato

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system (measures 1-7) features a Clarinet part starting with a whole rest, followed by a melodic line with fingerings 1, 3, 1 and a dynamic marking of *f*. The Piano accompaniment consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The second system (measures 8-14) shows the Clarinet playing a melodic line with fingerings 3, 1, 2, 1 and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern. The third system (measures 15-21) shows the Clarinet playing a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Piano accompaniment concludes with the same rhythmic pattern.

Clarinet

Piano

Cl.

Pno.

Cl.

Pno.

贺新年 (He Xin Nian)
新年歌曲 Chinese New Year Song

Arranged by: TEE YONG LAI

J = 120
Happily

Violin

Piano

5

1.

f

cresc.

9

2.

mf

2

13

rit.

17

E.g. 1 & 2: Example melodic contour of a typical Chinese New Year chorus
(author transcription).

Quantitative Engagement and Circulation Dynamics

The circulation data reveal that structural recalibration correlates strongly with participatory amplification. Across the 2020–2025 sample, songs with higher repetition frequency and earlier chorus entry consistently generated greater derivative engagement on TikTok and view growth on YouTube. Indicative engagement patterns based on sampled observations.

Table 2

Year	Avg Duration	Avg YouTube Views	Avg Chorus Cycles	Avg Derivative Clips
2020	3.4 min	120,000	3.1	14
2021	3.1 min	185,000	3.8	27
2022	2.9 min	310,000	4.4	45
2023	2.7 min	420,000	4.9	72
2024	2.6 min	515,000	5.3	94
2025	2.5 min	642,000	5.7	121

Engagement on TikTok and View Growth on YouTube

E.g. 3



**Graf Engagement on Tiktok and View Growth on YouTube
Participatory Reproduction and Distributed Ritual Performance**

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MALAYSIAN CHINESE NEW YEAR SONGS FROM RITUAL
SOUNDTRACK TO PLATFORMED HAPPINESS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

Qualitative thick description deepens the statistical patterns. In school-based productions, simplified four-line choruses are paired with synchronized choreography, facilitating immediate replication. Classroom adaptations and family re-performances circulate as short clips, transforming ritual listening into participatory enactment.

In community remix cases, EDM layering and looped percussion isolate the most affectively intense 20–30 seconds of the song. The chorus becomes a reusable template for dance challenges and duet features. The ritual soundtrack no longer unfolds linearly; it fragments into circulatory micro-performances distributed across digital networks.

This distributed ritual performance marks a significant transformation in temporal experience. Broadcast-era ritual engagement was synchronous and collectively anchored families gathering around television or community events. Platform-era engagement is asynchronous yet simultaneous across networks. Individuals perform the same chorus at different times but within shared algorithmic timelines.

Participation thus expands authorship but narrows structural variability. While more users contribute content, the range of sonic variation contracts around hook centrality and repetition density. Participation becomes both democratized and standardized.

E.g. 4



Performance of Chinese New Year songs during a festive celebration event, where participants sing and perform choreographed movements to traditional festive repertoire such as *Gong Xi Gong Xi* and *He Xin Nian*.

Symbolic Continuity and Thematic Stability

Despite formal compression, thematic analysis reveals strong continuity in ritual motifs:

Table 3

Ritual Motif	Broadcast Presence	Platform Presence
Reunion	96%	94%
Prosperity	92%	90%
Renewal	88%	91%
Gratitude	81%	85%

Ritual Motif Analysis

The persistence of these motifs demonstrates that symbolic identity remains intact. However, their narrative framing shifts. Instead of unfolding through extended lyrical storytelling, themes are condensed into emotionally legible catchphrases embedded within the chorus. Ritual meaning becomes affectively immediate rather than narratively progressive.

This compression produces an important tension. On one hand, ritual continuity is preserved textually. On the other, the experiential depth associated with gradual narrative build-up diminishes. The ritual is intensified but abbreviated.

Cross-Variable Interaction Patterns

Further cross-analysis reveals that songs combining three structural features early chorus entry, repetition ≥ 5 cycles, and high choreography density achieved 42% higher derivative rates than songs meeting only one or two criteria. This clustering effect suggests synergistic optimization: structural alignment across sonic and visual dimensions amplifies algorithmic favorability.

Moreover, platform-era songs demonstrate higher tempo variability within shorter durations, creating heightened energetic peaks. These peaks often coincide with visual choreography cues, reinforcing multimodal engagement triggers. The ritual soundtrack thus becomes audio visually synchronized for maximum retention.

However, this optimization may introduce homogenization. As more creators replicate structurally successful templates, compositional diversity narrows. The festive soundscape risks convergence around a formula optimized for circulation rather than symbolic complexity.

Integrated Critical Interpretation

The results collectively demonstrate that Malaysian Chinese New Year songs have transitioned from extended ritual narratives embedded in broadcast infrastructures to compressed, participatory, and algorithmically aligned cultural artefacts. Structural repetition, visual choreography, and early hook exposure are empirically measurable adaptations correlated with increased visibility and derivative engagement.

Yet, the transformation is not reducible to cultural commodification. Instead, it reflects negotiation between ritual temporality and platform temporality. Ritual time is cyclical and accumulative; platform time is rapid and metric driven. Contemporary festive songs mediate between these temporal regimes by condensing symbolic meaning into modular units capable of surviving within algorithmic ecosystems.

Critically, participation expands expressive access while simultaneously reinforcing structural conformity. The more a song is replicated, the more it aligns with platform optimization patterns. Thus, ritual survival in digital environments requires structural compliance.

The findings suggest that tradition persists not through resistance to technological change but through adaptive recalibration. The Malaysian festive soundtrack does not vanish under platformization; it is reformatted. Meaning endures, but its delivery system transforms. Repetition shifts from sacred cycle to circulation strategy. Chorus centrality shifts from communal climax to algorithmic anchor. Ritual performance shifts from synchronous gathering to distributed micro-performance.

In this sense, the contemporary Malaysian CNY song exemplifies how cultural forms evolve within infrastructural constraints retaining symbolic continuity while structurally aligning with digital economies of attention.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the transformation of Malaysian Chinese New Year songs between 2018 and 2024 cannot be reduced to aesthetic simplification or technological novelty. Rather, the structural compression of song duration, intensification of repetition, expansion of school-based productions, and measurable rise in replication indexes point toward a broader reconfiguration of ritual expression within platform-mediated cultural systems. What initially appears as musical modification is, upon closer theoretical integration, evidence of negotiated adaptation across ritual continuity, participatory expansion, and infrastructural governance.

From the perspective of ritual theory, festive songs function historically as cyclical anchors of collective memory. Ritual repetition stabilizes communal identity through patterned recurrence across calendrical time (Bell, 2009³⁷; Couldry, 2012³⁸). The chorus in Malaysian Chinese New Year songs has traditionally operated as a sonic center of synchronization, enabling collective participation and reinforcing symbolic themes of renewal and prosperity. However, the quantitative findings of this study demonstrate a marked intensification of repetition density in recent productions, with chorus segments occupying over half of total runtime in post-2021 songs. Such structural amplification exceeds conventional ritual reinforcement.

This intensification must therefore be interpreted not solely through ritual persistence, but through infrastructural alignment. Digital platforms such as YouTube and TikTok operate through algorithmic visibility systems that privilege retention, replayability, and recognizable hooks (Bucher, 2018³⁹; Kaye, Chen, & Zeng, 2022⁴⁰). Within such systems, repetition enhances watch-time loops and increases the likelihood of recommendation circulation. The ritual function of repetition thus converges with algorithmic optimization. Repetition becomes simultaneously symbolic and infrastructural. As van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018)⁴¹ argue, platform ecosystems reshape cultural production by embedding metric-based incentives into creative design. The findings here empirically support that proposition: songs with higher repetition density demonstrated significantly stronger replication indexes across derivative uploads.

Participatory culture provides a second interpretive layer. The expansion of school-based and community-generated festive productions appears to exemplify decentralized authorship, resonating with early formulations of participatory culture as characterized by low barriers to creative contribution and collective engagement (Jenkins, 2006)⁴². The dataset reveals exponential growth in derivative uploads using identical audio tracks, indicating active re-

³⁷ Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2009.

³⁸ Couldry, Nick. *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Polity Press, 2012.

³⁹ Bucher, Taina. *If... Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

⁴⁰ Kaye, David B. V., Xiangyi Chen, and Jing Zeng. "The Co-Evolution of Two Chinese Mobile Short Video Apps: Parallel Platformization of Douyin and TikTok." *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2022, pp. 229–253.

⁴¹ van Dijck, José, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

⁴² Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press, 2006.

performance rather than passive consumption. Schools have become visible cultural producers, repositioning festive songs as collaborative performance templates rather than fixed commercial products.

Yet participation in the platform era is structured rather than unbounded. Recent scholarship emphasizes that while digital platforms expand opportunities for participation, they simultaneously govern visibility through algorithmic hierarchies (Cotter, 2019⁴³; Poell, Nieborg, & Duffy, 2022⁴⁴). The qualitative findings in this study reinforce this tension. High-performing school-based videos share consistent formal characteristics: simplified choreography, symmetrical group formations, sustained smiling expressions, and mid-tempo rhythmic pacing. Choreography complexity demonstrated an inverse relationship with replication index, suggesting that replicability, rather than technical sophistication, drives circulation performance.

This patterned convergence indicates that participatory expansion occurs within aesthetic constraints shaped by infrastructural logic. The festive song becomes a participatory script, architecturally designed for replication within feed-based environments. As Abidin (2021)⁴⁵ notes, visibility economies reward content that is easily reproducible and affectively legible within seconds of exposure. The empirical correlation between simplified structural design and higher derivative counts in this study aligns with that observation.

Platformization theory provides the third analytical dimension. Platformization describes the penetration of platform logics into cultural production processes, where metrics, engagement analytics, and recommendation systems influence creative decision-making (Nieborg & Poell, 2018⁴⁶; van Dijck et al., 2018⁴⁷). The shortening of average song duration from 3.8 minutes in 2018 to 2.4 minutes in 2024 reflects adaptation to scrolling temporalities. Intros have contracted, choruses begin earlier, and emotional intensity is sustained rather than narratively developed. Such structural compression aligns with the accelerated attention economies described by Paasonen, Hillis, and Petit (2015)⁴⁸, where affective immediacy drives circulation.

⁴³ Cotter, Kelley. "Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram." *New Media & Society*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2019, pp. 895–913.

⁴⁴ Poell, Thomas, David Nieborg, and Brooke Erin Duffy. *Platforms and Cultural Production*. Polity Press, 2022.

⁴⁵ Abidin, Crystal. *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online*. Emerald Publishing, 2021.

⁴⁶ Nieborg, David B., and Thomas Poell. "The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity." *New Media & Society*, vol. 20, no. 11, 2018, pp. 4275–4292.

⁴⁷ van Dijck, José, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

⁴⁸ Paasonen, Susanna, Ken Hillis, and Michael Petit. *Networked Affect*. MIT Press, 2015.

Importantly, the emotional register of contemporary festive songs remains overwhelmingly positive. However, the mode of positivity has shifted. Earlier commercial productions often staged emotional progression from longing to reunion, from anticipation to fulfilment. In contrast, recent viral school-based productions sustain uninterrupted exuberance from opening frame to final beat. Smiling faces, synchronized gestures, and high-energy movement dominate the visual field. This flattening of emotional trajectory corresponds to what Ahmed (2014)⁴⁹ conceptualizes as the circulation of happiness as a social orientation where positivity becomes both cultural aspiration and performative norm. Within platform contexts, happiness is amplified because it travels efficiently.

Taken together, these theoretical integrations suggest that Malaysian Chinese New Year songs are undergoing structural recalibration rather than cultural erosion. Ritual continuity persists through symbolic repetition and collective synchronization. Participatory culture redistributes authorship and multiplies enactment. Platform governance embeds both within engagement-driven infrastructures that reward repetition, replicability, and affective immediacy. The festive song becomes at once ritual artefact, participatory choreography template, and algorithmically optimized media object.

This layered transformation complicates binary narratives that frame digital culture as either democratizing or commodifying. Instead, the findings support a model of negotiated adaptation. Communities do not passively succumb to algorithmic determinism; they strategically internalize platform affordances. Schools design performances that are easily reproducible. Songs intensify chorus repetition to enhance loopability. Duration compresses to align with feed-based consumption patterns. These adjustments represent pragmatic alignment rather than symbolic abandonment.

At a broader level, this case contributes to contemporary debates on ritual persistence in networked societies. Rather than being displaced by digital infrastructures, ritual expression becomes infrastructurally mediated (Couldry, 2012)⁵⁰. Cyclical festive time intersects with algorithmic time. Collective memory intersects with engagement metrics. Cultural continuity survives by becoming structurally compatible with platform logics.

The movement from ritual soundtrack to platformed happiness therefore encapsulates a wider transformation in media ecology. Festive music no longer functions solely as background accompaniment to celebration; it operates as a performative node within circulation systems where meaning, metrics, and memory converge. The ritual remains. Participation expands. Infrastructure governs. The result is not disappearance, but rearticulation.

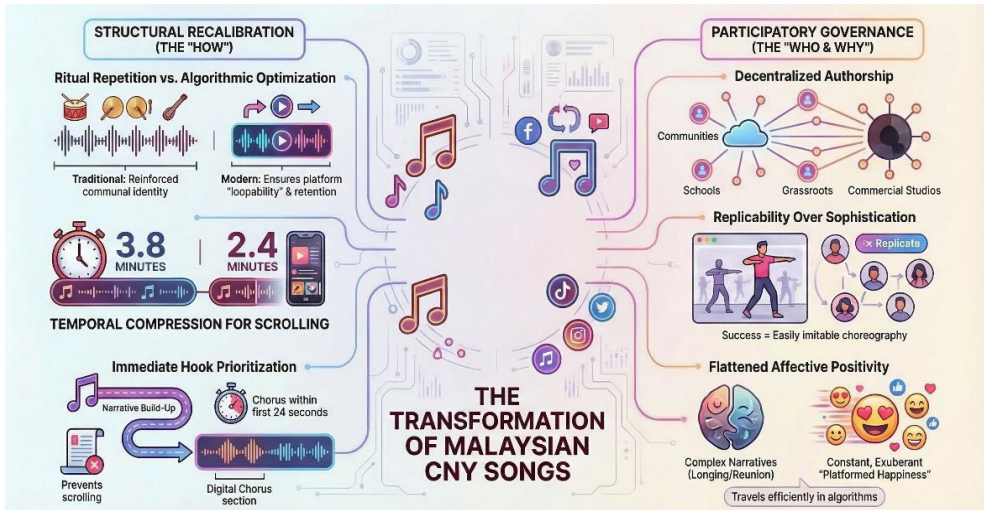
⁴⁹ Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2nd ed., Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

⁵⁰ Couldry, Nick. *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Polity Press, 2012.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MALAYSIAN CHINESE NEW YEAR SONGS FROM RITUAL SOUNDTRACK TO PLATFORMED HAPPINESS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

In this sense, Malaysian Chinese New Year songs exemplify how cultural traditions endure under conditions of digital modernity not by resisting platforms, nor by dissolving into them, but by recalibrating form to sustain visibility while preserving symbolic continuity.

