

The Creation of a Hub for Ukrainian Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of the Ivan Honchar Museum

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Article abstract

We focus on the Ivan Honchar Museum National Centre of Folk Culture and three of its projects aimed at collecting, safeguarding, restoring, and promoting ICH ("Night of Traditional Dance," "Kobzar Pentecost Festival" and "Oreli"). Having assembled one of the best collections of folk art and traditional material culture in Ukraine, the Ivan Honchar Museum has become a solid hub not only of tangible, but also intangible heritage, including oral traditions, arts, games, crafts, feasts, song, music, dance, and rituals. The article describes the circumstances in which folk singing, folk dance, and folk instrumental music can generate projects for successful folk festivals. In our times, the safeguarding of ICH means not only collection and archiving, but also support and promotion of its carriers, ensuring reproduction and transmission, developing consumers for this segment of culture, and involving children and youth.

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THE CREATION OF A HUB FOR UKRAINIAN INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE:

A Case Study of the Ivan Honchar Museum

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In academic discussions around intangible culture, museums occupy a special place as platforms for projects engaged with both tangible and intangible heritage (Seitel 2001; Yoshida 2004; Laforet 2014; Pocius 2014; Poulot 2014; Shelton 2014; Cadaval 2017; Blake 2018; Turgeon and Dubuc 2022). The UNESCO 1989 "Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore" had a significant impact on activities in the museum field (Arizpe 2004: 130). The 2003 Convention itself was also an impactful achievement. The theme of "Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage" was chosen for the 20th General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Seoul in 2004. An international «Intangible Cultural Heritage & Museums Project» was organized from 2017 to 2020 to explore the variety of museological approaches, interactions and practices in response to intangible cultural heritage (ICH).¹ Ukrainian museum institutions, particularly the Ivan Honchar Museum National Centre for Folk Culture (Kyiv), followed these developments. Today, this

1. *Intangible Cultural Heritage & Museums Project (IMP)*. <<https://www.ichandmuseums.eu/en>> (accessed 8 July 2023).₂

Centre is not only a repository for a rich material collection,² but a platform for folk performance practices, folkloric festivals, the popularization of traditional knowledge, craft revivals and other such activities.

In the expansive discussions of the UNESCO initiative, the term “intangible heritage” is often compared with the term “living tradition,” which “has the advantage to refer immediately to the people practising it” (van Zanten 2004: 38). Anthropologist Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett notes that, “in contrast with the tangible heritage protected in the museum, intangible heritage consists of cultural manifestations (knowledge, skills, performance) that are inextricably linked to persons. It is not possible – or it is not as easy – to treat such manifestations as proxies for persons, even with recording technologies that can separate performances from performers and consign the repertoire to the archive” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 60).

This understanding of the specifics of intangible cultural heritage is key to the orientation of the Ivan Honchar Museum. It collaborates with diverse categories of people, including traditional culture bearers, as well as reconstructors, researchers and certainly with a broad audience of consumers. In the past decade and a half, the museum has accumulated strong experience in supporting, strengthening and reviving cultural traditions in the spheres of traditional song, traditional dance and traditional instrumental music. It has gradually developed itself as a hub of non-material heritage. Among the most striking projects of the Centre are the “Night of Traditional Dance,” “*Kobzar* Pentecost” and “Oreli.”

The Oreli project is oriented towards the preservation and revival of traditional children’s culture. It arose with the awareness that, if we want living traditions to be sustainable not just today but into the future, then we must invest in children. In 2008, in the Ivan Honchar Museum facility, organizers came up with the idea to develop a museum format for systematically engaging children and adolescents with the goal of transmitting living folk traditions and integrating them into the urban cultural environment. A museum team developed the Oreli project, combining artistic, educational, exhibiting programs with other cultural-entertainment and cultural-enlightenment initiatives. The word “oreli” (openi) comes from the Polissian dialect of Ukrainian, and means “a swing.” In the past, on major spring and summer holidays in various regions in Ukraine, people set up swings in their communities and the area around

2. The Ivan Honchar Museum manages one of the richest collections of material culture and folk art in Ukraine, numbering over 15,000 items.

these swings became a sort of cultural locus, in which young people would engage in ceremonial and recreational activities, thus gaining social and cultural experience (Hrymych 2010: 538–543). In somewhat the same way, the Ivan Honchar Museum and specifically the Oreli programming strives to become a field of activity in which children, and through them also their parents, immerse themselves in living tradition.

The Oreli project initially took the format of a festival. Prior to the Covid pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it consisted of two annual festival events, one in the summer and one in the winter, which activated spring-summer and winter cycle traditional holidays respectively. Since part of the organized activities had an educational format, and they took place generally in the days prior to Christmas and Easter, the participating children and their parents had the opportunity to reproduce the relevant calendar traditions in their home context and celebrate these holidays according to tradition. This approach created the conditions for the revitalization and popularization of the holidays in their customary contexts.

