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Modern Opera of the Late 20th- Early 21st Centuries: World Trends and Ukrainian Realities

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Abstract

The ways of transformation of the opera genre at the new historical stage of its development are traced. The integrative aspects of the interaction of opera with other musical genres and types of art, features of the content, aesthetics, genre and style principles, stylistics of modern opera art are revealed. It was found that the basis of the latest operas are historical and mythological, biblical and fairy-tale, tragic and comic plots, masterpieces of ancient and modern drama, prose, and poetry. A wide panoramic review of operas created in recent decades has shown that among the topics that concern artists today, the most relevant are: the greatness and decline of the spiritual leader, the ephemerality of human life, indifference and coldness of modern society, depressing human loneliness, loss of identity, man's destiny in the world, crime and punishment, repentance for sins committed, carnal passions and violence, decomposition and self-destruction of the individual, idealized love, dreams, memory, the subconscious as ways to escape from absurd reality, and so on. The idea that universal values, which have been developed by mankind for many centuries of its existence, remain relevant for the modern generation, and their conceptualization in the latest artistic practice is associated with updating the canon in the direction of creating new hybrid genres, experiments with performers, instruments, place and time of performances, the use of multi-vector neo-style mixes, compositional and performance techniques, directorial interpretations. The place and role of operas of contemporary Ukrainian composers in the world opera process are determined. On the examples of works by M. Skoryk, A. Zahaykevych, L. Yurina, A. Merkhel, etc., as well as the activities of the creative group "New Opera" (I. Razumeiko - R. Hryhoriv) it is proved that the creative pursuits of Ukrainian artists are in line the latest world trends, testify to the high level of professionalism of the Ukrainian school of composition and performance.

Keywords: Music of the 20th – 21st centuries, opera, genre, style, stylistics, modern composer, Ukrainian music.

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Introduction

At the turn of the 20th - 21st centuries, opera as one of the most complex and attractive genres of musical art enters a new stage of its development, associated with numerous experiments and innovations. Modern composers face a new, much wider range of creative tasks than in previous epochs, approaches to opera drama are changing, and avant-garde means of expression are being used more boldly. At the same time, renewal takes place through the embodiment of new themes, the involvement of non-traditional literary sources, appeal to the archaic layers of folklore, and so on. Characteristic features of the opera are the diversity, mobility of forms and their components, the originality of stage solutions. Given that the latest musical material rarely becomes the basis of art and cultural studies, the authors of this article consider its topic relevant.

Methods

This study is aimed at studying current trends in the development of composition in the genre of opera at the turn of the 20th - 21st centuries. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks:

1. to analyze scientific sources on the researched problem;
2. to trace the ways of transformation of the opera genre at the new historical stage of its development and to reveal the integrative aspects of the opera's interaction with other musical genres and types of art;
3. to identify the features of the content, aesthetics, style of modern opera;
4. to determine the place and role of creative searches of contemporary Ukrainian composers in the world opera process;
5. to substantiate the conclusions and outline promising areas for further research of the selected problem.

To achieve this goal, research methods will be used that correspond to the nature of the phenomenon under study and the above objectives, namely:

- analytical and source study (analysis of the source base on the research issue);
- information-analytical (information screening of video and audio content on the websites of the world's leading opera houses, personal Internet resources of individual composers, etc.);
- method of holistic musicological analysis (study of individual samples of the opera genre);
- cross-cultural (search for common and distinctive features in the operatic works of composers of different countries by semantic, aesthetic, genre-style, stylistic and other parameters);
- comparative (comparison of the current stage of development of opera art with the previous historical period, comparative analysis of trends in the development of modern opera in the world cultural space and Ukraine);
- evaluation-generalization (assessment of the current state of composition in the field of opera, tracing world trends in the development of the opera genre at the present stage).

The material of the research will be Ukrainian and foreign operas, which have already been staged, won national awards, and are winners of international music festivals and ratings, have a wide cultural resonance.

Literature review

Elliot Antokoletz' thorough monograph "History of the twentieth-century music in a theoretical and analytical context" (2014) provides an integrated presentation of genres and concepts of musical art in the twentieth century, organized by aesthetic, stylistic, technical and geographical criteria and inscribed in political, social, economic and cultural contexts. Revealing the main stages of the evolution

of composer's thinking and compositional techniques during the twentieth century, the author analyzes the theoretical aspects of this process on some examples from modern operas.

Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (2012) offer a fascinating overview of the ways in which the opera genre has developed in historical retrospect from its inception to the present day. However, when it comes to modern examples of opera, the authors pay very little attention to them, considering them unsuccessful, or ignore them altogether, and at the end of the monograph make the disappointing conclusion that modern opera is a dead art form.

In the voluminous collection "Art and Ideology in European Opera. Essays in Honor of Julian Rushton" (2010) there is only one article on contemporary opera – "Being with Grimes: The Problem of Others in Britten's First Opera". Its author, J. P. E. Harper-Scott, focuses on an early opera by the eminent British composer Benjamin Britten, written in 1945. However, this material goes beyond the time frame of our study.

Irene Morra's book "British Authors of the Twentieth Century and the Rise of Opera in Britain" (2007) is dedicated to the study of the British opera tradition of the twentieth century through the prism of in-depth study of the works of prominent British writers as critics and librettists (in particular, the poet W. H. Auden and essayist E. M. Forster), defining their role in the rise of British opera in the 20th century. The interdependence of literary and musical aesthetics, the relationship between the literary source, the librettist, and the author of the opera can be traced.

Olga Pereima (2007) in her Ph.D. thesis offers a panoramic overview of the opera art of Italian composers of the twentieth century. Tetiana Zolozova-Le Menestrel (2016) unfolds a broad panorama of the work of contemporary French composers in the field of opera and illustrates the main trends on the example of operas by Pascal Dusapin. Renata Sokachyk (2019) explores operas of Hungarian composer Péter Eötvös in the context of the development of the Hungarian National Musical Theater.

Some examples of modern operas fall into the scientific field of view of Oksana Babiy (2012), Olena Berehova (2006), Oleh Hudachev (2014), Alexander Kan (2017), Anastasia Kapralova (2020), Lyubov Kianovska and Lydia Melnyk (2001), A. Konovalova (2017), Evelina Kushchova (2013), Svitlana Lavrova (2013, 2016, 2019), Yevhenia Pakhomova (2015), Rada Stankovych-Spolska (2005), and others.

Analyzing the body of scientific and scientific-journalistic texts, the authors of this study have not found any source in which the problem of modern opera is revealed in a broad cross-cultural aspect. This determines the relevance and scientific novelty of the proposed study.

Results and Discussions

Trends in the Content and Aesthetics of new operas

Historical themes are one of the most popular in all periods of opera development. Most national musical cultures of Europe and the world laid the foundations of their own professional schools of composition by developing and embodying historical plots in operas. Historical issues remain relevant in the late 20th – early 21st centuries, and it is embodied with extraordinary majesty, splendor, attracting resources from related arts. A striking example is the minimalist opera by Philip Glass "Akhnaten" (1983) about the life, work, and death of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Akhnaten, who became famous for being the first in human history to proclaim the monotheistic religion of the Sun god (against polytheism, which prevailed in the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians). In the last production of the Metropolitan Opera in New York on November 23, 2019 (directed by Phelim McDermott), a multi-level structure was installed on the stage, with ritual actions, choral scenes, or dance numbers on different levels. With a minimum of musical means and the general staticity of the drama in front of the audience an impressive scale and emotional tension spectacular action is being performed, creation of which involves additional resources of other arts:

- drama theater (acting declamatory rhetoric during the delivery of poetic speeches in the part of the Spirit of Father Akhnaten Amenhotep III, various pantomime scenes, light special effects, etc.);

- cinema (similar to slow motion) movements of actors in the scene “Attack and Fall”, layering of episodes in the scene “Ruins” – the process of mummification of the deceased Pharaoh Akhnaten takes place in one part of the stage, and in another – a lecture on the history of ancient Egypt for modern students;

- circus art (jugglers with balls or clubs in orchestral dance episodes).

