

## LVIV TRADITIONS OF HONORING MYKOLA LYSENKO: MUSES ARE NOT SILENT



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### **Lviv traditions of honoring Mykola Lysenko: Muses are not silent**

**Abstract.** Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912) is a leading figure of Ukrainian music, one of the most outstanding personalities. The work shows the history and features of his creative activity in Lviv. The basis for the foundation of classical music in Ukraine have been studied through his cultural-artistic development. Pedagogical, musicological, and conductor contributions of the composer have been discovered in the article.

Lysenko's constant connection with Lviv and Halychyna region is noted, where his artwork was extremely popular, and his personality was always honored through the holding of various ceremonial events.

**Keywords:** Mykola Lysenko, Ukrainian classical music development, musical professionalism, composer tradition, musical and public activity, jubilee honoring.

### **Tradițiile din Lvov de cinstire a lui Mykola Lysenko: Muzele nu tac**

**Rezumat.** Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912) este o figură importantă a muzicii ucrainene, una dintre cele mai remarcabile personalități. Lucrarea arată istoria și trăsăturile activității sale creatoare din Lvov. Bazele întemeierii muzicii clasice în Ucraina au fost studiate prin dezvoltarea sa cultural-artistică. În articol sunt descoperite contribuțiile pedagogice, muzicologice și dirijorale ale compozitorului. Se remarcă legătura constantă a lui Lysenko cu regiunea Lvov și Halicia, unde opera sa de artă a fost extrem de populară, iar personalitatea sa a fost întotdeauna onorată prin organizarea de diverse evenimente ceremoniale.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Mykola Lysenko, dezvoltarea muzicii clasice ucrainene, profesionalism muzical, tradiție compozitoare, activitate muzicală și publică, onorare jubiliară.

On March 22, 2022, we celebrated the 180th anniversary of the birth of Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912), a leading figure in Ukrainian music for all the time. In the history of Ukrainian national culture, Lysenko became the creator of the iconic examples in all major musical genres: opera, cantata and oratorio, vocal chamber, instrumental symphonic, piano and choral, including church music. Lysenko's work was not only a high artistic achievement, but it also became a source and catalyst from which modern Ukrainian music arose.

Lysenko's musical and public activity is no less significant. He created the basis for the foundation of musical education in Ukraine through his work as a pedagogue, musicologist and conductor. In his creative activity he worked for the fusion of folklore with professional music, in the public sphere, for the unification of Ukrainians of Great Ukraine and Halychyna region. Lysenko devoted his entire life and activity to his native people. Human, Citizen, and Artist assembled in his person an inseparable whole, a figure majestic in its simplicity.

Even during the artist's lifetime, Mykola Lysenko's universal creative and public activity was highly appreciated by his followers. Thus, a tradition of honoring the outstanding Master was created in Ukrainian society, when Lysenko days, along with the Shevchenko days, became crucial events in the cultural life of Ukrainians. This tradition of the Lysenko celebrations began in 1903, when all of Ukraine celebrated the 35th anniversary of the great musician's creative activity.

Celebrations were specifically solemn in Halychyna, with which the composer had made friendly creative and personal contacts since his student time. Festive concerts were held on December 7 and 8 in the *Lviv Philharmonic Society Hall*, with the presence of the Jubilee himself, who crossed especially for this the borders of the Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. During the two evening concerts, most of the composer's chamber, instrumental and vocal, works were performed with the participation of leading Lviv musicians, as well

as Lysenko himself, who played the piano. The culmination of the final concert was the performance of the mixed choir of the *Boyan Society*, numbering more than 300 singers, who with great enthusiasm and piety performed Lysenko's cantata *Rejoice oh Earth*. It was an admirable holiday of national culture, which in terms of scale had no equal in Ukraine from the beginning of the last century. Lysenko's journey to Lviv in 1903 was a turning point for the beginning of the process of professionalization of Ukrainian musical culture in Halychyna. From that time, the *Higher Institute of Music in Lviv* began to work under his patronage.

