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Research paper



Choral Singing as An "Emblem" of National Culture: Global or Local? (A Performative Response to The Question)

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Abstract

The article aims to explore the emblematic function of choral singing, positioning it as a "key" to understanding the relationship between two cultural development trends – global and local traditions, which remains highly relevant to contemporary performance practice. The article examines the choral art of Ukraine, which has historically functioned as a performative phenomenon within a sacred chronotope. At the level of compositional creativity, the dimensions of "sacred – secular" and "global–local" coexist on equal footing, facilitated by the high standard of choral performance culture. The study addresses the consequences of postmodern aesthetics, particularly the dominant role of globalization in the creative practices of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The key argument is that, within the musical component of this cultural cycle, a "counter" movement emerged, which, when viewed from a historical distance, effectively highlights the "onedimensionality" and narrow perspective of seeing globalization as the defining characteristic of the 21st century. This is vividly illustrated through choral art, particularly the history of Ukrainian sacred singing, from the Renaissance to the present. The material selected for analysis encompasses the history of Ukrainian sacred singing, including key stages of its evolution (church monody, linear and part-singing, sacred concerto), genre specifics (songs, prayers), and the compositional embodiment of the emblematic features of the musical-national language. An optimistic forecast can be made based on the example of Ukrainian sacred choral singing's role in the choral culture of the late 20th and 21st centuries. The cultural experience of human interaction occurs within the zone of a "counter movement" between two tendencies: globalization, which is built upon the experiences of many local traditions, and regional cultures, which expand into a broader space, gaining insight into the global world.

Keywords: *Choral Art; Choral Writing; Cultural Semiotics; Genre; Globalization; Localization; Musical language; National Tradition; Sacred singing.*

1. Introduction

According to the reception of postmodern aesthetics, the contemporary state of art, in the unity of its components, is marked by the predominance of globalization processes in human existence. A positive aspect of shaping existence as communication (in line with P. Ricoeur) is the tendency toward a universal language, where diverse genres and multi-stylistic elements enter the artistic framework of a work on equal terms. Rather than being mechanically borrowed, these elements acquire new semantics or undergo dialectical transformation within the systemic connections of another historical chronotope, forming a comprehensive linguistic-stylistic "ocean" of meanings – a meta-language.

The Ukrainian experience of choral singing (from the Renaissance to the present) vividly underscores the one-sidedness of the globalist perspective on cultural values. Within the musical component of postmodernism as a "cultural cycle," a counter-movement of national self-identification is emerging – a distinctly "local" response. If global culture is perceived as a unified system, this response represents a centripetal movement, while globalization functions as a centrifugal force, extending from the center to all external parameters of the system's connections.

The deliberate focus of composers on emphasizing the mental representation of choral singing – a characteristic of Ukrainian artists since the establishment of the new statehood – reinforces the distinctiveness and recognizability of national cultural semiotics, aligning with the Baroque principle of the emblem (a type of sign), according to the "trends of interpreting ancient styles and genres <…> in the age of globalization" [17].

Contemporary studies underline that "choir singing creates community" [15]. Choirs serve an important role in creating and sustaining national and cultural identity by offering a forum for cultural expression, building a feeling of community, and protecting and promoting cultural heritage. They are an effective instrument for transferring traditions, values, and a sense of belonging to a particular community. One of the most essential things a choir can do for a culture is to preserve traditional music alive. Many countries have a rich and distinct musical legacy, but as we progress toward a fully global culture, many of them are being overlooked. Many young individuals may never have heard their country's most important musical contributions because popular institutions do not preserve them. Choirs can change this

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tendency by resurrecting key pieces. A choir allows these songs to remain current and heard, ensuring that a country's musical history is preserved for generations. Even the greatest choirs in the world can help a song establish its position in global culture [4].

Meanwhile, despite its logical appearance, conventional historiography fails to capture the international dynamics of the choral movement. Choral history studies are uncommon, and those that do exist are often restricted to a certain geographic location, such as a town or nation. Even less explored is the role of choral singing in rallying people for nationalist causes. Lajosi and Stynen [11] attempted to fill this gap. They claim that the dynamic interaction of choirs and national movements was a nineteenth-century phenomenon involving new kinds of cultural and social engagement. Among the contrasts met by the choral models as they dispersed throughout the continent were distinct stages of nation-building and differing patriotic goals. There are several explanatory theories for understanding the historical formation of nations and national movements. The most prevalent ideas in recent decades have been constructivism and modernism: a sociological approach led to the claim that élites may construct countries; 'imagined communities' are established via the 'creation of traditions.

According to Rosul [16], because choral creativity is fundamentally communal, the semantics of its thinking leans toward generally meaningful concepts, indicating the need to use collective singing, particularly in religious activities or state events. The choral performance tradition is distinguished by its emphasis on engaging a large audience, making a choral performance a noteworthy event. According to Rosul [16], the level of choral culture development, the vectors and dynamics of its evolution, organizational and institutional performance forms, the genre range of creativity, and the distinct musical and auditory perceptions of performers and listeners serve as criteria for assessing the state's spirituality, nation-building markers, and the accumulation of socio-cultural experience.

