

= Mykola Leontovych =

Mykola Dmytrovych Leontovych ( LE @-@ ?n @-@ TOH @-@ vich , Ukrainian : ?????? ?????????? ; sometimes spelled Leontovich ; Dec 13 [ O.S. Dec 1 ] 1877 ? January 23 , 1921 ) was a Ukrainian composer , choral conductor , and teacher of international renown . His music was inspired by Mykola Lysenko and the Ukrainian national music school . Leontovych specialized in a cappella choral music , ranging from original compositions , to church music , to elaborate arrangements of folk music .

Leontovych was born and raised in the Podolia Governorate of the Russian Empire ( present @-@ day Ukraine ) . He was educated as a priest in the Kamianets @-@ Podilskyi Theological Seminary and later furthered his musical education at the Saint Petersburg Court Capella and private lessons with Boleslav Yavorsky . With the independence of the Ukrainian state in the 1917 revolution , Leontovych moved to Kiev where he worked at the Kiev Conservatory and the Mykola Lysenko Institute of Music and Drama . He is recognized for composing " Shchedryk " in 1904 ( which premiered in 1916 ) , known to the English @-@ speaking world as " Carol of the Bells " or " Ring , Christmas Bells " . He is known as a martyr in the Eastern Orthodox Ukrainian Church , where he is also remembered for his liturgy , the first liturgy composed in the vernacular , specifically in the modern Ukrainian language . He was assassinated by a Soviet agent in 1921 .

During his lifetime Leontovych 's compositions and arrangements became popular with professional and amateur groups alike across Ukraine . Performances of his works in western Europe and North America earned him the nickname " the Ukrainian Bach " in France . Apart from his very popular Shchedryk , Leontovych 's music is performed primarily in Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and education = = =

Mykola Leontovych was born on Dec 13 [ O.S. Dec 1 ] 1877 in the Monastyrak community , near the village of Selevyntsi , in the Podolia region of Ukraine ( then a part of the Russian Empire ) . His father , grandfather , and great grandfather were village priests . His father , Dmytro Feofanovych Leontovych , was skilled at singing and playing cello , double bass , harmonium , violin , and guitar , in addition to directing a school choir . Leontovych received his first musical lessons from him . His mother , Mariya Yosypivna Leontovych , was also a singer .

Other members of Leontovych 's family also grew up to have careers in music . His younger brother became a professional singer , his sister Mariya studied singing in Odessa , his sister Olena studied fortepiano at the Kiev Conservatory , and his sister Victoriya also knew how to play several musical instruments .

In the summer of 1879 Dmytro Leontovych was moved to a new parish located in the village Shershni where he would spend his childhood . Then in 1887 Leontovych was admitted to Nemyriv gymnasium . Due to financial problems a year later , however , his father transferred him to the Sharhorod Spiritual Beginners School , whose pupils received full financial support . At the school Leontovych mastered singing , and was able to freely read difficult passages from religious choral texts .

= = = Theological seminary = = =

In 1892 , Leontovych began his studies at the theological seminary in Kamianets @-@ Podilskyi , which both his father and grandfather had attended . His younger brother Oleksandr was enrolled as well , graduating two years after Mykola .

During his studies there , Leontovych continued to advance his skills on the violin and learned to play a variety of other instruments . He also participated in the seminary 's choir , and when an orchestra was formed during his third year of study , Leontovych joined , playing the violin until his

graduation . Leontovych studied music theory and started writing choral arrangements as a student at the seminary .

When the seminary 's choir director died , the school administration requested that Leontovych take over this position . As the conductor of the choir , Leontovych added secular music to the repertoire of traditional church music . This included Ukrainian folk songs arranged by Mykola Lysenko , Profyriy Demutskiy , and himself . Leontovych graduated from the Kamianets @-@ Podilskiy Theological Seminary in 1899 and broke the family tradition by becoming a music teacher instead of a priest .

