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### CONTEMPORARY BANDURA ART AS AN EMBODIMENT OF THE CULTURAL CODE OF UKRAINIANS

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**Abstract.** For many centuries, the activity of representatives of bandura art supported the morale of Ukrainians in difficult war times and periods of repression. In the course of the research, we can observe how the bandura repertoire reflected the desire of people to fight for freedom and carried history through the ages. With the start of a full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022, a young generation of contemporary bandurists began to actively support the Ukrainian people. Accordingly, linearly continuing the centuries-old musical tradition and demonstrating the mission of bandura art in particular. So, we can talk about this musical tradition as an embodiment of the national spirit and the cultural code of the Ukrainians.

The article analyses samples of bandura repertoire in different stages of Ukrainian history. The work also highlights the peculiarities of contemporary bandura art, the activities of its representatives, as well as their musical works.

**Key words:** contemporary bandura art, bandura players, cultural symbol, authentic instrument, media show, music of war.

**Introduction.** The culture of the nation is its treasure, which is a part of every generation and conveys the traditional philosophy of the people and their mentality. In old Ukrainian traditions, there are cultural symbols that collectively form the cultural code of the nation, as a separate people. These symbols help the people to identify themselves, to pass on tradition, history and people's beliefs to the next generations. In Ukrainian culture, there are many symbols that are given great attention and importance. They are praised and honoured (viburnum is a symbol of beauty, bread is a symbol of life) (Zhaivoronok, 2006: 270, 618).

Bandura is one of the brightest manifestations and embodiments of Ukrainian culture. In the minds of the people, the bandura is an authentic (Rusanivkyi, 2012: 93) instrument, through which the spirit of the people, its mental peculiarities are praised and reflected. Thus, it becomes the personification of a living tradition (Matkovsky, 2019: 60-65). An authentic instrument from the moment of its spread among the people acts as an ideological symbol of Ukrainians' struggle for freedom, which accompanies people and supports them in difficult times. This association was formed in particular due to the repertoire of its performers and their way of communicating with the audience. The basis of the bandura repertoire is the *duma* (Gromyaka, 2007: 212). This genre arose in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which coincides with the period of the spread of Cossacks<sup>1</sup> and the national self-awareness of Ukrainians as a separate ethnic and cultural unit. The executor of the *dumas* was considered the bearer of the national ideology and spirituality of the people. Currently, bandura art in Ukraine is presented in several forms: traditional (authentic), academic and contemporary direction of development. Its history can be conditionally divided into several stages.

**Stages of development.** Many scientists (M. Prokopenko, O. Famintsyn) studied origin and evolution of the instruments (*kabza*, later *bandura*). The most meaningful explanation of the origin and

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<sup>1</sup> The military-political union of Zaporozhian Sich was created in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

characteristics of the bandura is covered in Hnat Khotkevich's work "Musical Instruments of the Ukrainian people" (Khotkevych, 1930: 87). He considered the bandura to be a "purely Ukrainian invention" of the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, due to the addition of short melodic strings (prystrynky) to the construction of another instrument, the kobza. Due to the performance of the folk lyric-epic, the instruments are related. Therefore, we can say that the bandura is a conceptual and ideological continuation of the kobza. In turn, both those instruments are an example of the embodiment of an authentic Ukrainian tradition. The themes of kobzars (bandurists) authentic repertoire reveal the peculiarities and mentality of the people. Their repertoire is filled with love for the native land, history, and the spirit of freedom. In addition to the theme of the compositions, the method of conveying them to the audience is also related, namely, the recitative form of presentation of the material in combination with instrumental improvisation, which allows you to immerse the audience in the process of understanding the story and deep analysis, thereby touching the subtle aspects of the human soul. However, it is worth noting that these instruments are significantly different from each other in terms of external characteristics (shape, structure, method of sound production, and method of holding during performance).

Therefore, when we describe the history of bandura art, taking into account the aspect of conceptual kinship of bandura with kobza, it is appropriate to start with the period of the spread of kobzarstvo on the territory of Ukraine.

The bearers of kobzar art were only men – kobzars, who were considered preachers of the will of the people and bearers of their cultural and spiritual heritage. During the days of the Zaporozhian Sich (XVI–XVIII centuries), the kobzar was a highly respected person who spoke at the negotiations of ambassadors and at royal courts, went to war with the Cossacks, and was considered a defender of morality and the spiritual world. His mission was to preserve the history of the cossacks and tell the masses of people the true reality (Matkovsky 2019: 60-65). These facts testify to the active involvement of musicians in the lives of the Ukrainian people several centuries ago, as an embodiment of a living musical tradition.

From the beginning of its foundation, the kobza (and later the bandura) was diatonic (Pylypchuk, 2021: 43-46). Each performer made the instrument with his own hands according to his own vocal and performance capabilities, and the tuning of the instrument changed according to the composition he was performing. Their repertoire consisted of traditional songs of Ukrainian folklore, namely: dumas, historical songs, religious and moralistic songs, satirical songs and dance pieces (Chornopisky, 2008: 108-111). The texts of authentic dumas tell us about historical events ("Ruinuvannia Sichi Kateryny"/"Destruction of Sich by Kateryna"), the suffering of the enslaved people ("Plach nevolnykiv"/"Crying of the Slaves", "Marusia Bohuslavka") and the exploits of the Cossacks ("Samiilo Kishka", "Duma pro Baidu"/"Duma about Baida"). They contained ideas about the features, ideals, and behaviour of Cossack national heroes who respect their native land and the christian faith and defend it valiantly against enemies ("Duma pro kozaka Holotu"/"Duma about the cossack Holota"):