Lindl [14] describes an exploratory study on Chinese American teenage identity in a choir. Data collection consisted of 12 hours of observations over 5 weeks, as well as interviews with 5 Chinese American students, the director, and the founding director of the children's choir. The findings revealed that developing a positive Chinese American community in this choir aided in the formation, maintenance, and development of cultural identity, although in distinct ways for each member. This community's characteristics included the use of legacy language, the singing of Chinese folksongs to foster multigenerational relationships, the formation of Chinese American friendships to manage cultural identity, and the role of instructors as cultural carriers. Individuals, however, developed their own cultural identities. Cultural identity construction was variable and nonlinear, underlining the importance of avoiding overgeneralizations about Chinese American adolescents.

Joseph et al. [6] study how South African choirs contribute to community development. The writers investigate the identities of two choirs in the Cape Town metropole against the backdrop of continuing socioeconomic transformation. The varied but related choirs improve the well-being of their members as communities and those who sing for them. Community development as a result of community music is viewed as process-oriented. The Identity Process Theory is a valuable integrative paradigm for investigating identity, social activity, and social change.

This is significant not only for listeners (the recipients) but also for performers - , the bearers of mental frameworks who are tasked with conveying a meta-language that transcends a single national artistic system, a hallmark of the postmodernist condition. This becomes particularly evident when examining the repertoire priorities of choral ensembles.

The relevance of this topic lies in the pressing need within musicology to identify the sociocultural determinants and national-genre priorities shaping the repertoire policies of contemporary choral ensembles, aiming to bridge the "global–local" dichotomy in both scholarly and artistic discourse.

The creative experience of the Cantus Chamber Choir (Uzhhorod, Western Ukraine), led by artistic director and conductor Emili Sokach, offers a compelling basis for reframing the global vs. local dichotomy by emphasizing the parity between these components or the interplay of "local-global." The choir's 20-year history of performances across Ukraine and internationally (Hungary, Finland, England, Poland, USA) illustrates a dialectical shift from the external markers of European-centric globalization - particularly the dominance of Baroque classics (notably Italian and Dutch styles and works by J.S. Bach) - to the 20th-century classics as contemporary cultural documentation. In the choral works of B. Britten, B. Bartók, I. Stravinsky, Arvo Pärt, Valentyn Bibik, and Oleksandr Shchetynsky, the choir members gain an internalized experience of the "foreign" - , the local-as-the-Other within themselves. This process undoubtedly enriches the performers' artistic mastery and interpretative depth, cultivating a kind of encyclopedic artistic knowledge akin to the linguistic repertoire of polyglots. Analysis of Olena Yastrub's authorial definition from her monograph establishes the foundational principles of choral singing theory in Ukrainian culture: "Ukrainian sacred singing is a phenomenon of musical and performative culture embodied within the historical chronotope through the creative activity of homo credens, by the principles of divine communication, and expressed in the diverse forms and genres of liturgical and paraliturgical vocal art" [22].

2. Methods

The methodology employs the following methods: 1) historiographical – outlines the stages in the evolution of choral singing; 2) genre-based – identifies typical intonational models; 3) stylistic – highlights the individuality of the composer; 4) performative – synthesizes the specificity of choral singing in the context of the artistic goals of interpretation.

The tool of research was qualitative content analysis. The interpretivist research paradigm was laid at the foundation of research (see Fig. 1). The Interpretive research method allowed collecting and analyzing data that examine culture in context, to understand the behaviors and values of people from that cultural context. The choice of research paradigm was determined by the fact that interpretivism refers to the approaches that emphasize the meaningful nature of people's character and participation in both social and cultural life. It refers to research methodologies that assume that people's understanding of reality is a social creation by human actors, and hence excludes natural science approaches. These methodological insights highlight the necessity of recognizing and engaging with the local environment throughout the research process, from data collection to data management.

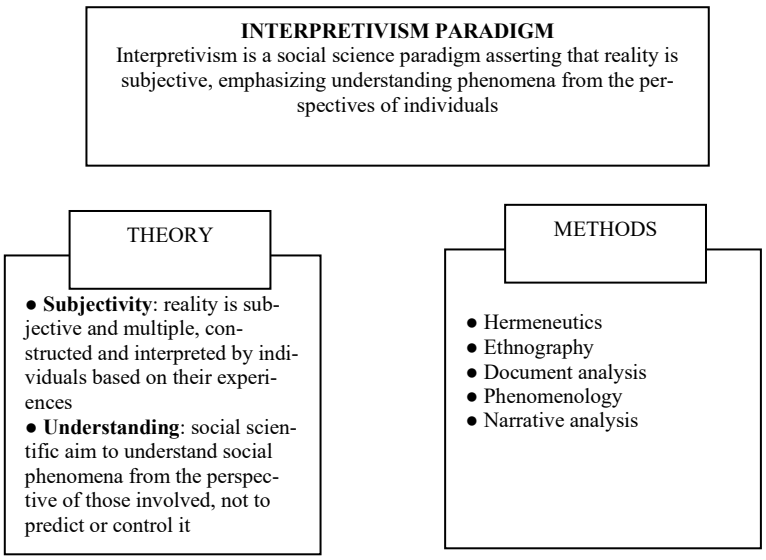


Fig. 1: Overall Concept Of Research.

