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# Alexander Jacobchuk's Symphonies and the Construction of Ukrainian National Identity

*As sinfonias de Alexander Jacobchuk e a construção da identidade nacional ucraniana*

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# Alexander Jacobchuk's Symphonies and the Construction of Ukrainian National Identity

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## Resumo

Atualmente, a música ucraniana emergiu como uma entidade distinta e visível, algo que não era possível durante o período soviético. O tema do passado heróico do povo ucraniano revelou-se um marco na preservação da identidade nacional, mesmo durante os tempos do poder soviético. Deste ponto de vista, a obra sinfónica do compositor ucraniano Alexander Jacobchuk é relevante, uma vez que o contexto histórico constitui a tela semântica das suas ideias. Neste artigo, a sua personalidade é apresentada no contexto da identidade nacional, principalmente através da sua música para orquestra. Jacobchuk explora práticas comemorativas na música, que incorporam a memória cultural e reflexões filosóficas sobre a vida e a perda. As sinfonias de Jacobchuk, como uma crónica que abrange temas como o desastre de Chernobyl, a Segunda Guerra Mundial, o Holodomor e o conflito em curso com a Rússia, seguem uma estrutura narrativa marcada por momentos de luto, confronto, reflexão e catarse. Outra característica marcante da produção sinfónica de Jacobchuk é a manifestação do carácter nacional ucraniano na música, contribuindo para o processo de construção da nação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Identidade nacional ucraniana; Música ucraniana; Sinfonia; Alexander Jacobchuk.

## Abstract

Nowadays Ukrainian music has emerged as a distinct and visible entity, something that wasn't possible during the Soviet period. The theme of the heroic past of the Ukrainian people proved to be a marker in the preservation of national identity even during the times of Soviet power. From this point of view, the symphonic work of the Ukrainian composer Alexander Jacobchuk is of great value, as the historical background forms the semantic canvas of his ideas. In this paper, his personality is presented in the context of national identity, primarily through his music for orchestra. Jacobchuk explores commemorative practices in music, which embody cultural memory and philosophical reflections on life and loss. Jacobchuk's symphonies, as a chronicle, spanning topics such as the Chernobyl disaster, the Second World War, the Holodomor, and the ongoing conflict with Russia, follow a narrative structure marked by moments of grief, confrontation, reflection, and catharsis. Another defining feature of Jacobchuk's symphonic output is the manifestation of Ukrainian national character in his music, contributing to the process of nation-building.

**KEYWORDS:** Ukrainian national identity; Ukrainian music; Symphony; Alexander Jacobchuk.

All that we can say with some degree of certainty is that national identity and nationalism are likely to remain powerful and proliferating forces in the foreseeable future.

Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*<sup>1</sup>

Preparing this article took place during a tragic period for Ukraine. It witnessed long and alarming months of Russia's large-scale invasion starting on 24 February 2022, marking the third stage of a conflict that originated in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea. It was unfathomable to me that my homeland could become another global conflict zone, witnessing the loss of military and civilian lives, the destruction of cities, villages, infrastructure, as well as architectural and artistic heritage. I couldn't imagine that the educational system would shift to an online format with questionable effectiveness, nor did I anticipate that approximately nine million compatriots, including my sons and myself, would be compelled to flee our homes in search of safety abroad. Despite this harrowing ordeal, we remain resolute in defending our territory, the sovereignty of our homeland, our language, traditions, culture, and national identity. The preparation of this article included the fortunate opportunity to discuss its ideas during the BASEES Study Group for Slavonic and Eastern European Music Annual Conference on 17 February 2024 at Durham University and the symposium 'Migration, Identity and Memory' on 21–22 March 2024 hosted by the Pembroke College of Cambridge University. I have an infinite sense of gratitude to Marina Frolova-Walker for our friendly communication, her support and generous advice, which became valuable for the conclusions and, I feel, for the next challenges for the future.

The history of the Ukrainian nation begins long before 1991, the year Ukraine declared independence following the collapse of the USSR. The journey to this pivotal moment is marked by victories and defeats, numerous human sacrifices during its colonial past under the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, and later as part of the totalitarian USSR. There are already many studies on this topic in the West.<sup>2</sup>

From the end of the eighteenth century, interest in the language, folklore, and history of their region spread among nobles descended from the Cossack nobility (starshyna) in Right-Bank Ukraine. This cultural awakening led to the creation of the first work in the Ukrainian

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1 Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity: Ethnonationalism in Comparative Perspective* (Reno, University of Nevada Press, 1991), p. 170

2 John Alexander Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism* (New York - London, Columbia University Press, 1963); John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (Edmonton - London - New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1988); Taras Hunczak, *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge - Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1990); John-Paul Himka, *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia, 1867-1900* (Montreal - Kingston - London - Ithaca, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Taras Hunczak, *Ukraine: The Challenges of World War II* (Lanham - Maryland, University Press of America, 2003); Taras Kuzio, *Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on Nationalism* (Stuttgart, Ibidem-Verlag, 2007); Timothy D. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, Basic Books, 2010); John-Paul Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust* (Hanover, Ibidem Press, 2021).

language, Ivan Kotlyarevsky's poem *Eneida* (1798), and the first treatise on the history of Ukrainians, *History of the Rus'* (first mentioned in 1828, authorship unknown, written in Russian). The treatise highlighted the historical differences between Little Russia (Ukraine) and Muscovy (Russia), tracing the legacy of Ukrainians from Kievan Rus' through the period of Cossack rule. It also asserted the equality of the Russian and Cossack elite with the Polish nobility (*szlachta*) and the Russian nobility (*dvorianstvo*).

The poetic work of Taras Shevchenko (1814–61) played a unique role in the formation of Ukrainian national identity. His collection 'Kobzar' (1840) combined national and social themes, offering criticism and satire of Russian authority. Widely known among the intelligentsia, it spread quickly with their assistance, earning great respect for Shevchenko. His work profoundly resonated with readers, helping to form the foundations of national dignity for Ukrainians in the oppressive conditions of serfdom.

I vam slava, syni hory,  
 Kryhoiu okuti.  
 I vam, lytsari velyki,  
 Bohom ne zabyti.  
 Boritiesia – poborete!  
 Vam Boh pomahaie!  
 Za vas pravda, za vas slava  
 I volia sviataia!

Extract from poem *The Caucasus* (1845)

And glory, mountains blue, to you,  
 In ageless ice encased!  
 And glory, freedom's knights, to you,  
 Whom God will not forsake.  
 Keep fighting — you are sure to win!  
 God helps you in your fight!  
 For fame and freedom march with you,  
 And right is on your side!

Translated by John Weir

It is phenomenal that, along with the Bible, Shevchenko's *Kobzar* became a cherished book for most Ukrainian families during both the era of totalitarianism and the period of stagnation, a fact I know from my own experience. The immeasurable influence of Shevchenko's poetic work is also evident in the vast number of musical compositions based on his words and themes. According to Valentyn Sylvestrov, who wrote several choral works based on Shevchenko's words during the war, this legacy endures powerfully,

This is a unique case in history when the poet became a symbol not only of the struggle for independence, but also a symbol of Ukraine. Through the word. He even has a line: 'And I will put a word on the guard around them.' Shevchenko's relationship with the word is biblical, his work is generally closely connected with the Bible. A biblical attitude to the word is important. He has a very strange fate: he is, in principle, an artist, but poetry was his misfortune and destiny. If he had not been engaged in it, he would have lived a normal life, he would have been a good artist, he would have orders. And poets—they deal with the word. And it turned out that his poetic word did not become simply literary, although it seemed that all the prerequisites were present. And these are like psalms, he is a psalmist. He is not a poet in the literary sense, like Pushkin, say, or Lermontov. He is different. He did not strive for the beauty of the composition, he had a completely different task.<sup>3</sup>

At the current crucial historical moment, Ukrainian music has emerged as a distinct and visible entity, something that wasn't possible during Soviet times. It's worthwhile to reflect on the inaugural instance of Ukrainian music's global exposure from a century ago.

During the formative years of the Ukrainian state (1918–20), Symon Petliura,<sup>4</sup> head of *The Directorate*,<sup>5</sup> tasked composer and conductor Oleksandr Koshetz (1875–1944) with swiftly establishing a choir in Kyiv. This endeavour aimed to showcase the young nation abroad through choral renditions of Ukrainian folk songs. Thus, the Ukrainian Republican Choir, comprising eighty members and led by Koshetz, embarked on a world tour funded by the state at the beginning of this journey from 1919 to 1927. Their journey took them through Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany, Poland, Spain, the USA, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Canada, and Cuba, where they delivered approximately 900 concerts in seventy-four renowned venues across Europe and America. This historic endeavour introduced the Ukrainian carol *Shchedryk* (adapted as *Carol of the Bells* by Peter J. Wilhousky in English-speaking countries), arranged by Mykola Leontovych, to audiences worldwide. Jaroslav Křička, a Prague conductor, bore witness to this artistic triumph, noting:

The Ukrainians came and won. Unfortunately, we had known nothing about them for too long, and they were deeply offended that we unknowingly and without understanding lumped them together with the Russian people against their will. Our very desire for a 'great and indivisible Russia' is a weak argument against nature, against the will and feelings of the entire Ukrainian people, for whom independence, just as it is for us, is everything.<sup>6</sup>

3 Mariia Semenchenko, 'Valentyn Sylvestrov: "Chytaite Shevchenka doky ne pizno..."', *The Day* (29 December 2013).

4 Symon Petliura (1879-1926) was an Ukrainian statesman, military and political figure, publicist, literary and theater critic. A fighter for the independence of Ukraine in the twentieth century.

5 The Directorate, or Directory (Ukrainian: Директорія, romanized: Dyrektoriiia) was a temporary collegiate revolutionary state committee of the Ukrainian People's Republic, initially formed on 13-14 November 1918 during a session of the Ukrainian National Union in rebellion against Pavlo Skoropadskyi's regime.

6 Tina Peresunko, *Kulturna dyplomacia Symona Petliury: 'Shchedryk' proty 'ruskogo mira'. Misiia kapely Olexandra Koshytsia (1919–1924)* (Kyiv, Vydavnychiy dim 'ArtEk', 2019), S. 26.

