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DLA dissertation thesis

VIKTOR MASSÁNYI

**MYKOŁA LYSENKO,
THE FATHER OF THE UKRAINIAN
NATIONAL MUSIC**

Ferenc Liszt University of Music
assigned as a Doctoral School № 28
of history of art and community

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I. The premises of the research

A Hungarian edition about Mykola Lysenko's life and musical activity hasn't appeared so far. Even the biggest Hungarian cyclopaedias only lightly mention the composer's name and the titles of some of his works whereas studies, reviews and assays had not appeared in this field at all. However Lysenko's art and organizing activity played on important role at the time of birth of the Ukrainian national school of composers in the second half of the XIX century, and in a direct or indirect way, his music had the great impact on the development of musical culture of other countries and nations.

The recognition of his activity was set back by many factors in his and other countries as well. At the time of the Russian Empire, the ruling circles tried their best to hush up the composer's nationality and in the Former Soviet Union – however his composer's activity was received – because of Russian-oriented, centralized outlook, the commitment and devotion to communal and substantive Ukrainian national self-consciousness wasn't mentioned for political reasons. At the end of XX century, following the birth of the sovereign Ukrainian state, Lysenko's artistic life came to light on the scene of artistic culture: his pieces could ever more often be heard at the concerts. However, an overall, vast and new monograph about his life and activity has not been issued even in his own country so far.

II. Sources

Owing to support of the great Diaspora who live in the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe, the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine Project* issued in 1954 by V. Kubijovich which has been regularly refreshed since then can provide the reader an insight into Lysenko's life and activity in English. I think, of great help were the memoirs of Lysenko's son and the composer's letter-writing which was printed out in several editions.

In my essay I tried to touch upon his most important and known works, following the composer's walk of life. I touched almost every of his pieces within the genre of opera. The detailed representation has more grounds, partly the significance of composition and many documents available. Sometimes I could choose from a plenty of printed and manuscript sources, scores, piano reductions, textbooks, concert programs, contemporary program guides, in quest for which were the guides of my musician colleagues, in other cases, just for a short period I could study a score of a piece in the Library of the National Academy of Music named after Lysenko in Lvov, which I did not have a possibility to make a copy of. The volume of Lysenko's studies issued by the Ukrainian Academy of Art in 2004 titled "Mykola Lysenko and the Ukrainian School of Composers" which came to light as the 160th jubilee of Lysenko issued by H. Skrypnik was a great aid for me as well.

III. Method

In my dissertation I want to try without any aspiration to being perfect – referring partly to literature and partly to my own research – to summarize the more important stations of the Ukrainian composer's life and work, emphasizing the thematic of national identity and combination of Slavic and European impacts which makes his music unique. When discussing his operas I considered it important to make a short review of the act, as these pieces are unknown to a Hungarian reader and at the same time choosing the theme and unveiling of the act, the succession of the events serves basic information not only on the librettist, but the composer as well.

When analysing music I chose more ways according to the nature of the composition: at some operas, with the advance of the act I analysed the players from the point of view of music and stage, but at some points I tried to show a protagonist through the all unveiling acts of the piece. When analysing pieces of chorus and chamber music I try to emphasise and introduce musical material as based on the folk songs and consciously showing Christian ideas at various stages of the composer's life. I also tried to illustrate my observations with as many musical examples as possible within the framework of my work so that the musical reader can immediately see the Lysenko's usage of the motives and his unique ability to compose melodies and feature characters.

IV. Achievements

In the first two chapters of my discourse (I. The development of Ukrainian culture till XIX century; II. Mykola Lysenko's walk of life), I make a short review of the development of Ukrainian culture, and also Lysenko's life and activity in his young years, stressing his dual bringing-up: his entity in the Russian Empire and European schooling.

In the third chapter (On the way toward the national opera) I deal with the special composing effects and the world of Lysenko's thoughts. In the stories of the great Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol, the Ukrainian theme plays a very important role (history and a folk-tale).

When studying these stories, Mykola Lysenko decided to write operas based on the Gogol's most interesting stories in Ukrainian (*Ryzdyjiana Nich* – Christmas Night; *Utoplana* – The Drowned); *Natalka Poltavka* – Natalka Poltavka).

In the fourth chapter, the most important opera by Lysenko (*Taras Bulba*) can be found. In this opera, the Ukrainian people embodied by the chorus play the most important role. In Lysenko's music, the conflict of the two camps – the Ukrainian kazaks and the Polish gentry – is expressed by individual characters as well, not just in general scenes, owing to the emphasis on the contradictory Ukrainian and Polish national complexion.

Let me demonstrate in the fifth chapter (Chorus- and chamber music pieces) a characteristic and popular eulogy, one of the many Lysenko's chorus pieces (*Raduj'sya nivo nepolittaja*) in which there is an emphasis on the Ukrainian Orthodox many-phrasal chorus, which

is different from the Catholic parochial singing. From his chamber music, the analysis of *the Ukrainian suite* composed on the pattern of baroque dance music provides the short insight into the typical Lysenko's style. From his songs, I demonstrate a *cycle of songs*, the text for which was chosen by the composer from the volume of verses titled "*Lyrisches Intermezzo*" by Heinrich Heine.

The sixth chapter: Lysenko's activity at the beginning of the XX century. Having gone through enormous social changes in the first decade of the XX century, the composer wrote a satiric opera based on the ancient Greek mythology (*Eneida*), and a mini-opera (*Мистине*) which is full of mystery games. The musical language of the both pieces advanced the cutting edge features of his later Ukrainian operas. From the composer's later works, I further demonstrate some of his *linguistic choir pieces* and a song titled *Ajstri* (Asters), which was composed in 1905 under the influence of the Russian revolution.

V. The documentation related to the domain of dissertation

A singer's point of view. I have been studying Lysenko's works since my technical college years. At the beginning I used to study and conduct his choir works, later, as an opera singer I became rather interested in his operas. I have also performed the "Aria of Ostar" from "Taras Bulba" on many occasions at concerts in Hungary as well. Last time I did it in March, 2009 at the University of Debrecen, which organized my social evening of aria and song.

I am planning a social evening of Slavic songs in autumn, 2010, where I am going to perform songs by Lysenko as well. By doing so, I would like to try my best so that the Hungarian audience can get to know the works of the Father of national music of the biggest neighbouring nation. I hope that apart from my singer artist colleagues, my thesis will arouse interest toward the outstanding Ukrainian composer's life and his works, and also the Ukrainian national music in a wider circle of Hungarian music historians and those professionals, who study the music of neighbouring nations.

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