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# The Subject of *Holodomor* in the Ukrainian Artistic Space: Historical Projections of the Art of Contemporary Composers

Olha Vasylenko, Liliia Mudretska

*Glier Kyiv Municipal Academy of Music*

## ABSTRACT

The Great Famine (*Holodomor*) is man-made famine that convulsed the Soviet republic of Ukraine in the 1930s. Since 2006, the *Holodomor* has been recognized as a genocide of the Ukrainian people carried out by the Soviet government. The article aims to highlight specific historical, cultural and social conditions that contributed to the dynamics of the *Holodomor* theme in music. It focuses especially on the musical compositions of this historical tragedy performed at the Kyiv Music Fest Competition. We can observe the linguistic and musical semantics of the opus of tragic imagery, along with the ethnic motifs of the Ukrainian cultural space, including musical rhetorical figures of the Baroque period, Christian symbolism of suffering and salvation, infernal stylistics.

**Keywords:** Ukrainian composers, tragic imagery, music dramaturgy, commemorative festivals

## IZVLEČEK

Velika lakota (*holodomor*) je eno izmed temnih poglavij ukrajinske zgodovine 30. let 20. stoletja. Številne države so *holodomor* uradno priznale kot genocid sovjetske vlade nad ukrajinskim narodom. Cilj članka je opredeliti določene zgodovinske, kulturne in družbene pogoje, ki so prispevali k dinamiki teme *holodomorja* v glasbi. Poseben poudarek velja skladbam na to temo, ki so bile prvič izvedene na posebnem skladateljskem natečaju Kijevskega glasbenega festivala. Opazna je jezikovna in glasbena semantika opusa tragičnih podob, skupaj z narodnimi motivi iz ukrajinskega kulturnega prostora, ki vključuje glasbene retorične figure iz baroka, krščansko simboliko trpljenja in odrešenja ter motivika pekla.

**Ključne besede:** ukrajinski skladatelji, tragične podobe, glasbena dramaturgija, spominski festivali

## Introduction

The *Holodomor* or Great Famine is a genocide of the Ukrainian people. The term “Holodomor” emphasizes the specially created conditions and deliberate aspects of the starvation, such as isolation and the impossibility of receiving external aid from other countries, as well as the confiscation of all food. The murder of millions of Ukrainians by man-made famine was the result of deliberately destructive socio-economic policies of totalitarian power over the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1931–1933.

In the extensive scientific research, the subject of Holodomor has been dealt with in detail only in terms of historical and social studies. In historical perspective, we point to the so-called canonical discourse of Holodomor by Stanislav Kulchytsky.<sup>1</sup> It is based on the basic concepts of communist terror, formed by scholars James Mace and Robert Conquest. In the terms of social analysis, Raphael Lemkin’s theory of the genocide’s impact on the integrity of traditional culture as a nation’s mental foundation is of considerable importance. He argued that the Soviet totalitarian system aimed at willingly starving the Ukrainian people by eradicating the traditional foundations of the oppressed culture and imposing a national culture of oppressors.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that these ideas dominate in the compositions’ conceptions of the composers on the subject of Holodomor.

The concept of carrying out genocide against a nation by deliberately creating unfavourable living conditions (famine) was formulated by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948. The Article of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide from 9 December 1948, provides the basis for the introduction of the term Holodomor into scientific and social sphere. In the thirties of the twentieth century, British journalist Gareth Jones, who visited Soviet Ukraine three times during the “Great Famine,” first used it in the Western press.<sup>3</sup> Raphael Lemkin, the author of the above-mentioned Convention, first used this term in legal documents in 1953, to define it as a crime of a totalitarian state. The murder of millions of Ukrainians by a man-made famine was the result of a deliberately destructive socio-economic policy of totalitarian power over the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1931–1933.

In Soviet times, the true cause of artificial hunger was deliberately hidden from society and distorted in historical scientific research. As an artistic subject, the topic of Holodomor was heavily censored, surviving in literary and musical

1 Stanislav Kulchytsky, “*Holodomor* of 1932–33: How and Why?” *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015): 93–116.

2 Serbyn Roman, “Lemkin on the Ukrainian Genocide,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 7 (2009): 123–130.

3 Gareth Jones, “The Great Famine-Genocide in Soviet Ukraine (Holodomor),” *The Financial Times*, April 13, 1933, accessed November 30, 2021, <http://www.artukraine.com/famineart/jones4.htm>.

folk traditions.<sup>4</sup> It became a subject of discussion in the Soviet-Ukrainian immigrant circles and works of dissident writers. In the Independence era, the topic was actualized and revealed in the public consciousness, inspiring Ukrainian writers, painters, movie and theatre directors, and composers to explore and creatively interpret the theme of Holodomor.

The literary works of Vasylyl Barka, Oles Honchar, Yevhen Gutsalo, Anatoly Dimarov, Vasily Zakharchenko, Ivan Onishchenko, Todos Osmachka, Mykola Ponedilok, Mykhaïlo Potupeyko, Ulas Samchuk, Ivan Stadniuk, Mikhail Stelmakh, Vasil Trubai, and Vasil Chaplenko referred to the important topic of the “Great Famine” of 1932–1933. In the twentieth century, painting the Holodomor theme has been presented in the work of such distinguished Ukrainian masters as painter and sculptor Valery Franchuk, graphic artist George Shanaev, monumental painter and graphic designer Ohrym Kravchenko, graphic artist Mykola Hnatchenko, artist and theatre decorator Victor Tsymbal, painter Nina Marchenko, lyre-, kobza- and bandura-player Ivan Novobranets, folk painter Ivan Marchuk, and many others.