Children's folkloric groups from diverse parts of Ukraine were invited to take part in the Oreli festivals. Each group presented its local traditions: songs, dances and folk games. An important component of the festivals was the inclusion of programming for "authentic" culture bearers, people whose knowledge was transmitted directly from previous generations and in a "natural" way (from father to son, from mother to daughter). At Oreli, culture bearers passed their experiences on to members of the younger generation through master classes. Examples of these activities include older women from the village of Komyshe, Okhtyrka district, Sumy oblast, who taught children traditional Christmas carols, preparation of *kutia* (кутя, a ritual dish of boiled wheat and honey) and *pyrohy* (пироги, a stuffed pastry recipe). The master star-maker Bohdan Novak (from the town of Dubliany, Sambir district, Lviv oblast) shared the art of preparing and decorating large round stars to be carried while visiting houses with Christmas carols. A master from the village of Kosmach, Kosiv district, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, showed how to make Christmas and New Year's masks for the characters of Grandfather, Grandmother and others. Ivan Prykhod'ko from the village of Dudarkiv, Kyiv oblast, painted Christmas stars and masks for the *koza* tradition (коза, goat, house visitations at New Year's). Volodymyr Markar'ian and his wife Alla baked *prianyky* (пряники, little cakes) with the children, the molds for which the artisan carved himself from examples in the collection of the Poltava Local Culture Museum named after Vasyl' Krychevs'kyi (Полтавський краєзнавчий

музей ім. Василя Кричевського). A CD of children's Christmas and New Year's carols was published under the auspices of the Oreli festival in 2014, entitled "Впустит' щастя в хату" (Let good fortune come into the house), for educational purposes in pre-schools and schools (*Vpustit' shchastia v khatu* 2014).

A second stage of the Oreli project was the creation of an Oreli children's school of folk traditions in 2010 (founder and director, Myroslava Vertiuk). Children from two to seventeen years old become participants in the school, normally young people who live in an urban center and/or have little experience with practices of traditional culture. Often, they have literally no knowledge of folk culture. Their families have diverse religious and cultural backgrounds and originate in various regions of Ukraine. The Oreli groups in the museum setting create a new cultural environment for the participants, producing impactful experiences. Most families of these children learn the traditions from them and begin to practice them, even though they had not been familiar with them before. Some of these children have grandparents who live in villages and learn a certain amount of traditional knowledge through them. Ukraine has a relatively high retention of traditional culture, particularly in relation to Christmas customs and partially with spring rites and Easter.

The Oreli school has three specializations: singing (director and instructor Myroslava Vertiuk), traditional folk dances (director and instructor Ievheniia Shul'ha) and instrumental music (director Andrii Levchenko). Iaryna Dron' teaches violin, Ievheniia Shul'ha teaches *tsymbaly* (цимбали, dulcimer) and Andrii Levchenko teaches drum and bass. Sofia Andrushchenko, a graduate from the Oreli school in 2021, also teaches violin.

This school differs from other children's educational institutions in terms of the material it proposes but also in its teaching methods which strive to approach oral transmission of the knowledge and skills, as it was in traditional society. The Oreli school does not participate in competitions and engages with stage performances only minimally, leaning rather toward recreating a living tradition. In this regard, they actively support the practice of house visitations with Christmas and New Year's caroling and spring songs at Easter time in groups with friends and family. Students spend recreational time together with traditional dances and folk games.

In the folk singing groups (2-8 years old and 9-16 years old), the older participants take some responsibilities as "teachers" of the younger ones,

to some degree imitating the atmosphere of traditional transmission. This is felt most clearly in the less formal atmosphere of festivals and holidays. In classes, the younger participants learn the simplest calendar and non-calendar genres of children's folklore: *zaklychky* (заклички, traditional calls); proverbs (примовки); spring songs (веснянки); Christmas carols (колядки); New Year's carols (щедрівки); counting rhymes (лічилки); and folk games (народні ігри). The materials used in the curriculum are from the private fieldwork archives of the instructors and from anthologies of children's folklore (Cherems'kyi and Semerens'kyi 1999; Hrymych 2009: 96–136, 190–211, 214–395; Hrymych 2010: 130–147, 169–218, 432–535, 538–543).

From the age of nine, children start visiting the older group's activities, where they start learning polyphonic songs. The division into two age groups allows the older students to master more complex song forms, first listening to them and then singing along. When the child gain a certain experience and confidence, they can start *zaspivuvaty* (заспівувати, singing the first syllables of a song or of each verse, which is traditionally initiated solo) or *vyvodyty* (виводити, singing higher notes to harmonize as a solo, when the remainder of the participants are singing the middle and lower notes).

The song repertoire is based on the traditions of Left Bank Ukraine (Kyiv, Chernihiv, Poltava oblasts) and partially Right Bank Ukraine (Zhytomyr, Cherkasy and Vinnytsia oblasts). In terms of methodology, the songs are learned aurally from the teacher's voices, without written notes. Older groups listen to recordings of authentic singers in the tradition. Children in the younger groups do not learn through recordings, since they often do not understand the words and since it is hard for them to reproduce the singing without a live voice.

Instrumental music is also taught in the Oreli group without the use of music notation. The main technique is auditory and visual imitation of the instructor's play. This is the typical traditional means of learning to play an instrument in the past. Most often, beginners learned to play by actively listening to the music and observing the movements of the fingers on the neck of the violin or bass, or the small hammers for the *tsymbaly*. Children often listened to the melodies when adults danced and then tried to imitate them at home, hiding in the barns, or while herding animals. Traditional transmission to children also included direct instruction by experienced musicians. In these situations, the training generally involved memorizing the melodies by copying the finger movements of the musicians. Less common were explanatory schematic diagrams (Yarmola 2014: 30). Still less common in traditional contexts was the use of music notation.

The Oreli traditional trio performing groups (троїсті музики) were the first children's group in Ukraine that started learning traditional instrumental music without notes, playing by ear and using the older traditional settings of three instruments.