3. Results and discussion

The hypothesis of the proposed concept is based on the following statement from practicing choir conductors, supported by an analysis of 20th-century compositional practices in conjunction with the performative demands of numerous ensembles in Ukraine. The current state of choral art is sustained through the balance of two tendencies:

- The universalization of the inherent principles of choral singing across different regions (a hallmark of globalization);
- The stability of preserving ethno-national culture in its various forms, which, against the backdrop of a global worldview, remains distinctly recognizable 'by ear' as an authentic local tradition.

The term 'local' refers to the distinctive characteristics of choral singing of a particular people, expressed through the unique mental image of its sound, as well as through the choice of genre and linguistic-stylistic emblems.

The interaction of both tendencies in the choral genre did not begin today (consider the work of I. Stravinsky, particularly his Symphony of Psalms). However, it was only in the final decades of the 20th century, because of various determinants in the artistic process (genre synthesis, the symbolism of musical language, polystylistics), that the integration of diverse genres and stylistic elements of musical language within a single composition, as an artistic whole, began. This feature points not to a separate phenomenon, but rather to the 'spirit of the time' – the mindset of the generation of composers who emerged at the forefront of the late 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, into this general 'ocean' of intonational and genre-stylistic information from languages existing within human culture, and its reinterpretation, actively engaged non-academic music genres (jazz, rock, pop), as the vigorous and 'forceful' development of mass culture inevitably influences the artistic elite's reflection.

Against the backdrop of the 'multivocal score' of globalized culture, amidst its artistic counterpoints, the truly 'pure' voice of spiritual choral singing stands out. Like architectural monuments, it materializes (objectifies) the spirit of human freedom, dignity, and grandeur within the historical chronotope. Let us call this value of choral singing the emblem of national culture.

The aspect of the historical evolution of national forms of Ukrainian sacred singing, which have a regional nature, should be explored.

The Kyiv chant represents a national variant of the Eastern Slavic church singing tradition, alongside the Znamenny chant. The term "Kyiv notation" has been applied in both broad and narrow contexts: "either to denote the national Ukrainian branch of the Byzantine tradition of monodic singing or the local, strictly Kyiv variant of monophonic performance" [20]. M. Antonovych further elucidates its meaning through comparison: "The Kyiv notation becomes for Ukraine what Gregorian chant is for the Latin West" [1].

The two variants of the Kyiv chant – the large and the small (a condensed version of the large) – illustrate the evolution of church singing art in Ukraine. Kyiv chant is distinguished by its modal thinking, employing techniques such as unison singing, octave unison melodic phrases, movement in parallel thirds, sixths, and octaves, and elements of virtuosic melismatic style. The melodic structure features an interplay between recitative and chant-like forms (recitative-syllabic structure), distinct vocalization, and the repetition of specific words and phrases, a characteristic not typical of the Znamenny chant. The symmetry, song-like rhythm, and alternation between recitative and melodic passages reflect the festive nature of the Kyiv chant.

The Pechersk variant of the Kyiv chant reached its final form by the end of the 16th century. Church melodies brought from Byzantium acquired new qualities, leading to the crystallization of the "Kyiv chant," which, through further evolution, developed into various regional forms of notation: "the 'notation of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra'; in the Volyn region – the Pochaiv chant; in Galicia – the Peremyshl and Lviv chants; in Transcarpathia – the Prostopinije of the Basilian order; and smaller variants – the Kharkiv, Kozelshansky (Poltava), and Horodyshchansky chants" [9].

The polyphony of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, which emerged in the 17th century, functioned as a unified national form of the "traditional polyphonic arrangement of ancient monophonic singing" (Shevchuk, 2008: 368). The chanting tradition of the Lavra was distinguished by a cantorial three-voice texture characterized by "a ribbon-like ternary combination of the leading tenor voice, a supporting discant, and an independent bass line" (ibid.). Over time, the cantorial texture expanded to four voices with the addition of a baritone part.

According to D. Bolgarsky, "canonical singing as a transformed melos defines the Kyiv-Pechersk chant... It absorbed the key principles of Eastern Orthodox liturgical singing: grace, salvation, therapeutic effect, comfort, instructiveness, and sobriety (in the sense of purity, clarity, and enlightenment of thought)" [2]. These established qualities, at the level of sound semantics, align with the figurative structure of Ukrainian sacred singing.

The next milestone in the evolution of Ukrainian Orthodox monody was the emergence of chant in syllabic style, an early form of church part-singing that developed in the late 16th century. This period culminated in the formation of the Pechersk variant of the Kyiv chant.