Additional visual series enhance the expression of the personal drama of the pharaoh, contribute to a fuller disclosure of the theme of greatness raised in the opera and the fall of the spiritual leader of society, commitment and betrayal of the environment, the ephemerality of human life.

Luigi Nono's opera “Prometheus” (1984), Mark-Anthony Turnage's opera “Greek” (1986-1988), Mark Adamo's opera “Lysistrata or the Naked Goddess” (2005), and other works are devoted to mythological themes.

The attention of composers is also attracted by biblical plots, which are sometimes embodied in an unusual fair and low farce form.

At the heart of the opera by the French composer of Ukrainian origin Marian Kouzan “Les tentations de Saint Antoine” (libretto by F. Tristan, 1992) – a biblical story about an attempt to distract the ascetic Anthony from the prayers in the desert by Lucifer and Satan. Four mythical characters are involved in the realization of their insidious plan: the Greek Helena, Balkis, the Queen of Sheba, Faust, and Don Juan. The main idea of the opera is the struggle of good and evil, and the drama of the work is built on the contrasts of the spiritual, religious and everyday fair.

Doomsday scenes appear in the Hungarian-Austrian composer György Ligeti's “Le Grand Macabre” (1974-1977, 2nd ed. 1996), a play by the Belgian playwright of the first half of the twentieth century, M. de Gelderod. The neo-expressionist sense of fear of an impending catastrophe is embodied here in a grotesque and humorous way – in the style of a medieval puppet theater fair. In the first three scenes of the opera, the peaceful life of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Brueghelland is interrupted by the appearance of the Necro-King, a generalized image of death who comes to announce the “last day of all mankind.” Episodes of the Necro-King's announcements become moments of time stop, which are underlined by pauses in the sound of the orchestra or ostinato chords-beats, separated by pauses. The final fourth scene is analogous to the traditional moral drama of medieval drama.

Contemporary composers also turn to fairy-tale plots, which are popular at all times, and which acquire new meanings in the modern context and can be wonderfully combined with ancient and modern texts. The opera “Girl with Matches” for vocal quartet and chamber orchestra by the famous German composer **Helmut Lachenmann** (1990-1996, second edition – 1999) is one of the most radical examples of the opera genre of the late twentieth century. Hans Christian Andersen's tale of a girl frozen by the cold in H. Lachenmann's version is inscribed in the acute social context of today, in which the problems of misunderstanding, indifference and coldness of modern society, depressing loneliness, homelessness as one of the worst are highlighted. In addition to Andersen's tale, the primary sources of the opera were fragments of Leonardo da Vinci's epistolary “On Fear and Desire” and letters from Gudrun Enslin, a terrorist of the Red Army Faction who died in 1977 and was a childhood friend of the composer. The composer calls his musical theater “musical pictures”, and this is reflected in the structure of the two-act opera, which consists of 28 almost unrelated scenes. In terms of stylistics, the opera is the crown of the composer's creative search in the field of instrumental specific music. The basis of the aesthetics of Lachenmann's sound is the disintegration of musical language into individual sounds, overtones, noises, which materialized with the help of innovative

means of sound production (or so-called advanced performance techniques). The composer seeks to discover new, previously unknown possibilities of instrumental playing and vocal technique. As a result, the music in his opera constantly changes its emotional “degree”: from barely audible silence – to noisy hard sounds, from seemingly frozen long “icy” sounds – to three-dimensional “warming” sounds and dramatic tension.

It is worth noting that in modern opera we have found few works, the plots of which are based on distant historical events, myths, fairy tales, and legends. A feature of the operatic process of the late 20th – early 21st centuries is the emergence of a significant number of stories about events in the recent past, the removal as the main characters of people who are contemporaries of composers or recently died. Operas “The Deaths of Klinghoffer”, “Nixon in China”, “Doctor Atomic” by British composer John Adams, “Anna Nicole” by his compatriot Mark-Anthony Turnage, “Dead Man Walking” by American Jake Heggie and other works of a similar plan became the musical and stage embodiment of modern events: characters of these operas are, as a rule, real public figures of the 20th - 21st centuries – famous politicians and religious figures, scientists, actors, etc.

For example, the minimalist opera by American **Philip Glass** “Satyagraha” (1979) is a free interpretation of the life of the national hero of India, a prominent statesman of the first half of the twentieth century Mahatma Gandhi – the author of the philosophical concept of nonviolent resistance to injustice and violence. This opera is the second part of the “Portrait Trilogy” of Glass's operas about people who changed the world (the other two parts of the opera trilogy are “Einstein on the Beach” and “Akhenaten”). The opera uses a text from the Bhagavad Gita, which is performed in Sanskrit.

In **John Adams'** opera “Nixon in China” (1987), the main characters are US President Richard Nixon and Mao Tse Tung, chairman of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China, who did have a formal meeting in 1972, which played an important role in easing political tensions between East and West.

John Adams' other opera, “Doctor Atomic” (2005), is based on the real events of June-July 1945, which took place in the American city of Los Alamos during the preparation for the test of the world's first atomic bomb. In the dramatic opera, the composer sought to recreate the moods of confusion, stress, and anxiety that prevailed in the souls of the then participants in the so-called Manhattan Project. The main characters of the opera are the American physicist Robert Oppenheimer, his wife Kitty Oppenheimer, General Leslie Groves, and other key figures of the project. The author of the libretto, Peter Sellars, adapted the text of the opera from various sources, many of which were declassified government documents and communications from the United States to the scholars, government officials, and military involved in the project. Other borrowed literary and musical texts of the opera include poetry by Charles Baudelaire, Muriel Rukeyser, the Sacred Sonnets of John Donne, quotations from the Bhagavad Gita, and the traditional Indian song Teva.

In general, the tragic pages of the history of the twentieth century often fall into the field of view of modern opera composers. Thus, the dramatic basis of the libretto of the one-act opera “Holodomor. Red Earth. Hunger” (2013) by the American composer of Ukrainian origin **Virko Baley** (based on the works of Bohdan Boychuk) are real tragic events that took place in Ukraine during the Holodomor of 1932–1933. According to the plot, it is a story about three starving people – a peasant woman with a baby and a man who took part in the dekulakization of peasants, but eventually repented and also fell victim to starvation, artificially provoked by the totalitarian regime of the former Soviet Union. The main characters of the opera are fictional, generalized characters – bearers of opposite ideologies and temperaments, but because of their fate, all the horrors of the real tragedy of the Holodomor is exposed to the audience. The atmosphere of the opera impresses by the emotional tension, expressionist features, as well as stylistic influences of music by Igor Stravinsky and Borys Lyatoshynsky are quite noticeable in it. The premiere of the Gerald W. Lynch Theater in New York on February 5, 2013, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Holodomor tragedy, made extensive use of multimedia technology – the transmission of excerpts from 1930s films, photographs,

newsreels, radio programs, authentic recordings of contemporary music, speeches of Soviet leaders, etc.

