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## UKRAINIAN FOLK SONG IN THE SYSTEM OF FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL MUSIC AND PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: THE CASE OF HRYHORII LEVCHENKO'S TEACHING AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

**A** The article examines the role of the Ukrainian folk song as a key component of both formal and non-formal artistic and pedagogical education of future music teachers in Ukraine. Drawing on the teaching and creative activities of Hryhorii Levchenko, Honored Artist of Ukraine and Professor, the study analyzes how the Ukrainian people's song heritage was integrated into the educational process at Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University. Particular attention is given to the relevance of incorporating Ukrainian folk songs into the formal artistic education system, specifically within the educational components taught by Hryhorii Levchenko. The study highlights the significance of bridging formal and non-formal art education, facilitated by Levchenko through the Ukrainian folk choir Kalyna. It also outlines the genre diversity of Ukrainian folk songs utilized in the educational process. The article concludes by evaluating Hryhorii Levchenko's contribution to preserving and promoting Ukrainian national musical heritage and its effective application in shaping future educators.

**Keywords:** Ukrainian folk song; artistic and pedagogical education; formal education; non-formal education; Hryhorii Levchenko

### Українська народна пісня в системі формальної та неформальної музично-педагогічної освіти в Україні (на прикладі викладацької й творчої діяльності Григорія Левченка)

**S** Розкрито роль української народної пісні як складника формальної та неформальної мистецько-педагогічної освіти майбутніх учителів музичного мистецтва в Україні. На матеріалі викладацької та творчої діяльності заслуженого діяча мистецтв України, професора Григорія Левченка проаналізовано шляхи інтеграції пісенної спадщини українського народу в освітній процес студентів Полтавського національного педагогічного університету імені В. Г. Короленка. Акцентовано увагу на доцільності використання української народнопісенної спадщини в системі формальної мистецької освіти майбутніх учителів музичного мистецтва під час оволодіння змістом освітніх компонентів, що викладалися Григорієм Левченком. Підкреслено важливість конвергентності формальної освіти з неформальною мистецькою освітою, що надавалася митцем в українському народному хорі «Калина». Виокремлено жанрову різноманітність українських народних пісень, які використовувалися у процесі надання освітніх послуг. Зроблено висновки про внесок Григорія Левченка в збереження й популяризацію української національної музичної спадщини та її ефективне використання у формуванні майбутніх педагогів.

**Ключові слова:** українська народна пісня; мистецько-педагогічна освіта; формальна освіта; неформальна освіта; Григорій Левченко

**Relevance of the Problem (General Overview).** Among the treasures of the intangible cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people, Ukrainian folk songs hold exceptional value. They represent the most popular genre of Ukrainian musical art, as they reflect the customs and traditions, moral values, and behavioral norms of our ancestors, while also depicting the most significant historical events and heroic figures of the Ukrainian

nation. Equally valuable are the melodies of these songs – unconventional, poignant, and expressive, featuring distinctive rhythms and melodic variations. It is no coincidence that the semantic and melodic heritage of the Ukrainian people plays a vital role in the development of the younger generation.

Teachers, especially music educators, serve as essential guides for children into the cultural heritage of their forebears.

They are responsible for fostering in children a sense of love and respect for their nation through immersion in the inexhaustible wellspring of Ukrainian folk music. In this context, one of the key conditions for the training of future art teachers in Ukrainian higher pedagogical education institutions is the integration of Ukrainian folk song heritage into the system of both formal and non-formal artistic and pedagogical education.

#### **Analysis of Previous Research and Publications.**

Prominent Ukrainian scholars of the past and present – such as A. Ivanytskyi [2], K. Kvitka [3], F. Kolessa [5], and L. Revutskyi [10] – have emphasized the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the powerful legacy of Ukrainian folk song, which has played and continues to play a significant role in the life of the nation and the individual. Contemporary studies by Ukrainian researchers such as O. Rostovskyi [10] and O. Otych [9], among others, offer various approaches to improving the training of future specialists using the vocal musical heritage of the Ukrainian people.

A separate and significant body of work consists of scholarly and practical contributions by contemporary educators at institutions of higher pedagogical education who have devoted their professional careers to preparing future music teachers. Among this group is Hryhorii Levchenko (1933–2022) – a lecturer at the Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Honored Artist of Ukraine, professor, composer, and arranger. His practical experience incorporating Ukrainian folk song into the educational process served as a foundation for providing high-quality training to future music teachers at Poltava Pedagogical University.

The **purpose** of this article is to highlight the main approaches to integrating the song heritage of the Ukrainian people into the system of national formal and non-formal education for future music teachers, using the pedagogical activity of Hryhorii Levchenko as a case study.