In the 16th century, alongside Orthodox monody, a polyphonic tradition of liturgical singing was already in use. It is noteworthy that syllabic chant resulted from the gradual choralization of ancient Ukrainian monody [8], characterized by the close positioning of voices and the prominence of second intervals. The primary melody in syllabic chant (whether in Kyiv or Bulgarian notation) was typically placed in the middle voice, and only rarely in the lower voice.

During this period, the notation of the Kyiv Znamenny chant was adapted to a five-line staff. According to O. Tsalai-Yakymenko, "the main trajectory of the national tradition of Christian singing in Ukraine diverged, focusing on the creation of a unified singing collection", which included selected chants for Sundays, weekly services, two-month cycles (eight-tone chants), and festive chants covering the entire liturgical year [20].

Of particular importance was the Heirmologion (14th–16th centuries) – a unique manuscript collection comprising church liturgical chants performed throughout the liturgical year. The structure of the chants in the Heirmologion reveals various types of melodies inherited from ancient monody [7]. The first notated Heirmologion was printed in Pochaiv in 1766, alongside the significant Osmohlasnyk, a key work in Ukrainian hymnography. Additionally, in the 18th century, the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery published a notated Heirmologion. The appearance of the notated printed Heirmologion (Lviv, 1700) played a crucial role in preserving the written heritage of monody.

The spirituality embodied in the sacred works of the Heirmologia represented various modes of church consciousness and, accordingly, states of the believer's soul: contemplative-meditative, solemn-elevated, and lyrical-dramatic. The melodic formulas of the chants gradually formed a distinct emblematic language, shaped by their spiritual content, encompassing intonations of supplication, address, and sorrow.

The socio-historical context of the Baroque era (17th – mid-18th century) should be emphasized as a critical determinant in the flourishing of sacred singing. In Ukraine, the intensification of the national liberation struggle led to the emergence of the Cossack Hetmanate, where Heirmologion singing became significant as an "emblem" of national self-expression.

A brief outline of the key parameters of the Baroque era reveals its role as a focal point for the concertante instrumental style, which introduced a new quality to Ukrainian sacred singing. The concept of "accentuated symbolism," as termed by O. Kozarenko, is a defining characteristic of the national musical emblematics of the Baroque period. The frequent use of three-part harmony with contrary motion between the two upper voices in thirds, contrasted against a relatively static bass line, underscores the partesny style. Researchers provide varied interpretations of this type of concerto, emphasizing that in partesny concertos, "the space seems to resonate with the diverse timbral colorings of various voices, including the use of the delicate voices of boys in the descant parts" [7].

Although the partesny concerto is part of paraliturgical music, it was performed during the Divine Liturgy, either in place of the communion verse or outside the liturgical context. The partesny concerto is linked to ancient monody and genres of Ukrainian song culture, such as the psalm and the kant. According to O. Letychevska, the "national character of Ukrainian partesny compositions" is expressed through the principle of contrast, particularly through the alternation between choral tutti and the ensemble sections of three-part kant [12]. The bass part, which appears in every partesny the work, plays a significant role, while "the search for diverse timbral colors in the absence of instrumental accompaniment fostered a subtle interplay of vocal timbres, enriching their combinations and contrasts" [13]. Polyphonic techniques, such as imitations, canons, and canonic sequences, play a leading role in shaping the form of the partesny concerto. Due to the instrumental nature of the melody, the frequent use of "syllabic-melismatic melodic lines of the coloratura type" became dominant [7].

The theory behind the principles of partesny singing is presented in M. Diletsky's work Musical Grammar (1679). As a graduate of the Kyiv Brotherhood School, M. Diletsky, according to O. Koshyts, "shifted our church singing entirely toward the West, decisively severing ties with the ideals of znamenny chant, which, though modified, still dominated our church musical thinking at the time [8].

The collection of choral works by M. Diletsky, edited and published by N. Herasymova-Persydska in 1981, includes liturgical compositions, choral concertos for double choir, sacred works for four-part choir, and a Service for four-part and eight-part choir, known as the "Kyiv Service." The composer's style in his partesny works is based on European harmonic-polyphonic techniques and the distinctive style of church music fostered within the national compositional school [18]. The musical techniques employed in M.Diletsky's Resurrection Canon "defined the golden age of Ukrainian church music in the second half of the 18th century [18].

The evolution of the partesny style was vividly expressed through the genre of the sacred concerto. A convergence occurred between liturgical music and secular genres (folk songs, urban-style songs, and romances). The sacred concerto was characterized by simplicity and clarity, with festive, solemn, and elevated imagery. The connection with European classicism is evident in the compositional techniques and choral writing, marked by functional harmony and free polyphony.

Researchers describe the Ukrainian classical sacred concerto as a "distinctive phenomenon with pronounced national specificity" [7].

O. Kozarenko highlights the "traditional Eurocentrism in the development of ethnomusical intonationality," solidified by the works of M. Berezovsky, D. Bortniansky, and A. Vedel, particularly "through the adoption of the classicist linguistic and stylistic code" [10]. Thus, it was in sacred concertos that the melodic talent of composers, who were also exceptional singers well-versed in vocal-choral writing, became most evident.