The body of reviews on the choir performances collected in Tina Peresunko's book proves the truly unprecedented resonance of the project. For example, in London during a month (February 1920), the choir performed in twelve concerts, collecting more than a hundred reviews in the press:

The new country that brought music to Great Britain is the Ukrainian Republic. One of the first laws of the government contributed to the preservation of music and the creation of institutions for its representation. One of these is the National Choir, which we heard in London last evening at the Queen's Hall. The singing is admirable. On the technical side it has been wrought to a high pitch of perfection, as is illustrated by unanimity of the nuance, the decision in the attack and release, and the perfect blend of the tone. That tone in itself is characteristic of the people. It is bright and uncommonly resonant, with an outstanding feature to British ears in the quality and range of the basses, which have all the sonority of the pure Russians. [...] In the Hymns, as in the Carols, the singing was most impressive, and the folk songs revealed a pliancy which is not common. To a choral country like Great Britain the efforts of the choir are particularly interesting, and, though there is inevitable difference in tone quality the effect, when once the ear is accustomed to its slight hardness, is very pleasing, while the technical command must always excite our admiration, since its value can be appreciated as probably nowhere else.<sup>7</sup>

The first concert of the Ukrainian Choir, which was given to-night at the Queen's Hall, showed that the rapturous praise which Belgian and French critics bestowed on these singers in no way exaggerated their ability. Their performance can only be described as the highest point which choral technique has ever reached. And as the singers are selected not only on account of their intelligence but also of the quality of their voice, the tone on the average is always free from the little harshness which over-trained choirs exhibit. Even their intonation seems purer than that of almost any choir I have heard, implying, of course, no disrespect to the other choirs for the sense of 'pitch' of any mass of singers and even players is never perfect to the ear of the expert.<sup>8</sup>

**The concerts on the American continent were accompanied by similarly positive reviews:**

The momentary scarcity of news, due to the Christmas season and its attractions, leaves me space to draw attention to a concert which has left an impression of the deepest sort. Although sometimes spoken of as the 'leading centre of choral activity in the North American Continent, Toronto found yet there is a lesson or two yet to be learnt when the Ukrainian National Chorus sang here last month. This vital little body of forty-five men and women, under the inspiring direction of Alexander Koshetz, shows perfectly amazing vocal technique and clarity of diction, besides revealing an intensity of emotional fervour which is nothing less than startling to our placid Anglo-Saxon temperament. Humming is a fine art with these Ukrainians. They have developed such definite string tone-colour that they can at a moment's notice reproduce the most

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7 *The Morning Post* (4 February 1920), Ukrainian translation in Peresunko, *Kulturna dyplomacia* (see note 6), p. 180.

8 *The Manchester Guardian* (4 February 1920), Ukrainian translation in Peresunko, *Kulturna dyplomacia* (see note 6), p. 180.

realistic effect of orchestral accompaniment. Their national part-songs, of which *Ulianka cut the silken grass* (Stupnitsky) and *The wind is whispering on the house* (Lyssenko) are outstanding examples, would well repay more than casual study.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the concert tour, numerous reviews overflowing with immense admiration were published in every country visited by the choir.

Regrettably, further exploration of Ukrainian musical culture was hindered by historical circumstances. Following the absorption of the independent Ukrainian state into the Soviet Union as a 'national republic', it became subordinate to Moscow, with the Communist Party wielding sole administrative power. Despite this, a handful of Ukrainian folk ensembles existed, offering a Sovietized rendition of folk music and occasionally showcased abroad in the context of 'friendship among peoples'.

One important source of information on Ukrainian music for the West was the book *Agony of Art* (1955) by Ukrainian musicologist and composer Andrii Olkhovskiy (1899–1969), who managed to flee to the West during the Nazi occupation of Kyiv. The title of the book, reflecting the tragedy of art under the totalitarian system, conveys the author's critical attitude toward the realities of life in the USSR. Olkhovskiy highlighted the dependence of art on the ideological pressure of the party, its control and manipulative methods, the presence of a well-established repressive mechanism, the lack of creative freedom, and the subordination of artists to the directives of the current government apparatus. Olkhovskiy noted the difficult and unfavourable circumstances faced by Ukrainian composers in their desire to reveal a national style. Some composers were strongly encouraged to move away from Russian music, while others sought direct contact with it. These opposite tendencies were further complicated by the imperatives of Soviet art policy. In the early 1920s, composers such as Kyrylo Stetsenko, Yakiv Stepovyi (Yakymenko), Mykola Leontovych, and Koshetz, who worked in Kyiv, preferred material borrowed from folklore. In doing so, they continued the tradition of the founder of the Ukrainian school of composers, Mykola Lysenko. Among them, Olkhovskiy singles out Leontovych: 'Particularly in Leontovych's work, the basic principle is the personification of the separated voices of Ukrainian folk song in which each participant is a real force, an actual personage, a characteristic phenomenon.'<sup>10</sup>

Through the concept of dynamic polyphony, which is rooted in the very nature of Ukrainian song, Olkhovskiy illustrates changes in the creative approaches of Lysenko's younger contemporaries. This concept influenced the active treatment of musical material, broadened the limits of form, and liberated art song from ethnographism. Olkhovskiy notes a noticeable enrichment of the harmonic language, the complication of tonal-harmonic connections, and

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9 'Musical Notes from Abroad', *The Musical Times*, 65/973 (1924), 268.

10 Andrey Olkhovsky, *Music Under the Soviets: The Agony of an Art* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), p. 245.

the diversification of texture.

In the mid-1920s, a new generation of composers entered the musical scene and directly felt the pressure of Bolshevik ideology. Olkhovskiy also discusses a range of themes prevalent in art at the time, including the glorification of great and small leaders, industrialization, collectivism, and Soviet patriotism. Despite these pressures, he characterizes the mood of artists in the mid-1930s as versatile. On one hand, there was passivity and an outward appearance of obedience; on the other, there was both acute and hidden protest. Among the noteworthy works of this time, Olkhovskiy mentions the Second Symphony and the Piano Concerto by Revutskiy, the Second Symphony by Liatoshynskiy, and Variations by Kolessa.

Dating the phenomenon of Soviet music to the years of Stalin's rule (1930s-1953), Olkhovskiy identifies its specific features:

In those years, too—a particularly important fact—it acquired that rigidity which has kept it unchanged to the present time, as well as its single creative method, that of 'socialist realism', which actually meant its complete loss of creative freedom and total subordination to the aims and tasks of Bolshevik political propaganda.<sup>11</sup>

This understanding is clarified by the fact that Olkhovsky was personally involved in this process as the head of the department of Ukrainian music at the Kyiv Conservatory from 1935 to 1941. For instance, his speech at the first visiting plenum of the Organizing Committee of the Union of Composers of the USSR in 1940, which focused on the work of Ukrainian composers, relied heavily on typical propagandist clichés. He spoke of 'The Great October Socialist Revolution' as having 'opened wide opportunities for the development of Ukrainian musical culture', emphasizing the 'fraternal unity with the great Russian people', and highlighting the 'covenant goals of socialist content and national form of art'.<sup>12</sup>

The deformation of the development of musical culture lasted until the collapse of the USSR, causing Ukrainian musical culture to exist under subordination to Moscow. However, according to Serhy Yekelchuk, there were exceptions due to the relative autonomy of the local bureaucracy and intellectuals, as seen in the production of patriotic historical operas, such as *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi* by Kostiantyn Dankevych, in Soviet Ukraine:

The production of patriotic historical operas in Soviet Ukraine underscored the lack of uniformity – indeed, the abundance of irregularities – in Stalinist culture. The Moscow authorities sought to achieve total control over cultural production, but their efforts were frustrated by the relative autonomy of the local bureaucracy and intellectuals. In their 'dialogue' with Moscow, the republican elites sometimes demonstrated extreme

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11 Olkhovsky, *Music Under the Soviets* (see note 10), pp. IX–X.

12 Andrey Olkhovsky, 'A. Tvorchist radianskikh kompozytoriv Ukrainy', *Radianska Muzyka*, 3 (1940), pp. 5-12.

servility by inflating ideological campaigns and pushing for more denunciations. At other times, they skillfully exploited the Stalinist linguistic code in defense of their cultural domain. In both cases, the local functionaries and the intelligentsia acted as historical agents who shaped the very nature of Stalinism by negotiating the meaning of the official discourse.<sup>13</sup>

The theme of the heroic past of the Ukrainian people proved to be a marker in the preservation of national identity (Renan, Smith, Kohn<sup>14</sup>) even during the times of Soviet power. This theme became even more significant after the Ukrainian people proclaimed their own state in 1991.

From this point of view, the symphonic work of the Ukrainian composer Alexander Jacobchuk (b. 1952) is of great value, as the historical background forms the semantic canvas of his ideas. That is why, in this article, I present his personality in the context of the problem of national identity, primarily through his music for orchestra.

The music of Alexander Jacobchuk is very popular in Ukraine. His choral arrangements of folk songs, of which he wrote more than three hundred for various choirs, are widely known. These works figure in the repertoire of chamber choirs such as Khreshchatyk, Oreya, Oranta, the Women's Choir of the Kyiv Municipal Academy of Music named after Glière, and the Galician Chamber Choir. Listeners also appreciate his cantatas and oratorios, which have been vividly and memorably performed by the National Academic Choral Capella Dumka and the Choral Capella Pochayna. More than two hundred of his compositions have been recorded in the fund of the National Radio Company of Ukraine with the label 'keep forever'. In addition to choral music, these recordings also include the works for orchestra. Over one hundred and sixty of his works have been published in Ukraine and Canada, eleven original audio CDs, and two videos have been released.

Alexander Jacobchuk was born on May 21, 1952, in the village of Cherche, near the cities of Kamianets-Podilskyi and Khmelnytskyi, in Ukraine. He began his musical training in 1964, playing the trumpet in the school brass band and taking private piano lessons. After completing music school in 1968, he enrolled in the Khmelnytskyi Musical College, specializing in Music Theory. It was during this time that he developed an interest in composition. From 1971 to 1976, Jacobchuk studied composition at the Kyiv Conservatoire under Anatolii Kolomiets.<sup>15</sup>

After graduating from the conservatoire, while working as a music editor for Ukrainian Radio (1976–9), Jacobchuk made several folkloristic trips to the villages of western Podillia

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13 Serhy Yekelchuk, 'Diktat and Dialogue in Stalinist Culture: Staging Patriotic Historical Opera in Soviet Ukraine, 1936-1954', *Slavic Review*, 59/3 (2000), p. 624. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2697347>.

14 Ernest Renan, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?', in *Hutchinson J. and Smith A. (eds.) Nationalism*. 17-18; Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London, Penguin Books of London, 1991); Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, Macmillan Publishers, 1944).