In cinematography of the twentieth century, the theme of Holodomor has been presented in many talented works. Among them are the documentaries *33<sup>rd</sup>, Eyewitness Testimony* (1989, directed by Mykola Loktionov-Stezenko), *Under the Sign of Trouble* (1990, directed by Konstantin Krainyi), *The Big Break* (1993, directed by Sergei Lysenko), and *Time of Darkness* (2003, directed by Serhiy Dudka), a feature film *Hunger 33* (1991, directed by Oles Yanchuk), a movie-requiem *Pieta* (1993, directed by Mykola Mashchenko), and a drama *The Guide* (2014, directed by Oles Sanin). In modern moviemaking, the topic of man-made hunger in Ukraine stays relevant, gaining worldwide resonance. The 2019 feature film *Mr. Jones* by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland tells the story of Gareth Jones, a Welsh journalist who travels to the Soviet Union in 1933 and uncovers the terrifying truth about the Holodomor. According to UK-based critic Wendy Ide, the arrival of the film was a high-profile event in world cinema, and the biographical thriller has been selected to compete for the Golden Bear prize at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival.<sup>5</sup>

Among the theatrical dramas dedicated to the topic is the production by the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company of the play *The Grain Store* by the Ukrainian writer Natalia Vorozhbit. Many Holodomor-themed musical compositions have had successful world premieres. They were written by many outstanding modern Ukrainian composers, including Virko Baley, Valentyn Bibik, Levko Kolodub, Gennady Lyashenko, Lesya Dychko, Gennady Sashko, Yuri Lanyuk,

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4 Tetiana Kononchuk, *Zatemnennya ukraïnyns'koho sontsya, abo Trahediya holodomoru 1932–1933 rokiv u fól'klori Ukraïny* (Kyiv: Tvim inter, 1998).

5 Wendy Ide, “Mr Jones Review – Gripping Stalin-era Thriller with James Norton,” *The Guardian*, February 10, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/feb/09/mr-jones-james-norton-stalin-thriller>.

Oleg Kiva, Yevhen Stankovych, Myroslav Skoryk, Ivan Karabyts, Igor Shcherbakov, Oleksandr Yakovchuk, Bohdana Frolyak, Viktor Stepurko, and many others. Their compositions on the tragic theme of an artificial famine as a result of the crime of a totalitarian state attract the attention of researchers and art critics.

## Literature Review

The Holodomor subject in the works of Ukrainian art is an extremely important topic for understanding the processes in the World culture of the twentieth century. The tragic theme of artificial hunger is widely represented in art but has not been systematically studied. Here are just a few important articles about different types of art that depict the Holodomor.

Film critic V. Syvachuk examines the socio-cultural aspects of Holodomor theme interpretation in documentary and fiction cinematography from different angles: as an artistic embodiment of a civic position; as a dynamic process of the search for historical truth; and as an artistic reflection of the epic tragedy of the Ukrainian people.<sup>6</sup> The importance of his research lies in the observation of the peculiarities of the artistic method, drama, and cinematographs. D. Darewych,<sup>7</sup> an art critic, explores the problem of Holodomor in the paintings of Kazimir Malevich and other Ukrainian artists. Philologists have thoroughly studied various artistic aspects in literary works on the Holodomor theme. An exemplary study is, for example, the monograph by N. Tymoshchuk.<sup>8</sup>

So far, there have been no scientific studies in Ukrainian musicology dedicated to the history of the implementation of Holodomor theme in music. There are only numerous works of scholars on individual pieces of music. We will note valuable nonfictional materials by L. Oliinyk<sup>9</sup> and special scientific articles by Ukrainian musicologists between the years 1993–2020. In 1993, Halyna Stepanchenko analyses the composers competition of Kyiv Music Fest 1992.<sup>10</sup> In 2003, Olha Vilchynska analyses the history of creation, features of the genre and dramaturgy of Ivan Karabyts' cantata *Prayer of Kateryna*.<sup>11</sup> In 2012, Olha Kramarenko analyses *A Funeral for the Dead from Hun-*

6 Vira Syvachuk, "Vidobrazhennya trahediyi *Holodomoru* v suchasnomu ukraïns'komu kinematohrafi," *Naukovyi visnyk Kyïvs'koho natsionalnogo universytetu teatru, kino i telebachennia imeni I. K. Karpenka-Karob* 15 (2014): 99–105.

7 Daria Darewych, "Images and Evocations of the Famine-Genocide in Ukrainian Art," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 47, no. 3 (2003): 345–373.

8 Nataliia Tymoshchuk, "Antytotalitarnyy pafos ukraïns'koyi prozy XX stolittya: Problema Holodomoru," *Aktualni problemy slovianskoi filologii. Seriya: Linhvistyka i literaturoznavstvo* 9 (2004): 417–424.

9 Lesia Oliinyk, *Muzyka ukraïns'kykh kompozytoriv Pamiati Holodomoru*, broadcast on December 5, 2008 on Radio Svoboda.

10 Halyna Stepanchenko, "Trahichni akordy Rekvieimu," *Narodna tvorchist ta etnografiia* 5–6 (1993): 243–245.

11 Olha Vilchynska, "Ivan Karabyts. *Molytva Kateryny*: Istoriia stvorennia, osoblyvosti zhanru ta

ger by Yevhen Stankovych, the concert, “A Dream” by Igor Shcherbakov, and *Stabat Mater* by Yuri Lanyuk.<sup>12</sup> In 2013, Hanna Karas analysed Virko Baley’s opera *Red Earth: Hunger*.<sup>13</sup> In 2013, Zoya Lavrova examined the tragic imagery of the oratorio about Yuri Lanyuk’s Holodomor *Skorbna maty (The Sorrowful Mother)*.<sup>14</sup> In 2013, Olha Kushniruk analysed Oleksandr Yakovchuk’s symphonies in the context of postmodernism of Ukrainian music culture.<sup>15</sup> In 2015, Kateryna Babkina examines the dramaturgy and semantic concept of the Spiritual Requiem-Concert “A Dream” by Igor. V. Shcherbakov.<sup>16</sup> In 2020–2021, Olha Vasylenko studied commemorative tradition<sup>17</sup> and main compositions among which are *Stabat Mater* by Anatoly Haydenko and Gennady Sasko’s choral concert of 1993 *Duma about 1933* for mixed choirs and soloists is addressed through the stylistics of the folk *duma* genre.<sup>18</sup>

Our article aims to highlight specific social and historical and cultural conditions that contributed to the dynamics of Holodomor theme in music. Particular emphasis is placed on illuminating the ways of integrating this theme into the artistic space by the forces of the world Ukrainian community.