The tragic events of World War II are the focus of the psychological drama “Les Bienveillantes” (2019) by the young Spanish composer **Hèctor Parra**, based on a libretto by Handl Klaus based on the novel of the same name by Jonathan Littell. However, they are presented in a rather unusual way – through the hallucinatory consciousness of a negative character – former Third Reich officer Maks Aye, who participated in the mass extermination of the Jews in Ukraine, played an important role in organizing the forced labor of the Jews in the German military industry. Immersed in memories of his past, the protagonist appears in a shocking form of educated, but cruel and morally rotten type, who speaks without regret about the horrors of World War II, arguing that in the circumstances in which he found himself, everyone would act as he. Much of the memory is occupied by Maks Aye's sexual fantasies based on homosexuality and incestuous relationships with his sister, numerous situations when he had to save his own life at the expense of other people's lives. To emphasize the insignificance, vulgarity, spiritual poverty of this type in the production of the Opera and Ballet Theater of Flanders Opera Ballet Vlaanderen (Belgium) by Catalan director Calixto Bieito used naturalistic effects as one of the ways of emotional impact on the audience: during the performance the stage is watered from a hose with some dirty liquid, fighting in which the heroes and the masses perform their parts. Particularly striking is the grotesque love scene of the main character and his sister, who are literally lying in a muddy swamp, which makes a particularly depressing impression and emphasizes the brutality of the distorted consciousness of numerous crimes. The sharp exposing pathos of this opera is designed to help society cleanse itself of crimes, to become more humane and loving. Since its world premiere, the international cultural community has dubbed the work the most important opera of the 21st century.

The opera “Dead Man Walking” (2000) by a contemporary American composer **Jake Heggie** is dedicated to the problem of repentance. One of the main protagonists of this opera is a real historical figure of the twentieth century – a Catholic nun, Sister Helen Prejean, who became famous for her ascetic activities in Angola: she was the spiritual mentor of prisoners sentenced to death, was next to them before the execution, actively advocated the abolition of the death penalty around the world. In J. Heggy's opera (libretto by Terrence McNally based on the diaries of Helen Prejean), her ward is Joseph de Roche, a criminal sentenced to death in an electric chair for the brutal murder of a young man and a young woman. The opera is dedicated not only to the theme of crime and sincere remorse, but also to the complex, hitherto unsolved problem of the death penalty in modern society, the possibility of forgiveness for the murderer, the comparability of the suffering of the families of the victim and the offender. For all the drama of the content and complexity of the covered aspects of social life, J. Heggy's opera is traditional in structure and musical embodiment. The score is full of numerous arias and ensembles with bright lyrical melodies in the style of Negro spirituals and blues and a major-minor flicker of jazz harmonies. Stylistic allusions to the operatic masterpieces of the 19th and 20th centuries complement the musical drama: the sad melody of the violins in the prologue, joined by other voices in a polyphonic plexus, resembles the symphonic episodes of G. Verdi's “La Traviata”; in Scene 1 of the first act there are connections with G. Gershwin's opera “Porgy and Bess”, and in Scene 5 of the same act the choir of male prisoners reminds of the threatening choir of the crowd from B. Britten's opera “Peter Grimes”. Masha Hinich suggests that “perhaps due to its traditional form, this opera has become the most successful of all American modern operas, the most performed of those written in the last 20 years” (Hinich, 2019). “The Guardian” noted that the opera “Dead Man Walking” is one of the most significant American operas of recent years (Ashley, 2012).

Along with the tragic, we observe comic plots in operas.

Italian composer **Luca Francesconi** is the author of the one-act “Buffa Opera” (2002), in which the main characters are insects. In addition to traditional stylistic models of comic opera –

colloquialism, exaggerated emotionality, inconsistency of form and content, dance clichés, etc. – the means of mass musical genres, jazz, avant-garde performance techniques are used in the work.

American composer **Mark Adamo** wrote the comic opera “Lysistrata or the Naked Goddess” based on the comedy by an ancient Greek philosopher and writer Aristophanes (2005).

Irish composer Gerald Barry's comic opera “The Importance of Being Earnest” (2011) based on the play of the same name by Oscar Wilde was a huge success on European and American stages.

Operas “Alfred, Alfred” by F. Donatoni, “Ghosts of Versailles” by G. Corigliano, “The Exterminating Angel” by T. Ades, etc. are marked by comic features.

The comic is often alongside the absurd in human life. Some composers resort to the stage realization of the theater of the absurd in their operas, such as the young Polish composer **Michał Dobrzynski**. His absurd opera “Tango” (2017) based on the drama by Slavomir Mrozek is one of the discoveries of recent years. The opera demonstrates the simple situations that everyone experiences in their lives, ridicules the absurd behavior to which people are sometimes inclined, depicts the absurdity of human existence. In 2017, a well-known Polish theater portal teatrdlawas.pl awarded the composer with the “Opera Shine of 2017” award in the “Best Music” category (Gdansk, 2018).

The appeal to the masterpieces of world poetry and literature remains the leading trend of modern opera. But if before the basis of the libretto of the opera was, as a rule, a single work, then modern composers and librettists boldly compile the texts of various poets and playwrights from ancient times to the present. As, for example, the Austrian composer of the Swiss origin **Beat Furrer**. In particular, the literary sources of his first opera, “Die Blinden” (1989), were the play of the same name by the Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck, the poems of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, and the works of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. The plot for his second opera, “Narcissus” (1994), Furrer found in the poem “Metamorphoses” by the ancient Roman thinker and poet Ovid, but borrowed from it only a few lines, which unfolded into six scenes. The main meaning of the opera was the eternal question of the purpose of human in the world. Another opera by the composer “PHEME” (2005), named after the ancient Greek goddess of rumors, is based on a short story by Austrian writer Arthur Schnitzler. The tragic story of a girl who sacrifices her honor to save her father from prison for wasting clients' money is embodied in a dramatic recitation with elements of singing. Unlike those composers who are interested in electronic music and modern computer technology of sound, B. Furrer focused his creative research in the field of acoustic timbres, studying their capabilities, exploring the overtone range of various instruments and the human voice. This gave the composer reason to define the genre of the opera “PHEME” as “theater of sounds” (Gudachev, 2014).

In the 21st century, there is a noticeable tendency to expand the range of sources that can form the basis of the libretto. For example, never in previous epochs were librettos based on films. Rather, on the contrary – the opera became the basis of cinematic reading (remember at least the opera films “La Traviata”, “Othello”, “Pagliacci” and other works of this plan by the famous Italian director Franco Zeffirelli). Some contemporary composers were inspired to create operas by films, such as the young Austrian composer Olga Neuwirth, who wrote the opera “Lost Highway” (2002-2003) based on David Lynch's film. And for the British composer Thomas Ades, the source of inspiration for the creation of the opera “The Exterminating Angel” (2016) was the film of the same name by Luis Buñuel in 1962.