...ne boitsia ni ohnia, ni mecha, ni tretoho bolota... /  
 ...(he) don't afraid of fire, or the sword, or the third swamp..)<sup>2</sup>

The texts reflect the freedom-loving people, which is one of its main characteristics ("Sokil i sokolia"/"Falcon and falcon"):

..Luchche my budem po poliu litaty../.We'd better fly across the field  
 Ta sobi zhyvnosti dostavaty, / And to obtain livestock on our own,  
 Anizh u tiazhkii nevoli / Than to live in severe captivity  
 U paniv prozhyvaty. / With the masters..<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Own translation

<sup>3</sup> Own translation

During the compositions' performances, the musicians used melodeclamation, supplementing it with elements of sonorism (exclamations, shouts, howls) and performance ornamentation, which we will refer to in the future as traditional techniques of playing the bandura (Yutsevych, 2003)<sup>4</sup>. The purpose of using these techniques was to morally arouse the listener, to evoke sympathy and empathy, and to fill with a sense of unity with the people and the desire to fight for freedom and rights.

From the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the bandura gained more and more use among the population, and the kobza gradually lost popularity. After the liquidation of Zaporozhian Sich and during the period of mass enslaving of the population bandura players began to travel throughout the country, performing at fairs, streets, and near churches, telling news and stories about the Cossacks and the fate of enslaved compatriot. In this way, they touched the subtle aspects of the human soul, inciting their feelings and desire to fight for freedom and boosting morale. They acted as a sort of media and psychologists of the time (Chaika, 2012).

In the XX century in Ukraine, there was a process of academisation of the instrument, which at that time was presented only as folk instrument. In 1902, at the 12<sup>th</sup> Archaeological Congress in Kharkiv, the report of researcher and bandurist Hnat Khotkevich was announced. He emphasised the need to introduce an ensemble form of performance and a unification of construction. There was also a big concert of bandura players and a presentation of their work. These two events attracted the attention of the participants in the congress and served as an impetus for active research of the instrument, thereby starting the process of modernization of the bandura and its subsequent academisation (Yurenko, 2004: 44). In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a large constellation of bandura players embodied the idea of the formation of academic bandura art (Hnat Khotkevich, Vasyl Yemets, Mykhailo Teliha, Volodymyr Kabachok, and others) (Zheplynskyi, 2011).

During the World War II, bandura players with new strength continued the tradition of supporting the national spirit of the population. The tired people welcomed the bearers of bandura art very kindly, because they were considered a symbol of the Cossacks, as the personification of willpower. Their performance repertoire awakened national consciousness, faith in one's own strength, love for the country, and the desire to protect it. The bandurists invested deep meaning and symbolism in songs, as well as the idea of liberation struggle and faith in a better future. Relevant compositions, in particular, were created during that time: "... As military bandura player Andrii Bobyr notes: "My comrades often asked me to sing. After a difficult battle, the song tamed the pain, before the battle, it gave strength and determination. We really liked "Na smert partuzana"/"To the death of a partisan" (Kostyuk, 2015: 248-261). There were dumas and songs in the repertoire of bandura player Yehor Movchan that awakened national consciousness ("Nasuvallas hrizna khmara"/"A threatening cloud was approaching", "Chornyi voron"/"Black crow"), reflected the realities of the time, and conveyed people's faith in a bright future, in particular a song based on A. Malyshka's poem "Koly techut kryvavi riky"/"When bloody rivers flow":

Koly techut kryvavi riky / *When bloody rivers flow*  
 V stepakh, opalenykh vohnem, / *In the steppes scorched by fire,*  
 Proslavym skryvdzhenykh naviky, / *We will glorify the offended forever,*  
 A zaprodantsiv — proklenem! / *And we will curse the sellers!*  
 ...I pidrostut novi vnuchata... / *...And new grandchildren will grow up...*  
 Na volni, radisni zhnyva. / *At large, happy harvest.*<sup>5</sup>

Bandura players helped people psychologically cope with all the horrors of war, death, and ruin. In the rear and on the battlefield, the performers did not leave the bandura and gave concerts. They believed that their music was a weapon against the enemy and medicine for the human soul, so they continued their mission (Kostyuk, 2015: 248-261).

<sup>4</sup> Mordent, flageolet, forslag, glissando, tremolo, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Own translation.

Despite the difficult social, economic, and political vicissitudes of the 1920s and 1940s<sup>6</sup>, the banning and physical destruction of bandura players, the process of the formation of an academic bandura was successful. The changes were reflected in many aspects (Yugova, 2017). The question arose of introducing a unified and improved chromatic, not diatonic, instrument design with a built-in tonality switching system (instruments of the “Chernihiv” type of 1953 – the design of Ivan Sklyar and the “Lviv” type of 1964 – the design of Vasyl Herasymenko) (Zinkiv, 2021). The bandurists' repertoire combined samples of academic music and authentic Ukrainian music. Composers created original works and transcribed from the repertoire for other instruments. The theme of the compositions was permeated with the acquisition of Ukrainian cultural heritage, which was noted in the title of the work, the use of folk music modes, appeal to folklore (Ukrainian folk dance “Na berezhku na stavku”/“*On the coast, on the pond*” by S. Bashtan, concert piece “Baida” by K. Myaskov, concert instrumental fantasy “Kupalo” by O. Herasymenko, the play “Pisnia vitru”/“*The Song of the Wind*” by R. Hrynkyv). The perfection of the chromaticism of the academic instrument is also proven by the performance of works of world classics, in particular: A. Vivaldi “The four Seasons”, J. S. Bach cycle of works “The well-Tempered Clavier”, F. Schubert “Ave Maria”, etc. Unification of the design of the instrument allowed bandurists to unite and play music in ensembles. In turn, this practice made it possible to significantly expand the performance repertoire and daily life of bandura players (symphonic orchestra, orchestra of folk instruments, chapels, trios and duets) (Lisnyak, 2019).