The signs of a new style can be traced in the spiritual works of M. Berezovsky. Researchers regard the artist's liturgy as one of the finest examples of its kind in Ukrainian sacred music. The new classical style of choral concert replaced the Baroque (part-song) concert. Berezovsky combined the traditions of domestic church singing with those of the Italian choral schools.

The choral writing of D. Bortniansky reflects the experience of classical European harmonic and polyphonic art [18], particularly in the genre-intonational synthesis of Ukrainian folk song, cantata, and part-song style.

The compositional work of the genius A. Vedel (1767 – 1809) is regarded as the pinnacle of Ukrainian liturgical music. The polyphonic style of Vedel's thinking is characterized by the free unfolding of melodic lines over a wide range, with large leaps and melismatic embellishments of an instrumental nature. A typical Vedelian principle is his choral texture, which consists of three components: a leading voice with a recitative structure (alto), a parallel secondary voice (tenor), and a bass part that serves a harmonic support function [18]. While M. Diletsky based his work on the polyphony of Western Europe, A. Vedel synthesized the principles of Znamenny chant, cantata, and oral folk tradition in his choral style, embodying a distinctly "Slavic type of intonation and melodically developed voice leading" [18].

The main historical processes that influenced the further development of Ukrainian sacred choral music during the Romantic era can be outlined as follows. After reaching its peak in the 17th and 18th centuries, the sacred choral tradition gradually lost its national stylistic features under the significant influence of Russian culture in the 19th century. Amid the process of Russification by the tsarist authorities, the national revival movement in Ukraine began to gain momentum. For instance, Kharkiv became one of the important cultural centers during the early decades of the 19th century. As a result, the Kharkiv archbishop's choir, which was well-known during this period, organized an orchestra.

The study of church singing was taught exclusively in religious educational institutions. It is worth noting that the curriculum of theological schools included a special subject titled "Church Choral Singing." Seminary choirs existed at theological seminaries, with the choir of the Chernihiv Theological Seminary being particularly renowned for its high level of choral culture.

The national revival was later suppressed through the deliberate closure of Sunday schools by the authorities, as well as the introduction of the Valuyev Circular and the Ems Ukaz. Despite this, Ukrainian spiritual culture continued to thrive. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, concerts of sacred music played a significant role in the national cultural and musical life, with performances being organized in both large cities and rural parishes.

Overall, the Romantic era (the 19th century) stands as one of the most important periods in the development of Ukrainian sacred choral music, particularly within churches and monasteries, and is directly linked to the national cultural revival. For example, in the church choral sphere, this was reflected in the establishment of a cantor school in Przemyśl, initiated by Bishop I. Snihursky. In 1828, a cathedral choir was organized, and a year later, a singing school was founded alongside it.

It is important to recognize that Ukrainian sacred choral music, throughout its evolution, has remained relevant in every era. During the medieval period, this phenomenon was represented in Orthodox monody; in the early Baroque era, in line singing. Subsequently, sacred music evolved into the part-song style and ultimately functioned within paraliturgical works (sacred stich, cantata, psalm) and the sacred concert.

Examples of the composer's interpretation of the sacred tradition in the 21st century can be found in the choral style of Valentin Silvestrov, a prominent representative of Ukraine's spiritual tradition today, whose long creative career embodies the strength and glory of national culture.

Continuing the review of the stages in the development of choral writing as a meta-language, it is essential to focus on the significant figure in Ukrainian music, Valentin Silvestrov [19], whose work represents an exceptional and unique phenomenon within both Ukrainian and global musical contexts. This is due to his more than half-century-long career, marked by constant evolution, flexibility, and the mobility of his creative consciousness, alongside the unquestionable recognizability of his authorial style. While these factors present challenges in explaining and identifying stable elements in the interpretation of the composer's legacy, they also contribute to the emergence of a variety of analytical concepts, ensuring the continued development of musicology. In each period of his stylistic evolution, the composer thinks out of the box: the aesthetics of the avant-garde and contemporary writing techniques of the 1960s-1970s, the meta-language and post-literalism of the 1980s-1990s, neoromanticism, and the weak style of the early 21st century each present a "different" Silvestrov, who dares to move further from already established, successful paradigms.

The composer arranges the musical space of his works in such a way that the listener is constantly required to find the key to understanding the music. The transformation of the composer's musical writing accentuates the immanent processes and emphasizes the significance of the internal authorial language/speech, reflecting the ontological foundation. It is no coincidence that O. Kozarenko defines V. Silvestrov's musical language as one of the "most powerful local semiotic systems in terms of sign-information charge" [10].

V. Silvestrov's choral writing is based not only on technical compositional innovations but, more importantly, on a profound sense of lyricism. The lyrical discourse manifests itself in the artist's works through various, often unexpected, compositional interpretations. Silvestrov maintains his distinctive style (lyricism), constantly searching for ways to embody it, including through experiments with various compositional techniques. In this way, he uncovers sought-after methods for expanding the expressive possibilities of music.