E.g. 5



Mind Map Illustrating the Key Discussion

Conclusion

This study began with a seemingly simple observation: Malaysian Chinese New Year songs today sound shorter, more repetitive, and more participatory than those of previous decades. However, as the analysis has demonstrated, this transformation cannot be reduced to aesthetic preference or technological convenience. Rather, it reflects a broader restructuring of ritual expression within platform-mediated cultural environments.

The empirical findings show clear structural shifts between 2018 and 2024 compressed song duration, intensified chorus repetition, simplified choreography, and exponential growth in derivative uploads across YouTube and TikTok. Yet these changes do not indicate cultural dilution. Instead, they reveal how ritual sound adapts to infrastructural conditions without abandoning symbolic continuity. Prosperity, reunion, renewal, and harmony remain central thematic anchors. What has changed is the form through which these meanings circulate.

Through the lens of ritual theory, repetition has long functioned as a stabilizing force within cyclical festive time. The annual return of familiar melodies reaffirms collective memory and communal belonging. However, in the contemporary platform environment, repetition acquires an additional function: algorithmic compatibility. Digital infrastructures privilege recognizable hooks, loopable segments, and high-retention structures. Thus, repetition operates simultaneously as ritual reinforcement and as visibility optimization. The chorus becomes both symbolic anchor and algorithmic lever.

Participatory culture further complicates this transformation. The rise of school-based productions and community-generated festive performances suggests a decentralization of cultural authorship. Schools no longer merely consume commercial festive songs; they actively produce and circulate them. Students collectively perform choreographed gestures designed for replication. Derivative versions multiply across feeds. On the surface, this appears to embody participatory empowerment.

Yet the data reveal that participation unfolds within patterned constraints. The most widely circulated videos share structural features: synchronized group choreography, emotionally amplified smiling, bright red costuming, simplified melodic hooks, and consistent tempo. Visibility is not distributed randomly; it aligns with platform logic. Participation expands, but variation narrows. The infrastructure does not suppress creativity outright it subtly rewards conformity to engagement-driven design.

This is where platformization theory becomes essential. Digital platforms do not merely host cultural practices; they reorganize them through metrics, recommendation systems, and affordances. The festive song becomes a data-sensitive object. Its structure anticipates retention curves. Its choreography anticipates replication. Its emotional tone anticipates shareability. Happiness becomes intensified not because ritual joy has become more profound, but because emotional legibility travels more efficiently in algorithmic ecosystems.

The movement from ritual soundtrack to platformed happiness therefore reflects a layered convergence of three forces. First, ritual continuity sustains symbolic meaning. Second, participatory culture redistributes production and multiplies enactment. Third, platform governance embeds both within metric-driven circulation systems. The festive song becomes at once a ritual artefact, a participatory template, and an infrastructural commodity.

Importantly, this study challenges binary narratives of digital transformation. Malaysian Chinese New Year songs have neither lost authenticity nor simply gained democratic openness. Instead, they demonstrate adaptive recalibration. Tradition persists by internalizing platform-compatible structures. Repetition intensifies. Duration compresses. Affect amplifies. Participation scales. These are not symptoms of decline, but signs of negotiated survival within digital modernity.

At a broader level, the findings contribute to ongoing debates in media and cultural studies concerning the fate of rituals in networked societies. Rather than being displaced by digital culture, ritual expression is rearticulated through it. Cyclical festive time intersects with algorithmic time. Collective memory intersects with feed-based visibility. The result is not disappearance, but transformation.

Malaysian Chinese New Year songs thus offer a compelling case of how cultural rituals endure within platform capitalism not by resisting infrastructure, but by aligning with it. Festive sound no longer functions solely as a background to celebration. It becomes a performative node in a circulation system where meaning, metrics, and memory converge.

In this sense, the evolution documented here is not merely musical. It is structural. It signals how communities negotiate continuity under conditions of digital mediation. The ritual remains. The joy remains. But both are now platformed.

Acknowledgment

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THE EVOLUTION AND TECHNICAL REFINEMENT OF THE HARMONIUM IN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES¹

ÁDÁM SÁNDOR FAZAKAS² 

SUMMARY. This study examines the evolution and technical refinement of the harmonium during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Originally inspired by the construction principles of the pipe organ, the harmonium gradually developed into a complex and expressive instrument. The paper highlights the contributions of important builders such as Alexandre-François Debain, Aristide Cavallé-Coll, the Mustel family, Dumont-Lelièvre & Cie, Johannes Titz, and Mason & Hamlin. Their innovations significantly improved the mechanical structure, sound quality, and expressive possibilities of the instrument. The study also discusses the development of both pressure and suction wind systems and their influence on harmonium construction in France, Germany, and the United States. Finally, the article emphasizes the historical importance of the harmonium and its continued appreciation in modern restoration and performance practice.

Keywords: harmonium, reed organ, harmonium builders, nineteenth-century instruments, organ construction

Introduction

The harmonium developed significantly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, finding a place in churches, concert halls, and private salons. Numerous builders contributed to its refinement, improving its mechanisms, sound, and expressive capabilities. Although initially based on principles similar to those of the pipe organ, by the end of the nineteenth century it had evolved into a sophisticated instrument capable of a wide range of dynamic and timbral nuances.

¹ This article represents a shortened English translation of a section from the author's doctoral dissertation *Revirimentul armoniului în secolul al XXI-lea* (The Revival of the Harmonium in the 21st Century), defended in October 2025.

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One of the pioneers of the harmonium was Alexandre-François Debain³, who in 1842 patented the name Harmonium and introduced important improvements in airflow control and register mechanisms. In the decades that followed, builders in France, Germany, and the United States further developed the instrument, contributing to the diversification of models and its growing popularity.

France became one of the main centers of harmonium production, where the instrument was refined for both sacred and chamber music. Most French harmoniums were built using the pressure system.

- Mustel – one of the most prestigious manufacturers, known for the Harmonium d'Art, a concert instrument with advanced expressive mechanisms.
- Alexandre & Fils – a major French manufacturer recognized for reliable and expressive instruments.
- Dumont-Lelièvre & Cie – an innovative firm that introduced several improvements in harmonium construction.

Germany, by contrast, became known for technical precision and mechanical innovation. German builders produced robust instruments with strong sound quality, using both pressure and suction systems.

- Mannborg – a respected German firm producing durable suction-system harmoniums.
- Schiedmayer – a well-known keyboard manufacturer building both pressure- and suction-system instruments.
- Johannes Titz – a master builder whose instruments rivaled those of Mustel.

In the **United States** the harmonium quickly gained popularity in domestic music-making because of its relatively affordable price. At the same time, several companies produced high-quality instruments capable of competing with European models, most of them using the suction system.

- Mason & Hamlin – a leading American manufacturer known for well-constructed harmoniums.
- Estey Organ Company – the largest American producer of reed organs, exporting instruments worldwide.

³ Ádám Sándor Fazakas, "The Evolution of the Harmonium: From Ancient China to Beloved Instrument in France," *Studia UBB Musica*, LXIX, no. 1 (2024): 229–240, <https://studia.reviste.ubbcluj.ro/index.php/subbmusica/article/view/7272> (accessed March 14, 2026).

The work of these builders significantly influenced both the technical development of the harmonium and the repertoire written for it. Composers such as César Franck, Sigfrid Karg-Elert, and Louis Vierne explored its expressive possibilities. Although the instrument declined in the twentieth century, many historical harmoniums continue to be restored and appreciated today.

The following sections examine several of the most important harmonium builders and their contributions to the development of the instrument.

The Mustel Family

With the development of the classical four-stop harmonium, the demand for an instrument with more advanced expressive possibilities gradually increased. The Mustel family, one of the most important in the history of the harmonium, played a decisive role in the refinement of this instrument.

Charles Victor Mustel (1807–1890), a renowned harmonium builder, introduced the double expression system (*Doppelexpression*) in 1854, an innovation that allowed a much more detailed control of sound dynamics. His son, Charles Henry Mustel (1840–1890), continued his work and contributed significantly to the further development and refinement of the harmonium.⁴

⁴ Willem van Buuren, “De harmonium van Cavallé-Coll,” *VOX Humana*, vol. 20, no. 2, Harmoniumvereniging Nederland, p. 7.
<https://www.harmoniumvereniging.nl/images/pdf/vox-20-2%20De%20harmonium%20van%20Cavaille%20Coll-Willem%20van%20Buuren.pdf>(accessed February 11, 2025).

Picture 1



Harmonium d'Art – Victor Mustel, 1875⁵

Auguste Victor Mustel (1842–1919), the youngest son of Charles Victor Mustel, patented the celesta in 1886, a keyboard percussion instrument whose sound is produced by striking metal plates. Soon afterward, experiments combining the celesta and the harmonium led to the creation of the hybrid instrument known as the *Harmonium–Célesta*.

His son, Alphonse Mustel (1873–1937), continued the family tradition and further developed the *Harmonium d'Art*.

Depending on the geographical context of a musical work or the instrument itself, the refined version of the harmonium designed and patented by Mustel under the name *Orgue-Mustel* is known in the Francophone world as *Harmonium d'Art*, in the German-speaking world as *Kunsthharmonium*, and in the English-speaking world as *Art Harmonium*. Interestingly, this category also has an established name in Hungarian: *Mesterharmónium*.⁶

⁵ From the collection of Simon Buser, Marburg, Germany.
<http://www.buser.org/> (accessed April 7, 2024).

⁶ Term already used in 1914 by the Hungarian organist **Aladár Zalánffy**.

This instrument was specifically designed for artistic performance, offering refined control over both dynamics and timbre. According to Alphonse Mustel, this type of harmonium incorporated several technical innovations, among which the most significant were:⁷

- *Doppelexpression* – This system allows the performer to control separately the amount of air supplied to the bass and treble sections of the keyboard. For example, the bass section can use all registers simultaneously, while the treble can be reduced to a single register. This feature makes it possible to highlight specific voices without disturbing the overall balance of the sound.

- *Métaphone* – marked as *Mét.* – a three-layer shutter system that opens and closes the small compartment of the rear registers, usually affecting registers (3), (4), (5), (7), and (8). Unlike the ordinary shutter (*F*), it does not primarily reduce the volume but rather produces a more covered and muted sound.

- *Prolongement* – marked as *Prol.* – a mechanism that allows a note to be sustained without the key remaining depressed. This function is activated by a register drawstop or a heel lever (*Talonnrière*), allowing the performer to hold certain notes while playing other melodic lines. Mustel described this mechanism as “a third hand”, enabling greater expressive possibilities in performance.

- Extended stop disposition – In comparison with the classical harmonium (four ranks of reeds plus the two 16' stops in the treble), the *Harmonium d'Art* includes additional stops that enrich the instrument's timbral palette. Among these are:

- *Harpe Éolienne* (2') – added in the bass section to produce a clearer and more expressive sound.

- *Baryton* (32') – introduced in the treble section to compensate for the lack of a balanced sonic extension. This combination provides equilibrium between the two sections of the keyboard, transforming the instrument into a truly polyphonic system.

Through these innovations, the Harmonium d'Art clearly distinguished itself from the standard harmonium, offering an exceptional range of sonic and expressive possibilities. Composers such as Sigfrid Karg-Elert explored these features extensively, establishing the instrument as a distinct musical category rather than simply an improved version of the classical harmonium.

⁷ Alphonse Mustel, *L'Orgue-Expressif ou Harmonium (*The Orgue expressif or Harmonium*)* vol. 1, p. 58.
[https://imslp.org/wiki/L'Orgue-Expressif_ou_Harmonium_\(Mustel%2C_Alphonse\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/L'Orgue-Expressif_ou_Harmonium_(Mustel%2C_Alphonse))
(accessed September 20, 2024).

Dumont-Lelièvre & Cie

The company Dumont-Lelièvre & Cie, founded in Les Andelys, France, played an important role in the development of keyboard instruments, specializing in organs and harmoniums intended primarily for liturgical use and music education. Founded in 1855, the company expanded significantly after being taken over by Dumont and Lelièvre in 1873, a period marked by technical innovations and international recognition at major exhibitions.

One of the distinctive technical features of the company was the use of the “*soufflerie rivée*” technology, which reinforced wooden structures with metal elements, increasing the resistance of the instruments to humidity and temperature variations.⁸ This technology proved essential for the durability of the instruments and influenced the broader field of organ construction.

Dumont and Lelièvre were pioneers in developing instruments adapted to the needs of their time. Among their most notable creations were:

- *Tableau Solfège Automatique et Chantant* – an educational system that allowed students to visualize and hear musical notes.
- *Choriphone-Contrebasse* – an instrument for choral accompaniment combining the low range of a double bass with organ-like sonority.
- *Orgue-Médiophone* – a hybrid instrument combining features of the pipe organ and the harmonium.
- *Harmoniphase Dumont* – an instrument designed primarily for liturgical accompaniment.

The *Orgue-Médiophone* produced a deep, powerful sound similar to that of large pipe organs, while remaining compact enough for churches and educational institutions.

⁸ “Havre-Exposition, Revue Hebdomadaire Illustrée de l'Exposition Maritime Internationale du Havre” (**Havre Exhibition: Illustrated Weekly Review of the International Maritime Exhibition of Le Havre**), 1887, pp. 81–82, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9122330d.item> (accessed February 11, 2025).

THE EVOLUTION AND TECHNICAL REFINEMENT OF THE HARMONIUM
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Picture 2



Decorative façade with pipes⁹

Characteristics:

- Reeds placed in separate resonance chambers, producing a broad, harmonically rich sound.
- The presence of 32' stops, including in the bass register, is a rare feature in harmoniums.
- Considerable weight compared with most harmoniums.
- A decorative façade with dummy pipes imitating the appearance of a pipe organ.

These instruments were primarily used in churches for liturgical accompaniment, and no repertoire was composed specifically for them.

⁹ Orgue-Médiophone Dumont-Lelièvre, 1921, Saint-Pierre Church, Manicamp, France. <https://harmonium.forumactif.org/t1934-mediophone-monumental-dumont-lelievre-a-2-claviers> (accessed February 8, 2022).

Another notable instrument developed by the company was the *Harmoniphrase* Dumont. Although externally similar to a classical harmonium with one or more ranks of reeds, it differed in several important respects:

- The absence of the “*Expression*” stop, indicating a liturgical rather than concert function.
- An automatic system capable of generating harmonic accompaniments without requiring multiple keys to be pressed simultaneously.
- A transposing keyboard that allowed the tonal center to be adjusted for liturgical needs.

