Carols of Birds, Bells, and Sacred Hymns from Ukraine

Carols of Birds, Bells, and Sacred Hymns from Ukraine:

An Anthology and Cultural Companion

By

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Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-0364-0513-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-0364-0513-7

To the generous, vibrant people of Ukraine

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PREFACE

My aim in this anthology is to introduce a portion of Ukraine's rich choral heritage to a broader world of choral musicians and audiences: to create a bridge to an ancient culture that is nevertheless new to most non-Ukrainians. As a Ukrainian-American musician, I have been bridging both cultures from childhood through years of directing university and symphony choirs and teaching in universities. With this book, I am embracing both the choral world into which I was born and the one in which I worked professionally, both the Ukrainian tradition and the Western European/ American tradition of the church and concert hall.

This collection focuses on choral[1] pieces related to the season of Christmas, New Year's, and Epiphany. As such, it does not include arrangements of folk songs or liturgical hymns related to *other* seasons or choral settings of verses by Ukraine's celebrated poets. Neither does it represent the full span of diverse religions that make up Ukraine's pluralistic culture, each with its own seasonal celebrations and songs. By excluding other repertories, the anthology does not deny their importance but merely focuses on a representative sample from this particular repertoire, a vast treasure trove in and of itself.

The twenty-six choral miniatures in this collection are mostly in Ukrainian, many of them with traces of folk dialect or linguistic remnants from earlier ages. Some have their origins in pre-Christian times. A few are in Church Slavonic, the ancient ecclesiastical language of Christian Ukraine. All of them are *a cappella*, reflecting the Ukrainian tradition of the Christmas season. As a group, they represent many strands and customs of this seasonal music.

Each composer who arranged or freely composed these pieces (including the anonymous ones) and each ritual surrounding the carols has a story. The biography and genre sections of this book describe these in some detail. Each of these carols, no matter how short or simple, has its dignity. The text within the scores—pitches, rhythms, dynamics, lyrics—is presented as authoritatively and authentically as possible to honor the words,

[1] By "choral," this anthology means what Ukrainian ethnographers call "academic choral"— music created for the church or concert hall as opposed to music sung communally in village tradition.

notes, and markings scribed and transcribed by ethnographers, arrangers, and composers.

Finding the most authoritative source for each piece has not been simple. Many early chant manuscripts from monasteries and autograph scores by composers have been destroyed, displaced, or altered in the course of Ukraine's complex history. Among the chants and older carols that do survive, the most authentic, urtext variant is difficult to pinpoint. Many of the carol arrangements were written in an era when the authoritarian government ruling over Ukraine disallowed the publication of music with Ukrainian words. For many of these pieces, no single urtext source exists. This book regards each piece as a living, organic creation that has adapted to new environments from choir to choir and year to year, and at the same time attempts to represent each in the manner the arranger/composer seems to have intended. The editorial notes at the end of each piece— sometimes as long as the carol itself—are provided to explain the choices made and offer variant readings.

In sharing the contemporary carols of this anthology, it is important to remind the reader that the creations of living composers are fully their domain; copying, performing, and sharing scores without their permission is strictly prohibited. To obtain permission to copy and perform these pieces, the reader may contact composers through their websites or contact me through my website.

Any editorial markings within the scores are my own and are in brackets. The principal difference between the scores as they appear here versus the original scores is in the number of staves used: Ukrainian choral composers, particularly of earlier centuries, wrote in two staves SA+TB, or three, SA+T+B. In contemporary scores, there is considerable flexibility in hiding or combining staves. The current edition generally provides a staff for each vocal part. In syllabic writing, notes of lesser value than a quarter are beamed together to allow greater ease in sensing the overall rhythmic pulse. In pieces by living composers, the scores have been verified with each.

Similarly, certain facts in the biographies have been cross-checked with living composers. In the biographies of earlier composers, some dates and places vary between sources, and I am offering the most accurate representation I can with the resources currently available.[2] Ukrainian scholars themselves have been allowed to research the music of their heritage without constraint only in recent decades. Scores of scores were stolen, burned, or hidden, and composers were persecuted or erased as "enemies of the people." Even the most basic information about sacred

[2] Ukrainian librarians and music scholars have been very generous.

music was censored or hidden during the Soviet years.[3] Since Ukraine claimed its independence in 1991, scholars have been working prodigiously to catch up. Since the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war, libraries have been diligently digitizing materials to preserve this culture that is under targeted threat.[4]

In writing Part I of this anthology, I have been aware that I am neither a political historian nor ethnographer nor linguist. I have consulted with experts in each field as possible. For example, conversing with ethnomusicologists I learned that the term "folk song" has fallen into relative disuse in recent scholarship across cultures. I use the term mindfully. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ukrainians themselves called folkloric songs *narodni pisni*, which literally translates to *narodni* (folk) *pisni* (songs), and they used it regularly and proudly. I will use the term when writing about that earlier era and its powerful folk song movement. After the Soviet era, when political authorities had manipulated the term for propaganda, Ukrainian musicians and scholars have become more wary when talking about their heritage songs. My discussion of post-Soviet folk carols will respect the current shift in terminology.[5] A glossary of various terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader—whether in Ukrainian and English, whether related to music theory or history—is provided to help the reader better understand this culture and its music.