For V. Silvestrov, established classical models of choral writing serve as a foundation upon which he enriches the music with original sound structures. As a result, he organically combines tradition (the achievements of the past) and innovation (enriching it with modern compositional and linguistic solutions). Therefore, the composer is regarded as one of the leading figures in contemporary Ukrainian music.

Choral music holds a significant place in the composer's legacy, despite his self-perception primarily as a composer-symphonist. Over nearly a decade, Silvestrov became one of the most influential creators of sacred choral music in Ukraine. Most of these works emerged through close collaboration with the Kyiv Choir and its artistic director, conductor M. Hodbych. Hodbych expressed the view that Silvestrov's turn to choral music during this period of his creative career marked a sign of maturity: "Behind him is the turbulent avant-garde, the search for new ways of self-expression, <...> having tested his new ideas in different genres, V. Silvestrov transferred them into choral scores – and it worked" [5].

The composer's body of work includes a significant number of choral pieces. The genre range is quite broad, spanning from large cyclical forms and sacred music to choral miniatures. Notable examples of cyclical forms include the following works: Cantata on the poetry of T. Shevchenko for mixed choir a cappella (1977), Diptych for a cappella choir (1995), dedicated to M. Kots, Requiem for Larisa (1997-1999), Triptych for a cappella choir (2013), and the choral cycle Maidan-2014 (2016), among others.

Sacred works in the composer's legacy occupy a distinguished place and transform both the tradition of sacred choral singing and the principles of modern choral writing, unified by the stylistic dominants of V. Silvestrov's compositional thinking. These include sacred songs and hymns, such as Two Sacred Songs (2006) for mixed choir a cappella, Two Sacred Songs (2007) for mixed choir a cappella, Two Sacred Hymns for mixed choir a cappella (2008), Liturgical Hymns (2005), and numerous references to the genre of the psalm, including Psalms on the poetry of T. Shevchenko for mixed choir a cappella (2006), Two Psalms of David for mixed choir a cappella (2007), Psalm on the words of H. Skovoroda (2009), and Vespers Hymns (2006) for mixed choir a cappella.

A distinctive feature of the composer's sacred works is the combination of canonical texts in Latin and Old Church Slavonic, the poetry of T. Shevchenko, and texts from folk songs within a "meta-language." For example, in the nine parts of Liturgical Hymns, which are performed attacca, alongside the words of John Chrysostom ("Holy God," "Cherubic Hymn"), there coexist authentic texts ("Oh, on the river, on the Jordan") and those that appeal to the European tradition ("Credo," "Gloria," "Ave Maria").

Within the system of the composer's style, a spiritual semiotics has developed: Shevchenko's words are equated with the sacred text. "As the Old Testament is based on the Pentateuch of Moses and the Psalms, so Shevchenko holds all of Ukraine through language" [21]. The composer compares the meaning of the words "psalm" and "psalmist" to the Ukrainian Kobzar: "The Kobzar is also a psalmist, but in a different space, perhaps a profane one" [21]. This coexistence is most vividly observed in Diptych: in the two-part cycle, the canonical "Our Father" is juxtaposed with Shevchenko's "Testament" as two legacies for humanity – heavenly and earthly. This dichotomy constructs a stable musical-semiotic system, with the elements of the system supporting one another.

Another significant stylistic phenomenon in V. Silvestrov's sacred works is the influence of post-avant-garde thinking on the musical language. This refers to the incorporation of "triviality" and the weak style, which penetrate not only the meta-language as a semiotic system but also the fundamental (ontological) principles of thought, elevating simplicity as a core value in the essence of music.

In All-Night Vigil Hymns, which consists of seven parts, biblical texts ("Come," "Silent Light," "Holy God," "Theotokos," "Now You Dismiss Your Servant") coexist with secular elements in the same sacred space. At the end, the European Christmas carol "Silent Night" is included. The composer discusses the embodiment of triviality as a feature of the weak style: "This is an example of how bagatelles transitioned into liturgical hymns" [19].

The composer's choral writing in his sacred works places special emphasis on the sound of words. Not only is the phonetics of the melody-word vocalized, but there is also a characteristic "reverberation" of the chordal verticals. As a result, a choral analogue of the word emerges – an emblem as a sound form. A recognizable stylistic technique in V. Silvestrov's writing is the use of choral pedals, which resemble the

Byzantine ison. An important element is the use of thirds, a characteristic feature of both chant singing, folk polyphony (second voices), and orchestral sonorous writing. Furthermore, the historical dimension of musical-choral emblematics is actualized, creating a rich "trail" of allusions.

Elegy and pastoral are other types of emblematics of the Romantic worldview, embodied in choral miniatures. An example of this is the "Pastoral" for mixed choir a cappella (2010) to the words of P. Tychyna, "Three Pastorals" (2018), "The Quiet Night Has Come" for mixed choir a cappella, to a text by an unknown author (2007), and "The Cherry Orchard" to the words of T. Shevchenko. In the composer's oeuvre, poems of a pastoral and reflexive-contemplative type dominate: "From the texts of the Kobzar, the composer selects landscape-philosophical, dreamy-reflective, lyrical-contemplative fragments, omitting plot-driven episodes. He avoids exhortative, imperative turns, consistently reproducing the soft, heart-centered nature of the Ukrainian mentality" [3].