The active phase of the bandura academisation process took place in the second half of the XXth century due to the fruitful and multicomponent work of bandura players (Vasyl Herasymenko, Serhiy Bashtan, Konstantin Myaskov, Lyudmila Posikira, etc.) (Zheplynskyi, 2011). At the beginning of the XXI st century, the bandura took its place among other academic instruments in Ukraine. All the quantitative and qualitative changes that took place during the period of academisation of the instrument did not erase its history and ideology, but rather interpreted and preserved it in accordance with the realities of that time. The representatives of bandura art continued to promote and convey the Ukrainian tradition, which were reflected in the repertoire, stage costume of the performer, and the theme of the concerts, where its performance could most often be heard.

**Reasons.** The socio-cultural changes that are taking place in the XXI century are giving rise to a new era, the catalyst for which can undoubtedly be considered global digitalization (Lisnyak, 2022: 144-164). The development and implementation of high technologies in the everyday lives of people also affected the modern worldview and the formation of a new generation. In particular, the reaction to these changes was reflected and implemented in contemporary art. The artist of the new era is not afraid of modern technologies. On the contrary, he skilfully uses them for his own purposes in order to create and popularise his art.

Contemporary bandura art is a kind of meaningful reaction to the present, which is expressed in the compositions and the actual positioning of its representatives in society. The creativity of modern bandura players illustrates a new image of bandura, which is at the same time interesting to a young audience and remains a symbol of Ukrainian culture.

Contemporary bandura direction is reflected in the reinterpretation of old traditions, the combination of authenticity and modern sound, and the artist's positioning and perception in the mass popular

<sup>6</sup>In the mid-20s of the last century, there were a number of resolutions aimed at obstructing the activities of musicians: "On the prohibition of begging (kobzarism)", "On mandatory registration of musical instruments in police and NKVD", "On approval of the repertoire in the People's Commissariat of Education", "Regulations on individual and collective music performance". Instead, the following instruments were distributed throughout the country: balalaikas, accordions, mandolins, accordions, and guitars.

<sup>10</sup>In the mid-1930s, the All-Ukrainian Congress of Lyricists and Bandura Players was held in Kharkiv, killing bandura players and burning their instruments. Representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, including active bandura art leaders Hnat Khotkevych and Opanas Slastyona, were also repressed and physically destroyed. The Kharkiv bandura was liquidated in Ukraine as a symbol of Ukrainian culture, and the bearers of the bandura tradition were repressed.

cultural space. Bandura players perform on chromatic academic instruments designed by Ivan Sklyar back in 1953, but actively use modern accessories (recorders, sound amplifiers, concert stands), and their repertoire of various genres reflects today's popular trends in a harmonious combination with Ukrainian authenticity. Artists participating in popular television talent shows, music and art festivals, gathering an audience on social networks, and paying considerable attention to the visual aspect of the presentation of their work, which in turn popularises and demonstrates musical abilities and the sound of the instrument to a wide audience, are all important factors in the formation of modern bandura art.

While describing the contemporary direction of bandura, it is also worth pointing out some of the reasons and prerequisites for its origin. Despite the successful academicisation of the instrument in the XX century, by the beginning of the XXI century, the instrument remained “folk” in the minds of the mass Ukrainian audience, and the bandurist could not be imagined without a vyshyvanka (traditional ukrainian dress) and songs about the Motherland. The themes of the repertoire, the musical arrangements of the songs, and their arrangements also became quite “monotonous”, with the use of classical harmonies, established modes, etc. Such music sounded on the stages of the philharmonic hall and the concert hall, but was not an object of interest for the mass audience. In that period, the importance and influence of mass art grew more and more. In particular, due to active rotations on radio and television, there was a significantly increased popularity of pop music and pop artists. As a result, a stereotypical, “not modern” or “archaic” vision of bandura and its representatives was born, which set a task for young performers to direct their activities to its debunking. The desire of young bandura players to take their place among other popular performers in the country, to make the authentic instrument interesting and accessible to a large audience, to popularise the instrument among young people and to present it to the foreign public in a dignified way – these are the ideas and goals that in turn led to the birth of “*contemporary bandura*” in Ukraine.

On the other hand, in the XXI century, a large-scale wave of national identity has been observed in many European countries, in particular in Ukraine.<sup>7</sup> An understandable longing for the past, for what is dear to the heart, for childhood memories, is emphasised by the artists, who try to incorporate these special feelings into their work. As a result, the audience warmly perceives such examples because they are close and familiar. It should not be considered that this is copying the works of our ancestors, traditions or clothes. Popularisation and revival of tradition through ethnic clothing, architecture, art using authentic colours and professional Ukrainian art of the past helps to preserve the tradition of the past.

Taking into account the above facts, we can say that *contemporary bandura art* will be manifested in particular through a reinterpretation of Ukrainian authenticity in a modern retrospective in combination with a contemporary and popular sound, which is expressed with a visual and digitalized presentation of the artistic product to reach a wide audience. An example can be found in the creative activity of modern bandura players, which will be mentioned later.