15 Anatolii Kolomiets (1918-97) was a Ukrainian composer and talented pianist-improviser, who at one time was a student of the Stalin Prize laureate Lev Revutskyi.

along the river Zbruch, recording folk melodies. From 1981 to 1988, during the summertime, he studied orchestration with professors Yurii Fortunatov<sup>16</sup> and Pavel Rivilis.<sup>17</sup>

Like many composers of art music, Jacobchuk found it challenging to develop his career in the post-Soviet space due to severe constraints on opportunities for new music, stemming from a lack of financial support. In 1990, he and his family moved to Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, but after the start of the Balkan Wars, the composer emigrated to Canada (1994–2009). In Canada, Jacobchuk struggled to support his family solely through composition work and nearly stopped composing altogether, as performance opportunities for his music were scarce. In 2009, he accepted an invitation to work at the National Academy of Music in Kyiv, where he has been a professor up to the present moment.

Jacobchuk belongs to the generation of composers whose careers began in the early 1970s. By that time, the Ukrainian avant-garde had been developing for at least ten years, led by figures like Sylvestrov and Hrabovskyi. Although it was not encouraged by the Union of Composers, Sylvestrov and Hrabovskyi were able to draw moral support and inspiration from the Warsaw Autumn Festival. They experimented with various techniques, including sonoristics, serial and free atonality, spatial effects, and static form. These innovations set the avant-gardists apart from the traditionally oriented majority of composers in Ukraine. Unfortunately, their compositions were seldom performed outside venues like the club of scientists in Kyiv for a long time. However, the establishment of the chamber orchestra Kyiv Camerata in 1977 expanded the possibilities for performing their music. Their impressive reputation as innovators and creatively free artists has attracted the attention of younger colleagues. Jacobchuk often visited Sylvestrov's home, where he could hear new music and become acquainted with modern scores. This unofficial training was complemented by regular composition lessons with Kolomiets, a composer of a much more conservative persuasion (himself a pupil of Lev Revutskyi), who took folk songs as the basis of his Romantic, tonal musical language. As Jacobchuk told me in an interview, the main result of these studies was his deep understanding of how to work with short segments of tunes, making modal and rhythmic changes.<sup>18</sup> Melodic formulas and dance rhythms appropriated from folklore have been used in the woodwind quartet *Folk Scene* (1972), *Triptych for mixed choir a cappella* (1975), and *Bukovyna Capriccio for clarinet and piano* (1984). All these compositions are very popular and effectively display Neofolklorism in the early style of Jacobchuk. In particular, the

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16 Yurii Fortunatov (1911-98) was a musicologist and professor at the Moscow Conservatoire. He was the initiator of the creation of the All-Union Seminar for Composers at the Ivanovo House of Creativity. Composers from all over the USSR sought Fortunatov's advice, including Georgy Sviridov when composing the 'Kursk Songs' and Rodion Shchedrin, whose 'The Little Humpbacked Horse' was written under Fortunatov's guidance.

17 Pavel Rivilis (1936-2014) was a Moldovan composer and professor at the Kishinev Academy of Theatre, Music, and Fine Arts. From 1980 onwards, he repeatedly participated in the work of the All-Union Seminar for Composers at the Ivanovo House of Creativity as a music director.

18 Interview with Jacobchuk (Kyiv, 21 May 2021).

composer used micro-motives from archaic layers of folklore and their various transformations as a basis for creating a musical form. Thanks to the variability of accents, he achieved the free fluctuation of rhythm and meter. This feature is similar to improvisations in Ukrainian folk instrumental music. But the young composer did not want to remain confined to the Neofolklorism framework. This intention caused a conflict with his teacher. Kolomiets was shocked by Jacobchuk's polyphonic variations *Metamorphosis* for string quartet (1974), written in twelve-tone technique, which Jacobchuk presented for an examination without his professor's agreement. Their relationship was severed immediately, and Jacobchuk began studying with the more tolerant Vitalii Kyreiko.<sup>19</sup> Unexpectedly, *Metamorphosis* gained notoriety in the conservatory environment due to its unusual sound. It was then performed at the All-Union Conference of Young Composers and Musicologists in Minsk, Belarus, and received favourable reviews in the press.

Thanks to the Ivanovo seminars, Jacobchuk had the opportunity to be at the epicentre of the innovative experiments conducted by young composers from all republics of the Soviet Union. He was imbued with the prevailing spirit of renewal and creative challenge, which ultimately influenced his entire artistic destiny and led to a high level of exactingness in his music. Thus, in the early period of his work, Jacobchuk focused his interest on Ukrainian folk music with the intention of reinterpreting it. At the same time, he explored wider horizons of his personal style and mastered different genres, especially the symphony.

The symphony was one of the top genres in the Soviet hierarchy of musical genres since the 1930s, with its prestige upheld by composers like Shostakovich and Myaskovsky, and in Ukrainian music, by Liatoszynskyi and Revutskyi. On the one hand, the status of the symphony was based on a long historical tradition of the genre in Europe, further enhanced by Asafiev's conception of 'symphonism' as the highest manifestation of generalization in music—a pinnacle that composers should strive for and achieve. On the other hand, its prestige was fuelled by state commissions, which provided payment and the opportunity to perform works, award prizes, distinctions, honorary ranks, and career success. According to Elena Zinkevich,

The 1970s and 1980s became the golden age of the Ukrainian symphony. During this period, the genre acquired a distinct identity, occupying an equal position among the symphonies of other national composer schools and becoming the dominant genre in Ukrainian musical life. Over 170 symphonies were created in Ukraine between 1970 and 1985.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Vitalii Kyreiko (1926-2016) was a Ukrainian composer, best known for his widely acclaimed opera *Lisova pisnia* (*Forest song*, 1957), based on a poem by Lesia Ukrainka. He studied under Lev Revutskyi from 1944 to 1949.

20 Elena Zinkevich, 'Ukrainskaya simfoniia: markery natsionalnoy identichnosti', *Yuzhno-Rossiyskiy muzykalnyi almanakh*, 4/45 (2021), p. 98.

The appearance of Jacobchuk's first symphonic works coincided with a significant discussion on the state of the symphonic genre in the USSR, titled 'Symphony Today. Traditions. Losses. Findings' (1987–8), which took place on the pages of the journal *Sovetskaya muzika* (Moscow). In this debate, musicologists examined the current situation, considered the significance of various artistic decisions, and discussed the movement away from the established model of the genre as well as the determined effort to master new directions. Contrary to Mikhail Aranovsky, who, in 1979, viewed the current period as a time of destabilization for the symphonic genre,<sup>21</sup> Mikhail Tarakanov saw the symphony as a stable phenomenon, though he acknowledged that its definition had been stretched to the limit of the possible. He insisted, however, that in the modern symphony 'the principle of antithetical development, based on the struggle and interaction of contrasting themes, has ceased to be universal, the only possible one'.<sup>22</sup>

Vsevolod Zaderatsky focused on the content of a symphony, considering it an 'exponent of intellectual meaning'. Starting from the central idea of a symphony—man and the world—the scholar discussed the 'semantic fields' of the genre. In particular, the image of Nature, increasingly perceived as representing the entire planet Earth and symbolizing the beauty of life, is now permeated with tragic reflection, haunted by the specter of nuclear disaster. According to Zaderatsky, what is new is the relationship to events and the collisions of the world, so the music reflects 'the world as a state of events'. He explains the appearance of meditative patterns as a new contemplation of infinity, sharpened by composers' reflections on the finitude of human existence. This complements the comprehensiveness of the lyrical factor as a synonym for human value.<sup>23</sup>

Like Zaderatsky, Irma Zolotovyt'ska discussed the freer correlation between symphonic thinking and the symphony as a genre, considering the method of symphonic thinking to be a mobile factor, and conceptuality as a stable factor in the modern existence of a symphony. The scholar also identified the separation between practical experience and its theoretical underpinning:

[...] our conceptual apparatus does not always align with the new tasks that composers have to tackle. It is necessary to clarify the concepts in their systemic relationship, historical dynamics, and in the general humanitarian context since we are discussing the fundamental theoretical, philosophical, and methodological problems of musicology, and the analysis based on them of specific, still little-researched pages of modern Soviet symphonies.<sup>24</sup>

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21 Mikhail Aranovsky, *Simfonicheskie iskanija* (Leningrad, Sovjetskiy kompositor, 1979), p. 5.

22 Mikhail Tarakanov, 'Simfoniya: zavety, sostoyanie, perspektivy', *Sovetskaya muzika*, 1 (1987), p. 14.

23 Vsevolod Zaderatsky, 'Simfoniya i realizm', *Sovetskaya muzika*, 2 (1987), p. 17.

24 Irma Zolotovitskaya, 'Kategoriya istoricheskaya', *Sovetskaya muzika*, 5 (1988), p. 26.

In Galina Grigoreva's view, the emergence of original, constructively unique models depends on solving a dramaturgical over-task, contrasting with previous stages where artistic discovery was concentrated in the intonation sphere.<sup>25</sup> Building on this perspective, Georgii Dmitriev sees the 'philosophy of orchestral voicing' as a necessary attribute of the modern situation in symphonic music: 'We can talk about a true symphony when the composer embodies the original dramatic concept with the help of developed and organic orchestral voicing.'<sup>26</sup>

This debate highlighted a shift in the understanding of what constitutes a symphony, with many new symphonic forms emerging for which musicologists have yet to find the right terminology. In Ukrainian music, Zinkevich provides examples such as the epic symphony (for example, Symphony no. 1 by Karabyts, Symphony no. 3 by Stankovych), meditation (for example, *Larga* by Stankovych, Symphony no. 4 by Sylvestrov), pamphlet (Symphony no. 4 by Buievskiy), and burlesque (Symphony no. 3 by Kolodub). She focused on new dramatic types such as the dramaturgy of dramatic statics, epic, and 'stylistic drama' (for example, Symphony no. 6 by Buievskiy, Chamber Symphony no. 2 by Zubyskiy), with narratives (for example, Symphony no. 3 by Kolodub) or without (for example, Symphony no. 5 by Sylvestrov), 'linear' and 'parabolic' (for example, *A Symphony of Pastorales* by Stankovych).<sup>27</sup>

Jacobchuk is devoted to the notion of the symphony as the pinnacle genre, indicating a certain level of mastery. He regards Shostakovich, Honegger, Liatoshynskiy, Barber, and Kancheli as important predecessors. In a conversation with me, he expressed that the symphony is meant to mirror life itself, to capture life's impressions, and to comprehend the history of the native people. It is a dialectical musical form in which the composer embodies a certain overarching task—the artistic idea of the work. Similar to the novel genre in literature, it possesses many figurative layers that interact with each other. Simultaneously, it's crucial to consider the audience, ensuring that the embodied idea is clear and well-received.