A state of monoaffective immersion, contemplativeness, and reflective dramaturgy, along with the "flickering" effect and the semantics of echoes, constitute the stylistic features of the musical language in such works. The listener moves through the sonic space of the composition's static dramaturgy, contemplating the inherent beauty of sound. The composer refrains from direct sound imagery, instead presenting the pastoral as a sound universe: "The pastoral is also a kind of symphony, but of the world. It is the home of a person, their temple. A person is present in it to contemplate this temple, not to bring their sorrows into it. Because when sorrows appear, it becomes an elegy. First, there is the pastoral, and then against its backdrop, the elegy emerges as a pastoral that has already been destroyed and poisoned by reflection." [19].

A defining feature of V. Silvestrov's choral writing in pastoral works is the emphasis on dynamics, particularly within the range of pianissimo to piano. This compositional approach demands that performers master subtle gradations of volume and demonstrate heightened acoustic sensitivity in rendering muted dynamics. The focus on restrained dynamics underscores the significance of each sound, its inherent value, and its emergence from silence, thereby broadening the scope of intonational expressiveness. Thus, the composer's strategy can be characterized as drawing the listener's attention to sound as an event, perceiving choral sound as a philosophical concept.

A significant emblem in the composer's choral oeuvre is the dedication, interpreted as the author's word. The composer deciphers the meanings of the work through the act of dedication: communication with humanity ("Dedication to Everyone and Anyone" for mixed choir a cappella, 2010), spiritual connections – "Dedication to H. Skovoroda" (2009), and historical events – "Dedication to Maidan. Kyiv. 2014" (2021). The dedication foregrounds cultural memory, functioning like "Solaris," which V. Silvestrov evokes using the phonemes of past eras, subtly touching upon the listener's memory. Consequently, the composer's "I" is diminished, while the necessity of a meta-language becomes more pronounced – a language in which the human and the transcendent resonate in overtones, and the boundaries between "self and world," "past and present," and "familiar and foreign" gradually dissolve.

A significant contemporary work is V. Silvestrov's "Prayer for Ukraine," part of the choral macrocycle (No. 13) "Maidan-2014." This prayer is rendered as an artistic document of a historic event – the 2014 Orange Revolution – and embodies the resurgence of national emblematics during a period of profound national tragedy.

What does the genre designation of a choral composition imply? The prayer invokes the discourse of divine communication, serving as an individual or collective appeal to God for protection, assistance, and intercession.

The genre of prayer, as a form of oral poetic expression, is among the most ancient in the corpus of oral literature. Consequently, the verbal text assumes primary importance, embodying the capacity of words to convey the essence of prayer. The text functions as a metatext, inherently forming a dialogue between the individual and the divine. In prayers, the dominant semantic modes – gratitude, humility, supplication, and repentance are not expressed by a detached consciousness but are articulated directly by the performer, the singer. An example of the profound impact of Christian tradition on poetic expression is the text of "Prayer for Ukraine," which is notable for its conciseness and the profound semantic depth of its imagery.

The choral writing of V. Silvestrov in this composition is characterized by a synthesis of several national traditions: sacred singing (choral pedals, ison in the male voices, biblical undertones), folk song style (second voices, alternating meters of 3/4 and 2/4), and cantus (tertiary melodies as a defining feature, with the main theme presented in the upper voices). Additionally, the emblematic quality of hymnody is evident using enlightened tonality in C major and a moderate andantino tempo, symbolizing universal human values.

Thus, V. Silvestrov's choral style emerges as a semiotic system defined by two interrelated tendencies: the universalization of choral writing as a meta-language and the integration of innovative dramaturgical strategies derived from the transformation of earlier stylistic periods in the composer's oeuvre. Key features of this semiotic system include its mosaic structure, reflecting Shevchenko's poetry and sacred texts, the Old Slavic tradition (incorporating elements of the "sound language" of liturgical singing – melismas, jubilations, ison), and the Western European mass.

The discourse of pastoralism and elegiacism plays a significant role in Silvestrov's choral style. Another notable stylistic feature is the composer's reflection on the same texts, both verbal and musical, resulting in multiple musical interpretations of a single text (such as Shevchenko's poetry or the anthem). This technique embodies the essence of self-quotation, a characteristic of post-avant-garde thinking.

The worldview expressed in the composer's choral works enables contemporary listeners to discern manifestations of national thinking at the level of the entire body of choral compositions, perceived as a cohesive meta-language. Such cohesion, however, is conditional and pertains to the scholarly interpretation of the choral phenomenon on multiple levels. The first level involves the timbral-textural organization, emphasizing spatiality as a defining aspect of choral writing. The use of divisi, resulting in a multi-layered texture, allows for interpreting choral voices as orchestral timbres (notably, most of the composer's choral works are written for mixed choir a cappella). This approach produces a distinctive transformation of sonority without the employment of avant-garde techniques.