Having experience in traditional music practice, the instrumentalist-teachers of Oreli, in a certain sense, perform as role models for the students. Though the members of the groups learn the music aurally without the use of notes, anyone who wishes is provided access to audio recordings of traditional musicians. They can listen to them and analyze them to the best of their abilities. The children can add new pieces of repertoire after learning the skills of playing on the instrument (holding it, understanding the tuning, fingering, the basics of tonality and other elements). Of course, this depends on the musical abilities of each student and the complexity of the pieces.

As of April 2023, four groups of older students (8-15 years old) are learning instrumental music on the violin, *tsymbaly*, *bas/basolia* and frame drum (бубон, bubon).³ Three groups of younger students (4-8 years old) are learning to play the violin, *tsymbaly* and frame drum. Whereas traditional contexts were gender differentiated, the Oreli groups include both girls and boys. Indeed, girls tend to be more numerous. When learning to play violin, the students learn both the first and second violin parts – melody and accompaniment. This is so that they can understand the context and can assume various functions with their instrument. This is important for future leaders of musical groups, so that they can orient themselves in the parts of every instrument and give assistance to anyone within the group. This is the typical practice of traditional musicians who generally started their training with a rhythmic instrument, then mastered an accompanying role and finally played the main melody.

Typically, at the end of sessions, all the participants of the Oreli instrumental groups gather for a shared repetition. This gives everyone the opportunity to experience larger group music making and to feel themselves as a part of a musical community. This strongly motivates the students to keep up their studies.

The instrumental repertoire of Oreli consists mainly of music documented from Western Podillia, the Poltava area and Sloboda Ukraine.

3. The *basolia* is a local Ukrainian bass instrument similar to a cello but it plays the bass function in the band.

It includes dance music as well as marches and pieces called “*nadobryden*” (надобридень, “good day,” ritual themes which were normally played at the very beginning of weddings). The repertoire consists mostly of *kozachoks* (козачки), polkas, waltzes and other dance melodies which were documented by ethnomusicologists in various settlements: “*Buryma*” (Бурима), “*Kosari*” (Косарі, scythers), “*Sanzharivka*” (Санжарівка) and “*Troinyi kozachok*” (Тройний козачок) from the town of Dykanka, Poltava district, Poltava oblast; “*Obruch*” (Обруч), “*Orlytsia*” (Орлиця), “*Hrechanyky*” (Гречаники) and “*Balamut*” (Баламут) from the village of Veselivka, Poltava district, Poltava oblast; “*Haiduk*” (Гайдук) from the town of Nedryhailiv, Romny district, Sumy oblast; “*Kaperush*” (Каперуш), “*Do stolu*” (До столу, to the table), “*Karohid*” (Карогід), “*Hory-pol’ka*” (Гори-полька), “*Vid Berezhnan do Kadry*” (Від Бережан до Кадри, from the town of Berezhany to Kadry) and “*Val’s 12 hodyn*” (Вальс 12 годин, waltz of twelve hours) from the village of Novosilka, Chortkiv district, Ternopil oblast; “*Metelytsia*” (Метелиця), “*Tanets’ svativ*” (Танець сватів, dance of the wedding masters) and “*Hopak*” (Гопак) from the town of Romny, Sumy oblast; “*Hopak*” and “*Na horodi mak zerkatyi*” (На городі мак зеркатий, in the garden are big-eyed poppies) from the village Zvyniach, Chortkiv district, Ternopil oblast; “*Polka*” from the village of Torske, Chortkiv district, Ternopil oblast; and “*Waltz*” from the town of Monastyriska, Chortkiv district, Ternopil oblast. In addition to their own fieldwork recordings, the instructors use materials documented in the 1950s from the archives of sound recordings of the Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folkloristics and Ethnology (Інститут мистецтвознавства, фольклористики та етнології ім. М. Рильського НАН України, IMFE) (Rylsky Institute Archives, Fond 14-10, item 84, 109), from the fieldwork of Mykhailo Khai (*Kaperush* 1997; *Nadobryden*’ 1997; *Z-pid karpats’koho khrebtu* 1997) and from the phonograph record set “*Ukrains’ka troista muzyka*” (Українська троїста музика, Ukrainian trio of musicians) (*Ukrains’ka Troista Muzyka* 1974).

The participants of the Oreli project learn how to dance from an early age using a specially developed pedagogical method. In the past, children did not typically dance. They were generally excluded from the areas in which the youth and adults were dancing. Exceptions did occur, of course, and in certain situations such as weddings, children could watch as the grown-ups danced and learn the tradition somewhat passively.

The clothing worn by members of the Oreli group is composed of copies and reconstructions of old garments which are recreated by parents and specialists from models kept in various museums in Ukraine, particularly the

Ivan Honchar Museum. The reconstructions of all elements are created in consultation with museum staff and outside experts, scholars, masters and private collectors. Embroidered shirts (*sorochky*, *сорочки*), skirts (*spidnytsi*, *спідниці*), pants (*shtany*, *штани*), woven and braided belts (*tkani*, *pleteni poiasy*, *ткані, плетені пояси*), footwear, vests (*kersetky*, *керсетки*), coats (*svyty*, *свити*, *chumarky*, *чумарки*), jewellery (*prykasy*, *прикраси*) and headwear are all produced with meticulous care.