**Presentation of the Main Research Material.** The issue of incorporating Ukrainian folk songs into the training process of future music teachers gained particular relevance following Ukraine's attainment of independence. It was during this period that educators were granted the opportunity to freely integrate Ukrainian folk music into all aspects of teacher training, including both formal and non-formal education systems.

It should be emphasized that Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University has long been distinguished by a close integration of formal and non-formal arts education. As early as the 1930s, the renowned Ukrainian educator Vasyl Verkhovynets (1880–1938), in addition to teaching theoretical and practical disciplines to future primary school teachers, directed a student choir. Within this ensemble, students received additional educational services, which would now be defined as non-formal arts education. Significantly, the repertoire studied during both curricular and extracurricular time consisted exclusively of Ukrainian folk songs and original works by Ukrainian composers. Verkhovynets's dedication to Ukrainian-centered arts and pedagogical activity ultimately led to his repression and execution in 1938 [1].

Such a combination of formal and non-formal components in arts education continued to characterize the activities of the Poltava Pedagogical Institute throughout the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, another prominent music educator, Mykhailo Fisun (1909–1994), worked at the institute, combining classroom instruction with student participation in an amateur choral ensemble.

From the 1980s, the Poltava Pedagogical Institute (now Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University) became the professional home of Hryhorii Levchenko – Honored Worker of Culture of Ukraine, Honored Artist of Ukraine, professor, and Head of the Department of Music (1982–2004). His path as a teacher-artist was marked by numerous challenges related to the use of Ukrainian folk songs in the training of future music teachers. After several years of leading the student choir (1967–1973), Levchenko was forced to leave the institute following the performance of a patriotic Ukrainian song, «Oh, the Star Has Risen», under his direction. At that time, the young choirmaster faced unemployment and hardship.

Nevertheless, fate offered Hryhorii Levchenko a second chance when a new rector of the institute, Ivan Ziaziun, invited him to lead a newly formed student-faculty Ukrainian folk choir in 1979. This marked the beginning of the «golden age» of Levchenko's artistic and pedagogical career within the Ukrainian Folk Choir «Kalyna» (now the Hryhorii Levchenko Ukrainian Folk Choir) and at the Department of Music and Singing (now the Hryhorii Levchenko Department of Music).

At first, the artist worked solely as the conductor of the Ukrainian folk choir Kalyna, where he enriched the artistic competencies of future educators through what is today termed non-formal arts education. It is worth noting that non-formal arts education within the system of teacher professional training is understood as voluntary artistic activity pursued outside the formal academic curriculum of higher pedagogical institutions. This type of education typically takes place within artistic and creative ensembles and does not result in the awarding of a state-recognized diploma [12, p. 7].

Later, Hryhorii Levchenko became the head of the university's Department of Music and Singing, where he began integrating Ukrainian folk song creativity into the system of professional training for future music teachers. This meant utilizing Ukrainian folk music within the formal arts education system, which is «regulated by the state at the legislative level through its standardization» [12, p. 26].

It is crucial to highlight that the political environment in Ukraine at the time did not allow for a focused emphasis on Ukrainian musical culture. One of the strategies for incorporating it into formal and non-formal arts education was a selective blending of «Soviet» vocal and instrumental music with Ukrainian works. For example, the vocal technique or conducting curriculum (formal education) included Russian romances such as «The Golden Grove Spoke» (by Sergei Yesenin) and «The Chrysanthemums Have Long Since Faded in the Garden» (by Nikolai Harito). Meanwhile, the repertoire of the Kalyna Ukrainian folk choir included works such as «And That Is Our Strength,

People» (by Valentin Levashov) and the Russian folk song «Oh, You Little Guelder Rose», among others.

Only by incorporating such compositions into both the formal and non-formal educational repertoire of future teachers could Ukrainian folk songs or works by Ukrainian composers and poets be used in parallel, and Hryhorii Levchenko took full advantage of this opportunity.

For over six decades, Professor Levchenko, fully aware of the significance of folklore and folk song in particular for Ukraine's development and progress, collected and incorporated Ukrainian folk songs into the formal and non-formal systems of arts education for future music teachers. He placed particular importance on verbal-musical folklore works created through collective authorship. The professor emphasized that these songs reflect the worldview, psychology, everyday life, and collective thinking of the people. Among the many songs he studied with students were «Oh, Long Ago I Lived with My Mother», «Oh, Little Sun», and «Yo, The Little Geese Are Wandering on the Pond».

It is also important to note that Professor Levchenko offered students a variety of Ukrainian folk songs in different genres. He was especially captivated by lyrical musical-literary works, particularly those depicting domestic and social life. He was inclined to include both widely known and lesser-known Ukrainian songs. Among those performed by the Kalyna choir, through which students received non-formal arts education, were Ukrainian folk songs as «The Blackthorn Is Blooming» and «Oh, Beyond the Little Green Grove». He also paid special attention to lyric-epic works, such as «Ballad about Baida» and «On the Hill of Imber».