Metamorphoses of genre, style, performance technique

The fate of musical theater genres in this period is associated with the continuation of the process of genre mutations characteristic of the entire twentieth century. The mixed genres of operatorio and opera-ballet, which existed before, received a powerful impetus to development; interest in the genre varieties of chamber and mono-opera is increasing. At the same time, the varieties of the opera genre invented in the twentieth century continue to develop – radio and television opera, rock and song opera, musical and opera in the spirit of folk action, musical and poetic performances, choreographic or lyrical scenes, opera specially written for concert performance, etc. All these genre

modifications are hybrid, as they use the resources of other musical genres, as well as related arts – drama, cinema, radio, television, literary and musical montage. In such hybrid forms, there may be different from the traditional for opera ratio of vocal and instrumental first, a new dramatic function of the choir, the transformation of various forms of folklore, the inclusion of declamation and colloquial intonations, and so on.

Some composers abandoned the concept of opera and offered authorial definitions of their musical and stage works. Behind each of these definitions is its own philosophical concept, which allowed some researchers to conclude about the conceptual similarity of philosophy and new music, as well as that music today is a kind of post-philosophical activity (Lavrova, 2016). For example, Austrian composer **Bernhard Lang** consciously calls his operas “musical theater” (“Das Theater der Wiederholungen” (2000-2002), “esc # 5” (2004), “I Hate Mozart” (2006), “Montezuma Fallender Adler” (2007-2009), “Der Reigen” (2012), “Hemma” (2014)). The composer is interested in the theme of originality (innovation) and repetition in art, which he, based on the work of the famous French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, explores and tries to conceptualize in his own musical and theatrical work.

Italian composer **Luciano Berio** used the alternative concept of “azione musicale”, which literally means “musical action” in Italian. Under this genre definition in the list of works of the composer we find such opuses as “Opera” (1970), “La Vera Storia” (1982), “Un Re inAscolto” (1984), “Outis” (1996). In them, L. Berio continues to develop the innovative stage concept he invented in the 1960s, based on the gestures and movement of vocalists on stage (gesture theater).

Another Italian composer, **Salvatore Sciarrino**, a supporter of the idea of “pure art” and “pure music”, has an innovative genre definition of “azione invisibile” – an invisible action. In the monodrama “Lohengrin” for soloist, instruments and voices (1984) vividly embodied his author's psychoacoustic concept of invisible action, the constants of which are the absence of any visual-scenic aspect, the uncertainty of the scene and the character. There are only two actors in the opera – Elsa and Lohengrin, but they are entrusted to one performer. According to the composer, the absence of stage action should focus the listener's attention on the inner world of Elsa, which can best convey fixed sound objects and microscopic changes in them. The composer seeks to change the consciousness of the listener and his limits of perception, to make him sensitive to the most subtle, quiet sounds. S. Sciarrino's sound theater, which appears in the plane between silence and sound, is the opposite of the phenomenon of visualization of modern culture. As S. Lavrova notes, the composer is a follower of “the idea of expanding the boundaries of musicality, the discovery of new acoustic phenomena by means of articulation, graceful tremolo and various muttering, elements of the performer's breath” (Lavrova, 2013). The soloist's part is full of timbre findings, numerous noise effects, such as clicking the tongue with the mouth closed, coughing, sobbing, shrill throat sounds, teeth chattering, hoarse breathing etc.

Another Italian, **Franco Donatoni**, has been implementing his own creative invention since the mid-1970s, which he calls 'l'esercizio ludico dell'invenzione' (literally from the Italian – “playful implementation of the invention”). Guided by certain clearly defined rules, the composer applies the combinatorial principles of transmutation and permutation to the minimalist material of the composition. The whole process in his imagination is similar to how a whole living organism grows from a small cell. The composer used his own composing technique in the one-act comic opera “Alfred, Alfred” in seven scenes and six interludes (1995), the plot of which was inspired by the author's painful visions while in a state of diabetic coma. There are many quotations and allusions in the work, in particular from the brindisi from G. Verdi's “La Traviata”, A. Vivaldi's instrumental concerts, baroque vocal-instrumental music, and so on. The author's technological invention allowed the composer to write a number of musical and stage works, which were a great success at the international level.

The poly-spatial principle of the sound-semantic levels of the work formed the basis of the concept of the opera “Quartett” (2011) by a modern Italian composer **Luca Francesconi**. The opera (written according to the libretto by H. Müller) is a musical embodiment of postmodern drama with

elements of psychoanalysis and role-playing games. O. Tverdokhlebova believes that the main idea of the work is to show bodily passions and violence as a destructive type of relationship between man and woman, and the result is the decomposition and subsequent self-destruction of the individual (2017). The composer divides the orchestra into two parts: the chamber ensemble is located in the orchestra pit, and the large orchestra together with the choir remains invisible to the audience and sounds virtually, with electronic amplification. The composer himself identified three musical layers that correspond to the three semantic dimensions of opera. The first is the internal level, personified by the chamber orchestra, which is tasked with voicing the passions and desires of the characters. The second – the middle dimension, beyond the intellect and will of the heroes - is their dreams, in which voices are heard in the recording. The third – the outside world (large orchestra and choir) – reflects society and the collective consciousness (Tverdokhlebova, 2017).

A general trend during the twentieth century in both opera and purely orchestral repertoire is the use of smaller orchestras as a way to reduce costs: cumbersome orchestras of the Romantic era with huge string sections, several harps, additional wind, and exotic percussion instruments are no longer relevant in modern opera productions and depart into the historical past. As public and private arts patronage declined significantly in the 20th century compared to previous epochs, new operas were often commissioned and performed on smaller budgets, leading to chamber and short one-act operas. For example, many of Benjamin Britten's operas use only 13 instrumentalists; the two-act opera "Little Women" by the American composer Mark Adamo (1998) is intended for 18 instrumentalists, and the chamber version of the opera by the American of Ukrainian origin Virko Baley "Holodomor. Red Earth. Hunger" (2013) was created for 5 soloists and 9 instrumentalists.

Thus, one of the newest trends in opera in the 1990s and 2000s is the growing interest in the chamber opera genre for a small number of actors and mono-operas, where all events are shown through the prism of the individual consciousness of one character. This type includes operas: "One" (2002) by Dutch composer Michel van der Aa, "Hypermusic Prologue" (2009) by Spaniard Hèctor Parra, "Lohengrin" (1984) and "My Betrayal Light" (2011) by Italian Salvatore Sciarrino, mono opera "Lady Lazarus" (2013-2016) by Ukrainian composer Lyudmyla Yurina, performative mono-opera "Entropy" (2019) by Ukrainian Andriy Merkhel and many other works. In some cases, the opera is so compressed in scale and number of performers that it becomes like a small theatrical musical scene. Composers also invented a genre definition of such an opera - a mini-mono-opera. Samples are presented in the works of Ukrainian composers Andriy Merkhel ("Forest Dog"), Lyudmyla Samodayeva ("Velimir in Odessa", "Voices" – both works were written in 2020).

The genre of chamber opera tends to new forms of literature, unusual for the field of musical theater. The role of the literary basis of opera is growing significantly, composers do not seek to adapt literary material to the laws of the opera genre, and strongly reconsider these laws themselves. Inevitably change the proportions of artistic elements – music, words, stage action. At the same time, the chamber opera retains the "generic" features of the opera genre, in particular, the opera's inherent diversity of constituent genres – arias, duets, ensembles, choirs, and more. Chamber opera is able to provide a multifaceted, truly operatic reproduction of reality; off-stage characters, images of the background, the environment of the main characters are represented by separate but characteristic elements that are easily recognizable and identified with the traditional constituent genres of opera.