**Representatives.** The “birth” of the contemporary bandura can be traced back to 2010, when bandura player Yaroslav Dzhus performed on the stage of the popular talent show “Ukraina maie talant”/“*Ukraina's got talent*”. It is worth noting that the television show “Ukraina maie talant” in 2010 was very popular, one of the most rated shows on Ukrainian television, which was broadcast on Saturdays in prime time. It indicates the reach of a large audience. (STB.ua, 2010) The victory, namely the prize of audience sympathy in the finale of the show, confirmed the interest in bandura among a wide audience and launched the process of development of a new direction in bandura art, namely contemporary.

The musician surprised the audience during the show's casting by performing an atypical banduras repertoire, namely the composition “Svitovi khity”/“World Hits” – a potpourri of world-famous

<sup>7</sup> The most striking example is the Eurovision contest, in which, in recent years, many countries have tried to demonstrate their national uniqueness through costumes, music and the conceptuality of the number.

melodies, recognisable to a large audience of compositions (“Nothing Else Matters” by Metallica, “Yesterday” by The Beatles, “We Are the Champions” by Queen, etc.). (You Tube, 2010) Unexpected for the audience, the choice of the repertoire and its performance on an instrument that, in the imagination of the audience at the time, was only “folk”, aroused interest in the musician and his work. Already on the live air, accompanied by a string nonet, he performed M. Skoryk's well-known composition “Melodiya”/“*Melody*” and received the prize of audience sympathy. (You Tube, 2011) Here the performer appealed to the audience's feelings because for Ukrainians this composition is associated with the memory of the victims of the Holodomor of the last century.<sup>8</sup> Just as when performing authentic thoughts and glorifying tragic events of the past, the bandura player touched the thin edges of the audience's soul. This performance, albeit in a new interpretation, gave the same effect as a result. It can be noted here that the main message of the music remained unchanged, but the presentation of the audience underwent changes in accordance with the requirements of modern times.

The participation and victory of Yaroslav Dzhus in the popular media show served as an impetus for the activation of the activities of young bandurists in the popularisation of contemporary bandura art, who in the future can be positioned as contemporary performers (Yaroslav Dzhus, Maryna Krut, Anastasiya Voytyuk, Georgiy Matviyiv, B&B Project, and others). Also began the process of destroying the myth of “archaic”<sup>9</sup> and the development of a new contemporary direction of bandura art in Ukraine, which continues successfully to this day.

In the following years, a young constellation of bandura players worked on the development of a contemporary repertoire for bandura, which includes original music, texts and musical arrangements of which meet the requirements of modern times and are interesting for a young audience (topics of compositions, harmony, compositional form), as well as translation into bandura familiar popular world and Ukrainian compositions (cover versions). A characteristic of many compositions is the combination of Ukrainian authenticity, acoustic features of the instrument with modern electronic sound and rhythms. The way of popularising and visualising an artistic product has also changed – appearance on popular television shows, original videos of works that are distributed through social networks and YouTube, attention to the concept and presentation of oneself as an artist, which is reflected in a concert costume, one's own positioning. Spreading one's own creativity through social networks allows expanding the circle of connoisseurs of bandura and Ukrainian culture, in particular, in the world.

After the television show, Yaroslav Dzhus began to be actively involved in the popularisation of modern bandura. In 2013, the bandura artist created the “BANDURA STYLE” project, thanks to which contemporary bandura began to spread throughout the country and abroad. At the initiative of the project, the first bandura collection with a modern repertoire was published, which included 6 original works and 6 translations of well-known world compositions, which were distributed around the country for free (Dub, 2013). In order to attract the attention of a larger audience, the bandurist made collaborations with famous musicians and bands (TNMK, Tartak, Go-a, and others), took part in numerous cultural and artistic projects (“KobzArt”, “Kraina Mriy”, “Tarasova Gora”, etc.), began to develop social networks and publish videos on the YouTube channel. In the early years, the bandurist's repertoire consisted largely of melodies from world-famous compositions (“Comptine d'un autre été” by Yann Tiersen, “Shchedryk” by M. Leontovych, “Melodiya” by M. Skoryk, “Yesterday” by The Beatles, etc.) and the author's arrangements of Ukrainian songs, in particular with the use of jazz laments (“Cheremshyna”, “Nich yaka misiachna”, “Kvitka dusha”, etc.).

Yaroslav Dzhus was the initiator of the band “Shpyliasti kobzari”, with which he now tours the world and participates in art projects, festivals and forums (“Nezalezhnist tse my”, International

<sup>8</sup> Holodomor is a genocide of the Ukrainian nation committed in 1921–1922, 1932–1933 1946–1947.

<sup>9</sup> Which has gone out of common use, is obsolete. Vocabulary is used in works of art to add a shade of antiquity to the depiction of certain events and phenomena (Bilodid, 1970: 64)

Festival named after Bohdan Vesolovsky, “Terytoriia Rizdva. Zymova misteriiia”) and television programmes of Ukraine (“Holos Kraïny”/“*Voice of the Nation*”, “Ukraïna maie talant”, “Snidanok 1+1”). The group works in the style of “music charge” (fr. *la charge*). They create original cover songs of well-known folk compositions, shoot YouTube clips, and experiment with stage images. The band chose the path of performing those compositions that are familiar to a wide mass audience in order to evoke in them a feeling of nostalgia and a high mood. That is why the band's repertoire is dominated by well-known Ukrainian folk and original songs, recognisable world melodies, and their mixing with each other. The musical design of the band's compositions is filled with elements of sonorism and traditional playing techniques (forstags, glissandos, arpeggios, sound effects) on the bandura in combination with modern metro-rhythms. Their performance repertoire includes cover versions of Ukrainian and international compositions, which they interpret in various styles of pop music, using jazz elements and new age, and their performances are impressive and extravagant (use of LED strips, fireworks, original stage costume).