## Socio-cultural Context

In the given perspective, it is interesting to consider the socio-cultural context of Ukrainian composers’ creativity of the late twentieth century. The emergence of a subject which was extremely difficult for the musical embodiment – the subject of Holodomor – in the works of Ukrainian composers was initiated by the activities of the diaspora representatives. Thus, the formation of the renowned academic festival Kyiv Music Fest is linked to the creative drives of American Ukrainian activists Virko Baley and the family of Marian and

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dramaturhiia,” *Naukovyi visnyk natsionalnoi muzychnoi akademii im. Chaikovskoho* 31 (2003): 162–166.

- 12 Olha Kramarenko, “Tema Holodomoru u vokalno-khorovii tvorchosti suchasnykh ukrainskykh kompozytoriv,” *Mystetstvoznavchi zapysky* 22 (2012): 92–97.
- 13 Hanna Karas, “Tema Holodomoru 1932–1933 rokov v Ukraini v konteksti muzyky postmodernu: Na prykladi opery Virko Baleia,” *Kultura i suchasnist: Naukovyi almanakh* 2 (2013): 102–107.
- 14 Zoya Lavrova, “Dramaturhiya oratoriyi Y. Lanyuka *Skorbna maty*,” *Kyivske muzykoznavstvo: Kulturolohiia ta mystetstvoznavstvo* 47 (2013): 161–170.
- 15 Olha Kushniruk, “Symfonicnyi dorobok O. Yakovchuka v postmodernomu konteksti ukrainskoi muzychnoi kultury,” *Visnyk Natsionalnoi akademii kerivnykh kadrov kultury i mystetstv* 4 (2013): 156–160.
- 16 Kateryna Babkina, “Duhovnyj koncert-rekviem ‘Son’ I. V. Shcherbakova: Dramaturgiya i semanticheskaya koncepciya,” *Naukovyi visnyk natsionalnoi muzychnoi akademii im. Chaikovskoho* 116 (2015): 44–51.
- 17 Olha Vasylenko, “Diyal’nist’ myttsiv diaspory v aspekti vprovadzhennya temy *Holodomoru* u muzyku suchasnykh ukrayins’kykh kompozytoriv,” *Art Museum: Past and Present; Collection of Scientific Articles* 6 (2020–2021): 4–13.
- 18 Olha Vasylenko, “Tema Holodomoru u khorovykh tvorakh ukrainskykh kompozytoriv XX–XXI stolit,” in *Culturology and Art History: Points of Contact and Prospects for Development; Ca’ Foscari, University of Venice, Italy, November 27–28, 2020, Conference Proceedings* (Venice: Baltija Publishing, 2020), 204–208, <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-004-9-122>.

Ivanna Kots. A New York University graduate, Marian Kots was born and died in Lviv, but lived most of his life outside the territory of his native Ukraine. As the Head of the Association of Holodomor Researchers, he did everything possible to reveal the terrible historical facts of the Great Famine, hidden by the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> Marian Kots has funded a considerable number of scientific and popular science projects devoted to the history of Ukraine. Thousands of memories of Holodomor were collected by the activists of the Association of Holodomor Researchers in Ukraine during the nineteen years of its existence. The composers competition with works on the subject of Holodomor, within the framework of the Kyiv Music Fest named after Ivanna and Marian Kots was first held on the initiative of its sponsors. According to Marianna Kopytsia-Karabyts,<sup>20</sup> at that time the festival was a large-scale musical action that actually performed the creative tasks of the painfully dying official Union of Composers of Ukraine.

Since 1990, the festival has started a large-scale action presentation of the achievements of contemporary Ukrainian music of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. The first Kyiv Music Fest was initiated with the creative and organizational support of the prominent American musician Virko Baley. The son of a well-known public figure, publicist, political scientist, and writer Peter Baley was born in the town of Radekhiv Lviv region. Subsequently, in 1949, Virko emigrated to America. For the first time, Baley performed music of prominent Ukrainians as a conductor in the United States. Promoting creativity of V. Sylvestrov, L. Grabovsky, M. Skoryk, E. Stankovych, I. Karabyts, V. Zagortsev and others is his outstanding contribution to the native culture. Oksana Harmel, a scholar, points out:

*In V. Baley's compositions one can find clear examples of works in which he turned to the sharply dramatic topics that constitute the traumatic zones of Ukrainian history, the traumas of cultural memory – this is the chamber opera Hunger (Hunger, 1985, 1995–97, 2011–13) on the libretto of the poet Bohdan Boychuk (1927–2017), in which the tragedy of nation is conveyed as a deeply lived personal drama.*<sup>21</sup>

In the 1990s, the paths of the families of Kots, Virko Baley and Ivan Karabyts intersected in Kyiv, and this fact directly influenced the integration of Holodomor theme into the music of prominent Ukrainian composers.

19 Oleksandra Veselova, "Viddanist Ukraini: Trudy i dni Mariana Kotsia," *Problemy istorii Ukrainy: Fakty, sudzhennia, poshuky* 20 (2011): 325–334.

20 "Materialy, Prohramy, Istoriia," in *Mizhnarodnyi muzychnyi festyval 'Kyiv Miuzyk Fest' – epokha v istorii*, ed. Marianna Kopytsia-Karabyts (Kyiv: Tsentrinform, 2004).

21 Oksana Harmel, "Fenomen diaspori v aspekti pamiaty kultury (na prykladi tvorchosti Virka Baleia)," *Naukovyi visnyk natsionalnoi muzychnoi akademii im. Chaikovskoho* 121 (2018): 13.