Less than a decade later, already famous Ukrainians such as musicians, writers, public figures from Halychyna crossed the borders of two empires for the last farewell prayer with their national musical genius. The death of Mykola Lysenko inspired Ukrainians to the first national mass demonstration. On November 7, 1912, almost 100,000 Ukrainians from all Ukrainian regions came to Kyiv with a glorious funeral procession, from the St. Volodymyr's Cathedral to the Baikove Cemetery to lead the outstanding composer on his last journey.

This farewell turned into a true manifestation of the national spirit, which united Ukrainians from two imperial states, Russian and Austro-Hungarian. In order for the tsarist police not to confiscate a priceless relic, the red cloth with which according to ancient Cossack tradition Lysenko's coffin was covered. The Lviv musical delegation took this memorable relic to Lviv for safe keeping at the *Higher Music Institute*. And it was quite natural that immediately after composer's death, the *Higher Music Institute in Lviv* was named after Mykola Lysenko. That is an affirmation of the basic world view and aesthetic beliefs on which himself built the national composer school and which are the basis of the concept of higher musical education in Lviv up to the present day.

A number of artistic anniversary evenings and concerts to mark the 25th anniversary of M. Lysenko's death took place in Lviv and Halychyna at the end of 1937. The main concert in

memory of Mykola Lysenko took place in Lviv at the *City Theater* on December 19, 1937. Among Lysenko's musical works performed at this concert is the *First Rhapsody* for piano performed by Halya Levytska, a series of vocal songs performed by Odarka Bandrivska (soprano) and Mykola Golynskiy (tenor). The *Lviv Boyan Mixed Choir* (conductor Ivan Okhrymovych) performed the best Lysenko choral works based on lyrics by Taras Shevchenko and the original cantata *In Eternal Memory of Kotliarevskiy*.

This concert showed not only the original musical heritage of the composer, but also emphasized deep and sincere pietism in the hearts of Halychyna regarding the figure of Lysenko. Ukrainian musicologists and critics Stanyslav Liudkevych, Vasyl Vytvytskyi, Nestor Nyzhankivskiy and Roman Savytskyi through their articles and reviews had reported the general cultural and national significance of this event in the Halychyna cultural life unanimous.

Already then, since the jubilee concert of December 1937, on the initiative of the *Union of Ukrainian Professional Musicians* in Lviv, the jubilee committee started work to prepare for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Lysenko's birthday in 1942. At their meetings held in 1938, the Board of the Union planned a number of artistic events for a worthy tribute to the classic of Ukrainian music. A special *Lysenko Jubilee Committee* was organized within the framework of the *Ukrainian Central Committee*, and its separate sections have been working intensively for a long time and preparing individual jubilee events.

Neither the establishment of the Soviet totalitarian regime in Halychyna from September 1939, nor the subsequent German occupation of Lviv in June 1941, became an obstacle to the preparation and holding of a real National Holiday of Ukrainian musical culture. From March 22, 1942, a number of grand events took place in occupied Lviv with the support and blessing of Metropolitan Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church Andrei Sheptytskyi to commemorate the 100th birthday of the Great National Composer.

Firstly, ahead of time, the Scientific and Publishing Section handed over for printing to the *Ukrainian Publishing House* in Lviv the popular monograph *Mykola Lysenko. On the hundredth anniversary of his birth, 1842–1942* by Viktor Andrievsky. This book is dedicated to the study of the life path and work of a prominent composer. According to the author himself, his aim was to present, albeit in a concise form, a more or less complete picture of Lysenko's musical life and work, and thereby help readers understand Lysenko's place and importance in Ukrainian culture. Very quickly, this unique edition, which is now a bibliographic rarity, became widespread and made a great contribution to the composer's cult in Ukrainian society.

The Jubilee Ceremonial Academy, dedicated to Mykola Lysenko, became the central musical event of these celebrations for the Ukrainian community of Lviv. These concerts were organized and held by the *Section of Concert Events* on April 24 and 26, 1942 in the Opera Theater Hall. In the concert program of both Academies, the best samples of all genres of his diverse work were performed, in particular, fragments of the opera *Christmas Night*, the symphonic and choral cantata *Rejoice, oh Earth*, a number of choral works (for mixed, male and female ensembles), chamber-instrumental works, works for piano and vocal works on the texts of Ukrainian poets.