One of Hryhorii Levchenko's innovative contributions to the system of non-formal arts education at the Poltava Pedagogical Institute was giving students experience in performing syncretic musical works. For example, he introduced into the repertoire of the Kalyna choir a Choral Version of a Piano Concerto by Serhii Shevchenko. It was a unique composition that combined Ukrainian folk choral singing with classical instrumental concerto, written by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Poltava composer-pianist Serhii Shevchenko (1898–1985).

It is worth emphasizing that during the difficult times of total Russification and suppression of all things Ukrainian, Hryhorii Levchenko managed to incorporate patriotic, national-liberation, and anti-militarist songs into the repertoire of the Ukrainian folk choir Kalyna as well as into the educational components of academic programs such as «Choral Conducting», «Voice Training», and «Choral Class». Among these works were «Chervona kalyna – Poltava land» (Hryhorii Levchenko), «Ballad about the Sons» (lyrics by Leonid Vernyhora, music by Oleksii Chukhrai), and «A Cossack's Adventure» (traditional lyrics, music by Hryhorii Levchenko), among others.

The cultivation of love for Ukraine among students of the Poltava Pedagogical Institute was also carried out through the songs of an intimate and personal character. These works expressed the joy or tragedy of family relationships, especially those marked by the loss of loved ones due to war. Among such songs, students learned «A Mother Sent Her Son to the

Army» (Ukrainian folk song) and «The Cossack Rode Beyond the Danube» (Ukrainian folk song).

At the same time, the professor's awareness of the fact that he was working with young, energetic, inspired, vibrant, and cheerful people motivated Hryhorii Levchenko to introduce youth-oriented and humorous songs. They were the following: «I Planted Cornflowers» (lyrics and music by Hryhorii Levchenko), «You Are Cabbage, You Are Seedlings» (Ukrainian folk song), and «Hrabarivka Polka» (a Ukrainian folk dance song recorded by Hryhorii Levchenko in his native village of Hrabarivka, in the Pyriatyn region), among others.

Equally valuable for working with the younger generation, in Levchenko's view, there were verbal-artistic compositions, which he arranged and interpreted over an extended period. They were the following: «A High Mountain Stands and Lullaby». The inclusion of songs by Ukrainian composers of the past and present, set to lyrics by renowned and lesser-known national poets, into the curricula of formal disciplines and the repertoires of non-formal arts education was of no less importance. Among such works, there were «The Dnipro Roars and Groans» (lyrics by Taras Shevchenko, traditional melody) and «Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow» (traditional lyrics, music by Stepan Charnetskyi).

At the same time, Hryhorii Levchenko created his musical masterpieces, which were performed by students during classes and by choir members during rehearsals and concerts. For the students of the Poltava Pedagogical Institute, the composer wrote original works set to the poetry of both past and contemporary poets. Examples include «From Village to Village» (lyrics by Taras Shevchenko) and «My Native Land» (lyrics by Mariyka Boyko). In his work with students receiving formal and non-formal education, Hryhorii Levchenko identified key priorities regarding the use of Ukrainian folk songs. First and foremost, the professor emphasized the content of the folk songs, whether they were traditional Ukrainian songs or works by Ukrainian composers. In choral conducting or vocal training lessons, where a particular piece was studied, the teacher began by discussing its content. He listened to the student's opinion and shared his reflections on the themes expressed in the piece. Only after this discussion did he begin to work with the student on specific tasks related to singing or conducting. Similarly, in the system of informal artistic education, Hryhorii Levchenko took a preparatory approach before allowing participants of the Ukrainian folk choir «Kalyna» to perform a song. The choir leader would prepare the participants emotionally to perceive the song's content. In particular, he would tell them about the historical period depicted in the piece and describe the personalities featured in the song.

Another significant priority in introducing a piece into the content of educational activities is conveying the subtleties of the artistic verbal form to the students. Hryhorii Levchenko often quoted specific lines from the song, emphasizing: «Just listen to the beauty!!! Only the Ukrainian people could have written this about a woman (nature, emotions)».



For Hryhorii Levchenko, the melody and the performance style in which each song should be performed were also crucial in the perception of Ukrainian folk songs by the students. Quite frequently, the conductor would analyze musical phrases, emphasizing their beauty, and would have students listen to pieces performed by the bearers of folkloric gems. Only when the choir participants' «eyes lit up with curiosity» would he begin working on each individual choral part, emphasizing the importance of understanding and conveying to the audience the meaning, artistic words, melody, authenticity, and more.