## **Implementation of the Holodomor Theme into the Music of Ukrainian Composers**

Music festivals of various composers and masters of the performing arts associated with the Holodomor regularly begin in large cities of Ukraine, primarily in Lviv and Kiev with the support of philanthropists from the diaspora. In 1992, the third Kyiv Music Fest competition for composers was directed by its organizers and sponsors to cover the Holodomor theme in music in Kiev. Ivanna and Marian Kots had initiated a musical panorama in memory on the sixtieth anniversary of tragedy in Lviv. Then the music of Lviv composers Myroslav Skoryk, Viktor Kaminsky and Yury Lanyuk was presented.

Thus, with the support of diaspora figures, the festivals focused on the introduction of the subject of Holodomor into musical compositions. These tragic topics have played a special role in consolidating the nation and improving the moral climate of the Ukrainian intellectual elite.

The first competition was held from 3rd to 10th October 1992, and was commissioned by the Association of Researchers of Holodomor Genocide in 1932–1933. That determined the subject of the academic compositions written for the competition – the Holodomor. The American composer Virko Baley was appointed as the coordinator. An Ukrainian jury, headed by the Odessa composer Oleksandr Krasatov, evaluated the works of the first round. In the second round, the jury was international: Theodor Kuchar (Australia), Walter Zimmerman (Germany), Olgerd Pisarenko (Poland), Lovell Lieberman (USA), Miroslav Skoryk (Ukraine). Twenty compositions were selected from the second round, including: *Spectrum* by John Lennon (USA), Volodymyr Runchak's *Con mesto sereno, Pro memoria* by Gennady Lyashenko, *Scorched Mallow* by Galina Ovcharenko, *Threnody* by Zbigniew Baginski (Poland), and *Crying and Prayer* by Valentyn Bibik. Zbigniew Baginski won the third prize, Valentyn Bibik the second, and the first prize was not awarded at all.

## **The Theme of Holodomor in the Repertoire of the First Concerts of Kyiv Music Fest in the 1990s**

The historical truth of the twentieth-century famine tragedies already had a certain tradition of artistic interpretation, such as in the Requiems or commemorative works of the composers of the 1920s Mykola Leontovych, Kiril Stetsenko, dedicated to the victims of the First Famine of 1921–22. In the second half of the twentieth century, there was Kyiv Music Fest by Ivan Karabyts. The tragic events of the Second (Artificial) Famine of the year 1933, even in the years of censorship, were covered in the Orchestra Concerto no. 3 “Lamentation”. The composition was performed twice – at the first (1990) and the second Kyiv Music Fest (1991). The appeal in symphonic music to *lamentoso*



intonations as a sign of the tragic in music is conditioned by the composer's desire to comprehend the folklore genre of lamentation as a common musical symbol of the dramatic era of Ukrainian history. This approach has established a new way of grasping the genre of crying in contemporary symphonic composition.

### **Principles of Interpretation of the Theme of Holodomor in the Works of Ivan Karabyts**

At the Third Kyiv Music Fest (1992), Ivan Karabyts presented the cantata *Prayer of Kateryna* for a reader, children's choir, and a large symphony orchestra on Kateryna Motrych's poems. At its premiere, the cantata suffered an unfortunate performance due to the conflict of performers (orchestra director and choir director). Therefore it was only performed at the festival concert and was not nominated as a competition piece. In three parts of the cantata the images of death, moral and spiritual catastrophe of Holodomor, in particular the tragedy of cannibalism, are revealed with incredible power. The author entrusts the choir party to children. It is the image of the child which, for the composer, personifies purity and innocence of the Ukrainian people. A striking force in music is the juxtaposition of two worlds: "Ukraine on earth" and "Ukraine in heaven." The first image depicts the tragic realities of a devastated country. Here the chaos of orchestral aleatoric, amplified by the choral glissando, is realized: the slipping of the sounds is like falling into the abyss. The score's powerful autonomous orchestral and vocal layers are unified by an authentic folklore modal organization. The double harmonic minor is associated with Ukrainian ethnic music, it is the main key in the composer Ivan Karabyts' system of thought. The process of imitation of holding the melody of the child's prayer request makes the development more dynamic. Of great importance for music is the symbolism of the theme of the cross, which acquires particular infernal expressiveness in the low register of various musical instruments. There is an impression of moaning, crying, and tension. The culmination of this imaginative sphere is a poignant account of the infanticide and madness of a peasant woman called Hanna, in whose personal destiny the composer sees more profound analogies: "And blind with grief, bruised, gray, half-blissful, She stood, propped up the sky with her torture, glowingly looking around, Mother Ukraine, crucified on a giant cross."<sup>22</sup>

The second musical image that emerges from the lyrics of Kateryna Motrych and is reflected in the music is a kind of Paradise, is an image of a happy Heaven Ukraine. The souls of the children turned into cranes, flew into

22 Ivan Karabyts, *Molytva Kateryny*, autograph score (National Library of Ukraine, Natsionalna biblioteka Ukrainy imeni V. I. Vernadskoho, Muzychnyi fond no. 1, opys 1, odynytsia kolektsii 517, 1992), 32.



the sky, and became the stars of the Milky Way. White shadows from Heaven Ukraine sit down to the funeral supper to mourn and sing the unburied, as Earth Ukraine has turned into a solid grave. Orchestral music is lit up, pastoral singing is concentrated in high register. The final mourning episode in the sound of the brass quartet is perceived as singing at a memorial service for the starving dead. After the last words of the reader, the music dissolves in the air (the composer again resorts to aleatoric music).

### **Valentyn Bibik's Diptych *Cry and Prayer for Symphony Orchestra***

Within the framework of the mentioned competition, the work of the prominent Kharkov citizen Valentyn Bibik (1940–2003) was presented, and he received the second prize (the first prize was not awarded). An author of eleven symphonies and an extraordinary personality of Ukrainian music named his composition in memory of Holodomor: *Cry and Prayer for the Symphony Orchestra* (1992, op. 89). The *lamentoso* intonation of the silent lament consolidates the melody-independent instrumental layers and unfolds during the first part of the symphonic diptych, being the meaningful embryo of all melody lines of woodwinds. The instrumental crying reaches its dynamic climax – the peak of emotional tension, the roar, the cry and the tears. The composer counterbalances this tragic break with the acoustic signs of the funeral service (bells are heard in the orchestra, an allusion to the theme of brass instruments playing a melody from the funeral mass of the Orthodox Christians *Rest with the Saints*). The second part of the diptych – “Prayer” – uses genre signs of psalmody, recitation, and instrumental imitation of choral singing, which are successfully reproduced in the instrumental layer of the composition.