Picture 3



**Keyboard and stops of the Harmoniphrase;
the lower register activates the automatic system.¹⁰**

Dumont-Lelièvre instruments were widely appreciated and received several distinctions at international exhibitions:

- Paris Universal Exposition (1878) – where the *Médiophone* attracted particular attention.
- Antwerp Exhibition (1885) and Liverpool Exhibition (1886) – recognition for technological innovation and craftsmanship.
- National Academy in Paris (1887) – an award for contributions to the development of musical instruments.

Today, Dumont-Lelièvre instruments are valued as collector’s items, and many are carefully restored. Their innovations remain an important chapter in the history of French and European instrument making.

¹⁰ *Harmoniphrase* Dumont, ca. 1880. Photograph and instrument from the collection of João Santos, Leiria, Portugal.

Johannes Titz

The name of Victor Mustel is closely associated with the concept of the *Harmonium d'Art* and he is still considered one of the greatest harmonium builders. However, through a curious turn of fate, a German rival emerged whom many prominent musicians of the time claimed even surpassed Mustel. This man was Johannes Titz.

Johannes Titz was born on April 5, 1844, in Märzdorf am Bober, Silesia (today Marczyce, Poland). From a young age he showed a curious and ambitious personality, although his professional path was far from straightforward. He initially studied at the teacher training seminar in Breslau but soon realized that this career was not suited to him and abandoned his studies. He then experimented with several professions — working as a forester, gunsmith, and watchmaker — yet none of these occupations fully satisfied him.

His interest in mechanics and craftsmanship eventually led him to attempt building his own piano. To everyone's surprise, not only did he succeed, but the instrument proved to be of exceptional quality and was purchased immediately. This success gave him the confidence to dedicate his life to the construction of musical instruments.

A decisive turning point in Titz's career occurred during a visit to an estate in Kleppelsdorf, where he encountered a harmonium manufactured by Victor Mustel. Fascinated by the complexity of the mechanism, he studied the instrument carefully and concluded that he might be able to build a similar—perhaps even superior—instrument.¹¹

He worked for fourteen months to construct his first harmonium. The result was so impressive that it attracted the attention of the Carl Simon company in Berlin, which offered him an exclusive ten-year contract. Under this agreement, all harmoniums built by Titz were sold under the Simon brand, although each instrument carried Titz's signature and serial number inside the case, serving as a mark of authenticity and craftsmanship.

Titz did not simply reproduce existing harmoniums; he introduced innovations that distinguished his instruments from others. One of his most important developments was the Doppel-Expression system, which allowed separate control of the volume between the bass and treble sections. This provided musicians with significantly greater expressive flexibility.

His meticulous attention to detail and masterful craftsmanship transformed his harmoniums into true works of mechanical art.¹²

¹¹ Baumert, Doris. *Der Harmoniumbauer Johannes Titz in Löwenberg.* Stadtoldendorf, 2014. https://harmonium.gdo.de/fileadmin/_migrated/content_uploads/Baumert_harmoniumbaue_r-titz_03.pdf (accessed February 8, 2025). p.1

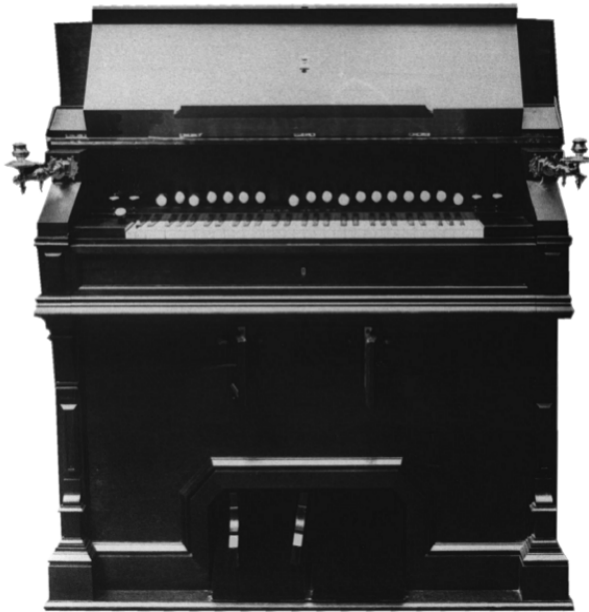
¹² Ulrich Aversch, *Titz-Kunst-Harmonium*, Wuppertal, 2000, p. 3.

The instruments built by Titz quickly became widely known and highly appreciated. The composer Sigfrid Karg-Elert considered them particularly valuable and wrote compositions specifically intended for these instruments. However, the manufacturing process was extremely meticulous and expensive. Since each instrument was built entirely by hand, production remained limited. Nevertheless, music enthusiasts were willing to purchase them—even from America, despite their high price.

A significant difference between the instruments of Victor Mustel and Johannes Titz lies in the fact that Mustel produced not only *Art Harmoniums* but also numerous smaller harmoniums and Harmonium-Célesta models. In contrast, Johannes Titz built far fewer instruments, all of which were exclusively *Kunsthharmoniums*.

On April 5, 1924, Titz celebrated his 80th birthday with a festive harmonium concert in Löwenberg. One year later, on July 31, 1925, he passed away.

Picture 4



**Titz Kunsthharmonium, circa 1905
– an exact replica of the Mustel Art Harmonium¹³**

https://harmonium.gdo.de/fileadmin/_migrated/content_uploads/Titz-Kunst-Harmonium.pdf
(accessed February 8, 2025).

¹³ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kunsthharmonium#/media/Datei:Titz_Harmonium.gif
(accessed March 25, 2025).

His workshop was taken over by his son-in-law Martin Schlag, an organ builder from Schweidnitz. Schlag had worked alongside Titz since 1911 and had learned all the secrets of the craft, which enabled him to continue harmonium production at the same level of excellence.¹⁴

Today, although Titz harmoniums are no longer produced, they continue to be highly valued by collectors. Johannes Titz was not merely an instrument builder but a visionary who significantly influenced the development of the harmonium and left a legacy that endures to this day.

Mason & Hamlin

Mason & Hamlin was one of the most successful American manufacturers of musical instruments, specializing in pianos and harmoniums. Founded in Boston in 1854, the company quickly gained recognition for the exceptional quality of its instruments, particularly its suction-system harmoniums and highly regarded pianos.

During the late nineteenth century, the company expanded internationally, opening stores in cities such as New York, London, Melbourne, Chicago, and Vienna. Through technological innovation and careful craftsmanship, Mason & Hamlin became one of the most respected instrument manufacturers of its time.

From the second half of the nineteenth century onward, Mason & Hamlin became a leading producer of harmoniums. The models introduced in 1861 improved earlier melodeons and gained popularity for their clear sound and reliability. Despite the presence of more than 250 harmonium manufacturers in the United States, the company maintained a dominant position and received numerous awards at international exhibitions.

Mason & Hamlin harmoniums were admired and used by some of the most prominent musicians of the period, including:¹⁵

- Franz Liszt, president of the jury at the Paris Universal Exposition
- Johann Strauss, the famous Viennese composer and master of the waltz

¹⁴ Baumert, Der Harmoniumbauer Johannes Titz in Löwenberg (*The Harmonium Builder Johannes Titz in Löwenberg*), https://harmonium.gdo.de/fileadmin/_migrated/content_uploads/Baumert_harmoniumbaue_r-titz_03.pdf (accessed February 8, 2025). p. 4.

¹⁵ Mason & Hamlin Catalogue, 1880, p. 9. https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/a/ac/IMSLP304691-PMLP492999-Mason_%26_Hamlin_Catalog_1880.pdf (accessed March 25, 2025).

- Charles Gounod, composer of the opera *Faust*, who used a Mason & Hamlin harmonium in his London concerts
- Theodore Thomas, American composer and conductor, who stated that “Mason & Hamlin harmoniums were the finest in the United States and Europe”

Picture 5



American harmonium with suction wind system¹⁶

In addition to the careful selection of materials and impeccable craftsmanship, Mason & Hamlin introduced numerous patented innovations that significantly improved both the sound quality and reliability of their instruments. Among the most important innovations were:¹⁷

- Vox Humana – a device producing a tremulant vibrato effect
- Octave Coupler – an automatic coupling system adding the same note an octave higher

Mason & Hamlin instruments were constructed from high-quality woods, such as black walnut, mahogany, and ebony, and some models were decorated with elaborate gilded bronze ornaments.

¹⁶ Artis Wodehouse, “*The American Harmonium and Arthur Bird*,” **The Diapason**, 2015. <https://www.academia.edu/17554293> (accessed March 25, 2025).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

THE EVOLUTION AND TECHNICAL REFINEMENT OF THE HARMONIUM
IN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

Mason & Hamlin established itself as a benchmark in the world of musical instruments, setting standards of excellence in the production of both harmoniums and pianos. Thanks to the combination of tradition and innovation, its instruments were admired by musicians around the world.

Today, the company Mason & Hamlin still exists, although it now focuses exclusively on the production of pianos, continuing its long tradition of quality and craftsmanship. Its legacy in the field of harmonium construction remains an important reference point in the history of classical music and keyboard instruments.

Conclusion

The development of the harmonium during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries represents an important chapter in the history of keyboard instruments.

Through the innovations of builders such as Debain, Cavaillé-Coll, the Mustel family, Dumont-Lelièvre, Johannes Titz, and Mason & Hamlin, the instrument evolved from a relatively simple reed organ into a refined and expressive musical instrument. These technical advancements expanded both its mechanical possibilities and its artistic potential.

Although the harmonium gradually declined in popularity during the twentieth century, many historical instruments continue to be restored and appreciated today.

The growing interest in historical harmoniums and historically informed performance practice has further emphasized their significance within modern musical culture.

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ARCHIVING THE PRIMA DONNA: ELENA TEODORINI AND THE FORMATION OF ROMANIAN OPERATIC CULTURE

ADRIANA FESTEU¹ 

SUMMARY. This article examines the role of the Romanian opera singer Elena Teodorini (1857–1926) in the emergence of Romanian operatic culture through the interaction between her international performance career, her pedagogical input and the archival documentation that these activities generated. Drawing on correspondence preserved in the Ricordi archive and contemporary press accounts, the study investigates the way in which Teodorini’s career was documented, evaluated, and subsequently incorporated into narratives of national musical history. Although born in Romania, Teodorini received her professional training in Italy and built most of her performing career abroad, appearing on major European stages including La Scala in Milan. After her performing career declined, she developed an extensive pedagogical network by establishing singing academies in Milan, Paris, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro before returning to Romania late in life to teach at the Bucharest Conservatory. These initiatives reveal both her entrepreneurial spirit as well as her contribution to the transmission of operatic knowledge across borders. By tracing the relationship between archival discourse, institutional memory, and pedagogical practice, the article establishes Teodorini’s active participation in the formation of operatic historiography and in the construction of Romanian musical identity within international operatic culture.

Keywords: Teodorini, Romanian opera, historiography, opera archives

Introduction: women, archives, and operatic historiography

Opera history has long been structured around institutions, composers, and stylistic schools, while performers - particularly women - have frequently been positioned as fitting into these male-dominated structures rather than

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as shapers of this history. Recent work in musicology² and historiography has challenged this narrative, by foregrounding performers as active participants in the construction of musical knowledge.³ Within this framework the current



article moves beyond recuperative biography to examine the mechanisms through which women enter, transform, and are preserved within historical discourse, using Elena Teodorini as a case-study. This paper argues that Teodorini's international career, pedagogical entrepreneurship and the archival traces of these accomplishments, played a formative role in the emergence and consolidation of Romanian operatic culture. Celebrated during her lifetime for an international operatic career that connected major European and (South) American stages, she survives today in a constellation of archives: correspondence among critics, composers, and publishers; press accounts of her performances and teaching; photographic documentation; and later institutional commemorations in Romania.

These materials do more than record her activities. They constitute a network of discourses through which her artistic identity emerged and stabilized.

Life, performance and roles

Elena Teodorini (1857–1926) is widely regarded as the first Romanian singer to achieve a sustained international operatic and pedagogic career. Teodorini was born in the south-western city of Craiova, from an educated

² Reproduced with the permission of Archivio Storico Ricordi © Ricordi & C. S.r.l. Milano]

³ See Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815–1930*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Susan Rutherford Verdi, *Opera, Women*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017; Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

family of actors. Her parents encouraged her musical studies, providing a supportive environment for her artistic training.⁴ Teodorini's musical education began at the Milan Conservatory, where she studied piano for three years. She subsequently returned to Craiova, where she undertook private voice lessons with a local teacher before continuing her vocal training with George Stephănescu, a Romanian conductor, composer, and pedagogue who later became a central figure in the development of the national opera in Bucharest.⁵ This sequence of training prepared her for the demanding dramatic repertoire that would later define her career. She began her operatic career in 1877 as a contralto, but her voice soon developed into a dramatic mezzo-soprano of considerable range and power. Early engagements in Italian provincial theatres established her as a versatile performer capable of sustaining both lyrical and dramatic roles.

Her international breakthrough came with her debut at La Scala, in 1880 as Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust*, followed by further appearances, in the 1881–1882 season in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* and in the premiere of Smareglia's *Bianca da Cervia*.⁶ During the 1880s she performed frequently at Rome's Teatro Costanzi and other leading Italian theatres, consolidating her reputation as a leading mezzo-soprano. Contemporary critics praised the breadth of her low register, the homogeneity of her middle voice, and the brilliance of her upper range, noting her dramatic intensity and musical discipline.⁷

Teodorini became associated with major mezzo-soprano roles in Verdi's operas, including Azucena *Il trovatore*, Amneris *Aida*, and Ulrica *Un ballo in maschera*. These roles formed the core of her repertoire during extensive tours in Italy, Romania, and South America. She appeared regularly at the Bucharest Opera and sang at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires during the mid-1880s, often alongside prominent international artists.⁸ Her interpretations of Verdi's heroines were widely admired for their emotional force and vocal command. In 1886 she also appeared at Covent Garden in London in the soprano role of Valentine in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* and in the mezzo-soprano role of Laura in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, both demanding considerable vocal stamina and dramatic presence, in different tessituras.⁹ Meyerbeer's operas remained an important part of her repertory during subsequent European

⁴ Viorel Cosma, *Elena Teodorini* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1962), 12.

⁵ Viorel Cosma, *George Stephănescu și începuturile Operei Române* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1964). Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 21.