All the teaching faculty of the Orel group combine instruction with research and fieldwork. Regular participation in folkloric-ethnographic field trips is normalized within their workload. They are all “children of the city” who have discovered an “invisible” layer of culture which existed beyond the mainstream. “Over many years, somewhere in a parallel universe, but also very close by, traditional music continued on in the underground – unnoticed by the musical industry, by melomaniacs, journalists and curators,” this is how the participants of “Rys” (*Рись*) describe themselves, a partnering project including Andrii Levchenko as a co-founder. This same spirit applies to the entire staff of Orel.

The Orel project is a part of a larger movement in Ukraine for the support of authentic song and traditional Ukrainian instrumental music. In this context, the Ivan Honchar Museum is a partner with the Polyphony Project, one of whose coordinators is Myroslava Vertiuk. “The mission of the Polyphony Project is to explore, preserve and present the living musical folklore of Ukrainian villages. In addition to recording the intangible cultural treasures of the Ukrainian peasantry using state-of-the-art technology, our priority is to make this heritage of unparalleled value accessible to contemporary society.”⁴ Orel participants use both recordings and direct contact with bearers of the living traditions.

The study and re-creation of traditional Ukrainian instrumental music in the Orel school follows the methods developed by Mykhailo Khai as he established the group «Nadobryden'» (*Надобридень*) in 1992 under the auspices of the Kyiv Conservatory (Markovych 2015: 113).⁵ The group included students and graduate students of the Conservatory, as well as interested musicians who were not associated with higher level educational institutions nor the academic sphere. The main idea of the “Nadobryden'”

4. <<https://www.polyphonyproject.com/en>> (accessed 8 July 2023).

5. Today the conservatory is entitled the Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music (Національна музична академія України імені П.І. Чайковського).

group is the reconstruction and restoration, as well as recreation, of traditional Ukrainian instrumental music without stylization. Members of “Nadobryden” always took field recordings as their models and learned the part for each instrument directly from the audio recording, without the intermediacy of musical notation. “Nadobryden” continues to operate today and over the entire 31 years of its existence, it has had at least four casts. Each cast of musicians transitioned gradually from the previous one. When a new musician joined, he started by playing a rhythm or accompanying instrument and then graduated to first violin, for example. This process repeated itself for almost every transition. In this way, there was a continuity in the musical hierarchy, typical of traditional village settings: Musicians generally proceeded from the simplest instruments and ended with the most complex. The sequence and the specific instruments varied from region to region but the general principle was universal. In traditional ensembles (*kapela*, *капела*), the leader of the group played first violin. This meticulous approach to the research and recreation of instrumental music has been partially or entirely adopted by the groups “Huliainhorod” (Гуляйгород), “Buttia” (Буття), “US Orchestra” and “Bozhychi” (Божичі).

In contrast to the reconstructionist groups, which play traditional Ukrainian instrumental music without re-arrangement and focus on reproducing key characteristics of local musicking, there is a large number of amateur and academic folk orchestras which were formed and firmly established in the Soviet cultural context and which continue to produce stereotypes and myths about Ukrainian folk music. These orchestras play in large ensembles of 8-20 musicians and include instruments atypical for traditional Ukrainian music: the *domra*, *balalaika*, *baian* and others (Khai and Skrypnyk 2019: 5). These orchestras play a repertoire based on notated works, either stylized from traditional sources or completely composed by individual authors (авторські, композиторські).

The number of such “folk” orchestras is immeasurably greater than the reconstructionist groups, and thus it is hard to overestimate the value of the latter. For this reason, the approach developed by Mykhailo Khai for “Nadobryden” is maintained by the instructors of Oreli, requiring scrupulous work with field recordings, with the composition of each musical group and with the selection of instruments themselves. The continuity between the “Nadobryden” and Oreli projects is ensured because Andrii Levchenko leads the program of instrumental groups in Oreli and he played in “Nadobryden” himself.

In the past, instrumental dance music was an integral part of people's leisure activity and was created primarily as accompaniment for dancing. Since 2015, the Ivan Honchar Museum has organized an event called the "Night of Traditional Dance" (Ніч традиційного танцю). It has a festival character and is part of a much wider European movement for the revival and presentation of traditional dance and instrumental culture.

The first "Night of Traditional Dance" took place as part of the International Festival of Traditional Culture "Etnosvit" (Етносвіт, Ethno-world) in 2015. Its goals were to integrate instrumental music and non-staged dance into the contemporary urban cultural context and to strengthen the perception of positive value for Ukrainian heritage among the younger generation. Since 2016 it has been mounted in association with International Museum Day (18 May) in the format of "A Night at the Museum" (Ніч у музеї). In 2019 this festival was prepared and presented in collaboration with the Cultural-Artistic project "Rys" (Рись) with support of the Ukrainian Cultural Fund (Український культурний фонд). This allowed for an expanded program and preparatory fieldwork and archival searches.

Ethnochoreologist Andriy Nahachewsky wrote that, in order to understand dance cultures, it is important to answer not only "who" is dancing, but also what, why, when, where and how. "It is important to know *what* dance is being performed. *Where*? In the kitchen? In a yard? At a festival? On a stage? At a crossroads in town? In a discotheque? *Why* are they dancing? Is this a part of the grandstand performance for a national holiday planned months in advance by government officials? Is it some type of spontaneous dance at a party? Or is it a funeral? *When*? Is this a holiday? Sunday afternoon? What season? What generation?" (Nahachewsky 2021: 5).