### **The Theme of Holodomor in the Choral Concerts by Gennady Sasko and Larisa Donnik**

The history of Holodomor of the 1930s has been reflected in other large-scale compositions performed at the Kyiv Music Fest in different years. The theme of Holodomor in Gennady Sasko's choral concert of 1993 (*Duma about 1933* for mixed choirs and soloists) is addressed through the stylistics of the folk *duma* genre. *Dumas* and historical songs were written and sung in the cities of Ukraine by blind lyricists and *kobzars*. Blind folk singers and epic storyteller *kobzars* are the narrators of Ukrainian epic. They play the *kobza* – an ancient lute, a string plucking instrument. There is a series of documentary evidence of the persecution of *duma* performers about the dead from starvation by a violent death in the years 1932 and 1933. All Ukraine knew about the destruction of hundreds of *kobzars* who wrote and sang the horrors of the First Holodomor of the 1920s. The *kobzars* were forcibly taken to the “congress” in Kharkiv and shot, and their musical instruments were destroyed.

The brave singers of the historical tragedies of the Stalinist regime are reflected in the contemporary music on the Holodomor. It is worth mentioning the musical composition by the Kharkiv citizen Larisa Donnik *Little Slobid Poems*, the second part of which is entitled: “On the Dedication of the Kobzars Executed in Kharkiv Oblast in 1929.” The allusive title of Sasko’s choral concert thus appeals to a well-known fact of history: the violent extermination of folk singers. In Gennady Sasko’s choral concerto the style of the epic genre of Ukrainian music was used: choral instrumental background for the epic narrative, the music is made with the use of crying vocal improvisations in the style of a lamento. Mykola Tkach is the author of a poetic text. Poetic text of Gennada Sasko’ choir concert is full of symbols. The image of a black hook in the sky, typical of the folk *duma*, symbolizes the Soviet invasion. It is a sign of distress, a sinister symbol of war, famine, and death, and particular the destruction of the kobza culture of Ukraine. Gennady Sasko’s choir also sounds in the traditions of Ukraine’s funeral singing – memorial services for the executed kobzars. The music synthesizes the intonation of a memorial church prayer (baritone solo) with the stylistics of a kobzar virtuoso instrumental sound and a bourdon in the bass layer of the score (imitating the virtuoso part of the choir). The peculiar *Duma-Requiem* for those killed in the Holodomor ends with an allusion to the funeral march from Sonata No. 2 by Frederic Chopin, voiced by Mykola Tkach: “Disturb the memory! Revive up memory with words with the word!”

### **Theme of Holodomor in a Spiritual Concert-Requiem “A Dream” by Igor Shcherbakov**

The subject of Holodomor is decided in the contemporary musical stylistics of large-scale instrumental and choral works of the early twenty-first century in modern concert programs of Kyiv Music Fest. The spiritual Concert-Requiem “A Dream” for a tenor, reader, children’s and mixed choirs, a large symphony orchestra and an organ by Igor Shcherbakov was written in 2008 and performed at the 21<sup>st</sup> International Music Festival Kyiv Music Fest. The composer is himself involved in the writing of the libretto. He combines the Latin text of the Requiem with the poetry of his contemporary Ukrainian poet Yuriy Plaksyuk – a contemporary witness to the terrible days of the Holodomor. Following Britten’s example, the librettist-composer inserts the poetic texts into the canonical parts of the Requiem.

A part of *Dies irae*: “Eternal Pain” combines the text of a Latin sequence from the Mass of the Dead with Plaksyuk’s poems. Similarly constructed are *Lacrimosa*: “Hell’s Tears,” the crying Benedictus, and Agnus Dei: “In a Dream and in a Waking,” as well as *Crucifixus*: “The Atonement of Despair.” Vocal and choral sections are intertwined with dramatically important instrumental

interludes – “The Ghost of Death” and “Healing.” The fifth, central part uses Mykhailo Vorobyov’s poems *The Snow of Sorrow*. The piercing pain of autobiographical confessions of the Ukrainian poets, who in the early childhood lived through the tragic events of Holodomor, echoes in every line of poetry. It is this bundle of painful emotions that has been embodied in the expressive music of the composer through use of the avant-garde techniques (these being the elements of quasi-dodecafony, micropolyphony, regulated aleatorics, and sonoristics).

In choral episodes of music by Igor Shcherbakov, the motive reminiscences and micro quotes of all the outstanding requiems of the world music culture can be heard, and in solo voices the style of the kobza free improvisational singing and recitative is conveyed. Between each of the composition’s numbers there are small inserts with recited poems or a children’s choir. Organic motifs are based on the symbolic themes of the cross; the musical material is clearly imbued with the rhetorical figure of catabasis, representing in European music images of suffering, hellish anguish, death. The musical conciliar performance of Igor Shcherbakov’s work convincingly conveys, on the one hand, the tradition of Christian singing of the dead. On the other, expressionist stylistics painstakingly portrays the dreaded dream of oblivion, of death, of the hellish hunger tortures. Elements of vocal lamentation, apocalyptic picture of the past in the finale dissolve in chords of a choral psalm. The cathartic idea of Igor Shcherbakov’s composition and the use of musical rhetorical figures is similar to the dramatic concept of Bach’s majestic Masses.