My own expertise or point of entry into this book comes from decades of work as a singer and as a director of university and symphony choirs in repertoires of various centuries and countries. Over the years, I have transcribed many Ukrainian scores, transliterated countless words, and translated this music for non-Slavic choirs of various levels. Time and again, I have seen singers light up when reading and performing this repertoire. The hymns and carols selected for this anthology are ones that I imagine

[3] The birthplace of the leading nineteenth-century cleric-composer Turchaninov, for example, was listed ambiguously until just last year.

[4] Many artists, scholars, and journalists have witnessed how Russia's war is targeting its culture specifically. Some refer to it as cultural genocide. "The Heritage War," reported by Bill Whitaker, *60 Minutes,* CBS News, November 12, 2023, https://www.cbsnews.com/video/ukraine-russia-heritage-culture-war-60-minutes-video-2023-11-12/. Even materials in the diaspora have been compromised. For example, the site https://folk-ukraine.com was hacked and destroyed in March 2022.

[5] During the twentieth century, Soviet authorities co-opted the term for songs they fabricated or distorted to galvanize a Soviet mass culture. Providing an example of Soviet manipulation of one song culture: Maria Sonevytsky, "Musical Evolution and the Other: from State Sponsored Musical Evolutionism in the USSR to Post-Soviet Crimean Tatar Indigenous Music," *Ethnomusicology* (Spring 2022): 51–80.

will beguile choirs, captivate audiences, and might find a place in celebrations and concerts around the world. I hope this anthology will help demystify this country, this people, and culture at least somewhat—whether among audiences in earshot of a concert performance or among readers at home turning a page.

The challenges of writing this book currently have been many. Perfection remains elusive. The lyrics of one of Ukraine's most beloved Christmas carols reminds us to share our gifts as they are:

> Now the Cherubim sing praises,
> Angelic choirs greet the Savior.
> The poor shepherd carries what he can
> As an offering to the child of God.[6]

This anthology is my humble offering. I am honored to share this music particularly at this time when the world is praying for peace in Ukraine and in Jerusalem. May it bring joy and illumination. May it be the beginning of a larger conversation and exploration.

> Look down with a sincere eye, O son of God,
> Onto our land, onto Ukraine.
> Send down from heaven your great gift,
> So that we may praise You for evermore.
>
> Verse from the Ukrainian Christmas carol "Vo Vyfleyemi nyni novyna"

[6] Verse from the carol "Vo Vyvleyemi nyni novyna" (Tidings in Bethlehem).

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

The transliteration system from Cyrillic to Roman letters found in this anthology varies from section to section out of necessity. It uses three systems:

1. Within the prose of Part I, names, places, and terms are transliterated according to the Library of Congress System with some emendations for greater ease of reading. For example, adjectives and terms that end with "ій" and "ий" are simplified to just "y" (instead of "ii" or "yi").[1] Thus, the word щедрий becomes *shchedry* (instead of *shchedryi*). The soft sign (мягкий знак) in the middle of words and names is eliminated: thus, the principal city of western Ukraine Львів is translitered as Lviv, not L'viv.

   This anthology also transliterates Ukrainian composer names in this system. For example, Ганна Гаврилець is transliterated without a final soft sign: not Havrylets' but Havrylets. If the composers themselves Romanized their name differently when working or publishing in the West, however, it follows their preference. The name Олександр Кошиць, for example is transliterated not Oleksandr Koshyts but Alexander Koshetz. If composers have adopted several transliterations, I have verified their preferred version.

2. In footnotes, all titles and names are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system: for example "ій" and "ий" are transliterated "ii" and "yi," and the soft sign "ъ" is always included (shown as an apostrophe). When citing Кошиць in footnotes, Koshetz (mentioned above) is transliterated Koshyts'.

3. Within the music scores, the transliteration of lyrics reflects a system that I have found to be most successful with non-Slavic choirs. This system is described at the outset of Part II, on pp. 192–194. The *title* at the heading of each piece, however, is transliterated in the first manner.

Overall, the first system is for ease of reading, the second for bibliographic searches, the third for precision of pronunciation in singing the language.

All translations from Ukrainian or Church Slavonic to English within Part I are mine. To differentiate the Ukrainian titles of pieces from other foreign words in the flow of the prose, translations of titles are in brackets and all other foreign words in parentheses.

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[1] This practice in transliterating Cyrillic is similar to that of musicologist Richard Taruskin and the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many *dobri dushi* (good souls) have contributed to this project. In Ukraine, I thank Mykola Hobdych, Evheniya Ignatenko, Maria Kachmar, Ludmyla Kapustina, Lidia Korniy, Valentyna Kuzyk, Lyubov Kyyanovsky, Ivan Ostapovych, Tina Peresunko, Ludmila Rudenko, and Yevhen Yefremov for their help in answering questions, sharing resources, and their guidance. I thank the living composers for sharing their living music: Iryna Aleksiychuk, Yuriy Alzhnyev, Lesia Dychko, Bohdana Frolyak on behalf of her sister and Dmytro Havrylets on behalf of his late wife Hanna Havrylets, Alexander Jacobchuk, Svyatoslav Lunyov, and Volodymyr Yakymets. In Canada, the United States, Germany, and Italy, I thank Virko Baley, Tania D'Avignon, Jurij Dobczansky, Danylo Galadza, Jan Harrington, Halyna Hryn, Ksenia Kiebuzinski, Natalie Kononenko, Ihor Kowal, Myron Maksymiw, Natalie Pollock, Kim Rankin, Mykola Schwetz, Maria Sonevytsky, Ted Stasiuk, Iryna Voloshyna, Bonnie Wade, Jason Zahorchak, Izaly Zemtsovsky, and the late Richard Taruskin for their advice, reference information, and encouragement. Special thanks to the exceedingly *schchedry* Victor and Halyna Ostapchuk for their hospitality in Toronto and their feedback along the way. My companions in this process Alex, Anne, Daria, Ina, Maria, Melanie, Micah, Paula, Penny, Stefano, Stephen, and Tricia kept me going.