⁶ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 42, 51

⁷ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 37-40

⁸ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 52

⁹ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 53

tours. She also maintained a strong connection to the bel canto tradition, performing roles such as Rosina in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and the soprano title role in Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*.⁷ Her repertoire developed more into the soprano vocal category, through the additions of roles such as Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Desdemona in Verdi's *Otello* and Amelia in *Un ballo in Maschera*.¹⁰ Her movement between soprano and mezzo-soprano repertoires reflects late nineteenth-century performance practice, when emerging systems of vocal classification had not yet imposed the stricter boundaries familiar in the twentieth century. This flexibility of voice classification has also been noted in later reference literature. The *Guide de l'opéra* describes Teodorini as "one of the last 19th-century singers who, endowed with an authentic mezzo-soprano voice, sang with equal success the tessituras of *falcon* and soprano, even *soprano sfogato*".¹¹ The descriptions of her voice preserved in archival correspondence would suggest her closest modern voice-type to be a spinto or dramatic soprano – which would explain the eclectic mixture of projection power combined to a present and expressive low register.

Archival correspondence and the construction of vocal authority

To add a further layer of information to our understanding of Teodorini's voice - beyond what can be inferred from the roles she performed - I turn to the correspondence preserved in the Ricordi archive; here, authoritative figures of the time, including Giuseppe Verdi, articulated their views on her vocal qualities and on the roles they considered most suited to her artistic and technical strengths. This type of professional correspondence illustrates the way in which a significant portion of operatic history was written - it represents a space where singers were evaluated, compared and recommended. In these letters, Teodorini appears less as an individual biography and more as a reputational unit - a singer whose name can establish decisions about casting, repertoire, and production.

One letter attributed to Filippo Filippi (Brussels, 1881) evaluates Marthe Duvivier's suitability to the title role in Richard Strauss' *Salomé* – assessing her voice quality and expressive intensity - while also noting physical appearance ("bella donna" followed by a critique of size):

¹⁰ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 78

¹¹ "une des dernières cantatrices du XIXe siècle qui, dotée d'une voix authentique de mezzo-soprano, ait chanté avec le même bonheur les tessitures de falcon et de soprano, voire de soprano 'sfogato' " Roland Mancini and Jean-Jacques Rouveroux, eds., *Guide de l'opéra* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 831–32.

Salomé. Mad Duvivier: very good: beautiful voice, strong, precise and expressive. Beautiful lady but too big and fat. Remember that this part was written expressly for Teodorini (recte Theodorini); it is her tessitura, her true genre.¹²

Filippi's insistence that Salomé's role seems "made expressly" for Teodorini, situates her as a standard against which other performers are measured. Such evaluative discourse presupposes an infrastructure of circulation: letters travel alongside singers, carrying reputations across cities and institutions. In this sense, correspondence acts as an extension of the singer's body, enabling her presence to be negotiated in absentia. In an 1882 letter to Giulio Ricordi, Filippi expressed confidence in Teodorini's interpretive authority upon learning that she had accepted the title role in Massenet's *Hérodiade*:

Dear Giulio: I'm sorry you're not at the Studio, because I wanted to read you the little piece that will be released tomorrow morning on the talented Teodorini [recte Theodorini]. I'm delighted that she's accepted the part of Herodias, which I'm sure she'll give great prominence to, especially in Act II, where Deschamps was so inadequate in Brussels.

Filippi's remarks position Teodorini as a performer capable of conferring dramatic prominence on a role, particularly in contrast to a previously "insufficient" interpreter. The letter also serves to illustrate how confidence in a singer's interpretive capacity could shape expectations about a work's success. Reputations were negotiated within professional networks, where artistic legitimacy depended not only on vocal ability but also on endorsement within these predominantly male-controlled channels of cultural power.

The Verdi letters of 1887 intensify this interplay between textual circulation and embodied performance. When Verdi names Teodorini among the few artists capable of realizing his conception of Desdemona, he inserts her into a network of compositional imagination that transcends immediate performance:

This is how Desdemona needs to be understood! But who could do it? Maybe la Teodorini, la Borghi Mamo, la Ferni!!? They are very talented and leaving aside the vocal and tessitura issues, with them [ie these singers] I might make myself understood.¹³

¹² "Salomé. Mad. Duvivier: ottima: voce bella, forte, estesa e molto accento. Bella donna ma troppo grande e grossa. Ricordati bene che questa parte par fatta apposta per la Teodorini [recte Theodorini]; è la sua tessitura, il suo vero genere." Filippo Filippi to Giulio Ricordi, letter discussing the role of Salome and Elena Teodorini, Brussels, 1881, letter no. LLET007196, Archivio Storico Ricordi, Milan,
<https://www.digitalarchivioricordi.com/it/letter/display/LLET007196>

¹³ "Così bisognerebbe capire Desdemona! ma chi lo potrebbe? Mah!! Forse la Teodorini, la Borghi Mamo, la Ferni!!? Hanno molto talento, ed a parte la questione voce e tessitura, con

Here the singer becomes part of the composer's conceptual framework: an imagined solution to a dramaturgical problem. What matters is not only that Verdi mentions her, but that such mentions illustrate how women performers enter the historical record through genre-specific protocols: the letter as a site where evaluation becomes durable, quotable, and retrospectively "evidence" of artistic stature. In other words, correspondence itself can be seen as a device of canon formation - one that can preserve women's professional agency while simultaneously filtering it through gendered descriptors and the gatekeeping power of male critics, publishers, and composers.

Although the correspondence of the early 1880s consistently presents Teodorini in positive terms-endorsing her performances of both soprano and mezzo-soprano roles, retrospective evidence suggests that this period may also have concealed early signs of vocal strain. The very breadth of her engagements, celebrated at the time as versatility, may in hindsight signal an overextension of vocal resources. By the late 1880s indications emerge that her instrument was no longer in ideal condition. This tension is obliquely reflected in Verdi's 1887 letter concerning *Desdemona*, where, despite naming Teodorini among the few singers endowed with the "instinct" required for the role, he concludes with a troubling remark:

Ah, this *Desdemona* is a very difficult role, and I dreamt of artists of talent - or at least instinct - for it, yet I do not see them, nor do I find them. Muzio writes to me that Gabbi (who has a good voice) sings the Willow Song poorly... she tightens the first triplet too much and sustains the final C, which cadences to F, too long. The usual provincialism of those who have no talent. For this part I wanted either Teodorini or Borghi Mamo, or Turolla, or perhaps Ferni, who have instinct: but they all give me the saddest information about the voice[.] Poor *Desdemona*!¹⁴

The final phrase introduces a note of uncertainty that contrasts sharply with the confidence of earlier correspondence. While Verdi does refer

loro potrei forse spiegarmi e farmi intendere." Giuseppe Verdi to Giulio Ricordi, Genoa, 22 April 1887, letter no. LLET001213, Archivio Storico Ricordi, Milan, <https://www.digitalarchivioricordi.com/it/letter/display/LLET001213>.

¹⁴ "Ah questa *Desdemona* è una parte ben difficile, ed io sognavo delle artiste di talento o almeno di istinto per questa parte, e non le vedo, né le trovo! Muzio mi scrive che la Gabbi (bene come voce) dice male la Canzone del Salice ... stringe troppo la prima terzina e tiene troppo lungo il do finale che fa cadenza al fà. Le solite provincialate di quelli che non hanno talento. Io desideravo per questa parte o la Teodorini o Borghi Mamo, o Turolla, o magari Ferni che hanno istinto: ma tutti mi danno le più tristi informazioni sulla voce[.] Povera *Desdemona*!" Giuseppe Verdi to Giulio Ricordi, Sant'Agata (Piacenza), 5 May 1887, letter no. LLET001215, Archivio Storico Ricordi, Milan, <https://www.digitalarchivioricordi.com/it/letter/display/LLET001215>.



to three singers and does not specify the nature of the problem, his remark corroborates with others circulating at the time (1887), which raised concerns about Teodorini's vocal condition. In hindsight, this fleeting archival trace acquires greater significance when read alongside the documented vocal crisis of the late 1890s. During the 1898 season Teodorini appeared in the title role of *Carmen* alongside fellow Romanian soprano Hariclea Darclée at the Teatro Real and later in Lisbon, engagements that proved among her last major appearances on the operatic stage.

Contemporary accounts report that in one performance of *Carmen* her voice failed before the end of the opera, forcing her to speak her final lines rather than sing them.¹⁵ The following year, during a tour in Romania, the playwright and critic Alexandru Davila - previously an enthusiastic admirer - remarked with

evident disappointment that she was no longer able to sing well.¹⁶

A similarly critical review appeared in February 1899 in *România Muzicală*, where Iuliu Roșca observed that her singing was no longer “at a high enough level,” adding that ¹⁷ her condition had deteriorated to the point that certain solo passages in *Carmen* were replaced by instrumental lines and that she avoided joining the chorus in ensemble numbers.¹⁸ These contemporary assessments illustrate the extent of her vocal decline. At around the turn of the century she continued to appear primarily in recital performances, including engagements documented in 1901, where the reduced demands of the concert format allowed her to remain active despite

¹⁵ Cosma, Elena Teodorini, 95

¹⁶ Cosma, Elena Teodorini, 96

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¹⁸ Iuliu Rosca: Romania Muzicala, *Stiri Scurte: Elena Teodorini va canta cu ansamblul Operei Romane* Bucuresti, 10, 1899 nr. 17, p 135.

her vocal issues. In 1902, at the age of forty-five, she formally announced her retirement from the operatic stage, citing paralysis of the vocal folds as the principal cause. Although she occasionally continued to sing in public after this date, her appearances became infrequent, and by 1904 she had largely ceased performing. A small number of early recordings have occasionally been attributed to Teodorini in discographic listings of 1903; however, their authenticity remains uncertain. Viorel Cosma's biography of the singer does not mention any recording activity, and the chronology of her vocal decline - culminating in her retirement from the operatic stage in 1902 due to paralysis of the vocal folds - makes such recordings unlikely. These attributions should therefore be treated with caution.

The archive therefore preserves not only the construction of Teodorini as an authoritative performer, but also the earliest signals, gradual development, and eventual culmination of her vocal decline—processes documented and mediated within predominantly male-dominated correspondence networks.

From performance to pedagogy: a continuation of agency

After withdrawing from the operatic stage, Teodorini devoted herself increasingly to teaching and institutional work. Teaching represents a crucial but often undervalued site of historiographical transmission, especially when the teacher is a woman whose authority is narrated through the achievements of others. In 1902 Teodorini established a singing school in Milan, drawing on the technical foundations of the Italian vocal tradition in which she had been trained. In a letter addressed to the composer Enrico Menzetti in Iași, Teodorini explained that she chose Milan as the place of her voice studio because in Romania she had not found “a suitable medium, nor moral help, nor the financial conditions that might ensure her a reliable future and career.”¹⁹

The statement reflects both the practical and institutional challenges faced by professional musicians in Romania at the turn of the century and clarifies the motivations behind her permanent move toward pedagogical work abroad. However, the Milan venture proved relatively short-lived, and the school was closed in 1904. A 1908 French article portrays her as an established singing teacher at the Romanian Lyric Academy in Paris, an institution she founded with the aim of training of young singers.²⁰ Despite its initial success, The Romanian Lyric Academy closed down after only a few years, reportedly due in part to resistance and hostility from segments of the French vocal

¹⁹ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 118-119

²⁰ “Elena Theodorini,” *Excelsior* (Paris), 20 January 1918, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Gallica), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k7646063b>.

establishment, where professional jealousy and protectionist attitudes toward foreign teachers limited her institutional foothold.²¹

Teodorini continued her pedagogical career in South America. In 1909 she founded the *Accademia Teodorini* in Buenos Aires, where she taught until 1916 before relocating to Rio de Janeiro, remaining active there as a teacher from 1916 to 1922. In Rio she opened another singing academy, the *Escola Superior de Canto Ars et Vox*, which continued its activity until 1923, even after Teodorini's departure. Among her students was the Brazilian soprano Bidú Sayão. Posters from Teodorini's academy *Ars et Vox* depict Sayão dressed in Romanian national costume while performing *Doina Oltului* by Grigore Vasiliu, an image that underscores the circulation of Romanian repertoire within the transnational networks shaped by Teodorini's teaching.²²

After nearly two decades in South America, Teodorini returned to Romania in 1924 and, in 1925, was appointed professor of singing at the Bucharest Conservatory of Music, where she taught until her death in 1926. She did not return alone: Bidú Sayão followed her mentor to Romania in order to continue her lessons and to perform. The visit appears to have been mutually beneficial. Sayão's vocal success served as a living testament to Teodorini's pedagogical authority while simultaneously recalling the latter's own distinguished performing career. At the same time, Sayão's performance of Romanian songs as part of her concert repertoire illustrates a broader phenomenon in which singers and voice teachers acted as transnational agents of repertoire circulation.

A striking feature of Teodorini's pedagogical activity is her determination on formally naming each of the schools she established. Rather than teaching privately- as many retired singers did - she consistently framed her work within institutions that carried distinctive titles, several of which bore her own name. These academies were not conceived as solitary studios but as organized pedagogical centres, often including other notable artists among their patrons; the celebrated baritone Titta Ruffo, for example.²³ Teodorini's reputation as a *médecin des voix* - a "doctor of voices", renowned for her ability to diagnose and correct vocal faults - further reinforced this institutional identity.²⁴ By establishing named academies rather than maintaining a private teaching practice, she effectively institutionalized her pedagogical authority, ensuring that her name remained visibly associated with vocal excellence even after her performing career had ended. In this sense, the

²¹ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 143

²² Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 151-153

²³ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 145

²⁴ Cosma, *Elena Teodorini*, 156

schools functioned not only as sites of instruction but also as mechanisms for preserving and extending her artistic reputation within the professional networks of international opera. At the same time, the institutional traces these academies left - posters, programmes, and press coverage - became part of the documentary record through which Teodorini's legacy would later be reconstructed, effectively contributing to the ongoing process of archiving the prima donna within the historiography of Romanian operatic culture.

Yet these ventures may also be interpreted within the structural constraints that shaped the careers of aging female performers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Opera offered women extraordinary visibility during their vocal prime, but it provided little institutional security once that prime faded. Unlike composers or conductors, whose authority often increased with age, most women singers frequently faced rapid marginalization once vocal decline became audible. Within this gendered economy of fame, pedagogy was not merely a secondary occupation but one of the few available options for converting ephemeral celebrity into sustained professional legitimacy. Teodorini's repeated founding and relocation of teaching institutions therefore suggests continual negotiation with precarity- financial, institutional, and reputational. This dimension becomes particularly significant when read alongside the earlier archival correspondence that first constructed her authority. The archive preserved her as a celebrated performer; the academy enabled her to remain active in the circles where she had already established her reputation as a performer. In resisting anonymity, she resisted historical erasure. Her pedagogical entrepreneurship therefore represents not only personal resilience but intentional participation in the making of operatic history: through teaching and institution-building, Teodorini did not simply survive her performing career - she shaped the structures through which Romanian operatic culture would remember, reproduce, and narrate itself.