### **Yevhen Stankovych, *Funeral Service for the Dead from Famine as Dedication to the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Tragedy of Holodomor***

Since 1993, a massive opus on the Holodomor sounded every five years as a part of the country’s official events to commemorate the anniversary at the Shevchenko National Opera and Ballet Theatre. The sixtieth anniversary of the Ukrainian people tragedy was marked by the performance of Yevhen Stankovych’s composition *Funeral for the Dead from Hunger* on Dmytro Pavlychko’s poem. A monumental composition of fifteen movements for two different choirs (academic and folk), soloists, and a large symphony orchestra was created within a month in Vorzel in 1992. Interestingly, the composer learned about the Holodomor during his two-month stay in Canada, reading the historical materials and memoirs of witnesses for the first time. He was greatly impressed by the theme of this historical tragedy. Thus, Yevhen Stankovych’s music became music of the cross-country path of Ukraine of the twentieth century and a super-emotional imprint of those terrible memories: “The heavy snows of 1933 sank over the expanses of Ukraine, presenting the world corpse

stench, apocalyptic visions, commensurate only with the paintings of the Last Judgment.”<sup>23</sup>

Another tragic piece, *Black Elegy* on the topic of the Chernobyl tragedy, by Yevhen Stankovych was performed by the Canadian orchestra Canadian Sinfonietta and a choir named after Oleksandr Koshytz.

Performers of the 1993 premiere were the National Choir Dumka with the artistic director Yevhen Savchuk, G. Verevka National Folk Choir with the artistic director Anatoly Avdiyevsky, the Symphony Orchestra of Shevchenko National Opera and Ballet Theatre with the conductor Volodymyr Kozhuhar, and the soloists Nina Matvienko (folk voice) and Constantine Klein (bass). *Funeral's* multi-layered genre is due to the principle of combining the canon of the ritual funeral church service and the artistic images of Dmytro Pavlychko's poetic text. The conflicting dramaturgy of the Stankovych-symphonist brings together, in the space of the work, the relentless progress of the death of the Soviet people and praying for the pardon of the souls of the people who have been starved with incredible force. The musicologist Elena Zin'kevych points out: “The dramaturgical unfolding of a memorial service takes place in two simultaneous movements of two ‘plots’: the church funeral service and the human memory of the terrible tragedy of Holodomor.”<sup>24</sup> Both coexist in different temporal and spatial dimensions: in the enclosed space of the temple and in the open space of Ukrainian history. Complex dramaturgy of the work skilfully conveys a colossal degree of the tragedy of *Funeral* music by Yevhen Stankovych.

### **The Fourth Symphony-Requiem “Thirty-Third” by Oleksandr Yakovchuk (for the Seventieth Anniversary of Holodomor)**

At the beginning of the third millennium, large-scale compositions of major oratorical and vocal-symphonic genres of Ukrainian composers encompassed the cultural space of many events initiated by the Institute of National Memory. The fourth Symphony-Requiem “Thirty-third” by Oleksandr Yakovchuk, written in 1990, was performed on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of Holodomor in 2003 at the Shevchenko National Opera and Ballet Theatre. Emotionally insightful poetry of Vasyl Yukhimovich, who personally experienced these terrible events at the age of ten, became the literary basis of the musical composition. The composition has six parts, in which the composer combines the artistic principles of modern symphony with the traditions of the Funeral Mass. The concept of the fourth

23 *Trydtsyat' tretiy: Holod; Narodna Knyha-Memorial*, comp. Lidiya Kovalenko and Volodymyr Maniak (Kyiv: Radyans'kyi pys'mennyk, 1991), 15.

24 Elena Zin'kevych, *Simfonicheskie giperboly: O muzyke Evgeniya Stankovicha* (Uzhhorod: Lyra, 2002), 176.

Symphony-Requiem – the commemoration of millions of lives lost because of artificial famine, repentance for the crimes of power, is complemented by the idea of exposing the evils and phantom ideals of totalitarian states. Their musical portraits serve as parodies of fascist and Soviet bravura marches, which in the collage fabric of Yakovchuk's Symphony-Requiem are mixed with the lamentoso motives of anguish, pity for the dead, and reveal the special significance of the funeral rite.

### **The Musical-text Model *Stabat mater* in the Memorial Compositions of Academic Composers**

On the commission by the state, Yuri Lanyuk created a theatrical oratorio to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Holodomor called *The Sorrowful Mother* (poetic text by Pavlo Tychyna). Oratorio score includes a large symphony orchestra, two choirs (mixed and children's) and two soloists (soprano and baritone). The composition was performed under the guidance of conductor Volodymyr Sirenko twice: in 2008 in Kyiv and in 2009 in Lviv. Director and producer Vasyl Vovkun worked with the composer to create the libretto.

*At first, the composition was conceived as a requiem, but in the process of comprehending the literary source as a genre model Stabat mater by the composer, the composition became a type of the allegorical oratory. The contextual concept of the requiem in the oratorio is related to the tragic fate of the artists of the "Shot Renaissance," to whom the composer Pavlo Tychyna also refers; the timbre of the folk lyre, which sounds in the open source of the oratorio, became a kind of memorial to the Ukrainian kobzars and lyricists shot in the 1930s.<sup>25</sup>*

The genre of the music-text model *Stabat mater* in the memorial compositions of academic composers lifts the indigenous traditions of the Ukrainian lamentation and mourning to the level of high philosophical generalizations of an idea where the tragic fate of a woman, a mother, reflects the fate of the whole Ukraine and is compared with suffering. The horrific tragedy of the martyrdom of starving children becomes Christian. A similar "Marian" theme is clearly resolved in the composition of Anatoly Haydenko (poetic text by Vasyl Zabashtanskyi), who dedicated his requiem for a mixed choir a cappella *Stabat mater* to the seventieth anniversary of the tragedy of the 1930s.

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25 Lavrova, "Dramaturhiya oratoriyi," 163–164.