The celebratory speech at the opening of the Music Academy was delivered by Dr Vasyl Vytvytskyi, who foremost noted the national and political significance of Lysenko in the evolution of our cultural revival, as well as Lysenko's influence on the development of new musical traditions in Ukraine, particularly in Halychyna. After all, it is a well-known fact that not only Kyiv composers of the beginning of the 20th century consider themselves the successors of Lysenko such as Kyrilo Stetsenko, Mykola Leontovych, Yakiv Stepovy, Oleksandr Koshyts. Also, the leading Lviv composers, Stanyslav Liudkevych, Filaret and Mykola Kolessa, Vasyl Barvinskyi, Nestor Nyzhankivskiy considered themselves representatives and successors of the *Lysenko composers school*, for whom the use

of folk melos in creativity remains a defining national element.

Among other important jubilee events, the Lysenko concerts at Lviv Radio deserve a high organizational and professional evaluation. Starting from March 11, 1942, during the entire jubilee year, Lviv Radio aired a series of concert broadcasts with performances of Lysenko's music by the best Lviv musicians. Among them, highly professional pianists Halyna Levytska and Roman Savytskyi, opera singers Mariia Sabat-Svirska (soprano) and Vasyl Tysiak (tenor), violinist Volodymyr Cisyk should be noted as the most active. The composer's daughter, concertmaster of the Lviv Opera, Mariiana Lysenko, also enthusiastically participated in the Lviv broadcasts. Now it looks absolutely phenomenal that under the German occupation, Ukrainian musicians could play on Lviv radio and thus popularize the work of our Classic in the occupied lands.

Also, among the important events of the Lysenko celebration was the resumption of the *Higher Music Institute named after Mykola Lysenko* (under the name of the *State Music School*), the director of which was Lviv composer, pianist and teacher Vasyl Barvinskyi. This event in February 1942 became extremely symbolic because the Institute resumed its activities in the same building where it functioned before the arrival of the Russian administration in 1939. And the founding of the Institute itself is closely related to the artistic events of 1903 when Lysenko himself came to Lviv and he was the main inspirer of the founding of the *Higher Music Institute in Lviv*.

As a kind of culmination on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mykola Lysenko, from July 31 to August 3, 1942, the *First Regional Competition of Halychyna Choirs* was held in Lviv. This highly reputable Competition organized by the *Institute of Folk Art* under the leadership of its director, an ardent choral singing enthusiast, priest Severyn Saprun. The Institute developed and coordinated the entire system of preparation for the Competition, and also organized local choir competi-

tions, in which singing societies, choral groups of cities and villages of Halychyna took part in reading rooms, churches and public houses. Also many professional musicians, public figures and simply Ukrainian patriots responded to his call, and more than 450 choral groups took part in the Competition. The final result of the hard work of the organizers, more than fifty conductors and many thousands of choir singers from all over Halychyna was a dignified and grand celebration of the 100th anniversary of Lysenko's birth and the confirmation of his choral heritage in the national treasury. Such a worthy tribute was a true manifestation and triumph of the indomitable Ukrainian spirit!

So, we can confidently state that the celebration of the centenary of Mykola Lysenko in Lviv in 1942 was a strong confirmation that under the conditions of German occupation, the name of Lysenko united Ukrainians as a nation! This celebration became a true manifestation of a worthy tribute to the national musical heritage. But, unfortunately, Lysenko's Lviv triumph did not last long, history continued its course and changed in another direction.

German occupiers under pressure from the Red Army retreated from Ukraine, and from August 1944, Lviv, like all of Ukraine, returned to the jurisdiction of the new Russian Empire called the Soviet Union. This new historical period for Ukrainian national culture, the leader of which was our "jubilee" Lysenko, was marked by great ideologisation and distortion of the development of the historical process. All national achievements in professional musical culture were silenced, a number of historical facts and materials were forbidden for any research. As a result, certain genres were silenced in Lysenko's work, such as church music and works of national patriotic orientation, and instead the attachment exclusively to folklore sources was exaggerated, and, especially, there was an unreasonable emphasis on connections and dependence on fraternal Russian culture.