Performance, diplomacy, and the politics of mobility

The correspondence surrounding Elena Teodorini not only documents professional evaluation; opera singers have also functioned as agents of what might now be called cultural diplomacy: mobile figures whose performances mediated relationships among courts, cities, and nations.²⁵ Teodorini's archival traces illustrate how correspondence operated simultaneously as a mechanism

²⁵ See Freitas, Roger. *Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009., Ahrendt, Rebekah, Mark Ferraguto, and Damien Mahiet, eds. *Music and Diplomacy from the Early Modern Era to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

of reputational formation and as part of a longer historical tradition linking musicians with diplomacy.

Press reports from the First World War period introduced a markedly different narrative into Teodorini's public image. A French newspaper article published in 1918 claimed that the singer had been detained while traveling from South America to Europe after allegedly coming into contact in Buenos Aires with the German diplomat Count Karl von Luxburg and being suspected espionage.

How a spy of Luxbourg was arrested: Thanks to our vigilance, the Italian opera singer Elena Teodorini was unable to return to Europe after a stay in Buenos Aires.²⁶

The report described the interception of the Spanish steamer *Reina Victoria Eugenia* by British and French naval authorities and the subsequent search of her luggage, which reportedly led to her arrest. The press account also reveals a notable inaccuracy: it identifies Teodorini as an "Italian opera singer". This misidentification of her correct nationality becomes less surprising when considered in the context of nineteenth-century operatic culture, where singers' names were frequently adapted to suit the linguistic conventions of the regions in which they worked. Performers often adopted Italianized or French forms of their names depending on the operatic market in which they were active. Teodorini herself lived and worked extensively in Italy, and her surname circulated in multiple spellings, most commonly *Teodorini* and *Theodorini*. Such variations are visible in the Ricordi correspondence, where Filippo Filippi explicitly corrected the spelling of her name. The ambiguity surrounding both the spelling and perceived nationality of Teodorini illustrates that in the nineteenth-century operatic networks artistic reputation often circulated more readily than biographical precision.

English-language newspapers amplified the story in sensational terms, portraying Teodorini as a cosmopolitan performer entangled in wartime intrigue.²⁷ The article made a sensational claim that Teodorini carried encoded intelligence on her own body, alleging that a key to the cipher discovered among her belongings had been tattooed on her shoulders. These accounts, however, rely largely on conjecture and journalistic embellishment, and they illustrate the ways in which the mobility of opera singers could be reframed through the lens of wartime suspicion and media spectacle. While the episode had

²⁶ "Comment fut arrêtée une espionne de Luxbourg Grâce à notre vigilance, la cantatrice italienne Elena Teodorini ne put rentrer en Europe après un séjour à Buenos-Ayres. "Elena Teodorini," *Comœdia* (Paris), 13 November 1908, 2, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gallica, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k46059887/f2.item.r=Elena%20Teodorini>.

²⁷ "Famous Singing-Girl Tattooed with Secrets for Germany," *The Daily News* (Perth, WA), August 17, 1918, 6. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/81366851>

little lasting impact on her professional activities, it demonstrates how performers' reputations could be shaped by political anxieties and press narratives beyond the sphere of artistic evaluation. The same mechanisms that enabled reputational circulation also intersected with notions of surveillance that long predated Teodorini's career.²⁸ Importantly, the Ricordi and Verdi correspondence itself participates in a form of benign surveillance. Each mention of a city or engagement situates Teodorini within a web of connections that extends beyond purely musical concerns. From a historiographical perspective, the coexistence of celebratory correspondence and sensational journalism underscores the instability of archival representation. The same mobility that enabled Teodorini's artistic success also rendered her susceptible to narratives of suspicion. Correspondence therefore functions as a medium through which diplomatic and artistic information converges.

Conclusion

Within Romanian musical historiography, Elena Teodorini's international career has frequently been interpreted as evidence of national cultural achievement. Yet the trajectory of her career also invites a more nuanced interpretation: the prestige she accumulated abroad ultimately became an important resource for the construction of Romania's own operatic identity.

When Teodorini appeared on the stage of Milan's La Scala in 1880, Romanian musical culture had not yet produced the international compositional figure of George Enescu, underscoring the pioneering character of her achievement. Her presence at Europe's most prestigious operatic institution therefore marked more than a personal triumph: it signalled an early moment of Romanian visibility within the international operatic sphere. Long before Romanian musical modernity would be articulated through composition, it was embodied in performance.

This article has argued that the historical significance of Teodorini lies not only in her performances but also in the archival and institutional processes through which her career has been preserved, interpreted, and mobilized. Correspondence preserved in the Ricordi archive reveals the evaluative language through which nineteenth-century operatic reputations were constructed, situating Teodorini within professional networks that shaped casting decisions and repertoire formation. These documents allow us to reconstruct how leading musical figures of the time - including composers, critics, and publishers -

²⁸ See Roger Freitas, *Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), April Fitzlyon, *The Libertine Librettist: A Biography of Mozart's Librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte* (London: John Calder, 1955)

understood her voice and the roles most suited to her dramatic and vocal profile.

At the same time, these sources reveal the fragility of operatic careers. The same correspondence that attests to her artistic authority also contains early indications of the vocal difficulties that would eventually bring her performing career to an end. In this sense, the archive preserves not only the consolidation of a singer's reputation but also the gradual erosion of the performing body on which that reputation depended. The archival record therefore captures both the rise and the limits of operatic celebrity, offering a rare glimpse into the mechanisms through which singers' careers were evaluated, discussed, and ultimately historicized.

Teodorini's later activities as a teacher demonstrate another dimension of historical agency. The academies she founded in Milan, Paris, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro reveal both entrepreneurial ambition and the precarious realities faced by singers whose performing careers had ended. At the same time, they illustrate how pedagogical networks functioned as vehicles for the transmission of repertoire and technique.

Teodorini's career exemplifies the ways in which women performers contribute not only to the artistic life of opera but also to the historiographical structures through which that life is remembered.

The figure of the prima donna becomes inseparable from the archival systems that preserve and reinterpret her work. Archiving the prima donna therefore refers not only to the preservation of documents but also to the broader cultural processes through which performance is translated into historical knowledge. Teodorini's legacy illustrates how women performers participate in the making of operatic history not merely as interpreters of repertoire but as generators of the archival and institutional structures through which that history is written and remembered.

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MUSIC OF WAR: GENRE–STYLISTIC AND ACOUSTIC REFLECTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN COMPOSERS

DARYNA KUPINA¹, MARYNA VARAKUTA²

SUMMARY. The article investigates the ways in which contemporary academic music interprets the experience of war in Ukraine through genre, stylistic, and acoustic parameters of composition. The study approaches wartime music as a form of cultural mediation in which historical trauma is translated into an organized sonic structure that combines ethical reflection with aesthetic form. Within this perspective, musical works become spaces where collective memory, individual emotional experience, and symbolic representation converge. The analysis is based on compositions by contemporary composers, including *Sunflower Seeds* (2022) by Cesare Chiacchiaretta, the first movement of *Symphony No. 5* (2023) by Fazıl Say, *Maria's City* (2022) by Zoltan Almashi, and *Dedication to the Heroes...* (2024) by Valentyna Martyniuk. A methodological combination of structural-intonational, genre-typological, timbral-dramaturgical, semiotic, and contextual-comparative approaches allows the study to reveal the principal artistic strategies through which contemporary composers articulate wartime experience. The results demonstrate that modern compositions addressing war develop specific models of representation. One of them is connected with the activation of historically established memorial genre markers such as requiem or elegiac forms, which preserve the semantic codes of mourning and remembrance. At the same time, it should be stated the transformation of the acoustic environment: clusters, noise textures, extended instrumental techniques, and unstable rhythmic structures construct a sonic field associated with tension, anxiety, and disruption. In this context timbre acquires a structural role, shaping the dramaturgy of the work and functioning as a carrier of symbolic meaning. The study concludes that contemporary music related to war in Ukraine functions simultaneously as an act of cultural memory and

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as a reflective artistic practice in which genre, style, and programmatic orientation interact to form a new acoustic image of historical experience.

Keywords: war in Ukraine; contemporary music; cultural trauma; genre models; timbral dramaturgy; acoustic environment; Ukrainian music; collective memory, modern European composers, Cesare Chiacchiaretta, Fazıl Say, Zoltan Almashi, Valentyna Martyniuk.

Introduction

War is a tragedy that profoundly affects humanity, leaving its mark not only on history but also on art. Music, as a universal medium for the expression of emotions and ideas, becomes a powerful means of comprehending and artistically representing war. It enables the transmission of the horrors of combat, human suffering, heroism, and hope, while also facilitating reflection on events at both the individual and the collective levels of experience. Musical works often function as distinctive documents of their time, reflecting both concrete historical events and the emotional condition of society. Numerous composers responded directly to wartime realities by creating works that subsequently came to be perceived as emblematic of a particular historical period. As researcher Olena Berehova observes, “Artists, as the most sensitive spiritual locators, are capable of perceiving and reflecting in their creativity the moods of their contemporaries and of their epoch. Endowed with empathy, vulnerable yet at the same time spiritually resilient, Ukrainian artists respond to new life realities, infuse their works with personal emotions, existential concerns, and the reverberations of psychological trauma, actualize the meanings and values for which Ukraine is fighting, and reveal the absurdity of the new wartime reality.”³

In this context, contemporary compositional practice proves particularly revealing, as the experience of the past four years in Ukraine crystallizes into heterogeneous genre-stylistic solutions – ranging from chamber meditations and memorial opuses to programmatically oriented large-scale works marked by pronounced timbral dramaturgy. An engagement with this repertoire (primarily Ukrainian, though also situated within a broader international context) appears methodologically justified: it not only registers current tendencies in contemporary musical language but also reveals the mechanisms by which traumatic historical experience is transformed into an artistically organized sonic form. In essence, it is music that functions as a space of

³ Berehova, Olena. “The Art of the Unbreakable: Ukrainian Composers’ Creativity in Response to Russian Aggression”. In *Musicological Thought of Dnipropetrovsk Region*, Issue 27 (2), 2024. p. 117.

reflection: programmatic orientations, intonational formulas, genre models, and acoustic regimes interact to construct a complex palette of meanings – ranging from individual affect to collective memory. It is precisely this plurality of strategies, together with the variability of programmatic orientations, that constitutes a particular object of scholarly interest, makes it possible to conceptualize contemporary wartime music as a multidimensional cultural phenomenon in which the aesthetic and the ethical converge within a unified sonic space.

The aim of the article is to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the genre-stylistic, compositional, programmatic and acoustic parameters of works by contemporary composers in which the events of Ukraine's twenty-first-century wartime experience are artistically conceptualized.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives are to be accomplished:

- to elucidate the mechanisms of artistic symbolization and the semantic transformation of historical experience within the genre-stylistic structure of musical works;
- to examine genre models, stylistic idioms, and timbral-instrumental scenarios employed in the realization of wartime themes in music;
- to identify the specific features of the acoustic regime in works addressing wartime subject matter;
- to compare genre-stylistic strategies in works of varying ensemble configurations related to the theme of war in Ukraine in contemporary European music.

Review of literature on the topic. The theme of war in music has been repeatedly addressed in scholarship within the broader problematics of music–politics relations, as well as in studies of cultural trauma. In the article by Susanna Välimäki⁴, music is approached not merely as an aesthetic artifact but as a specific cultural practice capable of articulating the experience of war, genocide, and violence within the horizon of collective memory and the transgenerational transmission of traumatic burden. The researcher focuses on the concept of cultural trauma, noting that “A collective trauma requires collective processing and recognition in the form of public cultural representations in order to transform, little by little, from an unnamable affect that disables the culture (and its individuals) into the symbolic sphere of collective remembrance and mourning work. This process is called the cultural trauma process, and art and popular culture have a significant role in it.”⁵ Cultural trauma is not exhausted by the fact of an

⁴ Välimäki, Susanna. “Musical representation of war, genocide, and torture Treating cultural trauma with music”. In *Acta Translatologica Helsingiensia*, 2015, p. 122–136.

⁵ Välimäki, Susanna. “Musical representation of war, genocide, and torture Treating cultural trauma with music”. In *Acta Translatologica Helsingiensia*, 2015, p. 122–123.

extreme event itself; rather, it is constituted through its displacement from the shared symbolic space, thereby acquiring a transgenerational character and initiating a prolonged struggle over meaning within the field of collective memory. Only through public cultural representations, social mediation, and the gradual delineation of responsibility does it become possible to transform this paralyzing burden into the sphere of conscious remembrance, empathy, and social healing. In this respect, music proves to be “an effective vehicle for contributing to the cultural trauma process.”⁶ Within this framework, the researcher examines *Different Trains* (1988) by Steve Reich, the rock classic *Born in the U.S.A.* (1984) by Bruce Springsteen, and *Stress Position* (2009) by Drew Baker.

At the same time, in recent years a considerable body of research has emerged focusing on the role of music in interpreting traumatic events associated with the military conflict in Ukraine. In the article “Art Music and War: Ukrainian Case 2022,” Iryna Tukova⁷ analyzes the conceptual foundations and compositional strategies through which Ukrainian composers interpret the experience of full-scale war following 24 February 2022, drawing in particular on *Eyes to Eyes* by Yevhen Petrychenko and *Lullaby for Mariupol* by Illia Razumeiko, Roman Hryhoriv, and the ensemble Opera Aperta. The study focuses on the structural, semantic, and receptive parameters of these compositions, outlining the specific modes of functioning of contemporary Ukrainian musical culture under conditions of wartime.

In the article of Violetta Dutchak⁸ the author offers a panoramic overview of the evolution of Ukrainian musical content from 2014 to 2022, interpreting it as a continuous trajectory of national resistance – from the aesthetics of the Maidan to the multi-genre wartime reflections that emerged after 2014 and, in particular, following 24 February 2022. The author analyzes the coexistence and interaction of folk, academic, and popular strata, demonstrating the mechanisms of resemantization of historical songs (notably *Plyve kacha* and *Oi u luzi chervona kalyna*) and the formation of new musical symbols. She also delineates thematic clusters (heroic-patriotic, lyrical-patriotic, tragic, and humorous-satirical) and identifies the social functions of wartime music – psychological support, community mobilization, cultural diplomacy, and the construction of a positive international image of Ukraine.

⁶ Välimäki, Susanna. “Musical representation of war, genocide, and torture Treating cultural trauma with music”. In *Acta Translatologica Helsingiensia*, 2015, p. 123.

⁷ Tukova, Iryna. “Art music and war: Ukrainian case 2022.” In *Musicologica Brunensia*. 2023, vol. 58, iss. 2, p. 193–204.

⁸ Dutchak, Violetta. “From the Music of Maydan to the Music of War: Ukrainian Phenomenon.” In *Publishing House “Baltija Publishing”*, 2022, p. 716–725.