## ***Ukrainian Lemkivsky Requiem* by Oleksandr Kozarenko – A Synthesis of the Model Catholic Requiem Model with the Ukrainian Ethnic Culture**

The subject of the Holodomor is embodied in different confessional genres: the Catholic requiem and the Orthodox memorial service of contemporary Ukrainian composers. Quite often, the mourning of victims in such musical compositions reflects the theme of the destruction of the Ukrainian ethnic culture. And the consequences of the crime of totalitarian power are equated with the forced resettlement of national minorities. Oleksandr Kozarenko dedicated his *Ukrainian Requiem* to the memory of the victims of the 1933 Holodomor and the deportation of the Lemkiv Ukrainians. The *Ukrainian Requiem*, with the subtitle *Lemkivsky*, was written in 2008 and first performed during the 14<sup>th</sup> International Music Festival Contrasts. Later it was also performed in Kyiv in the National House of Organ and Chamber Music, during the official commemoration of the victims of the Holodomor by the Borys Lyatoshynsky Ensemble of Classical Music. The second edition of the piece (2010) was performed in May 2011 in Kyiv during the festival Music Premieres of the Season and was broadcast and recorded by the National Radio Company of Ukraine.

The ethnic space stated in the name of the *Lemkivsky Requiem* is clearly reflected in the performance of the composition. The requiem was written for a choir, soloists and two different orchestras at once – a symphony orchestra and an orchestra of folk instruments. Both European and folk instruments are heard at the same time: violins, violas, dart, and cymbals. The *Lemkivsky Requiem* consists of twelve parts and combines Western European traditions with authentic layers of Ukrainian folklore. At the heart of the composition stands the burial mass in the cult Latin, the text of which is artfully crafted by Lviv poet Nazar Fedorak. His poems paint canonical prayers with Ukrainian tragic folk imagery. This allows Ukrainian composer Kozarenko to create a kind of equivalent to the *Polish Requiem* by Krzysztof Penderecki in modern music – a composition about the tragic events of the history of European peoples in the twentieth century.

The tragic theme of Holodomor, presented in a large number of multifaceted compositions of large and chamber formats, has today found a worthy place in the commemorative traditions in Ukraine and worldwide.

## **Conclusions**

To summarize, we can conclude that the theme of Holodomor first appeared in the outstanding musical composition of composers in the 1990s in the important era of *Nezalezhnosti* (Independence) of Ukraine. At that time, the official ban on the discussion about the Holodomor was abolished and

the attention of the artists was confined to the opening of the tragic pages of Ukrainian history. Ivan Karabyts was one of the first artists to embody the tragedy of Holodomor in symphonies, cantatas, and oratorios. With the support of the diaspora artists Virko Baley and Marian Kots, an academic festival of contemporary music Kyiv Music Fest was founded, with a thematic competition of composers with compositions on the subject of historical tragedies of Ukraine.

In the period 1992–1995, the subject of Holodomor was integrated into the academic music of Ukrainian composers. At the same time, the foundations of the eponymous commemorative tradition were laid in the music space. The educational activities of diaspora figures served as a catalyst for numerous cultural events (festivals, thematic music venues) to commemorate the anniversary of the tragedy. This supported the interest of Ukrainian artists in the extremely complex and morally traumatic theme of the Holodomor. Internal creative intentions in the development of the theme were directed by the deep mechanisms of cultural memory, which overcomes the tragic spheres of life in this way, and, according to Oksana Harmel, “[...] comprehends the traumas of Ukrainian history, the traumas of cultural memory.”<sup>26</sup>

These tragic topics have played a special role in the consolidation of the nation and the formation of a new generation of intellectual elite in our country. The striking compositions written by Ukrainian composers on the subject of Holodomor depicted and exposed the crimes of communist leaders, which created an artificial famine that led to a large number of victims, loss of national culture and tradition, and destruction of natural cycles. The criminal acts of the authorities in the 1930s eradicated the foundations of Ukrainian material and spiritual culture: traditional ethnic space, economy, religion, and customs that govern the natural cycles of the universe. Ways to overcome the apocalyptic tragedy in the dramaturgy of musical compositions on the subject of Holodomor are usually reduced to catharsis, a state of humility, and spiritual purification.

Two *topoi* of all musical compositions – mournful lamentoso intonation and expressive energy of *Holosinnya* (lament) in the artistic concept of symphonies, cantatas, concerts of Ukrainian composers depict the tragic fate of children, women, peasants, and executed kobzars crippled by hunger with incredible power. The images of evil carriers – party leaders, communist-lovers, functionaries, are revealed by parody marching themes, fragments, or expressive means of the masculine military complex in music (aggressive orchestral sound forms). The sound landscapes of the dead earth, devastated nature, that is, “landscape themed complexes,” have at their core a specific cruciform melodic outline, and they usually sound in an out-of-space frozen music space.

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26 Harmel, “Fenomen diaspori,” 11.



The picture of traditional ideas about the universe and the Ukrainian cosmos has been deformed. In the popular consciousness there are two parallel universes: Earth Ukraine – dead earth, it ceased to exist. All the souls of those who were executed by famine were transported to the Heaven Ukraine – a flowering picturesque paradise garden. Similar paintings in program compositions are resolved spatially, as a kind of dialogue between low and high registers with opposition to tragic and enlightened themes.

The themes of death and hunger, delusions, devilish attacks, suffering and salvation, Marian themes and imperatives of protest are embodied in compositions of different genres. Usually, these are requiems, memorial services, choral concerts, symphonic poems, and orchestra concerts. The distinctive features are scale of form and posterity of expression; the fresco of the interior space of the composition, where each image is rendered in a spreading horizontal space and inscribed in vertical coordinates “earth” – “heaven”. The peculiarities of genre and style transformation of the iconic commemorative compositions on the subject of Holodomor are the saturation of European musical canons with Ukrainian ethnic stylistics, and the textual component – the poems of Ukrainian poets.

Composer Ivan Karabyts stated in his explanation to the composition of commemoration of Holodomor victims: “Between the past and the present, between those who live today and those who have gone to Eternity, our Memory appears – without it, there is no future; there is a continuation of everything in it.”<sup>27</sup>

Translated by Irene Okner

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27 Yuliia Hozhyk, “Monolohy na vidstani,” *Dzerkalo tyzhnnya*, January 26, 2001.