I am also grateful for several gifts I received over the years. I had no idea at the time how much I would put them to use: the monumental carol anthology that my aunt Slava gave me sometime in the 1980s when I was in graduate school, saying "maybe it will come in handy some day";[1] the photo-essay book *Simply Ukraine* by Tania D'Avignon with its vivid images of the Ukrainian landscape that my aunt Nadia gave me one Christmas in the 1990s; a copy of the comprehensive *Ukraïns'ka muzychna kul'tura* (Ukrainian music culture) that its author Lidiya Korniy pressed into my hands after I gave a talk at the Kyiv Conservatory in 2016. These proved invaluable. More than just offering information, they served as endowed objects that anchored my work.

[1] "Mozhe prydastsia kolys'," she said, giving me the weighty tome published by Wasyl Zavitnevych in the 1960s (see Bibliography).

In some ways, the process of this book began before I was born. My grandparents, Anna and Mykhailo, Olha and Wolodymyr, and my parents Oksana and Orest, sang constantly as they made their way from western Ukraine to Germany and finally to the United States during and in the aftermath of World War II. When raising me and my siblings, they could not speak of the horrors and obstacles they had encountered, but the depth of their singing conveyed the profound stories they carried. My paternal grandfather was a schoolmaster in the small village of Khvativ, east of Lviv. His wife Anna taught the women in the village how to sew and sow. My maternal grandfather Wolodymyr Haftkowycz was a ranking member of the famous organization Prosvita (Enlightenment) in Lviv. He and his younger brother Ivan engaged in spreading words and songs—a kind of cultural guerilla warfare—across western Ukraine at their peril. My maternal grandmother Olha was a kindergarten teacher with a bottomless supply of Ukrainian children's songs. I owe them and my parents my life in music. These are the Ukrainians who taught me so many carols when I was growing up. I am also grateful for my siblings, cousins, nieces, and nephew who continue to sing these *koliadky* with me every Christmas season. Finally, I have been blessed with choirs who opened their voices and hearts to this music under my direction over many years and in so doing became *troshky* Ukrainian.

My labor on this book has been fueled equally by grief (from the first night I saw images of missiles landing in Kyiv in February 2022) and my love of this music and people. As I write this, Ukrainians are battling a brutal, senseless war with courage and determination, each with their own story and song.

I am grateful for each voice.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Praised for centuries for their *pisennist'* (songfulness), Ukrainians enjoy a copious repertoire of Christmas, New Year's, and Epiphany carols. One collection of Ukrainian carols produced in the 1960s includes 450 distinct pieces.[1] There are hundreds more. The present anthology brings this music—in a varied, curated (and translated) sample—to light. It is the first of its kind among English-language sources.

More broadly, this book opens a new realm to musicians and non-musicians alike. Each carol in this anthology can be enjoyed on its own, for its own musical sake: its sweep of melody, pulsating rhythm, inventive arrangement by its composer. The carols individually and as a group can also serve as a prism through which we can view Ukraine's unique history and varied culture. Many of these carols carry inspiring stories of choral activism, whereby songs became catalysts for societal change—perhaps among the less-known of the many global stories about the power of music. The carols might even cause us to reconsider the notion within Western music tradition, however conscious or subconscious, that mainly works of enormous orchestration and length have great importance. These *a cappella* miniatures have been a force in helping Ukraine as a nation to survive, and their life-affirming messages have value across cultural divides.

Ukrainian carols—Ukraine's music in general—have remained obscure to most singers, conductors, and audiences outside its borders. In international choral practice, singers and their directors are by now accustomed to mastering many languages,[2] including words in Church Slavonic and Russian transliterated from their original Cyrillic script. Once daunting, the language of Sergei Rachmaninoff's and Arvo Pärt's "Bogoroditse Devo," for example, has become part of the global choral vernacular. Yet Ukrainian choral music remains hidden from concert

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[1] Wasyl Zavitnevych, *Antolohiia Ukraïns'koï pisni: Tom 1, Koliadky i shchedrivky* [Anthology of Ukrainian song, vol. 1, Koliadky and shchedrivky] (New York: Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, 1967).

[2] The *New Oxford Book of Carols*, for example, includes carols in Basque (Euskara), Czech, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Welsh, among others. Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott, eds., *The New Oxford Book of Carols* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

programming. This relative absence is due to various historic factors that will be explored in the chapters that follow. The lack of familiarity is also curious, since one of the most internationally popular and ubiquitous of Christmas carols in concert halls, on the airwaves, and online, "Carol of the Bells," is of Ukrainian origin.