At the beginning of their creative career, “Shpyliasti kobzari” also took part in the television talent show “Ukraïna maie talant” in 2011. (You Tube, 2013) In their performance, a pot-pourri of Ukrainian songs was played during the live broadcast of the competition (such as “Smereka”, “Oi chy i to kin stoit”/“*Whose throw is worth*”, “Oi na hori dva dubky”/“*Oh, there are two oaks on the mountain*”, and “Vziav by ya banduru”/“*I would take a bandura*”) in combination with samples of world-famous music. Their performance on the stage was presented somewhat in a humorous context, which was expressed through the peculiarities of the arrangement of the composition, the use of certain elements of sound, stage images, and spectacular visual effects. Such an atypical presentation of the bandura and its performers at a large-scale show was aimed at destroying the myth of “popularity” and conservatism of the instrument and its performers, erasing certain conditional frameworks of the bandura player's appearance in the minds of both the public and other bandura players. In 2019, “Shpyliasti kobzari” again went to the television talent show “Holos Kraïny”, where they performed in an updated quantitative composition. (1plus1, 2019) The audience also observed the growth and rebranding of the band, which was reflected in the musical interpretation and design of the compositions, visual presentations, the involvement of other musical instruments (cajon, flute), the appearance of the musicians. Also, they demonstrated a clear artistic position, because their main message was the words – “Bandura is cool”. (You Tube, 2019) The musicians themselves, with their appearance at the show, wanted to demonstrate contemporary bandura music to a wide audience, in particular to international listeners, and break the stereotype of “archaic” bandura music in Ukrainian audiences.

Accordingly, Yaroslav Dzhus and the band “Shpyliasti kobzari” were the first to popularise contemporary bandura for the public using authentic Ukrainian texts in combination with melodies known to a wide audience in the media space. They actively popularised their work through television and social media, presenting contemporary bandura to a large audience. Images in social networks, the spectacular design of music videos and stage images are also important for musicians.

Bandura player Maryna Krut creates and popularises the modern sound of bandura through her own creativity. She began her media career on the stages of popular television talent shows and competitions in Ukraine (“X-Faktor”/“*X Factor*” 2018, “Holos Kraïny” 2019, “Yevrobachennia. Natsionalnyi Vidbir 2020”/“*Eurovision. National Selection 2020*”), was a participant in numerous Ukrainian and foreign festivals (Atlas Weekend, Lviv Bandur Fest, Benderstadt, Faine misto) and cultural and artistic projects (“Sound of Chernobyl”, “Z dnem narodzhennia, Chuvak”/“*Happy Birthday, Dude*”, “Pisnia pid banduru”/“*Song under bandura*”), she recorded collaborations with various popular artists, wrote music for films and commercial projects (“Isolde”, “Ya pratsiuuu na tsvyntari”/“*I work in the cemetery*”, “Zlomovchannia”/“*Breaking silence*”). Her author's output includes music albums (“Arche”, “Albino”), music collections (“Alternative”, “Play me something on the bandura”), as well as a number of video clips that she distributes through social networks, including YouTube.

Considering the above, the bandura player's involvement covers a wide range of activities, which helps popularise contemporary bandura, and positions the musician herself as a pop artist (Petrynka, 2020: 72-76).

The focus of Maryna Krut's authorial compositional activity is aimed at discovering the subtle facets of the organisation of the personality, its soul. An example is also the song "99", about the reasons to "rise" and move on, about the inner strength of the individual and the fear of making mistakes for the "Yevrobachennia. Natsionalnyi Vidbir 2020") (You Tube, 2020), The compositions "Chy ty mii son"/"Are you my dream", "Vse yak ty liubysh"/"Everything as you like", and "Korinnia"/"Roots" reveal the eternal themes of the vicissitudes of love, relationships between people, and the desire for self-awareness in the universe.

Maryna Krut is also called the world's first soul-bandurist (Eurovision.ua, 2020). In author's compositions she pays great attention to the inner experiences of a person, her personal microcosm, and her position in society. This opinion is confirmed by Maryna Krut's second album "Albino". The name of the mini-album "Albino" means albinos. As the author notes, it is these people who are special, as well as the human soul, the different facets of which she emphasises in her compositions (Kovalova, 2019). The album presents six compositions, each of which is interpreted as a separate manifesto, emphasising the importance of simple human feelings and their uniqueness and importance. "Divchinko"/"Girl" – a dialogue between a fragile and vulnerable soul and a rational, social brain; "Radii"/"Be glad" – the importance of life, sincere joy and gratitude for simple everyday things; "Sto lystiv"/"One hundred letters" – reveals the theme of unhappy love; "Khto ya"/"Who am I" – the meaning of life and the meaning of a person in the universe; "Ok" – a kind of hymn of introverts; "Skazhy meni Bozhe"/"Tell me God" – an intimate conversation between a modern person and the Creator.

Attention to the inner world of the individual, interpersonal contradictions, and attention to simple human values, a return to the roots, is the foundation of this album. Her music is characterised by a weightless introduction, often using the "kharkiv"<sup>10</sup> technique of playing, and a relaxed and harmoniously combined couplet accompaniment, which helps to reveal the content of the text in a voluminous way because the greatest attention is paid to it. The accompaniment itself during the vocal part helps the listener adjust to the appropriate internal emotional state. Instrumental performance is a place where the richness of the bandura sound is fully revealed and a high level of performance and technical skill of the bandura player is demonstrated. The compositions also contain proper bandura sound elements and techniques (instrumental improvisational – which is an essential feature of traditional *duma* – melismas, flageolets, glissandos, muting strings), which demonstrate the beauty of the sound of the instrument as well as the performance and technical capabilities of the bandura player.