Within Jacobchuk's extensive creative output, an idea of national identity can be discerned in his symphonies. His symphonic output from 1982 to 2016 can be envisioned as a kind of macrocycle comprising eight symphonies and a prologue – the symphonic poem *Golden Gates*. The symphonic poem no. 2, *Golden Gates* (1982), was timed to coincide with the nationwide celebration of the 1500th anniversary of the founding of Kyiv, marking the opening of the cycle.<sup>28</sup> This significant anniversary, initiated by the Ukrainian party elite, was commemorated throughout the entirety of the USSR. During an era characterized by

25 Galina Grigor'eva, 'Simfoniya i problemy stilya', *Sovetskaya muzika*, 4 (1987), p. 33.

26 Georgii Dmitriev, 'Nushny tesnie kontakty s zhyznyu', *Sovetskaya muzika*, 9 (1987), p. 20.

27 Elena Zinkevich, 'Ukrainskaya simfoniya: markery natsionalnoy identichnosti', *Yuzhno-Rossiyskiy muzykalnyi almanakh*, 4/45 (2021), p. 98.

28 The first symphonic poem, *The Feat* (1975), which the composer penned during his student years, was ultimately rejected and destroyed by him. Nonetheless, one of its themes found its way into the development section of *Golden Gates* (figure 20).

stagnation and Russification in Ukraine, as noted by Serhii Tolochko, 'the preparation and hosting of this celebration were emblematic of the creation and presentation of a complex of symbols aimed at revitalizing Soviet ideological discourse and enhancing its efficacy as a tool of state influence over society'.<sup>29</sup>

One of the symbols of the holiday was the concept of 'Kyiv—the cradle of three brotherly nations: Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian'. Considerable resources were allocated for construction, reconstruction, the publication of scientific and popular science literature, and the organization of numerous events, including a state order for the creation of works of art. As was customary in Soviet music, many composers reflected this theme in their work titles.<sup>30</sup> However, as Jacobchuk was still a young and relatively unknown composer, the poem did not receive a performance until fourteen years later, in Canada.

In spring 1996, during a concert dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra performed it under the baton of Volodymyr Kolesnyk.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, in Ukraine, the poem was performed by the orchestra of the National Radio Company under the direction of Victoria Zhadko during KyivMusicFest in 2005.

With hindsight, *Golden Gates* can be considered a prologue to Jacobchuk's entire symphonic oeuvre, reflecting his core spiritual orientations. Particularly, he contemplates on the historical legacy of his homeland, viewing it as the bedrock for the national pride of Ukrainians. The central motif of the symphonic poem is the iconic architectural landmark of Kyiv, dating back to the eleventh century, named after the Golden Gates of Constantinople. Though nearly obliterated over the centuries, it was reconstructed for the 1500th anniversary celebration. The pivotal event in the Gates' history was the siege of Kyiv by the Mongol Khan Baty in 1240, transforming it into a symbol of the city's defenders' courageous and indomitable spirit. Structured in the sonata form, the poem features an introduction based on the theme of the Golden Gates, a battle episode in the development section, and a mirrored recapitulation. However, Jacobchuk's orchestral style shines through in the thematic and timbral expressiveness of the imagery and the dynamic evolution of the music, lending an original touch to his orchestration.

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29 Serhii Tolochko, 'Svyatkuvannia 1500-richchia Kyieva 1982 roku: ideolohichniy aspekt', *Kyivski istorychni studii*. Vyp. 1 (2019), p. 74.

30 For example, an opera-oratorio *Kyiv Frescoes* and Concerto for orchestra no. 1 *A Musical Gift to Kyiv* by Karabyts, an oratorio *And it was named Kyiv* and a cantata *Dawn in Kyiv* by Lesia Dychko, *Ode to Kyiv* for bass, mixed choir and orchestra by Borys Aleksieienko, Symphony no. 3 *In the Ukrainian Baroque Style* by Lev Kolodub, Symphony no. 3 *Dnieper Rainbows* by Gennadii Liashenko, Symphony no. 10 by Glib Taranov, a symphonic poem *Hills of Kyiv* by Yakiv Lapinskyi, a symphonic fresco *Kyiv Rus* by Oleksandr Kanerstein, the piano concerto *Symphonic Dances* by Andrii Shtoharenko, the *Concerto Festivo* for orchestra of folk instruments by Zubytsky, etc. According to the official order of the Ministry of Culture of the Ukrainian SSR, Jacobchuk wrote the cantata *Kyiv Dawn* to the words of Petro Perebyinis for bass, mixed choir and orchestra (1985), which was immediately performed (Ihor Krupenko, bass, Choir named after Platon Maiboroda of Ukrainian Radio, conductor Vadym Hniedash).

31 Volodymyr Kolesnyk (1928-97) was a Ukrainian-Canadian choral conductor.

The composition exudes an atmosphere of ancient times, thanks to the composer's infusion of an archaic essence. Jacobchuk emphasized the significance of this archaic quality not only in terms of the piece's pacing, which he envisioned at around fifteen minutes, but also in terms of its overall ambiance. Consequently, when Zhadko conducted a performance lasting only thirteen minutes, the composer viewed it with a critical eye. In the introduction, the theme of the Golden Gates gradually emerges from motifs scattered across the register, setting the stage for the main theme, which encapsulates the image of Kyiv's defenders. The piece unfolds as a cohesive section, characterized by a gradual buildup of the orchestral texture leading to the climactic moment, prominently featuring the trumpet, woodwinds, violins, and violas. By introducing the 'Golden Gates' theme thereafter, the composer seeks to underscore the indomitable spirit of the people in their determination to defend their homeland. The cellos take on a secondary role, reflecting the soldiers' contemplation and apprehension before battle, rhythmically weakened by syncopations. The clash between opposing forces is concentrated in the development section, where a new theme representing the image of the foreign army emerges for the first time. Drawing on the motifs of the 'Golden Gates' theme, this new theme interacts with others, undergoing rhythmic and timbral variations. The *leitmotif* principle is inherent in the poem, evident in the thematic connections of each motif, contributing to the formation of the culminating zone. As the music reaches its zenith, the narrative shifts into a reflection on the depicted events, signalled by the emergence of a chorale based on the 'Golden Gates' theme. Employing a mirror method of recapitulation, Jacobchuk imbues the epic concept of the work with deeper significance. The secondary motif appears here in a state of moral desolation, symbolized by controlled aleatory techniques and manifested as an imitation duet between cellos and first violins in opposing registers. The reprise of the main theme, heightened by the timbre of the trumpets and interwoven with the theme of the 'Golden Gates', seamlessly affirms the triumphant conclusion of the piece, culminating in an apotheosis.

Despite its lengthy journey to reach listeners, the symphonic poem *Golden Gates* has secured an esteemed position among artistic interpretations of Ukraine's ancient past, particularly among compositions created before the 1500th anniversary of Kyiv's foundation. Moreover, within Jacobchuk's body of work, this piece served as a catalyst for his foray into orchestral music, driven by his aspiration to imbue socially significant ideas with newfound artistic quality and effectiveness.

Jacobchuk's First Symphony, *Biorhythms of Chornobyl* (1986), composed four years after the creation of the poem *Golden Gates*, stands as the composer's immediate response to the catastrophic man-made disaster that struck Ukraine—the explosion of the nuclear reactor at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant on April 26, 1986. The radioactive fallout from the accident spread over the European part of the USSR, affecting numerous European countries and even reaching the eastern part of the USA. Approximately 60 % of the radioactive substances settled

on the territory of Belarus. The aftermath of the disaster revealed a troubling history of efforts to conceal its magnitude. Initially, the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR, influenced by directives from Moscow, attempted to downplay the tragedy's scale and the ongoing danger it posed to the populace. They even proceeded with the annual May Day demonstration for the Day of Solidarity, failing to acknowledge the severity of the situation. However, following reports from Sweden about the detection of radioactive particles originating from the western USSR at the Forsmark Nuclear Power Plant and subsequent assessments of contamination levels, the evacuation of approximately 130,000 residents from contaminated areas in the Kyiv region commenced. Tragically, around 600,000 individuals, primarily those involved in the cleanup efforts, suffered from radioactive exposure and its devastating effects.

Looking back, historians regard the Chernobyl disaster as an event of immense social and political significance not only for the former USSR but also for the world, seen as one of the contributing factors to the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Tamara Hundorova draws attention to the symbolic weight of the disaster, noting that

Chernobyl has evolved into a symbol that challenges the 'positive' narrative surrounding progress. As Chernobyl transitions from a tangible historical incident to a symbolic phenomenon, it becomes intertwined with various socio-cultural and political meanings. Primarily, the explosion at Chernobyl signified a rupture within the Soviet system itself. It eroded confidence in socialist modernization, which had been pursued for over half a century through the excessive exploitation of human intellect and physical labor, as well as through the suppression of individual freedoms, national identities, gender equality, social hierarchies, and cultural diversity.<sup>32</sup>

It's crucial to note that despite the limited dissemination of official information about the accident in the press, the Chernobyl disaster sparked significant resonance within Ukrainian society, giving rise to sentiments of protest against the authorities. This was largely facilitated by the public activism of writers and the emergence of literary works addressing the topic.<sup>33</sup> According to Hundorova, Chernobyl also emerged as a pivotal factor in the struggle for Ukrainian independence. The catastrophe at the nuclear plant, situated in the immediate vicinity of Kyiv within the protected Polis zone, was interpreted as a deliberate political act aimed at undermining the national landscape, eradicating ancient culture, and threatening the authenticity of the Ukrainian people.<sup>34</sup>

Thanks to the efforts of writers, poets, activists of the Ukrainian human rights movement, and other public figures, the concept of national self-determination and Ukraine's departure

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32 Tamara Hundorova, *Transytna kultura: Symptomy postkolonialnoyi travmy* (Kyiv, Hrani-T, 2013), pp. 387-8.

33 Poems *Chernobyl Madonna* by Ivan Drach, *Seven* by Borys Oliinyk, *Pain and Memory* by Mykola Lukiv, a novel *Mary with wormwood at the end of the century* by Volodymyr Yavorivskyi, the documentary novel *Chernobyl* by Yurii Shcherbak, collection of short stories *Children of Chernobyl* by Yevhen Hutsalo, etc.