Written by Mykola Leontovych and titled "Shchedryk" in Ukrainian, "Carol of the Bells" is seldom known to be Ukrainian and even more rarely understood in its original meaning. Rather than a carol about bells, it is about a bird, a *lastivochka* (a swallow), that sings out to a farmer to remind him of his great fortune: his flocks, his plentiful grain, his beautiful wife. It is a carol of gratitude, abundance, and renewal. With its central motive that cycles over and over again, "Shchedryk" is perhaps emblematic of Ukraine, a country of vast wheat fields that regenerate each year. Within it, the carol also carries a story of tragedy—the assassination of its composer Leontovych by a Russian secret agent—that relates to Ukraine's history as a whole. The optimism of the carol reflects the spirit of this people who carry on with optimism and gratitude despite all hardship.

That seemingly artless carol "Shchedryk" sends a message that is both timeless and timely, local and universal: a message of tenacity and resilience as the world emerges from a devastating pandemic, as Ukraine fights valiantly to maintain its sovereignty, and as a war in the Middle East rages. Finally, it reminds humanity not to take each other or take the earth, in all its plentiful diversity, for granted. Encapsulated within this one carol is a macrocosm of messages. And this is just one of Ukraine's carols.

The present collection was envisioned toward the end of 2021, before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The war complicated research. Since the first attack on Kyiv in February 2022,[3] Ukrainian musicians and artists around the world, myself included, have been working nonstop to organize fund-raising concerts and panel discussions, give interviews, write articles, provide scores, and respond to queries about Ukraine. Librarians have been digitizing archives in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, and all across Ukraine to prevent their destruction by Russian missiles. There was so much to do, and the stakes of what initially seemed a simple, modest anthology of Christmas music were raised.

The war complicated but did not stop research. Knowing that travel to Kyiv would be difficult, I reached out to libraries and scholars in Ukraine and in the diaspora. Choral directors and composers—those who stayed

[3] The war had begun years earlier in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Eastern Ukraine. February 24, 2022 marks the day that missiles and air strikes landed across Ukraine followed by a large-scale ground invasion.

within Ukraine and those who are now refugees—replied to my questions when cell phone and Wi-Fi service allowed, as did colleagues around the world. My work on this book sometimes ventured into journalism, tracking what was happening in the moment. During my research thousands of miles from the war zone, I have been reminded time and again of how little information about Ukrainian music is available on the shelves (or storage facilities) of music libraries in the West—even the most prestigious ones. The emptiness of those shelves was sobering, and it also motivated my work. The scope of this project expanded.

All the while, the world has been witnessing how vital music has been to the people of Ukraine during this crisis. Villagers sing defiantly at tanks, city dwellers sing in bunkers, soldiers post TikTok videos of themselves singing in their cars enroute to deployment, pop artists hold concerts in underground metro stations. Within the first days of Russia's bombing of Kyiv, a leading pop musician posted a video of himself singing a traditional patriotic song. The video went viral, not just domestically but internationally, inspiring countless spin-offs of solidarity.[4] As the war wore on, that song continued to echo from one village and city to another. On New Year's Eve 2023, the song reverberated between high-rise apartment buildings in Odesa amid the sounds of a drone attack.[5] At each turn, Ukraine has countered devastation, war crimes of unspeakable cruelty, and demeaning rhetoric with eloquence, gratitude, and with song. Ukrainians have sung for survival for centuries. Their deep musical spirit has inspired and energized my work.

The music scores in Part II of this anthology can be enjoyed on their own without further reading or contextualization. For enthusiasts wishing to learn more, Part I of this book serves as a somewhat expansive cultural companion. The first chapter provides a history of Ukrainian choral music within Ukraine's complex history; the second shares biographies of the composers whose music is featured. Since Ukraine's Christmas–New Year's–Epiphany cycle of holidays encompasses a wide variety of carols and hymns, the third chapter offers a description of each carol genre and the

[4] The initial video of the song "Oy u luzi chervona kalyna" sung by Andriy Khlyvnyuk and filmed in front of Kyiv's iconic St. Sophia Cathedral, was posted on February 27, 2022. South Africa's The Kiffness posted his version on March 4; Pink Floyd posted "Hey, Hey, Rise Up!" on April 7; soloists from the Lithuanian National Opera on April 22; an Estonian choir numbering in the thousands of singers on May 23. See "Oy u luzi" in the Discography and Videography, p. 425.

[5] "31.12.2023 Odesa. 'Oy u luzi chervona kalyna' pid zvuky shakhedriv. My vystoimo!" [12. 31.2023 Odesa. "Oy u luzi chervona kalyna" amid the sounds of Iranian drones. We will endure!] Posted January 1, 2024, https://youtu.be/fnJLbuyKoAA?si=shoTIqIX_ZHVqljX.

holiday customs it accompanies. Woven into this third chapter are descriptions and brief (sometimes rather technical) music analyses of the individual hymns and carols included here.

Part II contains the scores themselves, grouped by genre. Each hymn and carol includes text underlay in both Cyrillic script and transliteration within the score; at the end, each provides English and German translations to make them readily accessible to non-Ukrainians. The editorial notes at the end of each score mention the provenance of each carol and practical information for performance. For readers who are unable to read music, the Discography and Videography includes a list of recordings where some of the carols can be heard.