Particular attention should be given to the scientific works of Olena Berehova⁹, who examines a number of compositions written by composers during the military conflict. She identifies works by Valentyn Sylvestrov – *Maidan–Kyiv*, *Prayer for Ukraine* – as well as *The City of Mary* by Zoltan Almashi, *Lacrimosa* by Oleksandr Shchetynsky, *Duma* by Liudmyla Yurina, and *In The Cage* by Anna Korsun. The researcher notes that under conditions of wartime cataclysm, artistic creativity emerges not as an autonomous aesthetic practice but as a form of civic action, in which artistic expression acquires a distinct ethical dimension. The figure of the artist is transformed into an active participant in public discourse, whose creative work functions simultaneously as a cultural testimony of the era and as an act of social responsibility.

In another article by Berehova, “Art as a Weapon: The Works of Composer Bohdana Frolyak During the Russia–Ukraine War”,¹⁰ the corpus of Bohdana Frolyak’s wartime compositions of 2022–2023 is examined (including *The Way*, *Let There Be Light*, *Cello Concerto* and *Oboe Concerto*, as well as the music for the theatrical production *The War That Changed Rondo*). These works encompass a broad semantic spectrum –from intimate lyrical reflections to tragic-memorial intonations – and interpret the symbolism of light as a model for overcoming darkness within a sonic continuum.

Although a substantial number of musical works have emerged in response to the tragic events in Ukraine, this phenomenon remains insufficiently explored, particularly in terms of the genre, stylistic, and acoustic principles manifested not only in the works of Ukrainian composers but also in those of composers from other European countries.

Materials and methods. The methodological framework of the study is based on a combination of structural-intonational, genre-typological, timbral-dramaturgical, semiotic, and contextual-comparative approaches, which makes it possible to consider works on wartime themes as artistic models of the symbolic interpretation of historical experience. Structural-intonational analysis is directed at identifying features of form-building, thematic organization, and dramaturgy; the genre-typological approach determines the relationship between historically established genre archetypes and their contemporary transformations; the timbral-dramaturgical approach clarifies the function of instrumental forces and acoustic density as carriers of meaning; the semiotic approach reveals the internal oppositions shaping

⁹ Berehova, Olena. “Artists and War: Creativity as a Civic Position.” In: *Ukraine in Flames: Artistic and Cultural Reflections on the Events of War*. 2024, p. 253–263.

¹⁰ Berehova, Olena. “Art as a Weapon: The Works of Composer Bohdana Frolyak During the Russia–Ukraine War.” In: *Artistic Culture. Topical issues*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2024, p. 81–86.

the work's system of meanings; and the contextual-comparative approach correlates programmatic orientations with musical structure and delineates a typology of artistic strategies in works of different ensemble configurations.

Source base of the study comprises *Sunflower Seeds* (2022) by Cesare Chiacchiarretta, the first movement of the *Fifth Symphony* by Fazıl Say (2023), *Maria's City* (2022) by Zoltan Almashi, and *Dedication to the Heroes. To the Dead, the Living, and the Unborn Defenders of Ukraine* (2024) for bass clarinet, organ, and snare drum by Valentyna Martyniuk.

Results and Discussions

The theme of war in the history of art music has assumed diverse generic embodiments – from the programmatic symphony to large-scale vocal-symphonic forms. The symphony, in particular, enables the representation of war on an expansive scale, generating images of battle, tragedy, victory, and mourning, as this genre is distinguished by a profound dramaturgical logic and the capacity to encompass the full emotional spectrum of war – from the chaos of combat to heroic exaltation or philosophical reflection. Thus, the idea of heroism and struggle is transformed into a dramaturgy of conflict and overcoming in *Symphony No.3, "Eroica,"* by Ludwig van Beethoven. In the twentieth century, wartime themes continued to develop within the symphonic genre. A notable example is the *Third Symphony ("Pastoral")* by Ralph Vaughan Williams, conceived as a melancholic reflection on the events of the First World War.

Monumental vocal-instrumental genres – such as oratorios, cantatas, masses, and requiems – have likewise frequently served to commemorate the dead or to reconstruct wartime events. Among significant examples are *War Requiem* (1962) by Benjamin Britten, *A Child of Our Time* (1941) by Michael Tippett, and *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* (1946) by Paul Hindemith, as well as the anti-fascist cantata *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1935–1957) by Karl Amadeus Hartmann and *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, Krzysztof Penderecki.

In contrast to orchestral music, chamber works concentrate on the personal experiences of individuals during wartime. They convey inner suffering, memories of loss, pain, and the tragedy of human destiny. In chamber music, war often appears not as a mass phenomenon but as the tragedy of a single human's life. A masterpiece of twentieth-century chamber music is *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* by Olivier Messiaen, composed in a concentration camp; it is remarkable for its emotional depth and its meditation on the eternal.

Twenty-first-century music reflects a new reality of war, particularly in the context of globalization, technological advancement, and shifting modes of communication. From established forms such as the symphony and the cantata to contemporary electronic and multimedia media, composers employ innovative expressive techniques to articulate the tragedy, chaos, and affective intensity accompanying the wars of our time. Contemporary compositions addressing war and political violence in the 21st century include works responding to the attacks of September 11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and other geopolitical conflicts. Among such compositions are John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*, Steve Reich's *WTC 9/11*, Mohammed Fairouz's *Symphony No. 3*, and John Corigliano's *One Sweet Morning*.

Contemporary composers increasingly integrate music with other art forms – literature, film, and the visual arts – creating multimedia or intermedial works. Accordingly, music about war is often not confined to narrative illustration; rather, it is embedded within a genre model or disrupts it from within, demonstrating that historical experience in music is realized primarily through the transformation of form, sound, or temporality.

Wartime events in Ukraine continue to serve as an object of artistic reflection within the European music context. Already in the first years of the full-scale aggression, a distinct international corpus of works appeared, in which the Ukrainian context emerges either as a direct addressee or as an imperative underlying the authorial statement. Indicative in this regard is the orchestral *Ukraine Triptych / Ukraine Triptychon* by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, created in collaboration with the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and described by the composer as a poetic response to the contemporary war. The Danish composer Morten Jessen has written the compositions *Kyiv* and *Slava Ukraini*. A memorial dimension is likewise evident in *Pavane* by Derek B. Scott, dedicated to the victims of the war in Ukraine, as well as in the solo *Elegy, for the victims of Ukraine war* (2022) by the Italian composer Alberto Guidobaldi for viola.

The stylistic profile of musical works addressing wartime theme combines both traditional and innovative techniques, conveying the atmosphere of combat, the tragedy of loss, heroism, the inner experiences of the individual, and the depth of philosophical reflection on war. Composers often foreground a realism of representation, since the events they respond to unfold in real time and within lived historical reality (a form of what may be termed historical memory). To this end, a range of sonic devices is using, including the imitation of military sounds (gunfire, explosions, sirens), clusters, and noise-based textures. The selection of timbres and specific instrumental techniques becomes a crucial means of wartime dramaturgy. Composers' experiments with registers, dynamics, and articulation, drawing on the resources

of the orchestra, choir, and electronic media. Particular emphasis is frequently placed on brass instruments (trumpets, trombones, horns), which evoke military pathos, fanfares, and signals. Percussion instruments (timpani, snare drum, tam-tam), in turn, articulate marching rhythms, explosions, or artillery rumble. String parts are often marked by extended techniques – harmonics, pizzicato, glissandi – that create an atmosphere of anxiety or chaos.

For example, in *Sunflower Seeds*¹¹ (2022) by the Italian composer Cesare Chiacchiaretta, which is examined in detail in the article by Yevhen Zhyla, the premiere performer of the work¹², cluster sonorities imitate automatic gunfire; the percussion group depicts violent explosions, while the brass evoke the sound of warning sirens. During performances of this work, a video projection featuring photographic documentation of wartime devastation, ordinary civilians, and landscapes of pre-war Ukraine by the artist Nikolay Karabinovych was incorporated. Such integration of music with video and other visual components – documentary film, animation, theatrical staging, installation – enables the creation of a more profound and multidimensional perceptual experience.

In the first movement, *Revolts and Longings*, of his *Fifth Symphony*¹³, the Turkish composer Fazıl Say likewise engages with the events in Ukraine. His music presents a generalized model of historical rupture in which the experiences of the pandemic and war are conceptually integrated into a unified musical space. Chronological specificity is deliberately effaced; events are not differentiated but fused into the image of a force that destabilizes the habitual coordinates of existence. It is the composer's programmatic note that activates the Ukrainian context; absent this indication, the work would function rather as a symphonic abstraction. This reveals a perspective "from without," in which war is interpreted through the prism of global existential turbulence.

At the same time, the first movement concentrates characteristic stylistic markers of Fazıl Say's compositional language: an energetic metric-rhythmic impulse, asymmetric accentuation, frequent metrical shifts, reliance on modal complexes tending toward makam-derived intonational patterns,

¹¹ Dnipro Academy of Music. "SUNFLOWER SEEDS – Yevhen Zhyla & Symphony Orchestra 'The Festival.'" YouTube video. Accessed March 4, 2026.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YSvBfEhT0g>

¹² Zhyla, Yevgen. The Imagery–Stylistic Palette of Accordion Works by Contemporary Composers (on the Example of Sunflower Seeds by C. Chiacchiaretta and Guernica by G. Hermosa). *Musicological Thought of Dnipropetrovsk Region*, Issue 26 (1), 2024. Dnipro: Hrani Publishing House, 2024, pp. 314–324.

¹³ Can Okan. "Fazıl Say: Symphony No. 5 – Presidential Symphony Orchestra." YouTube video. Accessed March 4, 2026. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC4HlipuFM0>

as well as extended harmonic constructions marked by a pronounced late-Romantic coloration and a penetrating, expansively shaped lyricism in the more contemplative passages.

Structurally, the first movement of the symphony takes the form of a multi-sectional composition built from contrasting blocks, in which three impulsive, rhythmically saturated episodes alternate with two reflective segments, unified by a wave-like dramaturgy of accumulation and release of energy. The opening section, characterized by elastic rhythmic patterns grounded on Turkish *usul*, a rapid tempo, and sharp *sforzando* accents, generates a sense of uncontrollable force. This is followed by a slower segment featuring characteristic third-based motion in the strings and woodwinds, associatively evoking the ambulance siren. Against this background, isolated intonations in other instruments are perceived as voices emerging from an acoustic haze. The subsequent *Allegro assai* intensifies the effect of instability through displaced metric accents, triplet pulsations, and the active deployment of percussion – particularly *kudüm* and *bongo* – which in the composer’s intonational semantics are often associated with images of attack or heightened confrontation.

In the *Andantino espressivo*, a modal intonational profile unfolds through stepwise development, returning the listener to the lyrical pole of the symphony. A noteworthy timbral solution is the introduction of the ocean waves (suggesting a breathing motion) alongside bells and harp, which contribute a sense of unreality. At the same time, this section culminates in an apocalyptic *tutti* outburst. The final section synthesizes the accumulated tension and reactivates the initial energetic impulse, as if mobilizing forces for continued struggle.

Thus, in Fazıl Say’s work, the experience of war is rendered as a universalized image of historical time, articulated through a rhythmic-intonational matrix rooted in the Turkish musical tradition.

In its engagement with the theme of wartime experience, contemporary Ukrainian composition reveals several coexisting models of artistic response in which genre, style, and program function as interrelated levels of meaning construction. For some works, a defining feature is reliance on historically stabilized memorial models. For others, it is the transformation of sonic material itself, which acquires a symbolic dimension beyond established generic frameworks. Iryna Tukova¹⁴ proposes a tripartite typology of such compositions. The first category comprises works in which the composers articulate their wartime experience primarily through programmatic framing –

¹⁴ Tukova, Iryna. “Art music and war : Ukrainian case 2022.” In *Musilogica Brunensia*. 2023, vol. 58, iss. 2, p. 193–204.

titles and accompanying authorial commentaries. The second category encompasses compositions in which the reflection on war materializes within the sonic fabric itself, generating an acoustically unsettling environment that may evoke air raid sirens, explosions, or other markers of wartime reality. The third category consists of works grounded in documented evidence of Russia's crimes and thus functioning as explicit political statements.

A number of composers consciously actualize established genre codes – requiem, *lacrimosa*, *lamentoso*. In such cases, genre functions as the function of cultural memory: the semantics of mourning are historically embedded, and the programmatic dedication merely specifies the concrete historical addressee. This strategy rests upon tradition. Representative examples include the Requiem *Maria's City* for string orchestra by Zoltan Almashi, *Bucha. Lacrimosa* for violin and symphony orchestra by Viktoriia Poleva, and *Lacrimosa* for violin, oboe, horn, two trombones, and organ by Oleksandr Shchetynsky, *Largamento* by Olexander Rodin.

At the same time, another tendency becomes discernible. Works appear that lack direct generic marking: programmatic chamber compositions, ensemble or orchestral canvases – often memorial in orientation – in which wartime experience is not codified through a genre archetype. Instead, it unfolds through intonational gestures, timbral decisions, sonorous qualities of texture, and formal organization. The programmatic dimension may be indicated in the title or in an accompanying commentary; sometimes, it is deliberately minimized. In either case, however, it does not determine the structure in a direct manner. Examples include *Toward Victory* by Olena Ilnytska, *With Faith in Ukraine* by Asmati Chibalashvili, *Dedication to the Heroes. To the Dead, the Living, and the Unborn Defenders of Ukraine* by Valentyna Martyniuk, *Bucha* by Victoria Poleva, *Maria's city* by Zoltan Almashi, *Lullaby for Mariupol* by Illia Razumeiko, Roman Grygoriv and the Opera Aperta ensemble, *Bakhmut Rhapsody* by Olga Zaitseva-Herz.

A distinct group is constituted by works that cannot be identified in relation to wartime experience without an accompanying verbal program clarifying the title. These include, for example, *Reading History* by Karmella Tsepkolenko, *Sensation* by Hanna Kopiika, *My Beloved* by Kira Maidenbergtodorova, *Signs of Presence* by Alla Zahaikevych, *The Fishes' Reply to St. Anthony* by Alexey Shmurak, *Footprints on the Sun* by Maxim Kolomiiets, *Still* by Ihor Zavhorodnii, *Post* by Svyatoslav Lunyov, and *Kommos 2022* by Oleg Bezborodko.

Valentyna Martyniuk's composition *Dedication to the Heroes. To the Dead, the Living, and the Unborn Defenders of Ukraine*¹⁵ (2024) exemplifies a memorial form of programmatic expression. In this music genre semantics are constructed indirectly, through a system of timbral and intonational devices. The instrumental configuration itself – bass clarinet, organ, snare drum – delineates a distinctive acoustic space. The organ, historically associated with sacred tradition, functions as a marker of spirituality and liturgical resonance. Its pedal ostinati, seconds- and cluster-based harmonic complexes, and sustained dominant zones generate the effect of concentrated, “suspended” time.