For many composers, the chamber opera becomes a creative laboratory – a place for testing and working out the latest avant-garde compositional techniques and technologies. Often the search for a new style and new means of expression in the opera genre leads to the emergence of new unpredictable syntheses. For example, the opera by Spanish composer **Hèctor Parra** "Hypermusical Prologue" (2008-2009), the genre of which is defined by the author as a "projective opera in seven planes", is the product of a unique symbiosis of music, science (physics) and plastic art. Music, according to the author of the opera, functions similarly to physical processes and concepts that are reflected in the space-time model of a physicist Lisa Randall (she became the author of the libretto).

Music appears here as a subtly organized form of spatial and acoustic energy, and the vicissitudes of the two characters (soprano and baritone) take place in an imaginary five-dimensional hyperspace. In an article on this opera, the composer expressed his concept as follows: “I established an integral synthesis between timbre, rhythm and harmony in this (hyper) sound adventure. I combined this with polyphony, which is not limited to the interweaving of independent melodic lines, but extends its effect to materials and bundles of instrumental fibers, characteristic timbre qualities that also develop over time. It is in this way that the set of instruments with which I created the opera has been increased, from macro-scale to micro-scale” (Parra, 2013). The composer also expressed the opinion that the integration of various musical parameters capable of producing, classifying, and manipulating the dominant plasticity of sound opens the way to new types of musical expression.

Mono-opera “One” by Dutch composer **Michel van der Aa** for soprano, video and soundtrack (2002) is based on the idea of integrating the means of musical art and cinema, and music plays here not a secondary (such as music in film or theater), but a primary role. Visual images complement the concept of opera, one of the ways to reveal it. The opera is the embodiment of a deeply intimate, poeticized psychological drama of a woman who has lost her identity. She is drowning in questions that are constantly boiling in her layered mind, but there are no answers or solutions. The combination of soundtrack and video makes the time axis oscillate between the true reality of “real time” and the “other” reality on the video screen. Michel van der Aa's skillful ability to combine music, text, and visual images into an organic whole turned his opera into an audio-visual masterpiece. This work was highly praised by a wide audience and critics in twelve countries of the world.

The stylistic principles of modern operas also abound in a variety of manners and unexpected stylistic mixes.

Neo-medieval plot, style, and symbolism in combination with neo-impressionist features of music determined the features of the aesthetics of the opera “L'Amour de loin” (2000) by Finnish composer **Kaija Saariaho**. According to a survey of music critics conducted by the influential British weekly *The Guardian* in 2019, this work was included in the top ten best modern music works of the 21st century (The best classical music works of the 21st century, 2019). Critics and the public were attracted by the exotic plot from the distant Middle Ages (the action takes place in the 12th century), the presence of a lyrical couple – Prince Joffre (aka – a troubadour obsessed with idealized love) and Countess Clemence, whom Joffre falls in love with never seeing her. The mediator between them is the Pilgrim. Through the love story from ancient times parallels with the present are seen in the form of deep themes of obsession and devotion in love, illusions and reality, loneliness of the artist. The score of the opera symbolizes the distance between lovers at the level of stylistics, which runs between the two poles of historically distant musical and stylistic periods – the Middle Ages and Impressionism – and can be traced in the work, according to James Jorden, “from hidden sound cascades representing the sea” (Jorden, 2016). There are many timbre-sonor finds in the orchestration, which create a mysterious color of the sea and the sound of the waves, and the stylistic landmark for Kaija Saariaho was the music of the French Impressionist composer Claude Debussy. Parallels with his symphonic poems “Sea” and “Sirens” are especially noticeable in the episodes of the women's choir behind the scenes.

Hèctor Parra's already mentioned opera “Les Bienveillantes” (2019) was written under the influence of French and Austro-German musical traditions. First of all, it is worth noting the influence of neo-baroque style in this opera, which has a structure of seven parts, corresponding to parts of the ancient French suite (Toccata, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Minuet, Aria, Gigue). The Austro-German operatic tradition is represented by broad stylistic allusions from the Baroque to the present, which, according to the composer, extend from the passions of Johann Sebastian Bach to the twentieth-century operas “Wozzeck” by Alban Berg and “Soldiers” by Bernd Alois Zimmermann, used as absolute stylistic models (Les Bienveillantes – warm-up, 2019).

Between the other two stylistic poles – classicism and modernity – the postmodern atmosphere of the opera “The Ghosts of Versailles” (1999) by American **John Corigliano** is created. The libretto by playwright William M. Hoffmann is based on Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais's comedies about the adventures of Figaro and “La Mere coupable”, and the musical prototype is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera “Le nozze di Figaro”, from which he borrowed the main characters (such as Figaro, Suzanne, Count Almaviva, Countess Rosina, Cherubino) with the addition of a number of minor characters and real historical figures – the playwright Beaumarchais himself and Queen Marie-Antoinette, around whose romantic relationship the action of the opera unfolds. Naturally, the main stylistic model of opera is the music of the classicist era and the great opera style (in particular, opera-buffa and opera-seria): neoclassical features have arias by Figaro and a quartet of two couples in love in the spirit of Mozart in the first act, recitatives for harpsichords, large choral scenes and many other opera numbers. At the same time, the classicist style paradigm is parodied, opera stereotypes and clichés are ridiculed, and the buff-style opera style is absurd. But the most important thing for J. Corigliano in this opera was not stylization and grotesqueness, but the possibility of dialogue of epochs - the meeting of past and present under the symbolic musical machine of time. The world of ghosts, illustrated by atonal orchestral sequences, aleatoric sound layers, cluster accumulation, and microtonal structures, proved to be the most suitable for the embodiment of his visions of modernity. It is in the use of modern compositional techniques revealed the great skill and ingenuity of the composer. Richard S. Ginell wrote about the permanent content and style of this opera: “It is comical and serious, entertaining and erudite, unreasonable and thoughtful, emotional and mysterious, painful and sublime, intimate and unsurpassed – and the more times you see it, the more you will find meanings” (Ginell, 2015).

In **György Ligeti's** neo-expressionist opera “Le Grand Macabre” quotes and stylistic allusions to the music of different eras, from Claudio Monteverdi and Johann Sebastian Bach to Jacques Offenbach and George Gershwin, are used to characterize the masked images. Thus, G. Ligeti's opera focuses on a wide range of neo-styles and has neo-Renaissance, neo-baroque, neoclassical and neo-romantic features.

Expressionist aesthetics formed the basis of the opera “The Exterminating Angel” (2017) by British composer **Thomas Ades**. At the same time, there are neo-baroque and neo-romantic features in opera music, and elements of psychological drama, comedy, surrealism, and theater of the absurd are noticeable in drama. Since the opera is written based on the film of the same name, it is easy to notice the penetration of elements of horror, mysticism, eroticism, as well as purely technological cinematic techniques of montage, layering of episodes, and more. Expression is fueled not only by typical expressionist atonal music, but also by a tense plot: a party at the aristocrats' apartment on the occasion of the opera premiere turns into a horrible psychological imprisonment, because for incomprehensible, mysterious reasons everyone present feels their will paralyzed. The composer seeks to show the listener the transformation of the human psyche under the influence of fear, the transformation of man into an animal, the escalation of aggression and animal instincts in extreme conditions, the alienation of man from his peers and the world, the oblivion of culture (an episode of breaking a cello by one of the guests at the party). One of the brightest episodes in this opera is a neo-baroque one: at the beginning of the party one of the heroines of the opera, pianist Bianca, sings and accompanies herself on the piano in a work in the Baroque style, as indicated by passages with ornaments in the spirit of salon harpsichord music. The best pages of the opera include episodes related to a romantic couple in love, Beatrice and Eduardo, who together seek solace in this strange adventure. In the first act of the opera, they have a wonderful lyrical duet in neo-romantic style with intonations of sighs, in the second – another lullaby duet. Lyrical characters stand aside from quarrels, mutual hatred, and clarifying the relationships that prevail in the opera, their feelings are the purest, deepest, and most human, and it is through them that the author conveys to the listener his main message that only love can resist fear.