The organizers of the "Night of Traditional Dance" tried to answer such questions as they prepared for the 2019 event. They traveled to villages in search of traditional performers who could help them document local dances. They saw that musical materials were preserved much better than choreographic lore. Dance melodies were documented by folklorists and ethnomusicologists first by using music notation and eventually by audio recordings. Clearly, the audio recording presents the musical phenomenon much more satisfactorily. On the other hand, dance movements have always been much more difficult to fix for ethnographers and ethnochoreologists alike. In the past, in Ukraine and in other countries, researchers used verbal descriptions to describe the movements and structures of the dance. Later, they used specialized schematic figures for describing the movements and

their sequence, positions of the dancers and other elements. And finally, they came to make video recordings. However, in comparison with audio recording technology, film and video are much more expensive and require more time and resources.

An additional historical factor is implicated in the poor documentation of dance as a part of Ukrainian intangible cultural heritage. The official cultural politics of the USSR was oriented to the creation of staged forms of traditional culture, popularizing them in this format for all levels and audiences, from cultural palaces in the capital cities to small village clubs. Under these circumstances, living dance practices were marginalized throughout the 20th century. A quotation from the prominent Soviet musicologist Andrii Humeniuk serves as a striking example of this, “It is well known that a dance documented among the folk achieves its true life when it is theatricalized in an aesthetic arrangement by a choreographer and performed by [trained] dancers” (Humeniuk 1969: 5). In the rush for spectacle and “artistry,” many local forms disappeared (Khai and Skrypnyk 2019: 5). Simple figure dances mostly remained, which gave and continue to give a distorted impression about traditional Ukrainian dance culture.

Despite these circumstances, some archival video documentations have been preserved, even if without sound, and provide the possibility to reconstruct and restore some aspects of the earlier dance culture. The Central State CinePhotoPhono Archives of Ukraine named after H. Pshenychny (Центральний державний кінофотофоноархів України імені Г. С. Пшеничного) preserves video materials from IMFE field expeditions to several regions of Ukraine (Central State CinePhotoPhono Archives 1955) and also German chronicles from Ukrainian villages during World War Two (Central State CinePhotoPhono Archives 1942).

The researchers and organizers of the “Night of Traditional Dance” in 2019 succeeded in retrieving and digitizing the majority of these video documents. A part of these was published in social media as promotion for the project and other parts were used by musicians and researchers as a source for reconstructing dances. A description of the sequence of movements and names of the figures of each dance was created with this goal in mind. Verses sung to the dances were transcribed, as were the dance movements (using variable-speed playback).

Traditional dancers were an important category of participants in the 2019 “Night of Traditional Dance” and reconstructive groups were a second key subgroup. The first category included musicians and dancers

from the Boiko ethnographic region (village of Vovche, Sambir district, Lviv oblast) and the Hutsul region (the village of Vipche, Verkhovyna district, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast). The second type of participant included “Nadobryden” (as specialists in traditional music of western Podillia), “US Orchestra” (specialists in traditional music of the Poltava region), “Oreli” from Kyiv (traditional music of the Poltava region and western Podillia), and “Sil’s’ka muzyka” (Сільська музика, village music) from the city of Rivne (specialists in traditional music from the Rivne area of Polissia). Each of the participant groups presented certain elements from the local musical and dance tradition which they featured. The event included the presentation of the Boiko dance “*Stortsak*” (Сторцак) from Vovche; Hutsul dances “*Resheto*” (Решето), “*Arkan*” (Аркан), and “*Hutsulka*” (Гуцулка) from Vipche; as well as the western Podillian “*Chaban*” (Чабан) presented by “Nadobryden”; and the “*Tropak*” (Тропак) from Poltava by the “US Orchestra.”

Over its four stagings since its inception, the festival “Night of Traditional Dance” has assembled the best musicians from various parts of Ukraine, which shared the authentic living tradition as well as examples of reconstruction. Groups of trio musicians of several generations demonstrated their virtuosic abilities which have been passed down orally through the generations. In these years, the festival has also invited guests from Bavaria, Poland, Hungary and Belarus, which created the context for particular kinds of cross-cultural communication through dance.

One of the results of the four “Nights of Traditional Dance” to date has been the growth in participants and settings for the performance and development of the reconstructive instrumental and choreographic traditions. Each of the young instrumental groups attracts an informal following, whose members actively practice Ukrainian social dances, including improvised forms. Contacts and interactions have increased between these reconstructive revivalist groups that play and research traditional music and dance on the one hand and traditional culture bearers on the other.

The Ivan Honchar Museum has also become the platform for another sphere of intangible cultural activity, the *kobzar* tradition. This historical-cultural phenomenon combines an epic singing and musical tradition by itinerant performers on the *kobza* (кобза), *lira* (ліра, hurdy-gurdy), old-style bandura (бандура), *torban* (торбан) and other instruments (Lavrov 1980; Kyrdan and Omel’chenko 1980; Mishalov 2013).

The Ivan Honchar Museum is the instigator of the festival «Kobzars'ka Triitsia» (Кобзарська Трійця, *Kobzar* Pentecost) and co-organizer of the festival «Kobzars'ko-lirnyts'ka Pokrova» (Кобзарсько-лірницька Покрова, Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God). These two annual events are part of a larger revival of the old Ukrainian *kobzar* tradition, related to European minstrelsy more broadly.