Within this sonic field, the snare drum operates as a sign of a contemporary collective ritual of remembrance, associated with the minute of silence. The bass clarinet, with its deep timbre and vocal individuality, brings to the foreground the folk song *Oi Moroze, Morozenku*¹⁶, preserving its intonational contour while transforming its range and register. In this way, a distinctive tripartite ensemble is formed: a sacred vertical axis, a ritual pulse, and a personal voice.

At the same time, the structural organization of the work attests to an engagement with the archetype of the Ukrainian folk song as a deep-seated genre matrix. A bipartite model consisting of verse and refrain, reiterated in reprise and culminating in a climactic intensification, determines a dramaturgy of gradual accumulation of emotional energy. The quasi-antiphonal principle of “soloist–response” (clarinet–organ), heterophonic stratifications, and intonational variations within a modal framework reconstruct a traditional mechanism of folkloric unfolding, in which the individual and the collective coexist as an integral whole. The coda, grounded in new song material – the well-known Ukrainian song *Oi u luzi chervona kalyna*¹⁷ – introduces a horizon of faith in victory and inner exaltation.

A further reflection on the contemporary events of Russian aggression against Ukraine is embodied in requiem¹⁸ for strings *Maria's City* (2022) by the contemporary Ukrainian composer Zoltan Almashi, dedicated to Mariupol – the city of resilience and courage. The programmatic title conditions a semantic personification of the city through the image of Mary, the archetype of the

¹⁵ Dnipro Academy of Music. “Valentyna Martyniuk – Prysnyata Heroyam.” YouTube video. Accessed March 4, 2026. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWIRhILGu5w&t=6s>

¹⁶ Ukrainian Opera Artists XX-th Century. “Oi Moroze, Morozenku – Ukrainian Folk Song.” YouTube video. Accessed March 4, 2026. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9z8cOIGhqY>

¹⁷ Nataliia Mohylevska. “Oi u luzi chervona kalyna (Concert ‘Dobroho vechora! My z Ukrainy!’).” YouTube video. Accessed March 4, 2026. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EV_vT0Vud5Q

¹⁸ In this case, the designation “requiem” functions rather as a metaphor than as a reference to a specific genre model.

Protecting Mother. The work artistically conveys the psychological and emotional experiences associated with war and human suffering. In this way, the composition acquires the features of a memorial elegy-requiem, functioning within the sphere of contemporary Ukrainian musical memory.

Under conditions of war, when culture becomes an essential dimension of the struggle for identity, Almashi regards music not merely as an artistic medium but as a means of resisting violence. He emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural heritage and articulating it in the works of contemporary composers. In his view, music must convey a positive message, expressing resilience and an aspiration toward peace.

In 2022 (16 and 18 November), Maria's City was performed in Toronto under the direction of Oksana Lyniv¹⁹. Its premiere marked an important moment in the composer's international recognition and in the support of Ukrainian culture on the global stage. The composer himself underscores the significance of fixing the dedication to Mariupol as an act of historical memory that cannot be effaced.

There exist compositional versions for string quartet²⁰ and for string orchestra; in both scores, however, the texture remains timbrally homogeneous, creating conditions for subtle micro-dynamic gradation and for heightened expressivity of articulation and bowing techniques.

The work is conceived as a single-movement through-composed form, internally articulated into three sections with reprise (A–B–A1). The first section takes the character of an elegiac monologue. The principal theme grows out of the opening viola solo and subsequently permeates nearly all voices, developing through dynamic and timbral transformation.

The second section functions as a developmental phase – a dramatic escalation that contrasts with the outer sections in tempo, modal orientation, texture, and rhythmic profile, leading to a culmination. The third section assumes the character of a post-dramatic meditation: a subdued song, a lullaby, a prayer for what has been lost, yet at the same time a luminous hope for the future.

The work opens with a soft and tender viola solo, evoking a sense of recollection of peaceful life. The melodic substance unfolds gradually and expressively, with careful shaping of each phrase. All of this generates an atmosphere of spaciousness, contemplative stillness, and memory.

¹⁹ YSOU / Molodizhnyi Symfonichnyi Orkestr Ukrainy. "Z. Almashi: Maria's City – Oksana Lyniv & YSOU, YoungEuroClassic 2022." YouTube video. Accessed March 4, 2026.
<https://youtu.be/5XXGN2XmUaE>

²⁰ Phenotypic Recordings. "Maria's City (Mariupol) by Zoltan Almashi (2022), performed by Vivere String Quartet." YouTube video. Accessed March 4, 2026.
https://youtu.be/iyW01D_tLk

E.g. 1

♩ = 60
1. solo
Viola
ppp p mf p pp f ppp
Zoltan Almashi
lontano

Zoltan Almashi, *Maria's City*: Opening Theme

The principal theme of the first section, presented in the first violin, is characterized by a smooth stepwise motion in seconds and thirds, a slow tempo, and gentle intonations, forming a sphere of inward concentration. The theme is lyrical and expressive, marked by clear tonal gravitations and a homophonic-harmonic texture. At the same time, all voices function simultaneously as accompaniment and as a complement to the melody, their interaction producing soft second-based sonorities. Harmony and timbre create a sense of open spatiality – as if the music were depicting the luminous, peaceful life of Mariupol before the war. The entire first section is grounded in poetic meditateness, where each phrase resonates like an act of remembrance.

E.g. 2

10
Vln. I p mp p mf mp f mp pp
Vln. II p mp p mf mp f mp pp
Viola tutti p mp p mf mp f mp pp
Vc. p mp p mf mp f mp pp
dolcissimo
dolcissimo
dolcissimo
dolcissimo

Zoltan Almashi, *Maria's City*: main theme

The dynamics gradually intensify, and in the orchestral tutti a bright, life-affirming melody emerges, derived from the intonational contours of the principal theme.

The second section of the work sharply alters the emotional tone. It is filled with tension, motoric motion, rhythmic aggression, and dissonant

sonorities that may be interpreted as a musical embodiment of shelling, the destructive moments of war, chaos, and fear. The sonic texture here is characterized by an accelerated pulse, aggressive intonational gestures, and an uninterrupted flow of sixteenth-note motion. The melody repeatedly strives to reach a climactic summit through ascending passages, yet each attempt abruptly collapses into the lower registers. The harmonic language becomes unstable and densely chromatic.

In the climactic zone, the orchestral vertical texture becomes increasingly dense, condensing into cluster-like structures. An ostinato, pulsating rhythmic layer emerges, generating the effect of a massive sonic field and a sense of inevitability. Rhythm here functions as the primary carrier of dramatic energy.

At the moment of emotional culmination, only a single sustained note remains in the first violins, sounding in an extremely high register. A sudden dynamic collapse follows: the musical material appears to disintegrate, becoming rarefied and fragmented, which intensifies the effect of catharsis. This moment may be interpreted symbolically as the destruction of the very structure of life, when a peaceful existence is abruptly interrupted.

E.g. 3

The musical score for E.g. 3, measures 110-117, is presented for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score begins at measure 110 with the first violin part. The first violin part starts with a dynamic of *mp* and a *non vibr.* marking. The dynamic then changes to *ppp*. The second violin part is silent. The viola and violoncello parts enter at measure 111 with the instruction *1. solo con sord.* and a dynamic of *ppp*. The viola part has dynamics of *p* and *pp*. The violoncello part has a dynamic of *pp*. The contrabass part is silent.

Zoltan Almashi, *Maria's City*: mm. 110–117

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In the third section of the work, the melody returns once again to a quiet and gentle sonority, yet now colored by a sense of shadow and subdued sorrow. It represents a musical realization that life continues, although irreversibly transformed – where hope and memory intertwine. The opening viola solo reappears, bringing back the principal theme. The orchestration becomes more transparent, with solo voices predominating.

The composer appears to deconstruct the first section and reassemble it anew: fragments are rearranged, while certain elements are recombined in altered configurations. In the slower tempo, figuration patterns from the second section also become perceptible. All of this leads to fragmentary reminiscences – subtle “shadows” of the initial intonation.

In the final part of the composition, a new theme emerges that resembles a kind of lullaby, characterized by its gentle rocking motion, third-based melodic intonations, and slow movement. The conclusion does not proclaim victory; rather, it affirms memory, thereby emphasizing the memorial character of the composition.

E.g. 4

The musical score for E.g. 4 is a lullaby motif for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso. The score is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major, and includes dynamics like ppp, p, pp, and mp. The tempo is marked 'semplice, teneramente'. The score is for measures 152-156. The Violin I part starts with a (1. solo) ppp dynamic and a melodic line. The Violin II part also starts with a (1. solo) ppp dynamic and a melodic line. The Viola part starts with a (1. solo) ppp dynamic and a melodic line. The Violoncello part starts with a (1. solo) ppp dynamic and a melodic line. The Contrabasso part starts with a (1. solo) ppp dynamic and a melodic line. The score includes dynamics like p, pp, and mp. The score is for measures 152-156.

Zoltan Almashi, *Maria's City*: lullaby motif

This work offers a vivid example of how contemporary academic music does not remain isolated within the sphere of “high” art but actively responds to the challenges of its time, becoming a platform for dialogue

with society. In this context, *Maria's City* functions as an artistic archetype: on the one hand, it refers to a concrete geographical and historical reality; on the other, it becomes an emblematic image of the destroyed home, lost identity, and at the same time the strength of renewal.

Thus, Almashi's composition emerges as a significant cultural and artistic phenomenon of the present. Within this work, individual experience and national memory, contemporary compositional language and a humanistic ethos are organically intertwined, which determines its importance for the further development of Ukrainian musical culture in the twenty-first century.

Conclusions

The analysis of contemporary works addressing the theme of war demonstrates that twenty-first-century music does not reproduce events literally but transforms them into a system of genre-stylistic and acoustic signs through which historical experience acquires a symbolic dimension. Art – particularly music – in such periods performs aesthetic, humanitarian, and socio-reflective functions. Within musical expression, war is transformed into sonic imagery that represents both external reality (explosions, sirens, silence) and the inner state of the individual (fear, confusion, despair, hope). In the compositional design of such works, one frequently encounters disproportional formal structures, rhythmic asymmetry, the use of clusters, free modality, extended instrumental techniques, elements of theatricalization, and intergeneric transitions. This artistic strategy may be understood as a response of art to the radical transformations of human existence during wartime.

The Ukrainian theme is increasingly integrated into the global musical discourse as a space of empathy and artistic solidarity, assuming diverse genre forms – from symphonic canvases to chamber elegies and choral declarations of peace. Above all, the general principles of representing war in art reveal themselves through universal artistic mechanisms for comprehending collective trauma. In *Sunflower Seeds* by Cesare Chiacchiaretta, one can observe a tendency toward almost documentary expression, articulated through sonorous clusters and timbral signals. In the first movement of the *Fifth Symphony* by Fazıl Say, Ukrainian events are integrated into a broader image of a global crisis alongside the experience of the pandemic. Here, national intonational specificity is largely absent; instead, the music is driven by rhythmic–intonational energy shaped by asymmetric meters and modal contours. Valentina Martynyuk's *Dedication to the Heroes...* constructs a sacralized sonic space through the organ's vertical sonority, the ritual pulse

of the snare drum, and the matrix of a Ukrainian folk song. By contrast, Zoltan Almashi's *Maria's City* realizes a memorial model of an elegiac type, structured through the dramaturgy of a continuous arch and the timbral homogeneity of the string ensemble as a sign of concentrated remembrance.

Thus, contemporary wartime music operates within two interrelated dimensions: as an act of national memory and as a form of reflection in which genre, style, and program interact in shaping a new acoustic image of the epoch.

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ZSOLT SZILÁGYI AND CHOIR LIFE IN SFÂNTU GHEORGHE (SEPSISZENTGYÖRGY)

GELLÉRT ATTILA LÓFI¹, IGNÁC CSABA FILIP²

SUMMARY. This study examines the work of conductor and voice teacher Zsolt Szilágyi, focusing on the artistic, methodological, and aesthetic dimensions of choir conducting. The aim of the research is to explore how Zsolt Szilágyi's conducting practice fits into the traditions of contemporary Transylvanian choral culture and what specific methodological and interpretative principles he contributes to its renewal. The methodological basis of the study consists of professional interviews, decades of newspaper articles, and personal conversations, the material of which is subjected to qualitative analysis, with particular emphasis on rehearsal techniques, voice production, repertoire selection, and pedagogical approaches. The analysis shows that, in Zsolt Szilágyi's conception of conducting, choir leadership is not merely an interpretative activity, but also a complex educational and community-building practice. The results of the study contribute to the contemporary interpretation of the role of the conductor and to the scholarly analysis of Hungarian choir life in Transylvania.

Keywords: Vox Humana, Transylvanian choral culture, conducting interpretation, musical identity, community singing

Introduction

The region of Háromszék, and within it the choral culture of Sfântu Gheorghe, has an extremely rich history. Written evidence of this can be traced back to the last quarter of the 19th century. Numerous pieces of archival data, records, choir minutes, and newspaper articles mention this. Granted - Sfântu Gheorghe, is a small town; the 1890 census shows the

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population was only 5,665. But even then, it already boasted several church choirs, singing groups, and school choirs. And this is even more so the case today! Sfântu Gheorghe, with a population of 48,794, currently has more than 30 choirs, some of which have won numerous national and international awards and achieved significant successes. Specifically, there are 15 adult choirs (women's choirs, men's choirs, mixed choirs, or vocal ensembles) and 16 children's choirs or youth mixed choirs.³ This is perhaps unique not only in Europe, but in the whole world. Perhaps one of the main architects and causes of this growth in numbers and in quality is the musical work of conductor and teacher Zsolt Szilágyi, one of the country's most renowned oratorio tenors, in this small town.

Professional and historical context and influences

Zsolt Szilágyi's life began in Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) on April 8, 1946, as the son of intellectuals. His father was a geography and natural history teacher, and his mother was the organist and choirmaster of the cathedral in the former princely city. He attended elementary school in Alba Iulia and Deva (Déva).

From 1963 to 1965 he studied music at the Pedagogical College in Târgu Mureș (Marosvásárhely), and from 1965 to 1970, he was a student at the Gheorghe Dima Conservatory in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), where he studied music education and singing. Already as a university student, he had a one-year singing performance contract with the Hungarian Opera in Cluj-Napoca. After graduating from the conservatory with the best national GPA, his music teaching degree precluded him from accepting performance positions at the Opera, so he joined the Community Arts School in Sfântu Gheorghe as a teacher of singing, music theory, and music history.