34 Hundorova, *Transytna kultura* (see note 32), p. 391.

from the USSR began to gain traction in Ukrainian society. In 1989, at the behest of the Writers' Union of Ukraine, the People's Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction was established—a socio-political movement that evolved from a coalition of democratic groups into a political party. This movement played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for Ukrainian statehood and ultimately declaring Ukraine an independent and sovereign nation in 1991. However, within the composer's circles, the topic of Chernobyl did not garner widespread interest. Many composers exercised caution, preferring not to engage with a subject that had not been officially sanctioned for discussion, particularly during a politically volatile period. According to the Lithuanian composer Vytautas Barkauskas, who himself composed a symphony inspired by the Chernobyl disaster,

The main idea behind the Fifth Symphony is my personal reflection on the tragedy of Chernobyl in 1986, set against the backdrop of the prevailing political climate in the country. This sentiment is not solely my own but is also shared by Lithuania and the Lithuanian people. The symphony premiered in Sverdlovsk during the International Year of Peace, a tragic coincidence given the monstrous catastrophe at Chernobyl. During this time, slogans promoting peace and the peaceful use of atomic energy were ubiquitous, juxtaposed with the reality of numerous nuclear tests being conducted at the Semipalatinsk test site. It was an era marked by discrepancies between rhetoric and action, where what was said often contradicted what was actually done. People lived in an atmosphere of deceit, where the significance of events like the Year of Peace and the Chernobyl explosion was downplayed or ignored. For me, the Fifth Symphony serves as a historical document, capturing the essence of that particular year and era. The musical material reflects the deceptive nature of the atmosphere in which people lived at the time. Despite the gravity of the Chernobyl disaster, it seemed as though little was acknowledged or done to address its magnitude. Instead, people were sacrificed to preserve the image of the authorities, although in my view, such actions only served to further tarnish their reputation.<sup>35</sup>

Among the few exceptions written in 1986, besides Barkauskas' work, are the Concerto *Ch + Ch = Challenger + Chernobyl* by Egils Straume from Latvia, Lev Kolodub's *Fourth Symphony*'86, and Jacobchuk's First Symphony *Biorhythms of Chernobyl*. Subsequently, this list was expanded to include Serhii Bedusenko's rock opera *The Trial* (1988), Oleksandr Levkovich's chamber cantata *Chernobyl* (1989), Yevhen Stankovich's *Black Elegy* (1991), and the trio *Music of the Red Forest* (1992). In all the aforementioned works, the theme of the disaster brought about by the peaceful atom is prominently featured, serving as a stark reminder of the profound impact it had on life both 'before' and 'after' the catastrophe. These compositions serve as a cautionary tale to humanity, emphasizing the potentially catastrophic and irreversible consequences of

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35 'O tvorcheskom metode, politike i Piatoi simfonii' (Beseda D. Grotskogo s V. Barkauskasom), *Uchenyje zapiski Rossiiskoi akademii muzyki imeni Gnesinykh*, 1 (2013), pp. 72, 74.

reckless actions. Through music, they underscore the importance of responsible behaviour and the need for greater awareness of the potential dangers posed by nuclear technology.

The genesis of Jacobchuk's idea to compose a symphony about Chernobyl has its roots in a series of impactful events. In 1986, while collaborating with performers on recording music for children's plays at the Sumy Puppet Theater, he received the news of the Chernobyl explosion from sound engineer Arkadii Vikharev, who was married to the daughter of the then Deputy Minister of Energy of the Ukrainian SSR. As Jacobchuk made his way home through the nocturnal streets of Kyiv, he encountered a convoy of empty buses heading towards Chernobyl. Upon inquiry, he learned that they were bound for Chernobyl to evacuate people. Rumors about the extent of the disaster quickly permeated the city, prompting precautions such as staying indoors, sealing windows to prevent radioactive dust from entering, and even drinking red wine to counteract radiation. Witnessing the unfolding panic and chaos in society, Jacobchuk felt compelled to capture his impressions and document the era. He titled his symphony *Biorhythms of Chernobyl* to convey the idea that the harnessing of atomic energy, ostensibly for the benefit of humanity, could spiral out of control, resulting in widespread devastation. Man found himself confronting the atom alone, overwhelmed and disoriented. The biological rhythms inherent in living organisms were disrupted by the Chernobyl disaster. Figuratively, Chernobyl precipitated societal changes, akin to a 'perestroika' of sorts. The work encapsulated the resonance of Chernobyl in Ukrainian society, illustrating how human invention could turn against itself, and how the mechanistic rhythms of technology intersected with human biorhythms. Jacobchuk's personal experiences during this period, including organizing concerts for liquidators in the radioactive zone, interacting with them, and witnessing the abandonment of villages, further intensified his perception of the event's apocalyptic nature.

Work on the symphony proceeded simultaneously in two versions: one for a string orchestra with percussion and another for a large symphony orchestra. The composer completed the first version, an 'extract' of the symphony, in 1986. It premiered shortly thereafter by the Kyiv Camerata, conducted by Volodymyr Sirenko. The symphony was performed again without genre attribution as part of the First Kyiv Music Festival on 9 October 1990, at the House of Scientists of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, with the Kyiv Chamber Orchestra conducted by Arkadii Vynokurov. Jacobchuk continued refining the second version until 1988. Its premiere was conducted by Volodymyr Sheiko with the symphony orchestra of the National Radio Company at the National Philharmonic of Ukraine in 2006. The following year saw the release of a disc recording of the symphony (CSF Inc. Productions), which also included the Second Symphony and the poem *Golden Gates*.

The originality of the composer's vision is evident primarily in his departure from the genre stereotype of the obligatory four-movement cycle. Jacobchuk frames his idea within the framework of a two-movement structure. In the first movement, if the final word was relinquished to the forces of evil, then the second movement of the work gradually affirms

hope and faith, culminating in catharsis in the coda. Moreover, the integrity of the musical text in the symphony is shaped by a sophisticated system of thematic connections, grounded in the use of the minor second interval, contrasting episodes, and deeply introspective, slow-paced monologues. These elements collectively contribute to the coherence and depth of the musical narrative.

The thematic layer of the symphony is rich with expressive musical imagery. In the first movement, notable motifs include the 'leitmotif of fate', symbolizing an unchangeable destiny (introduced in the opening theme), an image of anxiety, portrayed through a troubled spirit in the viola solo (the first subject), and a sense of impending disaster conveyed by a romantic reflection in the violin solo (the second subject). The latter is underscored by a slow-moving background in the cellos and double basses, characterized by augmented and perfect fourth intervals in the low register. Jacobchuk employs an element of illustrativeness here, mimicking the buzzing of high-voltage transmission lines. This secondary material acquires significant dramaturgical weight in the work due to its sonorous effect. In the development section, the composer introduces a new theme—the 'image of man-made disaster'. This theme, related to the 'theme of fate' and conveyed with massiveness by the tuba, evokes a sense of steady descent into nothingness. During the mirror recapitulation, Jacobchuk adopts a polystylistic approach, introducing a new theme reminiscent of patriotic Soviet-era songs. However, he grotesquely distorts their optimistic mood, imbuing the theme with bizarrely distorted grimaces through modal changes in the melody. This distortion serves to highlight the political and social backdrop of the disaster, exposing the pseudo-ideals of communist ideology prevalent at the time. Towards the symphony's conclusion, this theme transforms into a funeral march, symbolizing the universal lament of lost souls and expanding to encompass a sense of global grief. The second part of the symphony features a combination of traditional lyrical elements, such as a cello monologue expressing faith in life and humanity's ability to overcome adversity, alongside a finale depicting the hero's descent into madness, a tragic denouement, and a majestic coda.

Indeed, the First Symphony, *Biorhythms of Chornobyl*, served as a seminal work in the crystallization of Jacobchuk's style within the symphonic genre. The tragic concept—the impression and philosophical understanding of the Chornobyl nuclear power plant explosion and its aftermath—is vividly realized through the unconventional two-part cycle, representing a dialectical type of symphony. A notable characteristic of the work is its emphasis on the personal element, achieved through the introduction of numerous solo passages. Drawing on specific features of the symphonic genre such as cyclic structure, sonata form, and thematic contrast, Jacobchuk skillfully crafts intonational connections between themes and employs a diverse range of timbral textures to construct an artistic whole. This flexibility in form and utilization of orchestral resources contribute to the symphony's depth and richness, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the profound themes at its core.

In Jacobchuk's output, there are two symphonies guided by program principles and the involvement of a vocal element. Approaching the cantata/oratorio type, the composer combined the means of symphonic development with choral writing in Symphony no. 3 *Echo of Childhood* (1987) and Symphony-Requiem no. 4 *1933* (1990). Initially, both works were conceived as choral symphonies a cappella. One of the movements of the Third Symphony was even performed by the student choir of the Donetsk Music and Pedagogical Institute, conducted by Petro Horokhov. However, the work did not progress further. Without real performers, Jacobchuk postponed the symphony, and it was ten years before he decided to change its genre and supplement the music with an orchestral score. Based on a poem by Yurii Serdiuk,<sup>36</sup> the Third Symphony *Echo of Childhood* for mezzo-soprano, mixed choir, and symphony orchestra was performed for the first time by the orchestra of the National Radio Company under Volodymyr Sheiko at the 'Musical Premieres of the Season' in 2010. This performance became one of the bright musical events of the festival. This autobiographical work is devoted to the victory of the Soviet people in the Second World War, reflecting its events from a child's perspective. Serdiuk, who survived the war as a child and lost his father during it, wrote poems that resonated deeply with Jacobchuk's memories of his post-war childhood. These memories were filled with moving impressions of a brass band composed of disabled former soldiers in his native village, experiences that ultimately shaped his path as a composer. Interestingly, soon after the premiere, a video sequence was added to the music, featuring footage from war newsreels that accurately reproduced its content. As a result, the symphony has been broadcast on Ukrainian TV, gaining a new, wider audience for its performance.

The poetic text shapes the structure of the Third Symphony, where:

'The War'—Represents the beginning of the narrative.

'Children's Dreams'—Depicts the main experiences of the child in a detached way, reflecting children's impressions.

'We are Children of the War'—A fugato that marks a decisive turn in the unfolding of events.

'A Mother on Victory Day' (festive march)—Conveys the joy of Victory, with a philosophical interpretation in the coda.

In this symphony, Jacobchuk employed a sonoristic polylayering technique that was new to his work. In the second movement, he introduced a stylization of a German march to express the invaders' cheerful spirit. At the climax, the German march is overlaid with spoken phrases from a female choir commenting on the appearance of the Nazis. These cues, permeating the rhythm of the march, transition into the musical phrases of the mixed choir. This creates a sonoristic polylayering episode, with the tutti orchestra also involved.

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<sup>36</sup> Yurii Serdiuk (1938-2021) was a Ukrainian poet, writer and translator. He authored more than ten collections of poems, scripts for several documentaries.