A unifying characteristic of the diverse people of Ukraine seems to be a core belief in the power of prayer, in the necessity of song, and a reverence for their land. In their Christmas and New Year's celebrations, their religious devotion—to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, Virgin Mary, angels and saints—is not separate from their love of birds, farm animals, fields, and the stars in heaven. The pieces in the present anthology encompass this spirit. The collection features the famous carol about the *lastivochka*, "Shchedryk" (known widely as "Carol of the Bells") as well as the true Ukrainian carol of bells "Yerusalymski dzvony" (The bells of Jerusalem) and twenty-four other pieces. Some of them are centered in Christian themes: songs that retell the nativity story, hymns devoted to Mary, carols of wonder and joy at the birth of Jesus. Some are New Year's carols of a pantheistic nature. Some an admixture of sacred and secular. The anthology includes ancient chants as well as music composed very recently. All are for *a cappella* (unaccompanied) chorus: mostly mixed chorus (SATB), a few for treble voices only, and a few for Tenors and Basses.

The information in Part I of this anthology—the history of Ukraine and biographies of its composers—might be a difficult read at times for those only now learning this history and these narratives, particularly during and in the aftermath of Russia's massive, brutal assault on Ukraine's land and people. Much like Ukrainians themselves, the chapter on Ukraine's history will pause periodically amid the grim narrative to take a breath and quote carols that reaffirm messages of faith and hope. Grief, devastation, strength, and abundant beauty have often walked side-by-side in the Ukrainian experience. Ukraine's countless winter carols are a testament to the indomitable resilience of its people and to the maxim that no hardship "can defeat the will of a free people."[6] These songs assert that no matter how cold

[6] From the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's address to the Ukrainian parliament January 12, 2024. "Putin cannot understand that while you can kill individuals and

or bleak the days, light will triumph over darkness and the warmth of goodwill can prevail. Even in the darkest days of its history when Ukraine was robbed of its political voice, it still asserted its vibrant essence in song.

Ukraine has been in existence for over a thousand years. Like the *lastivochka* in "Shechdryk," this country sings out its identity and optimism—repeatedly, insistently. The present anthology introduces Ukraine as a country and culture phenomenally rich in song, faith, and love for its land. It offers choirs and readers around the globe a new adventure of music that is vivid in imagery, vocally idiomatic, and deeply stirring to the human spirit.

destroy buildings, no army can ever defeat the will of a free people. And that is why Ukraine will win." *Rishi Sunak addresses the Ukrainian parliament*, posted January 12, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIrPfgNUd8U.

be published if its lyrics were in Russian (or Church Slavonic) but not in Ukrainian.[3] Ukrainian composers responded to this challenge with choral miniatures that were easier to copy by hand and teach by rote. The greatest proliferation of Christmas-related choral music came at the turn of the twentieth century during a movement of choral activism, a concerted campaign to shore up ethnic self-awareness. During Ukraine's brief period of independence after the Russian Revolution of 1917, carols were employed by the new Ukrainian Republic in an effort to secure national sovereignty through song.

The paucity of Ukrainian Christmas music during the Soviet era is related to the categorical censorship of all sacred music. The relative lack of familiarity with Ukrainian music outside its borders until recently is also linked to historical and political factors. Particularly during the twentieth century, many of Ukraine's composers were assassinated, exiled, and "erased," their scores hidden or destroyed. While artists and works with Russian roots and names were supported, promoted, and exported for world consumption, Ukrainian artists and works were kept in the shadows.

The carols and hymns in this anthology are treasures from earlier centuries that have survived and new gems that have emerged since Ukraine (re)claimed its sovereignty in 1991.

The chapter that follows will not attempt to unravel all the complexity of Ukraine's history.[4] That jagged history—until recently told from a generally Russo-centric point of view[5]—is only now coming to fully transparent light. Among notable English-language historians, Serhii Plokhy of Harvard, Timothy Snyder of Yale, and the political scientist Alexander Motyl of Rutgers Universities have tackled Ukraine's past and present and have published monographs with tremendous fortitude and specificity.[6] For more thorough and nuanced information on Ukrainian

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[3] Two pieces of legislation that prohibited publishing works in Ukrainian were the Valuev Circular of 1863 and the Edict of Ems in 1876 (see p. 19).

[4] In 2007, at an academic conference devoted to Ukraine, the historian John Connelly stood up to the lectern, stacked a dozen books on a table, and concluded that its history is "too complex to be instructive." "Ukraine: History and Society": Thirty-First annual Berkeley-Stanford Conference of the Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at Stanford University." March 2, 2007.

[5] This phenomenon might be encapsulated in a quote attributed to Winston Churchill: "History is written by the victors."

[6] As an example of painstaking, detailed research, Snyder writes, "Each of the 681,692 people shot in Stalin's Great Terror of 1937–38 had a different life story.

history, the reader might consult their publications.[7] What follows is a simplified overview of Ukraine's history as it directly relates to choral music.[8] This chapter will give just enough historical background to contextualize the folk carols and the specific composers featured in this anthology.