According to Hryhorii Levchenko, this approach yielded extraordinary results. His students, who received formal artistic education and enriched it with informal artistic education within the framework of the Ukrainian folk choir «Kalyna», remained devoted to Ukrainian song many years after graduating from the institute (university). Graduates who had the privilege of studying under Hryhorii Levchenko became not only music teachers but also leaders of folk groups, folk ensembles, and choirs at general secondary education institutions and cultural organizations, heads of various cultural centers, organizers of folk festivals and competitions, and more.

Considering this, and based on his many years of artistic and pedagogical experience, Hryhorii Levchenko was convinced that «the majority of young Ukrainians are capable of appreciating folk songs in all their grandeur» [8, p. 15]. However, the professor, fully aware of «the significant gaps in the aesthetic education of contemporary youth» [8, p. 15], was deeply concerned about the fate of artistic-pedagogical education based on the Ukrainian musical heritage of the Ukrainian people.

According to the researcher of Hryhorii Levchenko's professional path, choir participant Yuliia Komyshan, certain arguments for his concerns in the artistic-pedagogical activity of the artist can be identified [6, p. 116]. These concerns arise from several reasons. The first is the economic and, partly, political instability in the country, which negatively affects the preservation and popularization of Ukrainian folk art in general and folk song in particular. The second reason is the modern approach of some composers and artists (especially!) to the understanding, and consequently the arrangement/performance of folk samples. Hryhorii Levchenko emotionally, yet consciously, remarked: «...poor singers convey moods that are diametrically opposed to those embedded in the content of the work». In his opinion, folk music and verbal examples like «The Cossacks Have Whistled to Saddle Up», «A Cossack Rode Beyond the Danube», «The Cossacks Rode Home from the Don» are, to some extent, sorrowful, sad, filled with longing, and instructive. Therefore, singing them in a pathetically boisterous, elevated manner while dancing is entirely inappropriate, as it distorts their original meaning. Another important reason for concern is the professor's realization of existing issues in education, particularly in the aspect of artistic-aesthetic upbringing for schoolchildren and, later, students. As a result, poorly executed «arrangements» of folk songs «become popular among a portion of contemporary youth, who, from childhood, have not been instilled with a

love for folk songs and an understanding of the true values of folk art» [6, p. 117].

What is valuable for students and faculty members at institutions of higher pedagogical education is that Hryhorii Levchenko proposed ways to overcome the problem of inadequate exposure of children and youth to the finest examples of Ukrainian folk art. Yuliia Komyshan, in her dissertation, notes: «He hopes that his student will realize that the language of the 'song is the language of the heart' (from a greeting to friends from the Sant-Mariankirchen Association, Austria; the postcard is kept in H. Levchenko's archive), and that the heart must be preserved and constantly nourished. The professor is firmly convinced that folk songs have significant pedagogical value. They combine folk wisdom, love for the native culture, sacred sites, traditions, respect for historical memory, and a careful attitude toward the native nature and national treasures. They transmit experience, and a connection between generations is made. Due to their profound meaning and simplicity of sound, folk songs influence the formation of the qualities of a citizen-patriot: responsibility, dignity, awareness, duty, a sense of pride for one's country, and the perception of the national idea. Therefore, through folk song, an educational influence on the individual is achieved» [6, p. 117].

**Conclusions.** The study of Ukrainian folk song as an important component of formal and non-formal music-pedagogical education through the example of Hryhorii Levchenko's activities allows for several conclusions.

Ukrainian folk song in the teaching and creative work of Hryhorii Levchenko at V. H. Korolenko Poltava National Pedagogical University emerges as a powerful means of developing national consciousness, artistic taste, professional mastery, and spiritual growth among future music teachers.

The formal education of future teachers, which was provided by Hryhorii Levchenko as an innovative educator, encompassed the purposeful acquisition of students' knowledge of folk-song heritage within the framework of educational disciplines, including choral conducting, solo singing, and choral class, thereby contributing to the development of deep professional knowledge and skills.

Non-formal education, realized through the activities of the Ukrainian folk choir «Kalyna», enabled students to immerse themselves in the living tradition of folk song, grasp its artistic value and semantic depth, and participate in artistic projects and concert practice, facilitating the practical assimilation of folk culture.

The comprehensive approach to using Ukrainian folk song in Hryhorii Levchenko's pedagogical work serves as an example of the convergence of formal and informal artistic-pedagogical education, which deepens students' artistic competence and broadens their opportunities for creative self-realization. Hryhorii Levchenko's experience is of great significance for contemporary artistic-pedagogical practice: it demonstrates the effectiveness of a nationally oriented model for personality development, based on the reliance on the Ukrainian song tradition as a source of spiritual strength, moral values, and cultural continuity.

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