= = = Early musical career and family = = =

At the time , a career in music in Ukraine meant having an unstable income , causing Leontovych to seek employment wherever he could find it . Leontovych worked in Kiev , Yekaterinoslav , and Podolia guberniyas over the next few years in order to remain gainfully employed . His first position after graduating was in a secondary school in the village of Chukiv ( present @-@ day Vinnytsia Oblast ) as a vocal and math teacher . During this time Leontovych continued to transcribe and arrange folk songs . He completed his " First compilation of songs from Podolia " and began working on his second compilation . He also inspired the children at the school to sing in the choir and play in the orchestra . He would later write a book about this as a professor at the Kiev Conservatory , titled " ? " ( How I organized an orchestra in a village school ) .

After several conflicts with the school 's administration , Leontovych got a new job as a teacher of church music and calligraphy at the Theological College in Tyvriv . Besides working with the college choir , Leontovych organized an amateur orchestra that often performed at college events . As he did earlier with choirs , Leontovych included arrangements of folk songs among the usual religious works sung in theological schools . These included arrangements by Mykola Lysenko , his own choral arrangements of folk songs , and entirely original works . One such work was based on a poem by Taras Shevchenko titled ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ( Oh my evening star ) .

During this period Leontovych met a Volynhian girl named Claudia Feropontivna Zhovtevykh , whom he married on March 22 , 1902 . The young couple 's first daughter , Halyna , was born in 1903 . They later had a second daughter named Yevheniya .

Financial hardships prompted Leontovych to accept an offer to move to the city of Vinnytsia to instruct at the Church @-@ Educators ' College . Again he organized a choir and , later , a concert band , with which he performed both secular and spiritual music . In 1903 he published his ? Second compilation of songs from Podolia ? which he dedicated to Mykola Lysenko .

In 1903 and 1904 , during his vacation from the Church @-@ Educators ' College , Leontovych traveled to Saint Petersburg . There he attended lectures held at the St. Petersburg Court Capella , which was associated with composers Maksym Berezovsky , Dmytro Bortniansky , and Mikhail Glinka . He studied music theory , harmony , and polyphony with Semen Barmotin , and choral performance with Puzarevskiy , both of whom were well known at the time . On April 22 , 1904 , he earned his credentials as a choirmaster of church choruses .

Again , disputes with the administration of the college resulted in Leontovych seeking new employment . In the spring of 1904 , he left Podolia and moved to the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine , where he became a teacher of vocal and instrumental music in a school for railroad workers ' children . During the Russian Revolution of 1905 , Leontovych organized a choir of workers that performed in meetings . These works included arrangements of Ukrainian , Jewish , Armenian , Russian , and Polish folk songs . Leontovych 's activity caught the attention of local authorities , and in the spring of 1908 he was forced to move back to his native Podolia region to the city of Tulchyn .

= = = Tulchyn period = = =

Leontovych 's move to Tulchyn marked the beginning of a period of compositional maturity and

major artistic achievements in the life of the composer .

In Tulchyn , Leontovych taught vocal and instrumental music at the Tulchyn Eparchy Women 's college to the daughters of village priests . There he met composer Kyrylo Stetsenko who was a student of Mykola Lysenko and also specialized in choral music . Stetsenko lived in a nearby village at the time where he was working as a priest , and their acquaintance developed into a lasting friendship that influenced Leontovych 's music . Stetsenko was the first critic of Leontovych 's music , saying , " Leontovych is a famous music expert from Podolia . He recorded many folk songs ... These songs are harmonized for mixed choir . These harmonizations have revealed the author to be a great expert of both choral singing and theoretical studies " . Leontovych also transitioned to more renowned music during his choir performances , such as Russian composers Mikhail Glinka , Alexey Verstovsky , and Peter Tchaikovsky in addition to Ukrainian composers Mykola Lysenko , Kyrylo Stetsenko , and Petro Nishchynskyi .

From 1909 , he studied under musical theoretic Boleslav Yavorsky , whom he periodically visited in Moscow and Kiev over the next twelve years . Leontovych also became involved with theatrical music in Tulchyn and its community life by taking charge of a local organization called " Prosvita " , meaning " Enlightenment " .