The synopsis of Ukraine's often painful history is not meant to overshadow its colorful music with grief. Rather, it clarifies how the grit and beauty of every village singer and every composer have been forged through much sorrow. Their holiday carols assert a belief in a higher power and in a benevolent lifeforce that is stronger than any tsar, commissar, or war.

Ancient oral tradition and earliest notated music

The history of Ukraine's music begins millennia before it was documented in manuscripts, published scores, and YouTube videos. Ukrainians—the various people who have inhabited the land bordering the Black Sea and Sea of Azov and between the Carpathian Mountains and Donets Basin—have been known as a singing people since long before the nation-state "Ukraine" existed. Situated in the middle of the Eurasian continent, Ukraine has absorbed resonances from the Khazar to Viking, Byzantine to Western European, Armenian, Jewish, Roma, Tatar, and Turkish cultures, among others.

Some of the very earliest musical remnants of human civilization have been found within Ukraine's borders.[9] Archeologists have found a

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The Nazi and Soviet regimes turned people into numbers…. It is for us as humanists to turn the numbers back into people." Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 408.

[7] Among the books published within the last fifteen years, each focusing on a different period are: Alexander Motyl, *Ukraine vs Russia: Revolution, Democracy, and War* (*Washington*, DC: Westphalia Press, 2017); Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); Snyder, *Bloodlands.*

[8] For an overview of Ukraine's history as a whole, see also Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History,* 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Paul Robert Magocsi, *Ukraine: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; 2007). For an even deeper history of Ukraine, see Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, 10 vols. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1997-2021).

[9] This chapter assumes borders as drawn after Ukraine claimed independence in 1991 and prior to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine.

collection of percussion instruments from the Paleolithic era, twenty thousand years BCE, near the current city of Chernihiv. In the Bukovyna region, they have found wind instruments typical of prototypes from forty to fifteen thousand years BCE, and in a Mariupol gravesite, seven bagpipes buried together from six to four thousand years BCE.[10] No physical evidence exists of songs, transmitted orally and aurally from generation to generation. Nevertheless, folk songs still in practice today hearken back to ancient rituals that dominated the culture well before the advent of the written word or written music. The ethnographer Anatoly Ivanytsky posits that some currently sung winter songs date back to 2000 BCE.[11] Within earliest Ukrainian music culture, the functions of composer, performer, and audience were indivisible,[12] and the various tribes that were at the foundation of the Ukrainian nation enjoyed a syncretic relationship of spoken word, song, and dance.[13]

To quote Serhii Plokhy, "the first historian of Ukraine was [in the fifth century BCE] Herodotus, the father of history himself."[14] The current capital city of Ukraine, Kyiv, was a documented cultural center by the mid-first millennium CE.[15] Near the ninth century, Kyiv became the heart of a larger region and population, a confederation of Slavic tribes originally formed by Varangians (as the Vikings were known in Eastern Europe)—later named Kyivan Rus'—that was regarded as one of the strongest and largest lands of Central Europe.[16] It was expansive, reaching north as far

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[10] Lidiia Kornii and Bohdan Siuta, *Ukraïns'ka muzychna kul'tura: Pohliad kriz' viky* [Ukrainian music culture: A survey across the ages] (Kyiv: Myzychna Ukraïna, 2014), 11.

[11] Although their lyrics have changed across the millennia, their lyric and melodic structures remain little changed. A. I. Ivanyts'kyi, *Ukraïns'ka muzychna fol'klorystyka: Metodolohiia i metodyka* [Ukrainian music folklore: Methodology and method] (Kyiv: Zapovit, 1997), 26–27.

[12] An analogous interrelationship was prevalent from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, when composers and choral directors were one and the same.

[13] Kornii and Siuta, *Ukraïns'ka muzychna kul'tura*, 14.

[14] Plokhy, *Gates of Europe,* 3. The first appearance of Slavs in Ukraine was in approximately 2000 BCE. From approximately 900 to 700 BCE, the Scyths—an Eastern Iranic nomadic people—migrated from Central Asia to the Pontic Steppe of modern-day Ukraine.

[15] Volodymyr Kubijovyč, Vadym Pavlovsky, Ihor Stebelsky, and Arkadii Zhukovsky, "Kyiv," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine,* accessed November 10, 2023, https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com.

[16] At this early time, it was referred to as "Ruska zemlia." The term "Kyivan Rus" was coined in the nineteenth century. The first mention of Ukraina (Ukraine) is found in the twelfth-century Hypatian redaction of the so-called Primary Chronicle.

north as what would later become known as Muscovy.[17] By the eleventh century, Kyiv was the largest political and commercial center in Eastern Europe,[18] and its population was one of the largest in all of Europe.[19]

In the landmark year 988, Kyiv's Grand Prince Volodymyr the Great baptized the entire Kyiv region into Christianity, adopting the faith from Greece. Historians speculate that he might have been attracted to Byzantine Christianity for aesthetic as well as spiritual reasons—the visual and sonorous opulence of its churches and liturgies. Alternately, he might have converted the population to Christianity and adopted it from Constantinople for practical and political reasons. It was perhaps his means of consolidating surrounding tribes under one religion and simultaneously forging a closer relationship with the commerce of Byzantium.