It is necessary to tell separately about features of voices and vocal technics in modern operas. Modern composers are very fond of writing vocal parts of the main characters of operas for rare or unusual voices. Thus, some operas use a very high male voice – countertenor (for example, the parts of Akhnaten in the opera of the same name by Ph. Glass, Francisco in “The Exterminating Angel” by T. Ades, the Poet in the opera “Holodomor. Red Earth. Hunger” by V. Baley, Arthur in “Tango” by M. Dobrzynski, etc.).

In Thomas Ades's opera “The Exterminating Angel”, the main character, the opera singer Letizia, must have an ultra-high coloratura soprano. There are a lot of vocal bursts in this part, vocal maxima that are approaching the cry. But given the fact that the opera has a lot of characters (15), the timbre of this heroine is different, stands as if above the timbres of the other characters, she is always well heard in a hellish, terrible chorus of people frightened by the terrible situation.

Today, extremely high demands are placed on singers whom modern composers want to see as performers of their operas. Vocalists should be not only highly professional musicians (usually with absolute hearing) but also unsurpassed actors who brilliantly master the techniques of stage acting, perfect articulation, various types of facial expressions, gestures, movements, breathing techniques, and more.

Ukrainian Opera of the 1980s – 2000s in the Process of Updating the Canon

The end of the twentieth century was a period of progress and renewal for the Ukrainian musical theater, a wide development of new themes, ideas, and images, the discovery of new creative personalities, a generous variety of artistic pursuits, individual compositional styles, and performance manners. The processes of renewal taking place in Ukrainian society encourage masters of musical and theatrical work to search for new opera forms, innovative rethinking and development of national classical traditions, the creation of convincing images of modern heroes.

Ukrainian composers of the older generation pay considerable attention to the creation of new operas on historical and literary subjects. At the same time, the process of enriching the opera genre with the achievements of modern symphony, the achievements of theater, cinema, and fine arts is taking place. Ukrainian artists seek a deep rethinking of the artistic features of other arts, their internal synthesis, the use of a palette of national theatrical colors. Among the operas of this period, written based on Ukrainian classical literature in the 1980s, it is worth noting the opera-ballet “Viy” by Vitalii Hubarenko after Mykola Gogol (1980), the opera-oratorio “Kyiv Frescoes” by Ivan Karabyts (1984), Vitaly Kyreiko's comic chamber opera “Vernissage at the Fair” (1985) based on the humorous novel by Hryhoriy Kvitka-Osnovyanenko “Soldier's Portrait”, Levko Kolodub's opera “The Poet” about Taras Shevchenko (1988), etc. In the 1990s, the themes of modern operas expanded due to the composers' appeal to highly artistic samples of intimate lyrics (monographs “Loneliness” by V. Hubarenko on “Letters to the Unknown” by P. Merimee and “Songs of Love” by Yu. Shamo on poems by M. Zabolotsky, B. Pasternak and other poets), folk texts (“Golden Word”, “Christmas action” by L. Dychko), previously not embodied on the stage of T. Shevchenko's poems “Remember, my brothers” by V. Hubarenko, “The Blind” by O. Zlotnyk, “The Milky Way of Taras” by O. Rudyansky) and dramas by Lesya Ukrainka (“Orgy” by O. Kostin and “Boyarynya” by V. Kyreiko), epistolary heritage of outstanding artists (mono-opera by V. Sinchalov “A Letter from Milan” based on letters by S. Krushelnytska), biblical stories (operas by M. Skoryk, O. Bilynsky, A. Shchetynsky, etc.).

The opera's searches of Ukrainian composers take place in line with the process of genre mutations characteristic of composer innovations in the field of opera around the world. The genre spectrum of Ukrainian operas is significantly diversified (chamber, mono- and micro-opera, satirical, one-act choral, opera-duma, etc.). In mixed forms, there are different from the traditional for the opera ratio of vocal and instrumental components, a new dramatic function of the choir, the transformation of various forms of folklore, the recitation and colloquial intonations, and more. Original artistic solutions are offered in Carmella Tsepko's opera noir “Fate of Dorian” (1990), Irina Hubarenko's comic opera “The Bear” (1989), operatic oratorios “Remember, my brothers ...” by Vitalii Hubarenko

(1992), "Taras. Star Lullaby" by Igor Shcherbakov (1996), musical and stage performance "Let's sow the Golden Stone" by Hanna Havrylets (1997) and other works.

Chronologically, the first Ukrainian opera of the third millennium was the opera-oratorio "Moses" (2001) by the outstanding composer Myroslav Skoryk on biblical themes. The complex, ontological interpretation of the image of the biblical prophet, the powerful resonance with the ethos of the oppressed people, the appeal to history, the intertextual placement of biblical events in the context of modernity – all this directed the composer to create a multifaceted, dramaturgically rich operatic canvas, where oratorical features dominate, that is evidenced by the leading role of choirs, and a certain static action, and an abstract interpretation of individual images. The symbolic construction of this "opera-parable" (L. Melnyk and L. Kyianovska, 2001) is based on the framework of the leitmotif system – six main leitmotifs and other leitmotifs, which form a wide range of musical symbols and metaphors. The opera also has intonation models, stylistically close to Eastern and Ukrainian melodies; neo-romantic style model, represented by the genres of love duet-consent and barcarole; dance-marching component used to characterize negative characters. The symbolic field of the opera is enriched by stylistic allusions to the works of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Dmitrii Shostakovich, Alfred Schnittke, Mykola Lysenko, and others.

Alexander Shchetynsky's chamber operas "Annunciation", "Bestiarium", and other musical and stage works are devoted to biblical themes.

The younger generation of Ukrainian composers resort to bold, sometimes radical innovations in the opera genre, and many new experimental operas on contemporary themes appear. Historically, Ukrainian music, due to the "iron curtain" and artificial barriers created by the former Soviet Union, had long been "not included" in the avant-garde processes of modern opera that took place in the twentieth century in Europe and the world. At the same time, this allowed Ukrainian artists to avoid formal innovation, to pass unnecessarily and unjustifiably from an artistic point of view experiments, to open new opportunities, and to offer a new interpretation of the old genre at a new stage of its development. Due to the lack of traditions of avant-garde opera in Ukraine (both productions and writings), young composers master these traditions on their own during internships at the world's leading centers of music education, participation in European international music festivals, master classes of world-famous composers. In particular, Alla Zahaikevych studied at the Institute for Research and Coordination of Acoustics / Music IRCAM in Paris (France), Liudmyla Yurina underwent an internship at Stanford University (USA) under a Fulbright Foundation grant program. Many young Ukrainian composers improved their professional level within the scholarship program of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland "Gaude Polonia", which included Zoltan Almashi, Bohdan Kryvopust, Andriy Merkhel, Bohdan Segin, Bohdana Froliak, Olena Ilnytska, Yevhen Petrychenko, Alexander Shimko and others.