As a result of the 1968 county reorganization, many young music teachers were assigned to Sfântu Gheorghe to fill the teaching staff of the newly established Music Elementary School and the Community Arts School. The young teachers who were assigned here, who had studied music education and had been socialized through choir singing during their college years, soon felt the need to sing together, which they initially did only for their own entertainment during informal, occasional gatherings. As a result, in 1972, they founded the choir of music teachers of the educational trade

³ See the author's earlier study. Gellért Lőfi – Ignác Filip. *History of choir movement in Sfântu Gheorghe from the 19th century onwards*, Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brașov. Series VIII: Performing Arts, Brașov, 2024, pp. 115–124.

unions of Sfântu Gheorghe a choir that later took on the name Vox Humana. Initially, three conductors took turns conducting the choir, each bringing their own style. Katalin Szarvas represented the folk style of Birtalan; Olga Czakó was considered a symbol of musical bourgeoisie. But it was Zsolt Szilágyi who had the most experience in the chamber choir genre, having sung in Dorin Pop's select chamber choir, Cappella Transylvanica, as a university student in Cluj Napoca. The official debut performance took place in May 1973, with an evening concert featuring madrigals and Hungarian and Romanian folk song arrangements. Even Tomás Luis de Victoria's "Ave Maria" was not objected to by the political censors. The concert was a huge success. The former choir directors invited to the performance – József Birtalan and Dorin Pop – offered words of praise and appreciation and suggested to the choir members that Zsolt Szilágyi should be the conductor from then on. The proposal was accepted, and Zsolt Szilágyi conducted Vox Humana until his serious illness in 2012. In these almost four decades, they garnered numerous national and international awards, fame, and success.

Vox Humana marked a turning point in the history of choral singing in Sfântu Gheorghe. The former amateur choirs were succeeded by professional ensembles, and the long-fashionable mass songs were replaced by more refined, sophisticated, sensitive, and demanding chamber singing. The sometimes ill-fated yearly series of Megéneklünk Románia ("We sing your praises, Romania") national choir competitions, which promoted false patriotism and in which Vox Humana won first prize ten times, was replaced by the crystal-clear intonation of chamber music, radiating refined, noble artistry. And it was this unwavering, demanding, tireless, high-quality work carried out by Zsolt Szilágyi that had an inspiring effect on the choral life of Sfântu Gheorghe and the entire Háromszék region.

Conducting methodology and rehearsal technique

The focus of Zsolt Szilágyi's work is stylistic diversity and disciplined sound. This is based on the rich musical education he received from his parents, his individual performing skills, as well as the ideal sound, precision, and high standards of artistic expression he learned from his teachers and friends, József Birtalan, Dorin Pop, Lajos Bács, and Marin Constantin. His motto as a conductor is Zoltán Kodály's admonition: "A good conductor must have a cultivated ear, a cultivated mind, a cultivated heart, and cultivated hands."⁴

⁴ Csinta Samu – Ferencz Csaba. *Az emberi hang fél évszázada (Half a Century of the Human Voice)*, Háromszék Vármegye Publishing House, Sepsiszentgyörgy, 2022, p. 32.

His interpretative practice is characterized by a homogeneous sound based on pure intonation, balanced voice proportions, rhetorical phrasing, and a focus on the intelligibility of the text. It was very important to him that his choir members not only know, but also understand and experience what they are singing about.

Zsolt Szilágyi regarded his role as conductor as a bridge leading from the unity of the choir to the most perfect performance of the work. In the period preceding choir rehearsals, he devoted a great deal of time to the precise analysis and interpretation of the works, paying particular attention to the clarification of diction and text interpretation.

In his artistic concept, tradition appears not as a static heritage, but as a source that can be reinterpreted. For him, the shaping of the deep, sacred nature of church works, or the lightness of folk song arrangements, or even technical bravura—all require equal seriousness, precision, and complete immersion, which he is able to convey to his choir members through continuous and conscious development and rehearsals.

His working methods demonstrate that the continuous expansion of vocal knowledge promotes the development of hearing and musicality; otherwise, choral art might become relegated to the margins of true art. The sound world of *Vox Humana* – the result of the choir members' cultivated vocal technique – is not only a prerequisite for the performance, but also its artistic value, insofar as it serves to express emotional content. And this is very crucial, because the first thing that reaches the listener is the sound.

An examination of the rehearsal process reveals a reflective, dialogue-based working method. Zsolt Szilágyi does not rely solely on direct instructions, but encourages the singers to listen consciously and interpret independently by asking questions and providing musical examples. In the area of voice production, he pays special attention to natural, speech-like singing, which is in harmony with the prosody of the Hungarian language. This approach is in line with the pedagogical approach of several representatives of 20th-century Hungarian choral conducting tradition, such as Lajos Bárdos, but Zsolt Szilágyi's practice shows an adaptation of the method based on personal experience.

Repertoire and interpretation

The repertoire of the *Vox Humana* chamber choir is the result of conscious aesthetic editing. The programs regularly feature Renaissance polyphonic works, 14th-15th century madrigals, motets, villanelles, 17th- and 18th-century chorales, cantatas, Baroque church music compositions, vocal

symphonic works, and 20th- and 21st-century works by Hungarian, Romanian, and foreign composers. To name just a few composers: Lassus, Victoria, Monteverdi, Viadana, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Liszt, Saint-Saens, Dima, Drăgoi, Kodály, Bartók, Orff, Jarda, Bárdos, Bács, Szokolay, Orbán, Terényi, Pop, etc.

Based on a structural analysis of the repertoire, three trends emerge: stylistic diversity, the prominent presence of works by Hungarian composers, and the integration of contemporary pieces.

This concept serves both artistic and pedagogical purposes: the gradual increase in technical challenges supports the development of the choir members.

This conscious balancing act has a dual function: it maintains cultural continuity while also updating the choir's repertoire. The impact of the repertoire selection strategy can also be felt regionally: other city and county choirs are also showing an increasing openness to contemporary and local composers in their programming policies.

"Incidentally, the repertoire is also determined by the chamber music nature of the choir (34–36 members). Although we are sometimes expected to excel with the qualities of a large choir, we are definitely a small chamber ensemble with limited dynamic and vocal capabilities."⁵

"The human voice is the ideal sound, whose rich expressive possibilities every instrumentalist strives to imitate."⁶ The balanced sound of the choir, its clear intonation, the correct pronunciation of the text, and the intensity that radiates emotion, all suggest that the Vox Humana chamber choir has the right conditions: the talented conductor and musical choir members receive adequate support for their artistic activities.

The true test of a choir is its proficiency in European Renaissance choral works. Szilágyi and his choir draw heavily from this source. Their choices have brought to life classics of this era such as Weelkes, Lasso, Gastoldi, Gesualdo, Marenzio, Croce, and Palestrina. Although I found the approach to some of these works unusual, I was won over by their knowledge of the musical text, their confident delivery, and their identification with the material, which was also measurable in their sound. The choir's parts are mature and independent, working together not with the randomness often experienced in ensemble sound, but with the mutuality required by the work. This is the secret of the confidence that emanates from Vox Humana's performances.⁷

⁵ Katalin Béres. *Ha mindenki olvas lapról. (When everyone reads from a sheet.)* Művelődés, vol. 31, no. 8, February 1, 1981.

⁶ Ilona Verestóy. *Vox Humana*, Red Flag, XXXIV/66, March 21, 1982.

⁷ Pál Szelényi. *Vox Humana from St. George*, *Napló (Veszprém)*, June 5, 1990.

The sound world of *Vox Humana* is chamber music-like: it is characterized by a transparent texture, finely nuanced dynamics, and articulation. The conductor's gestures are economical but expressive; the conscious construction of formal arcs results in structural coherence.

This sound model can play a normative role in regional choral life, as it offers a followable aesthetic pattern.

Pedagogical and community-building dimension

A conductor learns from his predecessors and tries to draw inspiration from them. But to this must always be added his own individuality, and this must inevitably lead to results in his future work. He must not get stuck in one method, one era, or one genre. When asked about the significant stages of his life and the development of his professional and artistic personality, he says:

Well, if you ask me whether my former environment has been beneficial to me in my profession, my work, and my professional development, then I must answer yes. Above all, I believe that one's start in life, one's childhood environment, influences one's future path in life. But I also believe in the power of learning, diligence, practice, perseverance, and constantly striving for more and better. Perhaps I should start by saying that I received a lot from my parents' home. My mother was an organist, so it is understandable that I heard a lot of music at home. Classical music was always playing on the radio. I learned to play the piano from the age of ten. Although all parents are biased towards their own children, they said I had a good voice even when I was little. As an elementary school student, I sang in the opera *János Vitéz*. As a high school student, I performed in Ciprian Porumbescu's operetta *Crai Nou*. I also have fond memories of my college teachers. From my years in Târgu Mureș, I remember Károly Szász, József Birtalan, and József Tróznér; and from my university years in Cluj Napoca, I remember János Jagamas, András Benkő, Dorin Pop, Emil Mureșan, and Ede Terényi."⁸

In Zsolt Szilágyi's approach to conducting and teaching, choir leadership is not merely an interpretative activity, but also a complex community and audience education practice. At *Vox Humana*, musical work is combined with

⁸ Mátyás Árpád. *Zenei élet – Szilágyi Zsolt nyilatkozik (Musical Life – Zsolt Szilágyi Speaks Out)*, Előre, Volume XXXIV, Issue 10133, June 20, 1980, p. 6.

community building: regular rehearsals (twice a week, or more if necessary), joint performances, foreign tours, and competitions create a cohesive force that goes beyond musical performance.

Everyone knows Zsolt Szilágyi as a true music enthusiast who believes that music is not part of elite culture, but a universal human need. He states this in an article: “I once read somewhere that in a sociological survey, researchers told a folk tale that ended with the wizard taking music away from the village. The respondents’ answer was unanimous and unambiguous: the wizard had robbed the villagers of the beauty of life. Well, music—and of course I don’t just mean classical music—is part of our everyday lives in some form. Music brightens up the dullness of everyday life, makes it more colorful, and beautifies people’s lives. Music is where tired people escape to rest; it is what erases the wrinkles from their foreheads. Human life is unimaginable without music. That is why I believe that we, as professionals, must do our part to ensure that music truly becomes a universal human need, accessible to everyone.”⁹

Thanks to Zsolt Szilágyi’s community organizing efforts, the musical life of Sfântu Gheorghe and, in a broader sense, the entire region has flourished. The regular concert season of the Braşov Philharmonic Orchestra, the Zenélő Képek (Musical Pictures) chamber music series organized by the Fine Arts Gallery, the numerous guest performances invited to the city, and the many choir festivals and song gatherings organized in Sfântu Gheorghe and the surrounding villages and towns—all have contributed to a bustling musical life.

This is how conductor Marin Constantin described it after one of the Madrigal Choir’s concerts in Sfântu Gheorghe:

I think fondly of this extraordinary audience, which seeks the sublime and the divine in music, and all I can say in farewell is that those of us like my friend Zsolt and myself were created for this, this destiny, or misfortune, has been bestowed upon us by God, so that we may carry out our task for the sake of other people, for the sake of the community, to the very end, and complete it there, before them, on the podium.¹⁰

⁹ Mátyás Árpád. *Zenei élet – Szilágyi Zsolt nyilatkozik (Musical Life – Zsolt Szilágyi Speaks Out)*, Előre, Volume XXXIV, Issue 10133, June 20, 1980, p. 7.

¹⁰ János Matekovics. *Interview with conductor Marin Constantin*. Samu Csinta – Csaba Ferencz. *Az emberi hang fél évszázada (Half a century of the human voice)*, Háromszék Vármegye Publishing House, Sepsiszentgyörgy, 2022, pp. 73–74.

Zsolt Szilágyi's work with the Vox Humana chamber choir makes it clear that choirs play a particularly important role in shaping identity in minority cultural environments. The Hungarian-language repertoire, the balance between sacred and secular works, and the cultivation of regional cultural ties contribute to the maintenance and renewal of community identity.

Quality impact on Transylvanian choir culture

The activities of the Vox Humana chamber choir can be considered exemplary in several respects:

- Artistic quality and professional consistency – The high standard of interpretation sets a benchmark for other ensembles.
- Pedagogical awareness – The rehearsal method and voice training principles can be adapted for use by other choirs.
- Repertoire innovation – The integration of contemporary and regional works enriches the living tradition of Transylvanian choral literature.
- Community building – The choir, as a cultural community, is of particular importance in a minority context.

Based on the research, it can be concluded that the activities of Zsolt Szilágyi and the Vox Humana chamber choir are not an isolated phenomenon, but one of the determining factors in the dynamic renewal of Hungarian choral culture in Transylvania.

A brief chronicle of the Vox Humana chamber choir:

- 1974-1997 • Television, radio, and CD recordings are made for domestic and foreign broadcasters
- 1977-1989 • First prizes at national choir competitions
- 1979 • Gorizia Second prize
- 1982 • Arezzo Second prize,
- 1982 • Papal reception in Rome, where Pope John Paul II greets the choir in Hungarian: "Teach God's people to sing beautifully and devoutly. My apostolic blessing is upon you." The political "result" of the choir's visit and high-profile, widely mediated meeting with the Pope, as a choir coming from a Communist country, is a ban on foreign travel for many years.
- 1992 • International choir festival in Nuoro (Italy), Vox Humana receives the first EMKE music award (issues by the Association for Transylvanian Cultural Development)
- 1994 • International choir competition: Llangollen (Great Britain)

- 1996 • Athens bronze prize
- 1999 • Barcelona – gold medal; Zsolt Szilágyi receives recognition as master conductor
- 2001 • International choir competition in Rhodes, Greece – bronze medal
- 2003 • International choir festival – Alta Pusteria (South Tyrol)
- 2005 • I. Edvard Grieg Competition and Festival, Bergen (Norway)
- 2007 • I Castelli Incantati festival (Italy)
- 2008 • Internazionale di Cori, festival in Salerno (Italy)
- 2010 • Ohrid – third place
- 2011 • Choir competition in Vilnius (Lithuania)
- 2013 • Zsolt Szilágyi receives the Order of Merit of the Hungarian Republic, Civil Division
- 2016 • Zsolt Szilágyi receives the Pro Urbe Award
- 2022 • Zsolt Szilágyi receives the Háromszék Culture Award

Conclusions

In summary, it can be said that Zsolt Szilágyi's work is based on a dynamic balance between tradition and innovation. His conducting activity preserves the historical continuity of Hungarian choral culture in Transylvania while also reflecting on the community and educational challenges of the 21st century. The results of this study contribute not only to the interpretation of an individual oeuvre, but also, from a broader perspective, to a rethinking of the role of the conductor, with particular regard to the significance of artistic and educational work in a minority cultural environment.

Zsolt Szilágyi's work in Transylvanian Hungarian choral culture goes beyond the artistic leadership of an ensemble. His activities have an impact on repertoire formation, create aesthetic norms, have an identity-forming function, and contribute to the professional strengthening of the regional choral movement.

The artistic program of Vox Humana can be interpreted as a model of conscious dialogue between tradition and contemporary aspirations, which may have a long-term impact on the Hungarian music scene in Transylvania.

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