Ukraine has always encompassed many ethnicities and religions. Political crises and shifts in borders have caused fluctuations in the percentages of religions practiced in Ukraine over the centuries.[20] Russia's war on Ukraine complicates current statistical records. In modern times, Christianity has been the predominant religion in Ukraine, and among its Christian denominations Orthodoxy has steadily occupied the largest percentage, followed by Byzantine Catholicism (also known as Eastern Rite, Ukrainian, or Greco-Catholicism). To note two minority religions and ethnic populations, Ukraine was home to between 56,000 and 140,000 Jews in 2016, making it the fourth-largest Jewish community in Europe and the eleventh largest in the world.[21] Another minority, Crimean Tatars (primarily of Muslim faith) numbered circa 250,000 on the Crimean Peninsula in the 1990s.[22] Obviously, most of the music in the present anthology is tied to Christianity. Many Ukrainian Christmas carols, however, are rooted in pre-

[17] The later name "Russia" was adopted during the reign of Peter I (1662–1725).
[18] Kuvijovyč, et al., "Kyiv," *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine.*
[19] P. M. Hohenberg and L. H. Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe, 1000–1994* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 10.
[20] It is critical to note earlier centuries: the seventeenth-century pogroms and twentieth-century Holocaust took millions of Ukrainian Jewish lives, a history too sensitive and serious to cover in this short chapter. The deportation of Crimean Tatars by Soviet authorities in 1944 (and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014) displaced citizens by the hundreds of thousands.
[21] Estimates by the demographer Sergio Della Pergola are found in his *World Jewish Population, 2016*,
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-46122-9_17.
[22] Edward Allworth, ed., *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland,* 2nd ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). Tatars were again forced into exile with the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia.

Christian times, and some of the carols in this anthology are popular across religions and ethnicities within Ukraine.

The division of sacred and secular is often difficult to delineate in Ukraine's ancient songs, including its Christmas and New Year's carols. Before the tenth century, Ukraine' primary religions were pantheistic, with a reverence for earth and the heavens[23] and a belief in the mystic powers of nature. After the milestone of 988, Christianity did not automatically supplant its earlier cultures and customs of spirituality. Rather, there was a synthesis of beliefs, symbolism, and song. For example, songs of worship to the feminine divine easily melded into hymns to the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Ukrainian called *Bohorodytsia* (or in Greek *Theotokos*), Bearer of God. To this day, Mary is much revered in Ukraine, and a great many Christmas carols are devoted to her. As another example of this melding, Ukrainians celebrate St. John the Baptist Day (June 24) with summer solstice rituals. Christian and non-Christian rituals have coexisted and informed each other for centuries in Ukraine.

The earliest Ukrainian ritual songs include *domashni pisni* (domestic songs) that accompany phases of the life cycle (birth, marriage, death) and *kalendarno-obriadovi pisni* (calendar-ritual songs) that accompany the cyclical tasks of Ukraine's largely agrarian society. With its vast expanses of steppes and extraordinarily fertile *chornozem* (black soil), Ukraine is often called the Breadbasket of Europe. Like its people, Ukraine's songs are close to this soil. Each season is accompanied by songs related to planting seeds and raising crops (spring), harvesting (summer/fall), and preparation for the next year (winter).

Particularly rich in symbolism are the winter songs. Pre-Christian *koliadky* and *shchedrivky* were the progenitors of the songs that currently accompany the Christmas and New Year's season.[24] Many winter *koliadky* from earlier centuries make no mention of the nativity story and celebrate the return of the sun. Since Ukraine used to celebrate New Year's in March, many *shchedrivky* refer to spring. Some early songs that to this day are called *koliadky* tell old mythic stories of creation.

Коли не било з нащада світа,
Тогди не било неба ні землі,
А но лем било синєє море,
А серед мор'я зелений явір.
На яворонъку три голубоньки
Три голубоньки радоньку радять,

[23] Ukraine's flag is a representation of heaven and earth: the sky and wheat fields.
[24] For an etymology of the terms and discussion of these carols, see Genres, p. 143.

Радоньку радять, як світ сновати.
—Та пустимося на дно до моря
Та дістанеме дрібного піску,
Дрібний пісочок посіємо ми,
Та нам ся стане чорна землиця.
Та дістанеме золотий камінь,
Золотий камінь посіємо ми,
Та нам ся стане ясне небонько.

In the beginning, before there was a world,
there was no heaven or earth,
but there was a blue sea,
and amid the sea a green sycamore tree.
On that little sycamore tree there were three sweet doves,
the three sweet doves consulted with each other,
held a little counsel as to how the world might be created.
—Let's dive down to the bottom of the sea
and get some fine sand,
the fine sand we'll sow,
and fertile soil will appear to us.
And let's get a golden stone,
the golden stone we'll sow,
and a bright sky will appear to us.

from "Koly ne bylo," an ancient *koliadka*[25]

Modern *koliadky* too sometimes feature creatures from the natural world alongside the nativity story. Many current *shchedrivky* still welcome the New Year and point toward spring in one breath.