The subsequent level pertains to timbral dramaturgy, wherein timbre conveys semantic meaning independently of thematic development. Like orchestral music, the composer approaches the timbre of the choral score as an "event." A defining feature in the stylistics of choral writing is the semantics of reverberation, echo, and the distinctive vibration of the chordal vertical, functioning as a form of sound-psychic energy.

The composer's meticulous attention to the word is notable: the rhythm of the poetry is preserved without disruption, repetitions are not introduced, and no cuts are made. However, characteristic pauses and stops in the flow of the melody (voices) are present, typical of Silvestrov's style. Like orchestral music, silence holds an important role in his works. The dynamics are finely nuanced, with sound emerging from silence, and great attention is paid to the strokes and details. The composer demonstrates a high level of precision and care in the performance of his choral works across various interpretations, essentially establishing a programmed intonational-sound invariant that demands an exact and refined interpretative performance, down to the smallest detail. Nevertheless, the most significant aspect of the composer's choral writing remains the lyrical discourse and the dominance of the melos.

4. Conclusion

The salvation from the lack of spirituality (poor taste in art) prevalent in certain spheres of 21st-century musical life can be found in the return of the individual (I) and their art (We) to their roots – traditional culture. In Ukraine, this tradition is represented by spiritual choral singing. Therefore, the response to the question, "In which cultural paradigm are we situated?" might be as follows: Only globalization – this is an exaggeration! Undoubtedly, this largely positive process has been unfolding for almost a century now (but this is a separate topic for future discussion), driven by numerous social determinants (scientific and technological progress, migration, digital communication). At the same time, a nationally defined, high-value professional choral music continues to thrive, which, to the average listener, may seem ethnically and locally specific. However, at a higher level of cultural self-awareness, represented by performers as carriers of the mental representation of national cultural values, there emerges a "megasystem" – a meta-language, in which, akin to the oceans in Solaris (based on the novel by the Strugatsky brothers), heterogeneous energies and images of human culture continuously undergo transformation and entropy. In this context, the role of emblems, archetypes, and symbols in scientific reflection and analysis is crucial.

In the Eastern Christian liturgical tradition, the "emblem" is represented by a cappella singing. Repeated linguistic and stylistic complexes, recognized and serving as emblems of national culture, can be understood as the "stylistic constants of Ukrainian spiritual singing." Additionally, there exists a vocal-instrumental version of the spiritual tradition – the kobzar-lyrical tradition. It is important to highlight that spiritual singing, at every stage of its development within Ukrainian musical culture, functions as a system of polyphonic types. Its established features as a musical emblem of the nation include:

- Original melodic forms characteristic of regional affiliations (Kyiv, Kyiv-Pechersk, Ostroh; in the western regions – Serbian, Bulgarian), with melodic formulas that have been preserved in liturgical (paraliturgical) practices to this day;
- Genre selection: spiritual verse, spiritual song (canticle, psalm), choral concert, where the cappella style predominates, with free melodic lines unfolding over a wide range, inherited from the folk song tradition;
- Prayerful semantics, nurtured by the nature of Ukrainian melos – prolonged, expressive, and focused on communication with God;
- The eight-voice system – a meaning-forming element of the tonal structure of the chant;
- The rhythmic-intonational triad of melodic types (syllabic, non-umatic, and melismatic), which originated within the system of early Ukrainian monody and retains its significance in the composer's interpretation as an "emblem" of national musical culture;
- The intonational structure of part-singing (second half of the 17th – 18th centuries) incorporated the qualities of ancient monody and paraliturgical genres (psalms, canticles), creating a style in which the antiphonal principle was expressed polyphonically.

The composer's emphasis on the local component of his creativity, particularly within the choral genre, elevates the emblematic nature of his original style to the level of the national, as demonstrated in the works of Y. Stankovych and V. Syilvestrov.

If the quality of specific (conditionally "regional") thinking is continuously amplified in the new works of various composers through the recognizable emblematic features of national art, such as the new "folk wave" in Ukrainian choral music of the 1960s-70s, this leads to the influence of local traditions on the content of globalized culture, serving as a determinant. A new quality of communication is established – a parity exchange of cultural values, a dialogue of "the world the other," which can be described as the search for balance within the "human–culture" system. Through concepts developed in musicology, such as "choral singing – choral writing – spiritual tradition – composer's interpretation," the semiotic "codes" of culture rooted in the past, the historical memory of the people, and the ongoing search for fundamental answers to the "eternal" questions of the creative human (homo creator) are revealed. No theories or simulacra, in this regard, can "cancel" this search.

An optimistic outlook can be drawn from the example of Ukrainian spiritual singing in the choral culture of the late 20th and 21st centuries. The cultural experience of human communication unfolds in the zone of a "meeting movement" between two trends: globalization, which is rooted in the experiences of many local traditions, and regional cultures that expand into a broader space while learning about the global world.

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