In scholarly studies, it is common to describe the history of the *kobzar* tradition from the end of the 17th century. In the 18th century, the performances of Ukrainian musicians and singers became fashionable even in the Russian court of Elisabeth II (Bilokin' 1993). At the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, this tradition became localized primarily to villages and towns, and its bearers were blind, traveling from village to village, singing and playing at markets and bazaars. At this time, we have the first information about professional *kobzar* guilds which, like occupational guilds, featured their own form of government, customs, court and even their own argot (лебійська мова) (Horbach 1957). In the Romantic period, the «old world» (старосвітське) art of itinerant *kobza* and *lira* players of the 19th century became the subject of collectioneering and research, though it already documented a certain decline in the tradition. In the 20th century, in the newly formed Soviet Union, this tradition was utterly unvalued: it was felt that it carried an aesthetic and ideological dissonance with the new socialist reality. Further, the carriers of this tradition, itinerant blind musicians, were categorized as beggars for which there was no room in the concept of the “happy communist future.” The *kobzar* and *lirnyk* tradition practically disappeared in the 1930s, as did the specialists in making those traditional musical instruments (Cherems'kyi 1999: 31–111). A new Ukrainian musical tradition developed about that time, based on the concert bandura and staged bandura performances (Berezutska 2020).

The process of revitalization of the *kobzar-lirnyk* art as a living tradition is associated with Hryhorii Tkachenko (1898-1993) (Mishalov 1985). His main occupation was as an architect and artist, but in the late 1960s and early 1970s he reconstituted the old-style (старосвітський, *starosvits'kyi*) repertoire, the manner of play on the *kobza* and the practice of building instruments based on old models. Most importantly, he taught a group of students, eight in total, who carried this revived art into the world and became майстри (maistry, masters, teachers, professionals) in their own right.

When Ukraine became independent in 1991, a full revival of the *kobzar-lirnyk* art as a living tradition became possible, albeit with new qualities. Mykola Budnyk organized the blessing of his students' instruments

in 1991, which became a core event for this process. The ceremony included ritual elements with a character of initiation, reminiscent of the historical *kobzar* rite of *odklinshchyna* (одклінщина, end of studies ceremony) (Hrymych 1992: 18–19; Kushpet 2007: 277–278; Tovkailo in this volume). After undergoing this ceremony, the student gained the right to sing independently. Since that time, the *kobzar* guild has been re-established as a social group which systematically works for the revival of the old tradition, maximally connected to the old style and its authentic heritage though adapted to the new social context (Cherems'kyi 2002: 354–358).

It is interesting to compare the continuity and change in various components of the contemporary living tradition of the *kobzari* with the classical situation: what elements of the older practice are retained and what has taken on new variant forms or has been invented.

A key element in the conceptualization of the revived tradition is the custom of individual, customized transfer of knowledge and skills from teacher to pupil. This ensures the legitimacy of the performer and his membership in the *kobzar* guild (Kushpet 2007: 179–185). When describing the qualifications of a *kobzar*, the name of his teacher is always mentioned, as a sort of professional brand: *kobzar* such-and-such, studied with such-and-such. For example, Taras Kompanichenko was a student of Hryhorii Tkachenko, who in turn learned the art of playing on the bandura and the traditional repertoire from Petro Drevchenko (1863-1934). Iurko Kocherzhyns'kyi studied under Mykola Budnyk, who had been a student of Hryhorii Tkachenko. The Guildmaster of the Kyiv *kobzar* brotherhood Mykola Tovkailo also studied with Tkachenko. Volodymyr Perepeliuk was a pupil of Iehor Movchan, who was a pupil of Stepan Pasiuha (1862-1933). In this way, a vertical structure of the community is built, a “professional genealogy” of contemporary *kobzari* which connects them to the last representatives of the old tradition. This approach is key to giving the contemporary *kobzar* tradition its strong sense of being a living tradition. An interrupted tradition can be considered living when “these artefacts are given new life by the descendants of the original practitioners” (Seitel 2001).

Of course, both in earlier times and today, there have been cases in which a musician was trained by more than one *maister*. In this way, Volodymyr Priadka learned to sing with Iehor Movchan and to play on his instrument with Hryhorii Tkachenko. Anatolii Parfynenko studied with Fedor Kushneryk, Iehor Movchan, Ievhen Adamtsevych, Serhii Bashtan and Volodymyr Perepeliuk (Kocherzhyns'kyi 2023a). This “horizontal”

aspect across one generation can vary and does not affect the rights and standing of the performer. Rather the vertical element is key.

In terms of teaching methods, the core process is the oral transmission of information and skills based on the saying “what you remembered – that’s what you have taken” (що запам’ятав – те й взяв). This remains one of the core principles of the contemporary living tradition. Several innovations arise, however, in the modern context for learning to sing or play an instrument. Firstly, audio recordings of former *kobzari* are available and can be used to learn their repertoire. In this way, Kost’ Cherems’kyi studied from Anatolii Parfynenko, the *kobzar* from Myrhorod. By the way, Cherems’kyi had been his sighted guide as a youth. However, Cherems’kyi sings certain pieces based on recordings of Iehor Movchan. Secondly, a self-teaching handbook now exists for playing on the old-world instruments (Kushpet 1997) though it is used only as a supporting method and the emphasis remains on direct interactions with a teacher while learning to play. Several contemporary *kobzari* have formal musical education (secondary or post-secondary), though it is generally considered that knowledge of musical notation and theory is not essential. Indeed, some hold the more radical position that such formal education interferes with the internalization of the tradition.

Oral transmission was the only way to pass on knowledge and skills in the classical *kobzar* society, particularly because all its members were blind. Practically the last representatives of the older tradition of sightless itinerant professional musicians were *kobzar* Iehor Movchan (1998-1968), *banduryst* Anatolii Parfynenko (1918-1992) and lira player Ivan Vlasiuk (1908-1991). The current bearers of the *kobzar* culture are sighted; however, there is a tendency to actively take on sightless students. The future of the tradition rests in some ways in their hands (Bozhyns’kyi 2023).