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## POVZETEK

### **Tema *holodomorja* v ukrajinskem umetniškem prostoru: zgodovinske projekcije umetnosti sodobnih skladateljev**

Velika lakota (*holodomor*) je eno izmed temnih poglavij ukrajinske zgodovine tridesetih let 20. stoletja, ki je bilo v številnih državah uradno priznано kot genocid nad ukrajinskim narodom. Sovjetski totalitarni režim v času Josipa Stalina je želel z lakoto narediti konec ukrajinski nacionalni neodvisnosti, izkoreniniti zatirano kulturo in uveljaviti lastno.

Resnico o razlogih za hudo lakoto v Ukrajini so v obdobju Sovjetske zveze prikrivali. Šele v času ukrajinske samostojnosti je tema znova postala aktualna, del javne zavesti in predmet ustvarjalnosti ukrajinskih skladateljev. Po zaslugi (s podporo) ameriških in kanadskih filantropov se Kijevski glasbeni festival začne s kompozicijami skladateljskega natečaja, ki razkrivajo tematiko te zgodovinske tragedije. To je pri ukrajinskih umetnikih spodbudilo zanimanje za izredno zapleteno in moralno travmatično temo holodomorja. Ustanovitelj in vodja Kijevskega glasbenega festivala, posvečenega sodobni ukrajinski glasbi, je bil izjemni ukrajinski skladatelj Ivan Karabic, ki je v 80. letih med prvimi vključil v svoje ustvarjanje tragično temo vsiljene organizirane lakote. Od tedaj je tragika holodomorja celovito obravnavana v vrhunskih glasbenih delih ukrajinskih umetnikov.

Namen članka je dokumentirati družbeno-zgodovinske in kulturne okoliščine, ki so prispevale k dinamiki teme holodomorja v glasbi. Poseben poudarek je na načinih, kako ukrajinska skupnost po svetu to tragično temo vključuje v svoj umetniški prostor. Fenomen travme v zgodovinskem spominu umetnikov v diaspori se izraža v njihovih ustvarjalnih idejah in poskusih, da bi širili zgodovinsko resnico o zločinu totalitarne sovjetske oblasti. Prav z njihovo podporo se je tema holodomorja uveljavila na festivalih sodobne glasbe, kot je Kijevski glasbeni festival. Kontrasti in Lvovski virtuozni, in različnih glasbenih panoramah ukrajinskih mest.

Pomembna zbirka kompozicij, posvečenih spominu na žrtve holodomorja, je v članku obravnavana v skladu z zgodovinsko verodostojnostjo, saj so se te teme dotaknile številnih ukrajinskih umetnikov iz druge polovice 20. stoletja in začetka tretjega tisočletja. Različni žanri opusov v spomin žrtev holodomorja razgrinjajo široko paleto del, od kompozicij za komorne (solo sonata, kantata) kot tudi za velike zasedbe (simfonija, opera, maša, rekviem). Umetniška analiza nekaterih simfoničnih in kantatno-oratorijskih del razkriva poseben slog, ki temelji na tradicijah klasičnih vzorcev glasbe svetovnih akademskih skladateljev. Opazna je jezikovna in glasbena semantika opusa tragičnih podob, skupaj z narodnimi motivi iz ukrajinskega kulturnega prostora. To vključuje glasbene retorične figure iz baroka, krščansko simboliko trpljenja in odrešenja ter motiviko pekla. Sklepi tega članka bodo omogočili bolj poglobljeno razumevanje pomembnega, a malo raziskanega področja ukrajinske glasbene umetnosti.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**OLHA VASYLENKO** (fonoton07@ukr.net) is a musicologist and ethnomusicologist, Assistant Professor, and Associate Professor of the Department of Music History at the Faculty of Performing Arts and Musicology of the R. Glier Kyiv Municipal Academy of Music. She is a member of National All-Ukrainian Musical Union, and a member of European-Ukrainian Scientific Union. Her scholarly research is focused on various topics of music history, such as earlier and modern Ukrainian music. She is an author of several scientific publications in Ukraine, Europe, America.

**LILIIA MUDRETSKA** (lmudretskaya@ukr.net) is a musicologist, Assistant Professor, Head of the Department of Music History, Faculty of Performing Arts and Musicology at the R. Glier Kyiv Municipal Academy of Music. She is also a member of National All-Ukrainian Musical Union, and member of the Kiev Wagner Society. Her research is focused on various topics of music history, particularly on genre and stylistic aspects of European music. She is an author of several scientific publications on music and culture of Ukrainian, French and German composers, including a study *Genre-style Search in the Opera Works by Jules Massenet (on the Example of the Operas Manon and Werther)*, published in 2004.

## O AVTORICAH

**OLGA VASILENKO** (fonoton07@ukr.net) je muzikologinja in etnomuzikologinja, docentka, doktorica znanosti, izredna profesorica na Oddelku za zgodovino glasbe na Fakulteti za uprizarjajoče umetnosti in muzikologijo na Mestni glasbeni akademiji R. Glièra v Kijevu. Je tudi članica Nacionalnega vseukrajinskega glasbenega društva in članica Evropsko-ukrajinskega znanstvenega društva. Raziskovalno se osredotoča na različna področja zgodovine glasbe, med drugim na starejšo in sodobno ukrajinsko glasbeno zgodovino. Je tudi avtorica številnih znanstvenih publikacij v Ukrajini, Evropi in ZDA.

**LILIIA MUDRECKA** (lmudretskaya@ukr.net) je muzikologinja, docentka, vodja Oddelka za glasbeno zgodovino na Fakulteti za uprizarjajoče umetnosti in muzikologijo na Mestni glasbeni akademiji R. Glièra v Kijevu. Je tudi članica Nacionalnega vseukrajinskega glasbenega društva in Kijevskega Wagnerjevega društva. Raziskovalno se osredotoča na različne teme iz zgodovine glasbe, predvsem na žanrske in slogovne vidike evropske glasbe. Napisala je tudi več člankov o glasbi in kulturi ukrajinskih, francoskih in nemških skladateljev, med drugim študijo z naslovom *Žanrsko-stilistična raziskava opernih del Julesa Masseneta (na primeru oper Manon in Werther)*, ki je izšla leta 2004.