The opera genre in the interpretation of young Ukrainian composers is enriched with resources of electronic music, modern multimedia technologies. Such examples include **Alla Zahaikevych's** opera-multimedia "Numbers and the Wind" (1992-1997) based on poetry and paintings by Mykola Vorobiov. The work is a synthetic sound-visual composition, which organically combines different types of art – opera, poetry, painting. The opera is based on six poems by the master of the post-sixties "Kyiv School of Poetry" Mykola Vorobiov: "The Road", "Garden", "Memories", "Game", "Dream", "Boat". According to the author's program of the opera's premiere, its protagonists are "three beings" who will "try to create a paradise and coexist in it." Who exactly these beings are, the author does not definitively determine, offering the viewer a wide associative-symbolic range of possible triads, such as: Body – Soul – Muse; Voice – He – She; Master – Creation – Incarnation; Adam – Eve – the Serpent; Birth – Life – Non-existence ... The performance is accompanied by a video slide show of Vorobiov's paintings, which forms an additional figurative and meaningful series of opera.

The real discovery in Ukrainian music of recent years was "Lady Lazarus" (2013-16) – a mono-opera by **Liudmyla Yurina** for soprano, piano, and electronics. The work is inspired by the work of the

American poet Sylvia Platt, including her three randomly selected poems that form a hidden connection (“Night Dances”, “Mirror” and “Lady Lazarus”), as well as texts by James Joyce and Richard Bach. At the center of the mono-opera is a young woman, her experiences, reflections, emotions, thoughts on the meaning of life. It is a story of life, suffering, depressing loneliness, and tragic death of a person (in this case personally Sylvia Platt), her painful feeling of a cruel world that does not always understand her worldview and feelings, the conflict between her and the surrounding society. The dramaturgy of the work consists in the principle of “compaction, accumulation” of emotions, from sad considerations to tragic discourses and desperate monologues, “thoughts aloud”, which are correlated with delusion. In the music of the mono-opera, the sung numbers alternate with the monologue parts, which are pronounced. The intonation circle and the musical language of the opera are generally based on atonality and sonority. In the vocal part, in addition to the actual singing, various ways of sounding the human voice are used, including the techniques of Sprechgesang, laughter, whispering, speaking in monologues, and so on. The piano part abounds in various ways of sound production or so-called advanced playing techniques, including: clusters, knocking on the instrument, scraping and rustling on strings with various objects, playing on pressed strings. There are many interesting acoustic finds in the score: the pianist uses a significant number of additional instruments (metal coin, jazz brushes, pencils, etc.) for sound production. The piano is used as a piano and as a percussion instrument, the role of this instrument is extended to the functions of the orchestra.

Andriy Merkhel tries to blur the line between the genres of opera and performance. He gives the author's definition of “performative mono-opera” to his first musical and stage work “Entropy” (2019) based on the book by Nobel laureate Olga Tokarchuk “House of the Day, House of the Night”. According to the composer himself, “... there are signs of opera and “traces” of performance. On the one hand, the score contains many instructions that are not inherent in the performance. On the other hand, there is not enough detail for the vocal part, which is not typical for academic opera. In fact, it is a vocal theater” (Naydyuk, 2020). The composer follows the text of the literary source, which is written in the spirit of magical realism and is very metaphorical, has many layers of meaning. At the same time, the mono-opera is distinguished by the absence of a traditional verbal narrative, the plot of drama, conflict, and linear development. The text is spoken by the actor before the sound of music. In general, it is a work that actualizes aspects of dreams, memory, and perception of one's past, travels to the subconscious in search of new meanings. The main idea of the opera is to recreate the process of bizarre balancing of man between states of chaos, destruction, and episodic restoration of integrity and order. The realization of this idea corresponds to the open variable structure of the mono-opera, which consists of several dozen patterns (according to A. Merkhel, they can be performed in any order), which are purposefully destroyed.

If we compare the directions of composers' search in the opera genre in Ukraine and the world, it becomes obvious that Ukrainian artists lag far behind their foreign counterparts in the number of new operas. For example, in Europe, there is a more extensive system of genres and many more operas are being created, but also there is competition for their performance. In Ukraine, we have only a few examples of successfully implemented opera projects, the appearance of each new opera is the exception rather than the rule. However, in recent years the situation has begun to change for the better: in 2014 the creative group Nova Opera was formed and became active, uniting a group of vocalists, instrumentalists, sound and video engineers led by the famous director and producer Vlad Troitsky. The formation also includes two young composers – recent graduates of the Tchaikovsky National Academy of Music of Ukraine **Illia Razumeiko** and **Roman Hryhoriv**, who write music for new operas. In less than 6 years of operation of the “New Opera”, 10 new operas were written and staged in various and completely innovative genre modifications. These are: a trilogy of operas on biblical themes – opera-requiem “Iyov”, opera-circus “Babylon”, opera-ballet “Ark”; neo-opera-horror “Hamlet”, dream-opera “NeprOsti”, trap-opera “Wozzeck”, futuristic opera “Aerophonia”, opera-anti-utopia “Gaz” and two grand operas – “Nero” and “PRO dni PRO”. The activity of the new creative

tandem Razumeiko – Hryhoriv is not only productive, but also successful in terms of public perception, which is facilitated by successful art management.

Each of the opera projects realized by I. Razumeiko and R. Hryhoriv is not an opera in its “pure” form. Composers focus their efforts on updating, modernizing the opera canon by synthesizing with other musical genres and arts, finding non-traditional stages, reviewing stereotypes about the duration and form of the opera, targeting a mass audience.

One of the first and still most successful projects is the opera-requiem “Iyov”, which premiered at the international festival “Gogol Fest” in Kyiv in September 2015. The literary basis of the libretto was a mix of Old Testament texts of the Book of Iyov with traditional sacred texts of the requiem (Catholic funeral mass). The extensive biblical story of the long-suffering righteous Iyov, whom Satan slandered before God for a test of strength in faith, is embedded in the clear number structure of the requiem. According to the performers, “Iyov” is a chamber opera: it was written for 6 vocalists, cello, drums, piano, and reader. With the generally static nature of the drama (the performers do not move, but stand around the piano, which emphasizes the connection of this work with the cantata-oratorio genre) in the opera are quite noticeable features of performance. The center of performative action and musical-dramatic composition as a whole is a prepared piano, which stands in the center of the stage and is the object of an extended range of performing techniques, especially in instrumental interludes (playing with the sticks from the drums clamped between the strings of the piano, touching the strings with a triangle, striking the strings, etc.). Razumeiko-Hryhoriv's innovation is that not only the pianist is the performer on the piano. Singers also interact with this instrument – they sing, speak, moan, laugh into the piano, play the strings, extract additional resonance from it. It seems that the piano seems to come to life, becomes a full participant in the performance, and sometimes resembles a symphony orchestra. The opera uses a mix of different vocal styles – academic, folk, pop vocals, Tibetan throat singing. The style of the opera is also heterogeneous, it has noticeable neo-baroque, avant-garde features, powerful energy of ro-music. The opera-requiem “Iyov” was awarded the highest state prize of Ukraine – the National Prize of Ukraine named after Taras Shevchenko in 2020 in the category “Theatrical Art”. The work has gained a wide international resonance due to productions in Poland, Austria, Macedonia, Denmark, Holland, and the United States. According to the international musical-theatrical rating of Music Theater Now 2018, the opera requiem “Iyov” entered the TOP-10 best experimental operas in the world among 436 participants from 55 countries (Music Theater Now, 2018).