An important component of the *kobzar-lirnyk* revival in contemporary Ukraine is the resuscitation of the traditional form of self-organization – the guild. As of today, there are *kobzar* guilds in Kyiv and in Kharkiv, headed by Mykola Tovkailo and Kost’ Cherems’kyi, respectively. Lira player Mykhailo Khai strove to create a guild for lira players; however, he recently passed away with this goal unfulfilled.

The revitalization of rituals for the *kobzar* community is a core around which the rest of their operations revolve. The major pillars of this structure are the two calendar holidays mentioned above. In the past, the Christian holy day of Pentecost (Трійця День Зіслання Святого Духа, Triitsia,

Day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, 50 days after Easter) represented the beginning of the season of travel for the itinerant *kobzari*. Pokrova (Покрова, Покров Пресвятої Богородиці, The Intercession of the Theotokos, or the Protection of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary) marked the end of the season. Over the winter, the *kobzar* players sang in people's houses. As mentioned above, the tradition of *kobzar* rituals revived in 1991 on the feast of Pokrova. In 2013 it grew into the form of a festival, based on the *Kobzar* Pentecost festival which itself had been established in 2008. Since 2019, the festival on Pokrova takes place on the grounds of the Ivan Honchar Museum. Weather permitting, the concert, master classes and marketplace are set up in the Museum yard. A conference and exhibits are set up inside the building.

The *kobzar* community has actively debated the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the festival context for performing ceremonial acts. This is not an authentic format for the tradition though it is considered as the only viable strategy in the current situation, even by the most conservative brothers (*bratii*, братії). Numerous strategies and approaches exist for folklife festivals (Cadaval 2017) though a moment of communication – direct contact between the bearers of the culture and the broader public – is a key common feature.

Both festivals incorporate old (reconstructed) customs as well as new ones. The assemblage of *kobzari* and *limyky* itself is a core feature of both the old and the revived tradition arriving from all regions and interacting in the context of their professional brotherhood. Their interactions involve an exchange of news, experiences, a demonstration of repertoire, shared toasts and other activities. Documents suggest that such assemblies provided the opportunity for the ceremony (визвілка, *vyzvilka*) which gave certain *kobzari* the right to take on students and to confirm and define the territory for the *kobzari* to sing and play for alms. Today, the main ritual act is the blessing of the musical instruments. This ceremony is conducted by a priest in a church (less often outside). The most frequent locations have become the Church of the Pokrova in the Podol district of Kyiv and the Refectory and Church of Saint John the Theologian on the territory of St. Michael's Cathedral in Kyiv (Трапезна й Церква Іоанна Богослова на території Михайлівського Собору в Києві) (Kocherzhyns'kyi 2023b). Since there is no information of such a ceremony in the past, at least not a collective blessing, this can be considered an innovation, first organized by Mykola Budnyk.

In the past, the *kobzar* community was quite closed, in large part because its members were blind. Their young guides (*povodyri*, *поводирі*) served as intermediaries between the world of the blind and the sighted. The *kobzar* assemblies, therefore, were quite secretive. Today however, such an approach is dissonant with the demands of the time. The public visibility of the festival format for *kobzar* assemblies makes it possible to publicize the idea of reviving the *kobzar* tradition and to find as many supporters as possible in diverse segments of the population.

The “Kobzars’ka Triitsia” and “Kobzars’ko-lirnyts’ka Pokrova” festivals incorporate master classes and demonstrations of building musical instruments, as well as techniques for playing the *lira*, *kobza*, *bandura* and *torban*. They also include *kobzar* concerts, concerts of ancient and spiritual music, traditional Ukrainian dances, scholarly conferences and exhibits.

One of the features of this tradition is the artisanal creation of the musical instruments based on antique precedents (Demian and Falk 2021). This is no doubt an innovation since the blind musicians of the past did not build their own instruments. Initiation into the community of instrument makers has become almost a cult event in the contemporary *kobzar* tradition. Not all practitioners adhere to this ceremonial demarcation but many do.

There is an extensive narrative lore on the theme of the relationship between the musician and his instrument in the community of *kobzari* and *lirnyky*. One of the recurring themes is how Hryhorii Tkachenko had to revive not only the *kobzar* repertoire and school but also the forgotten craft of making old-style musical instruments. As a professional artist and architect, he made high quality drawings and initiated searches among carpenters to find masters who could produce his designs. He started by commissioning a craftsman to make a little stool (*taburetochka*, *табуреточка*) and watching how the woodworker proceeded. After this, he engaged him to make a more complex project, a musical instrument based on drawn plans. Not all carpenters could achieve the project satisfactorily, but he did identify several artisans for his purposes (Kocherzhyns’kyi 2023c; Bozhyns’kyi 2023). Mykola Budnyk built old-style *bandury* himself and gifted them to those who expressed a desire to learn to play on them. After a while however, he grew disillusioned in this strategy and came to the conclusion that the best motivation for playing such an instrument is to build it oneself. If a student completes such a project, then he is most likely to have serious intentions as a *kobzar* (Kocherzhyns’kyi 2023c). These luthiers build their instruments in the yards near their homes or in workshops. One such workshop was established in the building of the

Ivan Honchar Museum. A staff member of the museum, Rusalim Kosmyna (Kozlenko), managed the facility (Kosmyna 2023). Many museums around the world have experience in collecting and reviving the craft of making old musical instruments, thus engaging in intangible cultural heritage in this way (La Rue 2007).