This period in his career was among the most productive , as he created numerous choral arrangements . These included his famous " Shchedryk " , as well as " ????? ????? " ( The roosters are singing ) , " ????? ????? ????? ????? " ( A mother had one daughter ) , " ??????? " ( Little Dudka player ) , " ?? ??????? ????? " ( Oh , the star has risen ) , and others . In 1914 Stetsenko convinced Leontovych to have his music performed by the student choir of the Kiev University under the leadership of Alexander Koshetz . On December 26 , 1916 , the performance of his arrangement of " Shchedryk " brought Leontovych great success from the public in Kiev and raised the interest of intellectuals .

= = = Career in Kiev = = =

During the October Revolution and the establishment of the Ukrainian People 's Republic in 1918 , Leontovych relocated without his family to Ukraine 's capital Kiev , where he was active as both a conductor and composer . Several of his pieces gained popularity among professional and amateurs groups alike , who added them to their repertoire . In the beginning of 1919 the rest of his family also relocated to Kiev . During this period Leontovych also began teaching choir conducting alongside Hryhoriy Veryovka at the Kiev Conservatory , and also taught at the Mykola Lysenko Institute of Music and Drama . Leontovych was one of the organizers of the first Ukrainian State Orchestra . He participated in the founding of the Ukrainian Republic Capella of which he was the commissioner .

= = = Move back to Tulchyn and assassination = = =

During the conquest of Kiev on August 31 , 1919 , the Denikin Army persecuted the Ukrainian intelligentsia . Because of this , Leontovych returned to Tulchyn with his family . There he started the city 's first music school , since the college where he had worked was closed down by the Bolsheviks . He also began to work on his first major symphonic work , the opera Na Rusalchyn Velykden ' ( On the water nymph 's Great Day ) .

During the night of January 22 ? 23 , 1921 , Mykola Leontovych was murdered by Chekist ( Soviet state security ) agent Afanasy Grishchenko . Leontovych was staying at the home of his parents , whom he was visiting for the Orthodox Feast of the Nativity ( December 25 of the Julian calendar ? which on the Gregorian calendar , adopted by the USSR only in 1918 , falls in January ) . The undercover Chekist had also asked to stay the night at the house and shared a room with Mykola . At dawn he shot the composer ( who died of blood loss a few hours later ) after robbing his family .

Several facts point to a political motive behind the assassination . Leontovych 's participation in the independence movement , such as commissioning Ukrainian Republic Capella , aimed at promoting Ukraine as an independent state , earned him many enemies . His older daughter Halyna later recalled her father saying , shortly before his death , that he had documents to leave the country to

Romania , and that he had these documents with him among his sheet music during a concert . However , after returning from tea following the concert , Leontovych noticed that someone had gone through his papers . His plans to leave the country , along with the fact that he was killed by a Soviet agent , also indicate political reasons for his death .

= = Character = =

Mykola Leontovych was highly critical of himself . According to his first biographer Oles ' Chapkivskyi , a contemporary of the composer , Leontovych would sometimes work on one choral setting without letting anyone else see it for up to four years . After the publication of his " Second Compilation of Songs from Podolia " , he changed his mind and was not fully satisfied with it , and as a result he bought all 300 copies and had them destroyed .

Chapkivskyi also described Leontovych as having a shy personality , saying " He abstained from fame , feared attention and advertisement . " On the other hand , Chapkivskyi claimed that Leontovych 's jealousy , fear of competition , and fear of non @-@ acceptance from the established musical society , caused the music of Leontovych to be little known .

Zynoviy Yaropud of the Kamianets @-@ Podilskyi State Pedagogical University writes that " all of [ Leontovych 's ] contemporaries called him a quiet , gentle person . He was not an active leader of the national @-@ revolutionary movement , which revealed in the years of 1917 @-@ 1921 a whole handful of prominent fighters for the Ukrainian republic , " revealing that the composer was politically quiet , but not indifferent .

Leontovych 's friend , O. Buzhanskiy , recalls that the composer was " always full of humor ; spoke so that everyone was laughing to tears , but he remained serious and stayed calm . " Stetsenko also described Leontovych to be a " witty storyteller " and that his students at the Church Educator 's School in Tulchyn were " in love with him " because of his storytelling .

= = = Religious views = = =

Mykola Leontovych grew up in a highly religious environment . He was a member of the Orthodox Church , descended from a line of village priests . He was also a graduate of the Podolia Theological Seminary in Kamianets @-@ Podilskyi , which for the most part trained Orthodox Christian clergy .