New Opera's projects after “Iyov” impressed the Ukrainian and world cultural community with their unusualness and outrage.

The dream-opera “Neprosti” (2016) based on the novel of the same name by Ukrainian writer Taras Prokhasko breaks stereotypes about the time and form of the opera. The opera begins at midnight and lasts until morning. The audience is located in the lobby of the theater on mattresses, mobile phones are taken away at the entrance so that people are not distracted and can fully immerse themselves in the action. During the sound of meditative music (piano, cello, double bass, accordion, drums, electronics), listeners/spectators, unlike a traditional opera, can and should sleep. Upon awakening, they recount or record their dreams/images. Activation of the work of the subconscious by means of music was the basis of the concept of this opera by I. Razumeiko – R. Hryhoriv.

A big surprise and even a sensation was the futuristic opera “Aerophonia” (2018), in which the AN-2 plane was used as a musical instrument and the central element of the scenography. The legendary Ukrainian AN-2 aircraft is the only biplane in the world, which has been continuously produced since its introduction into serial production in 1948 and is still in mass operation. Composers I. Razumeiko and R. Hryhoriv during a visit to the famous Kyiv Antonov Aircraft Plant (DP Antonov) noticed that different engine speeds of this aircraft can give different musical sounds. They had an idea to use the flagship of Ukrainian aviation in one of their opera performances and make it “to sing”. The idea was realized on June 14, 2018 in Ivano-Frankivsk during the Porto Franco festival at the RUKH

stadium in the presence of about 9,000 spectators. A separate score was created for the pilot of the aircraft, and a unique system of conductor signs was developed for the conductor, which recorded changes in the sound of the aircraft engine. The music of the opera "Aerophonia" is a combination of sonorics of the air turbine with Gregorian chants, Mongolian lullabies, and trip-hop rhythms. The original approach to expanding the range of performers of modern opera was officially declared a national record: immediately after the performance, a representative of the Book of Records of Ukraine made a record of setting a record for the use of aircraft as a musical instrument.

Original versions of the modern interpretation of the opera genre are the latest projects of the composer duo Illia Razumeiko – Roman Hrihoriv – grand operas "Nero" and "PRO dni PRO" (both written and staged in 2019 in collaboration with the rave band "TseSho"). In particular, the premiere of the grand opera "Nero" was the main event of "Gogol Fest" in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol in 2019. To stage a large-scale opera performance, an unusual place was chosen, which had never before become a stage – the Azov Shipyard, where an improvised stage and an open-air auditorium for 600 seats were built. The main idea of this work is the purification of water and the glorification of water as one of the most powerful natural elements ("nero" translated from Greek means "water"). The prologue and epilogue of the opera are biblical narratives about the creation of the world. According to the authors' plan, the stage and, later, the auditorium are flooded. The original philosophical aqua concept is embodied in music with the help of minimalist means, aleatorics, sonority, as well as ballet sculpture, light special effects, and powerful energy sounds of rock music. However, according to the composition of the performers, it is a chamber opera (vocal ensemble, piano, double bass, saxophone, accordion, drums). The vocal sphere of the opera has been expanded by adding vocal parts to the instrumentalists, which partially compensates the lack of chorus in this opera.

An important part of the musical and theatrical show "Nero" is a ballet of cranes with a dance of loaders, in which the sounds of a working factory become part of the sound canvas, and the scenery is the industrial landscape, the sea, and visual art installations. The neo-urban idea is embodied in the original composition of ballet dancers, whose performers are not people, but three cranes. Illuminated by flashlights (the action takes place late in the evening), the taps move slowly at first to the mysterious electronic music, which reproduces some amazing rustling, knocking, and other extra-musical noises combined with cello flagellates. As the nature of the music changes, the type of movement of the ballet "artists" changes: to music with a clear rhythmic basis, in which melodic cello sounds appear against the background of automated sounds of production processes, the cranes rotate very slowly around their axis and rotate synchronously.

Conclusions

A wide panoramic overview of about 80 modern operas in the world has shown that the basis of the latest operas are historical and mythological, biblical and fairy-tale, tragic and comic plots, masterpieces of ancient and modern drama, prose, and poetry. At the same time, there is an expansion of the range of primary sources of opera librettos, which include samples of the epistolary genre (letters, diaries, memoirs), declassified government documents, films, and more. The tragic pages of the history of the twentieth century (World War II, the test of the world's first nuclear bomb, the Holodomor in Ukraine, etc.) often come to the attention of modern opera composers and are revealed with great force of drama. A special feature of the operatic process at the turn of the 20th - 21st centuries is the desire of composers to see as the main characters of operas their contemporaries – famous politicians and religious figures, scientists, actors, and others. It happens that composers bring to the stage anti-heroes – vile criminals, degenerates, and perverts, as, for example, in the operas "Dead Man Walking" by American Jake Heggy or "Les Bienveillantes" by Spaniard Hector Parra. Due to negative images, acute social problems of crime and punishment, the expediency of the death penalty, the possibility of forgiving the murderer, repentance for sins are raised. The exposing pathos of such operas is aimed at purifying society from moral vices, further actualization of the imperatives of humanism, love, and goodness.

In the genre and stylistic sections of modern opera, integrative processes continue, the search for new performing practices, which often lead to unexpected syntheses. Based on their own musical and philosophical concepts, composers boldly resort to modifications of the opera genre by integrating with other musical genres and related arts, electronic and multimedia technologies. Opera art, like contemporary art in general, is becoming more and more conceptualized, opera, along with other musical genres, is becoming one of the types of post-philosophical activity (S. Lavrova).

As for the creative search of Ukrainian contemporary composers in the opera genre, they are entirely in line with the latest world trends. Successful productions of new operas by M. Skoryk, A. Shchetynsky, A. Zagaykevych, L. Yurina, A. Merkhel, and other composers on Ukrainian and European stages confirm the high level of professionalism of the Ukrainian school of composers and performers. Indicative in this respect is the activity of the creative group “New Opera”, which partially compensates for the lack of modern opera house in Ukraine. The main goal of the latest opera projects of the composer tandem of Illia Razumeiko – Roman Hrihoriv – to expand the audience of opera lovers – is achieved by the breadth of figurative content of operas, provocative and outrageous musical and stage embodiment, appeal to both prepared and mass audiences, postmodern layers of styles within a single work (from neo-baroque and avant-garde features to neo-urban sounds, elements of jazz, folk, popular, rock music, rap, trip-hop, etc.).

The example of numerous operas of the turn of the 20th - 21st centuries confirms the idea that universal values, which were produced by mankind for many centuries of its existence, remain relevant for the modern generation, and their conceptualization in modern art practice is associated with updating the canon in direction of creation of new hybrid genres, experiments with the performers, tools, place and time of performances, the use of multi-vector neo-style mixes, compositional and performing techniques, directorial interpretations.

Finally, musicologists Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker’s (2012) conclusion that modern opera is a dead art form is probably premature. Over four centuries of development of this genre, numerous experiments, crises, and attempts at reform, which have given and continue to give the world outstanding artistic results, have proved that opera was, is, and will be as long as man and his high art live.

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