The element of itinerant music making has changed substantially in the current *kobzar* living tradition. In today's context, the classical practice of making a living in a region designated by their brethren by walking from village to village is anachronistic. Nonetheless, several cases of such a practice have been observed. Nazar Chornyslychnyk (Bozhyns'kyi) explains in one of his interviews,

I play as a *kobzar* every Sunday on my bandura or lira in Novi Sanzhari. This is the lifestyle of a *kobzar*, you have to play for people everywhere. I try to come every Sunday from 8:00 to 12:00. On weekdays in Poltava I strive to play at the market as well, or more often near the cathedral by the belltower. My concert performances are not the main thing, because people come who have already seen this a hundred times. You have to play for regular people, because they don't show this on television, and there is no other place to see it. (Bozhyns'kyi 2022)

Iurko Kocherzhyns'kyi described how he, together with his teacher and mentor Mykola Budnyk, practiced itinerant *kobzar* playing in the 1990s. They traveled by streetcar, stood beside churches and at marketplaces. To avoid difficult situations, they tried to play for those who asked for it or for those who might be potential listeners (Kocherzhyns'kyi 2023c). The contemporary narratives of *kobzari* contain many themes about playing "outside" and interesting experiences with contemporary itinerant practice (Kocherzhyns'kyi 2023c; Bozhyns'kyi 2023).

Nonetheless, examples of classical itinerant *kobzar* playing are the exception to the rule and a new context has become standard: traveling with concert performances. This lifestyle can be seen as intermediate between the old-style itinerant tradition and the modern touring life of stage artists. The concert touring of contemporary *kobzari* and *lirnyky* involves performances (often unpaid) at various cultural events, as well as their own feature performances, frequently for charitable purposes. During the Revolution for Dignity in 2013-2014 and during the current war, they have traveled actively, lifting the morale of the fighters with their songs and music. Another connection with traditional practices is the preference for playing outdoors in public squares (they call this "*kobzariuvannia nadvori*," кобзарювання надворі). If a performance occurs inside a building, it typically takes the form of an informal interaction.

In the *kobzar-lirnyk* context, their playing is not conceptualized as the profession of an artist, but more as a philosophy and a lifestyle.

Kobzar Taras Kompanichenko has found an interesting balance between his stage performances and informal praxis closer to old world tradition.⁶ He often performs on stage and takes part in concerts, though he develops his stage practice within the bounds of the *kobzar* philosophy. After every event he always remains with those who show interest in his music and spends time with them in informal interactions and orientational discussions, illustrated with musical examples. For this reason, in the mass culture, he is received as a bearer of an authentic living tradition.

The yard of the Ivan Honchar Museum has established itself as a regular platform for *kobzari* and lira players. The atmosphere of an old-world market is maintained in this area and the players are felt to be natural in this context.

Performing as a *kobzar* outdoors in some ways overlaps with the contemporary practice of street musicians. On the other hand, it also has similarities with the subculture of historical reconstruction. *Kobzari* and lira players approach their personal image from various angles. For some, the ethnic utility of their practice is paramount and they appear simply in embroidered shirts, perhaps a Cossack style haircut or other physical markers of their occupation. Others work very seriously on their presentation to emphasize historical continuity. They may create their own clothing in special workshops or make their garments themselves. In this spirit, Nazar Chornoshlychnyk (Bozhyns'kyi) has explored mastering the loom, weaving straw hats and has sewn himself a shirt based on a museum artifact worn by Taras Shevchenko (Bozhyns'kyi 2023). The Ivan Honchar Museum provides advice and support for creating copies of authentic folk clothing.

The success of the *kobzar* practice as a living tradition is a significant factor in the formation of public opinion about national heritage. By Order No. 525 of the Ministry of Culture and Informational Politics of Ukraine, 23 December 2022, the *kobzar* tradition was inscribed into the National inventory of elements of intangible cultural heritage of Ukraine.⁷

6. Taras Kompanichenko is designated as a People's Artist of Ukraine and has been awarded the prestigious National Shevchenko Prize.

7. Ukrainian Center for Cultural Research 2022. <<https://uccs.org.ua/novyny/kobzarstvo/>>.

The “Night of Traditional Dance,” “Oreli,” and the *kobzar* tradition are not the only projects of the Ivan Honchar Museum National Centre of Folk Culture associated with the preservation and promotion of intangible heritage. The list of its creative initiatives includes a wide spectrum of actions promoting crafts and folk arts, traditional knowledge related to producing clothing with traditional patterns and decoration, foodlore, oral traditions in general and other genres. They all reflect the originality of Ukrainian culture and the cultural identity of Ukrainians. Some of the Museum’s projects can be described as supporting living traditions, while others take the form of festivals, and yet others combine these two directions. Similarly, the creative work involves both traditional culture bearers and reconstructors. In this way, the Ivan Honchar Museum, housing one of the best collections of folk art and traditional material culture artifacts in Ukraine, has become not only a hub of material culture but also intangible cultural heritage of Ukraine. Safeguarding the intangible heritage and folklore is not understood by the Museum staff and its partners as only collecting and archiving but also as supporting and promoting the culture bearers, caring for the viability of continued re-creation and transmission as forms of living tradition. This engagement takes place both in the form of festivals and revivalist practice, as well as the education of the consumers of this segment of the overall culture, including a concerted engagement with children and youth.

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