The revival of Lysenko celebrations in Lviv, as in the whole of Ukraine, became possible after the collapse of the Soviet Union and

the final disappearance of all Soviet ideological prohibitions. In the first year of Ukraine's independence, in March 1992, Lviv once again grandiosely held a phenomenally artistic festival under the telling name *Lysenko Festival in Lviv*, dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the birth of the luminary of Ukrainian music. Just like 90 years ago, back in 1903, the organizers of these anniversary events set themselves the ambitious task of practically restoring and fully presenting the multi-genre work of Mykola Lysenko. It is worth noting that the organizer of the Lysenko Festival in Lviv was the *Lviv Composers Union*, an organization that in 1991 became the legal successor of the previous union of Lviv musicians, composers and performers, the *Union of Ukrainian Professional Musicians in Lviv*, which was active in Lviv in 1934–1939.

The full week of all artistic events of the Festival, from the first to the eighth of March 1992, covered more than 10 artistic events that took place in the *Lyudkevych Concert Hall* of the *Lviv National Philharmonic*, *Lviv Conservatory Concert Hall*, *Zankovetska Drama Theater*, *Lviv National Opera Theater*, *Dominican Cathedral* and *National Museum in Lviv*. The leading musical performers of Ukraine took part in these concerts, such as *Lviv Philharmonic Symphonic Orchestra*, *Lviv Conservatory Opera Studio Theater*, *Gloria Lviv Chamber Choir*, *Revutskyi Male Choir* from Kyiv, *Trembita State Choir Chapel*, *Kyiv Conservatory Student Choir*, *Children Opera Theater* from Kolomyia, *Svitylen Youth and Students Choir* from Drohobych, *Dudaryk Male Choir Chapel*. Many prominent Ukrainian musicians had the honor of performing in Lviv during these celebrations such as conductors Pavlo Muravskyi, Mykola Kolessa, Ivan Yuziuk, Mykola Katsal, Bohdan Dashak, Bohdan Antkiv, Mykola Kulyk, Yaroslav Hnatovskyi and Mykola Kovalchuk; leading Ukrainian opera singers Valeriy Buymister, Liudmyla Davymuka, Mariia Bayko, Stepan Stepan, Kornelii Siatetskyi, Volodymyr Ihnatenko, Nataliia Datsko, Stepan Piatnychko, Nataliia Svoboda, Oleksandr Hromysh, Svitlana Mamchur, Nataliia Romaniuk and famous instrumentalists such

as Mariia Krushelnytska, Lidiia Shutko, Etela Chupryk, Myroslav Drahan, Oksana Rapita.

It is obvious that the organizers of the Lysenko Festival in Lviv managed to attract high-quality musicians and, accordingly, to perform most of the Jubilee's works at a high professional level with unique individual interpretations. First of all, this concerns the opera repertoire, because were performed many fragments of most of Lysenko's operas, some of them for the first time. These are such operas as *Eneida*, *The Drowned Maiden*, *Christmas Night*, *Nocturne*. The concert performances of the children's folk-operas *Pan Kotskyi (Mister Cat)* and *Koza-Dereza (Pretty Goat)* were enthusiastically received by the young audience. The cantata-oratorio genre was represented by the performance of cantatas based on the poetry of Taras Shevchenko *The Rapids are Raging* and *Rejoice, oh Earth*. Lysenko's *Youth Symphony* was performed in Lviv for the first time since it was written, that masterfully reconstructed and edited by the leading modern Ukrainian composer Myroslav Skoryk, especially for this anniversary. Most chamber-instrumental works and songs to the poetry of Lesia Ukrainka, Ivan Franko, Oleksandr Oles, Taras Shevchenko and others sounded in an elegant salon atmosphere of *Lysenko's Lounge*.

Separate events that only emphasized the significance and importance of holding such a grandiose scale of Festival was the *Scientific and Theoretical Conference* dedicated to the figure of Mykola Lysenko and his significance for Ukrainian culture. And also the exposition in the *National Museum* under the telling name *Lysenko and Halychyna* which was prepared and commented by the staff of the *Lysenko memorial house-museum* in Kyiv, Roksana Skorulska and Iryna Shcherbanyuk.