Maryna Krut also pays attention to the demonstration and visualisation of her own creativity. She very often publishes photos of creative photo shoots with bandura, which she then uses in concert posters. Great attention is also paid to video editing of her performances and video design of music clips, which helps to harmoniously complement the picture of audio and visual perception in the mind of the audience. For an organic appearance on stage, she also uses a special vertical stand for the instrument (the final of the contest "Yevrobachennia. Natsionalnyi Vidbir 2020" (You Tube, 2020) and the air of "Holos Kraïny 9" (You Tube, 2019). The list of original video works of the bandura player also includes filming in nature, where the sounds of the bandura are combined with nature; the singing of the birds ("Hey little bird", "Oi khodyt son"/"Oh, the dream goes", instrumental improvisation – 2021); and siren sounds ("How we live in Ukraine" – 2022) (Naidenko, 2021).

In 2020, the bandura player presented the composition "Kimnata"/"Room" for the cultural and social project "Sounds of Chernobyl" (You Tube, 2020). This work can be interpreted as a vivid

<sup>10</sup>Method of throwing the left hand through the upper shemstock to the bandura strings (prystrunky).



example of the continuation of the kobzar tradition and idealism in activity and interpretation through the own creativity of representatives of contemporary bandura art.

The composition is based on the story of the tragedy of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which exploded in 1986 and affected the lives of thousands of people. The composition reveals the inner experiences of a person, his childhood trauma and fear. Ukrainian folk instruments – bandura, trembita (Khotkevych, 1930: 237-241), national clothes, use of folk music modes – all this emphasises the involvement and influence of the event on the entire nation. Many symbols are used to reveal the artistic ideas in the video series. In particular, the dominant colours of the video clip are yellow and black, which is a reference to the sign of radiation. The large number of people involved in the video clip shows the scale of the tragedy, and the slight difference between the video sequence and the text of the composition illustrates the lies and distortion of the event by the authorities of the time (Movchan, 2020).

As for the composition itself, from the first seconds we hear the sounds of the unique Ukrainian instruments trembita and bandura, and later their harmonious combination with electronic sound. The bandura player is the narrator of the story. Her recitative narrative reveals the inner experiences and tragedy of a person, tells a story that is characteristic of the authentic bandura tradition. The musical accompaniment helps to keep the viewer's attention by immersing him in a certain emotional state. The instrumental improvisation at the end of the composition uses the modes of Ukrainian folk music, namely the “hutsul” minor mode<sup>11</sup>, which is recognisable to people and is often used in folk and academic Ukrainian music. Such a combination of Ukrainian authenticity, history, concept, and electronic sound in modern presentations of the material is a vivid example of the manifestation of contemporary bandura art with a reinterpretation and a kind of continuation of its authentic tradition. The idea and implementation of the song “Kimnata” make contemporary comprehension about the scale and consequences of the tragedy of 1986, and an accessible and conceptual demonstration helps to convey it to a wide audience. The realisation of an authentic idea, the construction of a composition (a recitative story about a history with instrumental improvisational parts), in combination with modern elements of visual presentation to the audience, is an example of the contemporary direction of the development of bandura art.

In summary, Maryna Krut's creative work is multifaceted and covers many areas. In her work, the emphasis is placed precisely on the combination of Ukrainian authenticity and electro sound. In compositions, great attention is paid to the inner world of the individual, which is emphasised in visual demonstrations, concepts, and the musical design. We should also mention her powerful presentations of her own creativity to a wide range of audiences via social media and television.

A striking example of the popularisation and spread of modern bandura is the activity of bandura virtuoso player Georgy Matviyiv. In 2012, he was elected a member of the European Jazz Orchestra, thus demonstrating the possibility and beauty of the timbre sound of the bandura not only in the orchestra of folk instruments, but also in the jazz one (Matviiv, 2018). A year before that, he had shot the first bandura music video for the song “Wild West Jazz”. The composition is created in a jazz style with the use of syncopated and swing structures. As the performer himself notes, the video clip depicts a woman with body art on her back, which embodies the disclosure of the soul to art (Matviiv, 2021). The dominant colours in the video work are red and black, which for Ukrainians subconsciously evoke an association with the colours of folk tradition (“traditional clothes” – red means love, and black means grief). This work is a vivid example of the demonstration of contemporary bandura to a wide audience. It combines the original jazz sound on an archaic instrument, and the video clip visually enhances the impression of the viewer, for whom it is a novelty.

<sup>11</sup>A Ukrainian minor scale in the key of C: c d e<sup>b</sup> f<sup>♯</sup> g a b<sup>b</sup>.

The bandurist also took part in the large-scale fantasy show “Volodari stukhiy”/“*Lord of the Elements*” in 2018 performed by solo instrumentalists (hutsul cymbals P. Skazkiv, violin O. Bozhyk, ethno wind instruments O. Zhuravchyk) and NAONI (which from Ukrainian stands for National Orchestra of Folk Instruments of Ukraine). Each soloist embodied the element of nature, and a special magical atmosphere was created by the scenery, a combination of traditional and electronic musical instruments, percussion, visual and audio effects, and the use of 3D-mapping technique (Lisnyak, 2020: 80-94.). A feature of his compositional handwriting and performance skills is the perfect and complete use of bandura playing techniques, a combination of different genres in one musical sample (jazz, blues), and creative performance, where bandura sounds full and self-sufficient (Lisnyak, 2019:181-200).