A clear connotation of memorable childhood memories of the sound of the brass band of former front-line soldiers can be traced in the finale of the symphony. The expressiveness of the musical image is achieved through the stylization of a Soviet march from that era. Its first solemn appearance is in the choir a cappella, with the soprano leading the theme while the other voices accompany it in the style of a brass band. This instrumental thematic material, presented by the living human voices of the choir, acquires the characteristics of a chorale, carrying the exalted charge of the people's spiritual awareness of their victory in the war.

The Third Symphony shares some features with Jacobchuk's Second Symphony: an elevated role of the coda, which expands into an elaborate epilogue, gaining importance as a philosophical generalization; the technique of phase achievement of the highest climax; and intonation echoes between movements. Meanwhile, in the Third Symphony, Jacobchuk introduces new writing techniques that will characterize his subsequent work. These include the stylization of genres (in this case, the German and Soviet march) and sonorous polylayering, created by the simultaneous sounding of contrasting musical images.

The Fourth Symphony–Requiem *Year 1933* (1990) was dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Holodomor (also known as the Terror–Famine or the Great Famine, translated from Ukrainian as 'death by hunger', 'killing by hunger, killing by starvation').

The Holodomor was indeed a genocide of the Ukrainian people, perpetrated by the totalitarian communist regime during the establishment of a socialist sector of the economy in the USSR, marked by the subordination of Soviet party–state authorities and the establishment of Stalin's personal dictatorship. Preceded by the forcible collectivization of agriculture, the 'dispossession' of peasants, grain harvesting campaigns, and mass terror in the countryside, the Holodomor, or Terror–Famine, lasted for twenty–two months (from 1932 to 1933), claiming the lives of around 3,5 to 5 million Ukrainians. This deliberate policy of starvation was a result of strategies and tactics devised by the Stalinist government since 1928.<sup>37</sup> It was a punitive and repressive action aimed at subduing Ukrainian peasants and destroying self–employed peasant farms, which were the socio–economic foundations of the Ukrainian nation. If you're looking for a source, you could refer to historical accounts, academic research, or official statements from recognized institutions or governments regarding the Holodomor.<sup>38</sup>

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37 Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York - Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986); David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (New York, Central European University Press, 2007); Timothy Snyder, *Blood Lands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (London, Bodley Head, 2010); Bohdan Klid and Alexander J. Motyl (eds.), *The Holodomor Reader: A Sourcebook on the Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine* (Edmonton - Toronto, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2012); Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (London, Allen Lane, 2017); Stanislav Kulchytsky, *The Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine: An Anatomy of the Holodomor* / translated from the Ukrainian by Ali Kinsella (Edmonton – Toronto, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2018).

38 Research on the Holodomor is conducted by Ukrainian and international academic and archival institutions, including the Institute of History of Ukraine (NAS of Ukraine), the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide, the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies.

For the first time in the world, the discussion of the Holodomor was officially initiated in 1984, with the creation of a US Commission on the Ukraine Famine in the USA. The purpose of this commission was 'to conduct a study of the 1932–33 Ukrainian Famine in order to expand the world's knowledge of the famine and provide the American public with a better understanding of the Soviet system by revealing the Soviet role.'<sup>39</sup> More information about this commission and its mandate can be found on reliable sources such as government archives or historical records. The Commission's final report, submitted to Congress in 1986, concluded that the man-made famine constituted an act of genocide against the people of Ukraine, carried out by the Soviets.<sup>40</sup>

In the Ukrainian SSR, the authorities attempted to deny the occurrence of the Holodomor. The First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, provided scholars with access to official archives with the intention of supporting the official denial of the famine as 'fascist slander'. However, instead of confirming the official narrative, scholars discovered accounts of government decisions, food confiscation, protests, mass deaths, and even instances of cannibalism, leading them to conclude that the famine had undeniably occurred. The exact date when this research was conducted and publicized may vary, but it began to gain wider attention starting from around 1989.<sup>41</sup>

Discussion of the Holodomor became possible as part of the glasnost policy of openness. In Ukraine, the first official use of the term 'famine' occurred in December 1987 during a speech by Shcherbytskyi, on the occasion of the republic's 70th anniversary. Another early public usage within the Soviet Union was in February 1988, during a speech by Oleksa Musiienko, Deputy Secretary for ideological matters of the party organization of the Kyiv branch of the Writers' Union in Ukraine. The term 'holodomor' may have first appeared in print in the Soviet Union on 18 July 1988, when Musiienko's article on the topic was published.<sup>42</sup> The Ukrainian Communist Party's Central Committee passed a resolution on 26 January 1990, officially recognizing the famine as the result of the 'criminal course pursued by Stalin and his closest entourage toward the peasantry'.<sup>43</sup>

Since 2006, the Holodomor has been officially recognized as genocide against the Ukrainian people carried out by the Soviet government by various entities, including the

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39 *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine: Report to Congress Commission on the Ukrainian Famine* (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1988), p. V.

40 *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine* (see note 39), p. XXIII.

41 'Holod na Ukraini (1931–1933 rr.): [Dokumenty i materialy], *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 7 (1989), pp. 99–111, 8 (1989), pp. 105–17, 9 (1989), pp. 110–21, 11 (1989), pp. 78–90, 12 (1989), pp. 123–8, 1 (1990), pp. 104–12; *Kolektyvizatsia i holod na Ukraini, 1929–1933*, edited by S. Kulchytskyi (Kyiv, Naukova dumka, 1992).

42 Oleksa H. Musiienko, 'Hromadians'ka pozytsiia literatury i perebudova', *Literaturna Ukraïna*, 7–8 (18 February 1988).

43 'O golode 1932–1933 na Ukraine i publikatsii sviazannykh s nim arkhivnykh materialov: Postanovlenie TsK Kompartii Ukrainy ot 26 yanvaria 1990 g.' *Pravda Ukrainy* (7 February 1990), p. 1.

European Parliament, Ukraine itself, and thirty-four other countries. In 2010, the Kyiv Court of Appeal ruled that the Holodomor was indeed an act of genocide. The court held Stalin, Molotov, Kaganovich, Kosior, Postyshev, Khatayevich, Chubar, and other Bolshevik leaders responsible for this tragedy.

The glasnost policy of openness facilitated the publication of works about the Holodomor by Ukrainian writers. This led to a kind of literary boom, as a wide array of previously unknown novels and poems narrating this tragic period of history emerged. Notable examples include *Maria* (1934) by Ulas Samchuk<sup>44</sup> and *Zhovtyi kniaz* (1962) by Vasyl Barka.<sup>45</sup> In music, Jacobchuk was among the first artists to compose a work commemorating the Holodomor.<sup>46</sup> However, despite this, the composer had to wait thirteen years for its premiere, which occurred after the Ukrainian parliament first recognized the Holodomor as genocide in 2003. Nevertheless, the most significant reason for this delay was Jacobchuk's emigration and consequent removal from the artistic context of Ukraine.

The symphony was performed for the first time<sup>47</sup> on 22 November 2003 at the National Opera of Ukraine, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Holodomor. Composer Sylvestrov, a colleague of Jacobchuk, shared his impressions of this significant work in an interview: 'The theme of the Holodomor chosen in the symphony is, in my opinion, very difficult to reflect in music, only silence can be adequate. But Aleksander Jacobchuk managed to create such sad, such tragic music that simply stuns listeners.'<sup>48</sup>

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44 Ulas Samchuk (1905-87) was a prominent Ukrainian writer, publicist, journalist, and member of the Government of the Ukrainian People's Republic in exile. He was also associated with the nationalistic Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. Samchuk graduated from the Ukrainian Free University in Prague in 1931, where he first learned about the Holodomor, the man-made famine orchestrated by the Soviet regime. Intrigued, he ventured back into Soviet Ukraine the following year to witness the event firsthand. In response to his experiences, Samchuk penned the novel 'Maria' in 1934. This novel stands as the first literary work to depict the famine and village life during that tumultuous period.

45 Vasyl Barka (1908-2003) was a distinguished Ukrainian writer, poet, literary critic, and translator. He held a PhD in literature. Barka studied philology at the Pedagogical Institute in Krasnodar from 1928 to 1930. His notable novel 'Zhovtyi kniaz' (The Yellow Prince, 1962) gained international recognition and was translated into French (Paris, 1981). It received two nominations for the Nobel Prize in Literature, highlighting Barka's significant contributions to Ukrainian literature.

46 Among his colleagues, the topic of the Holodomor gained significant interest and was explored through various genres starting from the late 1980s. Works such as *Symphony No. 5 Pro memoria* by Kolodub, *Crying and Prayer* by Bibik, *Panakhya za pomerlymy z holodu* by Stankovych, *Pro memoria* by Liashenko, *Kateryna's Prayer* cantata by Karabyts, *Symphony No. 3* by Mykola Dremluha, *Duma about 1933* by Gennadii Sasko, *Mourning Mother* oratorio by Yurii Laniuk, *Holod* cantata by Liudmyla Matviichuk, among others, reflected this tragic period in Ukrainian history. A composers' competition dedicated to this topic gained significant public resonance and took place during the Kyiv Music Fest in the fall of 1992. This competition provided a platform for composers to express their artistic responses to the Holodomor, contributing to a broader cultural dialogue surrounding this historical event.

47 The symphony was performed by the choir of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy 'Pochayna' (conducted by Oleksandr Zhygun) and the State Symphony Orchestra under Victor Zdorenko. Following its debut, on 13 December 2003, the piece was performed once again, with Zhygun conducting, at the National House of Organ and Chamber Music. A recording of this performance was made, and a DVD was subsequently released based on this concert.

48 Telephone interview with Sylvestrov (3 March 2013).

There were additional obstacles on the path to the premiere: originally, the symphony was composed as a work for three soloists, a mixed choir, flute, and percussion. However, conductor Zhygun deemed it insufficiently monumental. Without consulting the composer, he commissioned composer Victor Stepurko to orchestrate it, as Jacobchuk was already living abroad at that time. This orchestrated version of the symphony was first performed. In 2005, Jacobchuk, having generally accepted the orchestration by his colleague, revised it once again and published the final edition in Canada.<sup>49</sup> The premiere of this new version, in its completed form, took place for the first time on 24 November 2007 at the Ukrainian Cultural Center in Moscow, following a provocative debacle related to a Holodomor exhibition by members of the Eurasian Youth Union on 17 November 2007.<sup>50</sup> Subsequent performances occurred in Poltava, Kyiv (2008), and Dnipropetrovsk (2009).