And finally, and this is probably the most important thing, after almost a century of oblivion, church music returned to performing practice. The beginning of anniversary celebrations on the first of March was celebrated with a Solemn Liturgy in the oldest religious building of Lviv, a model of ancient Ukrainian architecture

of the 13th century, the Church of Saint Nicholas. For the first time in Ukraine, the *Memorial Service* in memory of Lysenko of the prominent Ukrainian composer and church figure Priest Kyrylo Stetsenko was performed. This *Memorial Service* was created in 1912 under the impression of the unexpected death of Mykola Lysenko and is dedicated to his bright memory. This majestic work belongs to the most spiritual pages of Ukrainian church music and remains in the repertoire of leading Choirs to this day.

Also, for the first time in Lviv, all the famous church choral works of Lysenko, written by him in the early 1900s, were presented by *Gloria Chamber Choir*. Lysenko's work in the field of church music during this period was not accidental, it was precisely at the beginning of the 20th century the efforts of the intelligentsia to Ukrainize church life under the conditions of the Russian tsarist empire intensifying, which ended in 1921 with the creation of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. It is important that not only Lysenko took an active part in this process, but also his best students and followers, Kyrylo Stetsenko and Oleksandr Koshyts.

The works performed at this historic concert represented all of Lysenko's well-known legacy in the field of sacred music. Among the best compositions, we should mention Lysenko's elaboration of the ancient kondak *Christmas Psalm*. This musical masterpiece is saturated with the archaic color of the melody and the colors of the combination of natural modes and plaintive inflexions, reminiscent of the plasticity of ancient church melodies. The original church composition is the *Cherubim Song*, which was written as a strict canonical model of this genre, sustained in the spirit of sincere deep prayer. A choral concert *Whither Shall I Go From thy Spirit* can also be a successful masterpiece in which the composer successfully combines the technique of a classical concert in combination with ancient chants of Ukrainian church singing. Lysenko's harmonization of the melody of the church cant *Cross Tree* (from the XVII century) on Crucifixion of Christ is extremely successful and moving, sustained in the

spirit of free-style polyphonization with the use of quasi-baroque sound chord effects. And the final piece of this concert with Lysenko's sacred music was brilliant in its simplicity and sincerity the children's prayer to the text of Oleksandr Konyskyi, *The Only and Magnificent God*, became the Ukrainian Spiritual Hymn shortly after it was written and gained great popularity in all parts of Ukraine.

Obviously, it became extremely symbolic, but 10 years after the performance of this sacred music program by Lysenko, already on the 160th anniversary of the composer's birthday in 2002, the *Gloria Chamber Choir* recorded and released a compact disc with all Lysenko's sacred compositions under the telling name *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?*

The history of Lysenko celebrations from its beginning and origins has come to real-time. On March 22, 2022, we celebrated the 180th anniversary of the birth of the luminary of Ukrainian music, Mykola Lysenko, in the center of our old City, Leopold. Probably, this celebration was special. Not only because it happened very notably and perceptibly but not so magnificently as in all previous times. After all, there is a brutal war in Ukraine, a fierce struggle with the Russian aggressor, a struggle for Death, but for Life! Now we are fighting, and we continue to fight for our Freedom, which they want to enslave, which they want to destroy.

Together with us in this struggle, the name of Jubilee, our Classic, Genius Mykola Lysenko is present. And this year's anniversary concert on Rynok Square in Lviv took place to the sounds of air raids, when enemy rockets exploded in the sky over Kyiv and Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Mariupol, Sumy and Kherson, just over our one Ukraine, sung by Lysenko and his immortal Muse. With this year's Lysenko anniversary concert, which took place in the midst of the war, the Lviv National Philharmonic started concert series "Ukraine-2022. Muses Are Not Silent", which continues to this day during the Russian military aggression. Broadcasting of the concerts will become a platform for the uniting

of the Ukrainian music community, as many musicians participating in these concert programs have become internally displaced people and have found shelter in Lviv. And this first concert, dedicated to Mykola Lysenko in connection with the 180th anniversary, resounded as a symbol of our indomitability. After all, today we are fighting, uniting and praising our dear Art Creator! And we pray with Lysenko's immortal *Prayer for Ukraine*:

*Lord, oh the Great and Almighty,  
Protect our beloved Ukraine,  
Bless her with freedom and light  
Of your holy rays.*

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