After the reign of Volodymyr the Great, in the course of the medieval era, many Ukrainian monarchs and religious leaders endeavored to leave a church, monastery, or educational institution as a legacy. Yaroslav the Wise founded the St. Sophia Cathedral in the early eleventh century, and Ukraine's first monasteries appeared in the eleventh century as well, most notably the famous Monastery of the Caves in Kyiv. By the thirteenth century, the number of monasteries in the Kyiv region rose to twenty, and

[25] "Koly ne bylo" [Before there was], transcribed by I. Vahylevych in the 1830s in the Halychyna region of western Ukraine. The full song is published in M. Moskalenko, ed., *Zolotoslov: Poetychnyi kosmos Davn'oi Rusi* [Golden words: the Poetic cosmos of Ancient Rus] (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1988), 48. Quoted in Kornii and Siuta, *Ukraïns'ka muzychna kul'tura*, 15. The song is featured in a famous recording by Nina Matvienko, *Zolotoslov*, Oberih 21 (1995).

others were founded in Chernihiv, Lviv, and other localities.[26] Culture flourished.

However, from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern era—because of Ukraine's natural resources and its politically strategic location as a gateway between Asia and Western Europe and between Northern Europe and the Mediterranean—it was the target of many invasions and occupations. In the mid-thirteenth century, the Mongols sacked the medieval Kyivan state (Kyiv and its surrounding territory, often referred to as Kyivan Rus')[27] and overran land as far as Hungary and Poland. Eventually, they lost control of their gains in the fourteenth century. From the mid-fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, Ukraine's western territory was occupied by Poland and its eastern territory by Lithuania, which in 1569 formed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. During this same era, the Principality of Muscovy to Ukraine's north, with Moscow at its center, grew in territory and power.[28] In 1476, its Grand Prince Ivan III adopted the title Tsar, and his newly named Tsardom of Muscovy[29] entered a prolonged conflict with Lithuania over the ownership of eastern Ukraine.[30]

Although Ukraine was splintered geopolitically, its culture in language and song continued to flourish throughout these centuries and across geographical divides**.**

Despite the invasions and upheavals from the Middle Ages into the mid-seventeenth century, the area surrounding Kyiv and several other Ukrainian cities survived. By the seventeenth century, Kyiv revived and once again became a leading educational and religious center of Europe. In the latter sixteenth century, both western and eastern Ukrainian regions became influenced by humanism. Secular academic institutions took hold alongside monasteries and thrived. The most notable of these were the Ostroh

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[26] Mykhailo Vavryk, "Monasteries," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine,* accessed October 10, 2023, https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com.

[27] In the course of their history, Ukrainians have used two principal terms to define their land: Rus' (the finale apostrophe indicating the soft sign in Cyrillic) and Ukraine. Both have medieval origins. The term *Kyivan* Rus' (created in the modern era) is typically used for Ukraine's medieval period. Plokhy, *Gates of Europe*, xxii–xxiii.

[28] The later name "Russia" was adopted during the reign of by Peter I, who ruled "Muscovia" from 1682 to 1721 and the "Russian Empire" until his death in 1725.

[29] The first mention of the title "Muscovy" comes from the year 1500. A. L. Khoroshkevich, "Rossiya i Moskoviia: Iz istorii politiko-geographicheskoi terminologii" [Russia and Muscovy: from the history of politico-geographic terminology], *Acta Baltico-Slavica,* (1976): 47–57.

[30] Plokhy, *Gates of Europe,* 65.

Academy (founded in 1576) and the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (founded in 1632), among the earliest educational institutions in Eastern Europe. They boasted a cosmopolitan outlook, teaching in Greek and Latin as well as Church Slavonic. The Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, which later became a university (and exists to this day), rose to the highest level among European institutions. Many of its graduates became *mandrivny diaky* (wandering deacons) who taught in villages across Ukraine.[31] In western Ukraine, *bratstva*—intellectual-religious fraternities that proliferated in the late sixteenth century— opened schools for children of all social classes.

By the mid-seventeenth century Ukraine possessed one of the highest literacy rates in all of Europe. According to the journals of Paul of Aleppo, who traveled from Aleppo to Instanbul, Wallachia, Moldavia, Ukraine, and Muscovy in the 1650s, the government prioritized the building of new churches, the arts (the creation of icons and paintings and cultivation of church singing), and the development of schools and education. Upon his arrival on Ukrainian land, he wrote:

> We noticed the most wonderful trait that aroused our amazement: all of them, without exception—even most of their wives and daughters—knew how to read; they know the order of church services and church singing![32]

As in Western European music history, music notation and music literacy were first developed and promoted in churches and monasteries. The first Ukrainian music to be fixed and preserved in notation were Orthodox chants and hymns. The earliest system of notation—called *kriuk* (hook) notation—was suitable for single-line sacred chant, or what Ukrainians call *monodia* (plainchant). The principal church services of Orthodox Christianity—the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great—feature continuous sung dialogue between the celebrant, deacon, and choir.[33] In Orthodox church services, chant repertoires were extensive and individual chants sometimes extended. Notation enabled easier transmission from one generation, from one

[31] Kornii and Siuta, *Ukraïns'ka muzychna kul'tura*, 73.

[32] Paul of Aleppo, an Ottoman Syrian Orthodox clergyman, chronicled what he observed. Quoted in Mykhailo Hrushevsky*, History of Ukraine–Rus',* ed. Frank Sysyn, vol. 9, bk. 2, pt. 1, *The Cossack Age, 1654–57* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2008), 382.

[33] Some of their hymns express a reverence for the very act of singing. See p. 152.