The symphony by Jacobchuk was composed to the poems of Vasyl Yukhymovych,<sup>51</sup> who specifically wrote them for this work. Yukhymovych, having witnessed the atrocities of the Stalinist regime against the Ukrainian people in his early childhood, was able to articulate these experiences through his dramatic poetic stanzas as an adult. Jacobchuk mentioned to me that the symphony was written in just one month in 1990, conceived in a single burst of creative inspiration. The inspiration for the symphony stemmed from Jacobchuk's childhood memories, particularly from conversations he overheard in his parents' home during the 1950s. There, he listened to his grandmother and parents discuss the famine in Ukraine and the people who perished as a result of it. Moreover, Jacobchuk was also sensitive to the evolving political landscape of Ukraine. The topic of the Holodomor, which he had been aware of since childhood, could finally be addressed openly, breaking the long-standing silence surrounding this tragic chapter of Ukrainian history.

The symphony comprises six movements, reflecting the traditions of a memorial service for the deceased. Jacobchuk incorporates the canonical prayer 'Lord, have mercy' (*Kyrie eleison*) into the score as the main thematic motif in the first movement. This motif reappears in the background during the reprise of the second movement and at the conclusion of the final movement. Through this structure, Jacobchuk achieves a holistic narrative vision, centered on commemorating the millions of lives lost and conveying the theme of repentance.

In the second movement, the listener is introduced to the circumstances that precipitated the famine in Ukraine. The arrival of Soviet power following the Bolshevik coup of 1917, metaphorically referred to as 'the Red Broom' by the poet, resulted in the destruction

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49 The Canadian publishing house 'Etobicoke Music Festival' with the financial support of the Schevchenko Foundation and the 'Holodomor-33' Foundation, 2008.

50 'Proimperski khuligany rozhromyly v Moskvi vystavku, prysviachenu Holodomoru', *UNIAN* (17 November 2007).

51 Vasyl Yukhymovych (1924-2002) was a Ukrainian poet and journalist. He authored twenty collections of poems, some of which gained popularity as lyrics for songs composed by Ukrainian musicians. Additionally, Yukhymovych contributed a libretto and text for the first Ukrainian folk-opera 'Yatranski ihry' (1978) for a cappella choir, composed by Ihor Shamo. His contributions to Ukrainian literature and music have left a lasting impact on the cultural landscape of Ukraine.

of spiritual Christian values. This upheaval unleashed subconscious forces, symbolized as demonic, leading to rampant entropy and the empowerment of the crowd.

The third movement serves as a dramatic shift in the narrative. It resembles a desperate scherzo, akin to a dance of death. Here, the development of the imagery embodies an all-powerful destructive force, particularly evident in the middle section where the composer stylizes the haunting intonations of the popular Russian song 'Kak rodnaia menia mat' provozhala'.

In the midst of the bacchanalia of death, the indescribable cry of the victims is depicted. This cry is conveyed through a delayed cluster in the female group of the choir, accompanied by violins and violas. The fourth movement, 'Za Adama', commences with an *attacca* transition and assumes the character of a funeral march. The peculiarities of its poetic text and the individualization of timbres reflect the grief for each person who perished from hunger. Jacobchuk employs monological episodes featuring flute, bassoon, English horn, horn, clarinet, and cello. A significant element in the movement's development is the phrase 'The bells didn't ring, the bells didn't ring: it died, he died, he died, he was and he died', expressed in minor triads and dotted rhythm by the tenors and basses. This phrase, falling in chromatic semitones, bears resemblance to the 'theme of fate' ('Thirty-third year!'), while also containing the seed of the finale's theme, known as the 'theme of protest'.

The fifth movement skilfully stylizes a collective image of famous songs typical of the Soviet era, portraying the blind faith in the phantom ideals of communism and the glorification of the 'father of all nations', while simultaneously highlighting the absurdity of the optimism prevalent during that time. Stylization is evident not only in the melodic material of the music but also in its orchestration. The theme, presented in the *staccato* of the *a cappella* choir, is accompanied by the flute and snare drum, enhancing the ironic content of the movement. The composer reinforces this irony by incorporating slogans from banners at demonstrations during Stalin's era, such as: 'Comrade Stalin! We are successfully carrying out collectivization in Ukraine!' or 'Comrade Stalin! Collectivization is successful! We break the resistance of enemy elements! Long live the great Stalin', etc. Individual soloists from the choral groups chant different slogans after each of the three verses, one measure late, mimicking the roar of the crowd and introducing an element of chaos. This chaos escalates after the third verse, with the theme played by the flutes and supported by the steady beat of the drum. The final section of the fifth movement marks the principal tragic climax of the symphony, introduced suddenly by the composer. This section is characterized by the familiar cluster-groan of the souls who died of hunger, laid out in the chorus through the gradual layering of sounds and supported by the entire orchestra. It culminates in a powerful eruption, manifesting as a universal curse of the tyrant.

In this symphony, symphonic thinking is evident through clear thematic connections between sections, achieved through the use of leitmotifs such as the prayer, cluster-groan,

theme of fate, and theme of protest. These leitmotifs are dynamically developed throughout the work, contributing to its cohesive structure. The technique of stylization is employed to fulfil the programmatic requirements of the piece. The signs of a requiem are primarily felt in the mournful nature of the composition and the thematic program, which revolves around commemorating those who perished from hunger. This is underscored by the incorporation of the canonical prayer of the Orthodox rite and the composer's ability to evoke a sense of spiritual purification among the audience through the music.

Jacobchuk envisions his series of symphonies as a complete entity, with no intention to extend it further. The culmination of this series is represented by the diptych titled *The Revolution of Dignity*, comprising the last two one-movement symphonies—no. 7, *Maidan*, and no. 8, *The Unconquered*. These works were composed in response to the interconnected events in the recent history of Ukraine—the Euromaidan protests and the subsequent anti-terrorist operation (ATO) in the East of Ukraine, which took place from April to August 2014.<sup>52</sup>

The terms 'Revolution of Dignity' or 'Euromaidan' refer to the political activism of Ukrainian citizens at the end of 2013, which culminated in a change of government in early 2014. This movement emerged in response to President Yanukovich's efforts to halt Ukraine's path toward European integration, as well as systematic violations of citizens' rights and freedoms, and ineffective socio-economic policies. The protests commenced on 21 November 2013, following the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine's decision to suspend preparations for signing the Association Agreement with the European Union. The movement gained momentum after the violent dispersal of demonstrators in Kyiv on the night of 30 November. The protests, evolving into meetings, demonstrations, student strikes, and encounters of violent opposition from authorities, led to an escalating and uncontrollable confrontation, resulting in loss of life.

The outrage sparked among the public by the use of force by the Berkut (special police forces in Ukraine) against unarmed students on 30 November 2013 served as a catalyst for widespread protests against the authorities. For several months, Kyiv's central square—Maidan Nezalezhnosti—and the main street, Khreshchatyk, transformed into impromptu encampments for protesters. Similar camps were established in central squares in many other cities across Ukraine, where people gathered to rally and advocate for European integration. The tragic climax of the Euromaidan occurred during mass clashes, including the use of small arms, near the parliament and particularly on Maidan Nezalezhnosti from 18 to 20 February 2014. Nearly 100 protesters were killed by police and snipers during these violent confrontations. The deaths, referred to as the 'Heavenly Hundred' (or 'Nebesna sotnya' in Ukrainian), shocked the nation, with casualties not only resulting from sniper bullets but also from a devastating

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52 The term 'Anti-Terrorist Operation Zone' or ATO zone was commonly utilized by the media, government of Ukraine, foreign institutions, and public discourse to denote the Ukrainian territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which came under the control of Russian military forces and pro-Russian separatists. A substantial portion of the ATO zone is acknowledged as temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine.

fire in the House of Trade Unions. These apocalyptic events during the Maidan protests in those bloody months had a profound impact on the lives of Ukrainians, underscoring the cost of the struggle for national priorities. Jacobchuk's *Maidan* symphony stands among a host of other works dedicated to these events, including the requiem *Memory of the Heavenly Hundred* by Bohdana Filts, *Symphony no. 4 System of Desire* by Valerii Antoniuk, *Chamber Symphony no. 12 Maidan Mural, Praying for Peace* by Stankovych, *Choral Cycle Kyiv 2014* by Sylvestrov, *Holy Hymns* (dedicated to the Heavenly Hundred) by Victoria Poleva, and the ballad *Nebesna sotnya* by Larysa Donnyk.

Jacobchuk's *Symphony no. 7, Maidan* (2014), stands out for its dynamic symphonic development and the prominent role of extended solos, including the trumpet, viola, cello, English horn, Pan pipe, and the Armenian folk instrument *duduk*.<sup>53</sup> These solos are integral to the work's concept, highlighting the composer's emphasis on the individual amidst the collective upheaval. Each solo represents a specific person, their life, feelings, and actions, leaving a lasting impact on contemporaries and future generations. The symphony opens with an expansive solo from the muted trumpet, setting the stage with the primary thematic material and establishing a palpable atmosphere of tension as the crowd awaits confrontation. In the middle section, Jacobchuk introduces a large, sarcastic episode in a fast tempo, depicting the animalistic terror of the 'titushky'<sup>54</sup> and Yanukovych's 'Berkut' forces facing the people. Drawing from his personal experiences on the Maidan, the composer vividly portrays the uncontrolled chaos and elements of popular uprising. The culmination of the conflict results in human sacrifices on both sides. In the climactic moment, the composer employs a mournful chorale of bassoons and brass instruments, symbolizing the commemoration of the fallen heroes. This poignant expression underscores the gravity of the events depicted and the profound impact they have on the collective memory of the Ukrainian people.

The concluding section of the symphony is initiated by a solo cello monologue, during which the cross theme from Jacobchuk's *Cello Concerto* (2006), dedicated to victims of political repression, resurfaces towards the end. This self-referential gesture allows the composer to reflect on the events of the Maidan and consider their justification. A noteworthy timbral innovation is the duet featuring the Armenian folk instrument *duduk* and the Pan pipe. The juxtaposition of their somber and luminous timbres respectively symbolizes the enduring

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53 *Duduk* is a traditional Armenian double-reed woodwind instrument made from apricot wood, known for its warm, haunting sound and deep cultural significance. It is considered as a symbol of Armenian national identity and has been recognized by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity since 2005.

54 The *Titushky*, plural for *Titushka* (Ukrainian: титишки), were mercenary agents in Ukraine who operated during Yanukovych's administration. They aligned themselves with the Ukrainian security services and frequently posed as street hooligans, often dressed in sports clothing. Their primary objective was to serve as provocateurs at pro-European and anti-Yanukovych political rallies, instigating violence to prompt the arrest of protestors. Following the Euromaidan protests, the *Titushky*'s role became more pronounced as they engaged in numerous clashes and acts of violence during the movement. Their actions exacerbated tensions and contributed to the turmoil surrounding the protests, further fueling public discontent and resistance against Yanukovych's regime.

memory of the first casualties of the Maidan—Armenian Serhii Nigoyan and Belarusian Mikhail Zhiznevsky. The triumph of the people is portrayed with ambivalence, as it also marks the onset of tragic events, including the armed aggression launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine on 20 February 2014. This dual portrayal captures the complex and multifaceted nature of historical events, emphasizing both their transformative power and the profound challenges they entail.