As a person with a professional theological education , Leontovych kept up with the movement of the establishment and recognition of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church , which was reestablished in 1918 . The composer 's output during this period became rich in new sacred music , following the examples of Kyrylo Stetsenko ( a close friend of Leontovych , also an orthodox priest and composer ) and Alexander Koshetz . Leontovych 's works from this time included " ?? ?????????? ?????? " ( On the Resurrection of Christ ) , " ??????? ?? ? ? ????????? " ( Praise ye the name of the Lord ) , and " ????? ????? " ( Oh quiet light ) , among others . A milestone in the development of Ukrainian spiritual music was the composition of his liturgy , which was first performed in the Mykolaiv Cathedral at the Kiev Pechersk Lavra on May 22 , 1919 .

= = Commemoration = =

On February 1 , 1921 , nine days after Leontovych 's death , a large number of artists , professors , and students of the Mykola Lysenko Institute of Music and Drama in Kiev gathered to commemorate him , as is expected according to Christian tradition . They established the Committee for the Memory of Mykola Leontovych , which later became the All @-@ Ukrainian Mykola Leontovych Music Society , and promoted Ukrainian music until 1928 .

Ukrainian writer and politician of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic , Pavlo Tychyna , was an admirer of Leontovych and wrote about the composer 's death in prose . Poets Maksym Rylskyi and Mykola Bazhan also dedicated poetry to him .

The name of Leontovych is carried by musical groups , such as the Leontovych Bandurist Capella ,

and by educational institutions such as the Vinnytsia College of Arts and Culture . Streets in Kiev and other cities have been named after him . There is a memorial museum dedicated to him in the city of Tulchyn , and another was established in 1977 in the village of Markivka where he was buried .

In 2002 , to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the composer 's birth , the city of Kamianets @-@ Podilskyi held an all @-@ Ukrainian scientific conference entitled " Mykola Leontovych and modern education and science , " with guests from the Ukrainian ministry of education and science , the Ukrainian composers ' Union , and many local authorities . During this event the city held a ceremonial opening of a memorial plaque to the composer , placed next to the old building formerly used by the Podolia Theological Seminary .

= = Music = =

Mykola Leontovych specialized in a cappella choral music . He is remembered today mostly through the musical works he left behind , which include over 150 choral compositions . These range from artistic arrangements of folk songs , religious works ( including his liturgy ) , cantatas , and choral compositions set to the words of various Ukrainian poets . His two most famous works are the choral miniatures " Shchedryk " and " Dudaryk " .

Leontovych also commenced work on an opera ( Na ruslchyn velykden ? - On the Water Nymph 's Easter ) based on Ukrainian myths and the works of Borys Hrinchenko . By the end of 1920 he had finished the first of three acts . However , Leontovych was murdered before he could complete the opera . Attempts to complete and edit the opera were made by Ukrainian composer Mykhailo Verykivsky . Composer Myroslav Skoryk and poet Diodor Bobyr used the musical material of the unfinished opera to make a one act operetta ; this premiered in 1977 at the Kiev State Opera and Ballet Theatre , one hundred years after Leontovych 's birth . The North American premiere took place in Toronto on April 11 , 2003 .

One of the largest influences in Mykola Leontovych 's music is that of Mykola Lysenko who is considered " the father of Ukrainian classical music " . Leontovych admired Lysenko 's music ever since he was a student at the Kamianets @-@ Podilskyi Theological Seminary , when he had the seminary 's choir perform the composer 's music . Since then he would perform Lysenko 's music in concerts wherever he worked .

= = = Shchedryk / Carol of the Bells = = =

Mykola Leontovych 's " Shchedryk " is the composer 's most well @-@ known piece . In its English version as a Christmas carol , it is known as the holiday favorite " Carol of the Bells " . It is famous for its four @-@ note ostinato motif and has been arranged over 150 times since 2004 . The original Ukrainian text of " Shchedryk " used hemiola , a shifting of accents within each measure between 6 / 8 and 3 / 4 , which is lost in the English versions . The most popular English adaptation was composed in 1936 by Peter J Wilhousky who was influenced by the culture of his Eastern European parents and the traditional Christian story of carols ringing out at the birth of Jesus , although other English adaptations of the song were also made in 1947 by M. L. Holman , 1957 and 1972 .