A feature of Georgy Matviyiv's work is the creation of an original virtuoso musical canvas, which combines jazz and Ukrainian authenticity with an impressive visual presentation of its audience in the form of video clips and original music shows. This combination allows you to continue the living Ukrainian tradition, bringing it to a younger audience and thereby popularising it.

Anastasia Voytiuk is a contemporary bandura player, experimenter, composer, and leader of the band “Troye Zillia”, the Lviv Bandur Fest festival of contemporary bandura music. The group “Troye Zillia” are professional musicians who play in the style of folk fusion and world music, successfully experimenting and combining authentic Ukrainian songs with modern rhythms (“Yanchyk”, “Drevo”, “Peremanocho”, etc.). Based on Ukrainian folk songs from different regions of the country, they write original arrangements of mixes of R&B, D&B, Afro-Cuban, and jazz and perform at various Ukrainian and foreign venues (Lisnyak, 2019:181-200).

**Music during full-scale war.** Despite the long history of transformation and improvement of the bandura, we can observe that its ideological mission and strength have remained unchanged. The activity of contemporary bandura players since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in the XXI century is proof of the continuation of the related centuries-old bandura tradition in modern realities.

The vector of their work has changed somewhat with the beginning of a full-scale war on the territory of Ukraine. Now they are acutely aware of the need to morally support Ukrainians through the performance of patriotic and folk songs, modern compositions, and the author's creative work. Bandura players, like other Ukrainian artists, write songs on the theme of war, give charity concerts for internally displaced people and raise funds for the army, visit the military, encourage their national spirit with music. Through the performance of patriotic compositions for the people and the army, bandurists create a feeling of unity among the nation. Their music awakens a sense of self-identification as a Ukrainian, that is, a part of one nation experiencing a common grief.

Bandura music reinforces these feelings also due to the historical significance of its music, which is the embodiment of the living tradition of the Ukrainian people and the cultural code. In the minds of the people, however, the bandura still remains a traditional instrument. It is her sounds that strengthen people's patriotic feelings and self-confidence, because they subconsciously return a person to their roots.

In such difficult moments, the personal presence of performers and live communication with music is important for people. This is the path of bandura virtuoso Georgy Matviyiv. He continues his creative involvement and performs with a bandura both solo and as a member of NAONI of Ukraine. During this period, he and his band held a series of concerts in different parts of Kyiv and country for the people and in support of the military. Their performances took place in the House of Creative Teams of Ukraine, at the railway station, metro stations, military hospitals, for children and the military. Georgy Matviyiv also gave a live concert on the Crimean Tatar TV channel ART.

As Georgy Matviyiv notes, – “In the conditions of war, language, culture in general, and music in particular are also weapons, and that is what characterises our national identity”,<sup>12</sup> the awakening of

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Georgiy Matviiv 3.05.2022.

the national spirit in her mind. The bandurist ponders and compares music as a means of protection and moral support for a person against an external enemy, a tool for awakening the national spirit in his consciousness. Positive audience feedback and loud applause are results that give an understanding of the correctness of the chosen support vector. Because music is medicine for the soul, it is very important to consider this aspect.<sup>13</sup>

The emotional state of the country is extremely difficult now, so musicians and artists are trying in every way to improve it and distract people from negative thoughts. Concerts are being organised in support of temporarily displaced people in the western part of the country and in Europe. Bandura player Anastasia Voytiuk is an active participant of such events. It is during the performance of authentic songs that she sees her mission as a bandura player today and the union with the authentic kobzar tradition, which consists of supporting the spirit of the population and telling the history of the people, which is cyclical. Her music is filled with a Ukrainian modes that helps people energetically return to their roots through the performance of authentic folk songs. Anastasia Voytiuk gives concerts in Lviv, the Czech Republic, and toured in Poland.<sup>14</sup> The performer herself considers cultural diplomacy and support of the people's spirit to be her mission. In addition, Anastasia teaches Ukrainian authentic songs by giving vocal master classes. Through the bandura and music, the performer speaks to a foreign audience, and such a speech is more powerful on an emotional level. Together with Polish musicians, the bandura player also gives concerts in the Czech Republic and toured in Poland. In the first period of the full-scale war, Anastasia Voytiuk was involved in the recording of the famous pop singer Max Barskih's "Dont F@ck With Ukraine" (You Tube, 2020). Bandura and other traditional instruments can be heard in this electro-house record in support of the army.

Maryna Krut has started active volunteer and artistic activities, which are aimed at actualising Ukrainian music in the world. In addition to making music, she raises money for the military through her social networks. With the support of the Art Foundation, a charity solo concert of the bandura player took place together with jazz musicians at the LV Cafe jazz club in Lviv. The songs that will be included in the new album "Liteplo" – "Chaiky"/"Seagulls", "Volia"/"Freedom" and "Mistomalomy"/"City to the Little One" were presented at the concert. An integral part of the bandura player's activities is holding charity concerts in various European countries in support of her country (Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland).<sup>1</sup>

To encourage Ukrainians, the girl started playing on the streets and recorded a cover of T. Petrynenko's song "Ukraïno"/"Ukraine" at the volunteer headquarters of the city of Khmelnytskyi with the participation of the Khmelnytskyi municipal choir (You Tube, 2022). It is the participation of the team and filming during the weaving of camouflage nets for the military that emphasises the importance of unifying the people and shows the power of joint work for victory. The text of the song illustrates the living love for the native land, which has lived in the hearts of people for centuries and now manifests itself with new force:

Meni ne mozhna ne liubyty, / *I can't help but love you,*

Tobi ne mozhna ne tsvisty. / *You can't help but bloom.*

Lysh doty varto v sviti zhyty, / *Only until then is it worth living in the world,*

1. Interview with Maryna Krut 6.06.2022

Poky zhyvesh i kvitnesh ty! / *As long as you live and flourish!*<sup>15</sup>

At the beginning of April 2022, the singer released her original song "Volia"/"Freedom" (You Tube, 2022), in which she conveyed her desire for independence and the reasons for the fight of the Ukrainian military:

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Georgiy Matviiv 3.05.2022.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Anastasiya Voituk 2.06.2022.