Symphony no. 8, *The Unconquered* (2016), composed for soprano and large brass band, pays tribute to the living and fallen defenders, notably the 'cyborgs'<sup>55</sup> of the Donetsk airport, as well as the heroes of Ilovaisk, Mariupol, and Debaltseve. Reflecting on recent events in eastern Ukraine, the symphony encapsulates the composer's contemplations through personalized reflections, the sounds of battle, and the mourning of fallen heroes, evolving into a universal protest against war. The symphony's dramatic narrative unfolds through several phases of thematic development. Skilfully crafted climactic sections capture the tense military confrontations, the harrowing intensity of battle, and the stark reality of death faced by unconquered soldiers. However, it is the final section that emerges as the most poignant moment of the composition. Commencing with the subdued tolling of bells fashioned from 152 mm artillery shells collected in the Donetsk airport area, symbolizing a memorial tribute to fallen soldiers, the symphony transitions into an extended vocalise performed by the mezzo-soprano. Her voice, representing Mother Ukraine, gradually crescendos from a gentle pianissimo to a resounding climax, serving as a powerful protest against war. Notably, this symphony stands out not only for its conceptual depth but also for its innovative use of performing forces, being the first Ukrainian symphony to feature a large brass band. This unique orchestration adds a distinctive sonic texture to the composition, enhancing its emotional impact and thematic resonance.

The Symphony *The Unconquered* by Jacobchuk embodies the essence of resilience and triumph in the face of adversity, portraying the indomitable spirit of the Ukrainian people. Its performance history, spanning cities like Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, and Odesa,<sup>56</sup> speaks to its

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55 The Cyborgs were Ukrainian servicemen who played a crucial role in the defense of Donetsk International Airport during the war in eastern Ukraine, which lasted from 26 May 2014 to 22 January 2015. They engaged in intense combat operations in and around the airport, often facing overwhelming odds and enduring prolonged sieges. These brave individuals, all volunteers, became known for their resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to defending Ukrainian territory against hostile forces. Despite facing relentless attacks and challenging conditions, the Cyborgs demonstrated remarkable courage and fortitude, earning widespread admiration and respect both within Ukraine and internationally.

56 Jacobchuk's Symphony no. 8, *The Unconquered*, found its way to the stage thanks to the collaboration between the composer and military conductor Valery Vinnikov. Their friendship and shared passion for music culminated in the symphony's first performance, which took place on 27 October 2016 at the Great Hall of the National Academy of Music of Ukraine in Kyiv. Conducted by Vinnikov, the National Exemplary Band of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, accompanied by soprano Tamara Khodakova, delivered a brilliant rendition of the symphony, captivating the audience with its stirring melodies and powerful themes. Following this successful debut, the musicians wasted no time in preserving their performance, making a recording that remains in the archives of the Ukrainian Radio.

resonance and impact among audiences. After the concert in Lviv some listeners' impressions have been fixed by a musicologist Iryna Chernova–Stroi who noted the symphony is perceived in one breath. In the opinion of a musicologist, professor Stefania Pavlyshyn:

It is felt that the author concentrated here his indomitable patriotic convictions, to which he was faithful from a young age, in the difficult conditions of the persecution of Ukrainian national thought. Perhaps, it is precisely because of sincerity and truthfulness that the effect of this music is so strong and deep. The work is unique in this genre: the tragedy conveyed by sounds has an impressive power, and despite all the contrasts and variability of the development of the action in the rich timbres of the brass band, it creates a single whole. I do not like loud sound in music, but in this case it was not felt at all, it was appropriate and deeply convincing. Jacobchuk's music is not illustrative, like, for example, symphonic works on the theme of battles — *1812* by Tchaikovsky or *The Battle of Vitoria* by Beethoven; it's not film music either. Probably, the military performers — the conductor and the orchestra - heart and soul entered into the element of this work, without pathos, without sentimentalism, written with the blood of the heart. It seems to me that if the soldiers, who are now fighting at the front with the Muscovites, could use music to reflect their lives, they would do it in the same way as the composer.<sup>57</sup>

**From the point of view of Oleksandra Smerechanska, a teacher of the choral disciplines, retired,**

The symphony *Unconquered* is the best, deepest, most convincing piece dedicated to the historical theme of the Ukrainian people at all times of their striving for true will and freedom. Listening to the symphony, I imagined thousands of soldiers of various ages marching, fighting, dying, and others taking their place. And they cannot be defeated, because they are invincible, they are true patriots and worthy heroes of their people. I was deeply impressed by the different intonations of a marching nature, which sounded as a whole orchestra, and not in separate groups, which would impoverish the title. The beautiful vocals of the wonderful mezzo-soprano Julia Boyiko were touching to the core. Closing my eyes, I sympathized with thousands of mothers mourning their sons who gave their lives for the freedom of Ukraine. I felt not just greetings, but words sprinkled with blood and tears: 'Glory to Ukraine!' — 'Glory to heroes!'<sup>58</sup>

Jacobchuk's Symphony no. 8, *The Unconquered*, continued to garner attention through performances by esteemed ensembles like the National Presidential Band of Ukraine under conductor Maksym Husak. Its inclusion in concert programs at prestigious venues like the Kyiv and Odesa Philharmonics underscored its significance in the contemporary Ukrainian

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Subsequent performances of the symphony continued to captivate audiences, including a memorable rendition on 15 June 2017 at the Lviv Philharmonics. Dedicated to Jacobchuk's 65th anniversary, this concert featured the Combined Brass Band of the Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Academy of Ground Forces of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and the 2nd Galician Brigade of the National Guard of Ukraine, with mezzo-soprano Yulia Boiko delivering a mesmerizing vocal performance.

57 Iryna Chernova-Stroi, 'Muzyka neskorennych', *Slovo Prosvity* (27 June 2017).

58 Chernova-Stroi, 'Muzyka neskorennych' (see note 57).

music scene. Additionally, Jacobchuk's arrangement of the symphony for symphony orchestra allowed for broader accessibility and was well-received when performed by the orchestra of Ukrainian Radio under the baton of Sheiko, soprano Anastasiia Kozak in 2019.

Meanwhile, *Symphony no. 7, Maidan*, found its place in the festival 'Music Premieres of the Season' at the House of Sound Recording of the National Radio Company of Ukraine. Its positive reception among both audiences and critics<sup>59</sup> alike highlighted its impact and relevance. Notably, both symphonies earned nominations for the prestigious Taras Shevchenko National Award of Ukraine in 2022, further affirming their artistic merit and cultural significance.

## Conclusion

Jacobchuk's symphonic compositions reflect a broader trend within Ukrainian music of the 1980s, characterized by an integrative approach to the symphony genre and a deep exploration of national tradition beyond mere folk influences. One significant aspect of this trend is the exploration of commemorative practices in music. They serve as an important tool for preserving memory, forming national and cultural identity, and for interacting with collective history. The uniqueness of musical artifacts, unlike written ones, lies in their ability to evoke the emotional memories of listeners, enabling them to recall the experiences they had while engaging with the work. The characteristic of symphonic music – the ability to engage with a broad audience (Bekker<sup>60</sup>) – greatly facilitates collective empathy and the shared experience of the composer's ideas. Through this mutual emotional connection, symphonic music strengthens the collective memory of the community.

Jacobchuk's symphonies, spanning topics such as the Chernobyl disaster, the Second World War, the Holodomor, and the ongoing conflict with Russia, follow a narrative structure marked by moments of grief, confrontation, reflection, and catharsis. According to Jan Assmann: 'Remembrance is a matter of emotional ties, cultural shaping, and a conscious reference to the past that overcomes the rupture between life and death. These are the elements that characterize cultural memory and take it far beyond the reaches of tradition.'<sup>61</sup>

Another defining feature of Jacobchuk's symphonic output is the manifestation of Ukrainian national character in his music, contributing to the process of nation-building. Despite composing during the Soviet era, Jacobchuk's later works focus more explicitly on Ukrainian history and identity, moving away from the Soviet discourse and towards a more

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59 Olha Kushniruk, 'Z muzychnoho litopysu epokhy: Symfonia no. 7 'Maidan'', *Kultura i zhyttya* (27 July 2018); Violetta Dutchak, 'Vid muzyky Maidanu do muzyky viiny: ukrainskyi fenomen', *The Russian-Ukrainian war (2014-2022): Historical, Political, Cultural-educational, Religious, Economic, and Legal Aspects* (Riga, Publishing House 'Baltija Publishing', 2022), p. 720.

60 Paul Bekker, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin, Schuster und Loeffler, 1918).

61 Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), 20.

nuanced portrayal of national themes. While some earlier compositions may have been influenced by state-sponsored narratives, such as *The Golden Gate* commemorating the 1500th anniversary of Kyiv's founding, Jacobchuk's later works demonstrate a shift towards a more independent and authentic expression of Ukrainian identity. One of these features is usage of poetry by Ukrainian writers in the Third and Fourth symphonies. Ultimately, Jacobchuk's symphonic oeuvre serves as a chronicle of important tragic events in Ukrainian history, memorializing these events through music and contributing to a deeper understanding of the nation's collective memory.

Jacobchuk's symphonies offer a platform for reflection and contemplation, encouraging individuals to confront difficult truths and engage with the complexities of history. In doing so, they contribute to a deeper understanding of Ukraine's past while inspiring hope for the future. As Ukraine navigates its path through the modern world, Jacobchuk's symphonies stand as powerful expressions of national pride and solidarity, uniting listeners in a shared appreciation of the country's heritage and aspirations. Through his music, Jacobchuk leaves an indelible mark on Ukrainian culture, shaping the nation's collective memory and identity for generations to come.

Investigating the phenomenon of cultural memory – the process of preserving, transmitting, and transforming shared experiences over time – Assmann considers it the foundation of collective identity. Through cultural memory, society defines what it was, what it is, and where it is headed. In his view, memory serves as an instrument for historical, social, and political construction. In the case of Ukraine, with only thirty-four years of independence, building a national identity remains a critical task. Consequently, examining artifacts from the perspective of moving away from Soviet discourse emerges as a significant focus in contemporary Ukrainian studies. This aim was one of the motivations behind writing this article on Jacobchuk's music.

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