The song has been used many times in the soundtracks for films and television . For example , it was used in the box office hits The Santa Clause and Home Alone , Will Vinton 's award @-@ winning A Claymation Christmas Celebration , and as a parody called " Carol of the Meows " in The O.C. show 's " The Chrismukkah That Almost Wasn 't " . It has also been arranged and performed by many groups , regardless of singing style or genre , ranging from classical ( Vienna Boys Choir ) , to traditional music groups ( Celtic Woman ) , to pop singers and groups ( Jessica Simpson , Destiny 's Child ) .

= = = Musical style = = =

Leontovych had an original style . Many of his works have " deft use of imitative counterpoint " and

impressionistic harmony . He had a strong desire for his music to arouse the senses , especially sight , saying , " I 'm interested in which colors you used for high tones , and which for the low ones . I myself often think about that , to combine sound and color . "

His choral compositions feature rich harmony , vocal polyphony , and imitation . His earlier choral arrangements of folk songs were primarily strophic arrangements of the melody . As the composer gained more experience , the structure of his choral compositions and arrangements of folk songs became more frequently intertwined with text .

Leontovych arranged many Ukrainian folk songs , creating artistically independent choral compositions based on their melodies and lyrics . He followed the traditions of improvisation of Ukrainian kobzars , who would interpret every new strophe differently . He also employed humming and the variability in timbre of singers ' voices as techniques in reaching a desired emotional or sensual effect .

A central topic of Leontovych 's work is choral music about everyday life . His music frequently reflect actual actions and events . An example of this is his *shchedrivka* " Oho tam za horoy ( Oh there behind the mountain ) in which a tenor initially starts the song with a solo and the rest of the voices of the choir gradually come in , reflecting carolling when new groups of singers join in . Then , a switching of parts begins between different groups of the choir , recreating the clamorous atmosphere of the New Year 's Eve .

= = = Reception and popularity = = =

For most of his career , Leontovych kept his music to himself , only performing it during his own concerts . This was because of the composer 's highly self @-@ critical and shy personality . Leontovych 's first critic was his friend and fellow priest and composer Kyrylo Stetsenko , who described him to be " a great expert of both choral singing and theoretical studies " . He also convinced Leontovych to publish his music and have it performed by the Kiev University .

The successful debut of " *Shchedryk* " earned Leontovych popularity among specialists and fans of choral music in Kiev . Leontovych 's mentor @-@ turned @-@ coworker at the Kiev Conservatory , Boleslav Yavorsky , also positively evaluated his newly written works . During another concert , Leontovych 's " *Lehenda* " , set to a poem by Mykola Voronyi , gained great popularity .

After reviewing Leontovych 's " *Second Compilation of Songs from Podolia* " , Lysenko wrote : " Leontovych has an original , illustrious gift . In his arrangements I found separate passages , movement of voices , which later developed in a geniously weaved musical network . "

The increase in popularity of Leontovych 's music was aided by the head of the Ukrainian National Republic , Symon Petliura , who created and sponsored two choirs that would promote the awareness of and the culture of Ukraine . One choir headed by Kyrylo Stetsenko toured across Ukraine , while the Ukrainian Republic Capella headed by Alexander Koshetz toured Europe and the Americas . Performances by the Ukrainian Republic Capella made Leontovych known throughout the western world . In France Leontovych earned the nickname , " Ukrainian Bach " . On October 5 , 1921 the Capella performed " *Shchedryk* " in the Carnegie Hall in New York City . In 1936 , ethnically Ukrainian Peter J. Wilhousky , who worked for radio NBC , wrote his own lyrics for the song , which became known as the " *Carol of the Bells* " .

Apart from " *Shchedryk* " , or the *Carol of the Bells* , Leontovych 's music is currently performed mostly in Ukraine and few recordings are dedicated to him exclusively . The Ukrainian diaspora remember him and perform his works . For example , the Olexander Koshetz Choir based in Winnipeg , Canada performs music of Ukrainian composers including Leontovych and have made a recording of his music .