<sup>15</sup> Own translation.

Mamo, ya v put /*Mom, I'm leaving,*  
 Bo nemaie uzhe shcho vtrachaty! /*Because there is nothing to lose!*  
 My nikoly ne vmily movchaty, /*We never knew how to keep quiet,*  
 Bo nemaie chuzhykh ditei! / *Because there are no other people's children!*<sup>16</sup>

The text also highlights the victory of the “mother's song” over the “sound of the city siren” – an air alert, which embodies the victory of the Ukrainian song over terror. This modern interpretation reflects the reality of the Ukrainian people, which highlights the eternal value of the people – love of freedom and love for the motherland. The main emphasis is on the text of the composition. The instrumental accompaniment is sufficiently transparent and unobtrusive, without additional compositional decorations and improvisational parts, which are inherent in modern bandura compositions.

For these two compositions, the leading thought is the idea of the power of the unity of the people against the enemy (“.. Could we, with our hearts, we will ignite thousands of hearts” – “Ukraïno”; “..But I have a million-strong family, it will win on a spring day” – “Volia”), which reflects the peculiarity of the situation and mood of people today.

According to performers of modern bandura art, in such a dark period in the history of the Ukrainian people, they feel more united than ever with the roots and origins of bandura and realise the importance of their mission in maintaining the moral spirit of the people. In real time, you can observe the true mission and importance of the bandura as the embodiment of the traditions of the Ukrainian people.

**Conclusions.** Bandura art throughout its long history has become the embodiment of a living Ukrainian tradition, as an integral part of the culture of the entire nation. The repertoire of the bandura players and their mission consists of moral support of the population, protection of its mentality, spirituality, and high morals. Contemporary bandura art is a linear continuation of the authentic tradition, although with a modified way of interacting with the audience in accordance with the requirements of modernity.

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### **Interview with Anastasiya Voituk 2.06.2022**

#### **1. What is the mission and main message of your activity now?**

*My key missions now are cultural diplomacy and supporting the fighting spirit of Ukrainians both abroad and in Ukraine(...)*

*(...) Culture is one of the key components of building a nation's identity, and Ukrainian culture is very rich and diverse, especially its singing tradition, which has thousands of songs. These songs contain the historical and emotional memories of the people, and it is now that we realise what many of our songs are about, because our people have already experienced similar violence from Russia and its previous incarnations under other names. Through the song, I make emotional contact with people, and then I can tell them about the situation in Ukraine now. Through the song, I also help people stabilise mentally and partially survive the trauma of war, gain strength and energy to at least continue to live and fight. Through meetings with Ukrainians, I give faith in the country, a sense of unity, mutual support and love(...)*

#### **2. What do you feel now as a bandurist? What do you want to convey to people today through your creativity?**

*(...)As a bandurist, I feel like a soldier on the cultural front. I play on a rare instrument that 100% represents Ukraine, which gives a very great purity and power to the message (...)When I sing old songs, I feel unity with the Ukrainians who lived and sang them before. I feel that our instrument is very beautiful and enchanting, and it is a very powerful force now. (...)Music always impresses more powerfully than conversation or words. This is very delicate and filigree work with the emotional field of a person, and if you get to it, you can change important worldview positions of a person, which will then influence his decisions.*

#### **3. Do you have a sense of spiritual unity with the tradition of kobzars, whose activities were directly related to the support of the moral spirit of the people?**

*(...) I had the feeling that now I understood what our predecessors were singing about. Also, the historical context has already changed, and if once the song sang about the king not letting the soldiers return home, now it is no longer about us—we are independent and fighting for our state, and similar wording can be used by other nations. (...)*

*(...) When there is great trouble for the people, everyone runs to the basement to hide, literally and figuratively. Metaphorically, we run to our roots to understand exactly who we are and what we are fighting for and whether it is really worth giving our lives for it. And as life shows-it's worth it and for what?*

### **Interview with Georgiy Matviiv 3.05.2022**

#### **1. What do you feel now as a bandurist? What do you want to convey to people today through your creativity?**

*The bandura is an uncompromisingly Ukrainian folk instrument. As a representative of the bandura community, now more than ever I feel the need to share with listeners samples of Ukrainian folk music, works by modern Ukrainian composers, including my own works. In the conditions of war, language, culture in general, and music in particular are also weapons, and precisely what characterises our national identity.*

#### **2. Do you have a sense of spiritual unity with the tradition of kobzars, whose activities were directly related to the support of the moral spirit of the people?**

*Raising the morale of Ukrainians, and especially soldiers, war invalids and displaced persons, children is an extremely necessary mission, because no matter how pathetic it sounds, music really*

heals the soul. Together with NAONI, since the beginning of the war, we have held a whole series of concerts in different parts of Kyiv for people from all over Ukraine (in the building of national creative groups of Ukraine, at metro stations, at the train station, in all crowded places, etc.), where we performed Ukrainian music and based on people's feedback it becomes clear that this is an extremely necessary matter. In fact, this is a matter of national importance (literally).