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THEATRICAL ORCHESTRA AND THE FORMATION OF SYMPHONIC PERFORMANCE IN KHARKIV

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Zhang Lichuan. The theatrical orchestra and the formation of symphonic performance in Kharkiv

The purpose of the publication is to define the specific characteristics of the functioning and role of the theater orchestra in the formation of symphonic performance in Kharkiv.

The methodology. In the process of understanding the phenomenon of the Kharkiv Theater orchestra, a historical approach was applied, which allowed for the chronological reconstruction of the musical ensemble's functioning. Additionally, a comparative analysis method was used to identify the unique features of the orchestra's instrumental composition, repertoire development, and performance practices.

The results. The specific functioning of theatrical instrumental ensembles in Kharkiv, which provided musical accompaniment for performances from the 1770s to the early 1870s, was examined. The study identifies factors that led to the establishment of a permanent "Orchestra of the Kharkiv Theater and Commercial Club", which, besides performing in the theater, also served city artistic events from the mid 1840s to the 1870s. Key factors include the return of the Kharkiv Theater to private management in 1867, the activities of K. Vilboa from 1869 to 1873 aimed at creating a concert instrumental ensemble in the city, and the emergence of a new orchestra under the direction of G. Grazia in the Kharkiv Drama Theater in 1872. These developments facilitated the organization of symphonic concerts under the aegis of the Kharkiv branch of the Russian Musical Society from 1871.

The scientific novelty lies in the determination that the primary source of symphonic performance in Kharkiv was the permanent orchestra of the Kharkiv Theater, active since the mid XIX century, whose instrumental and numerical composition met the demands of the provincial musical practices of that time. The conducting activities of K. Vilboa in Kharkiv during the late 1860s and the early 1870s were a driving force behind the formation of two orchestral ensembles

in the city — the theater and club orchestras — whose instrumental and qualitative compositions aligned with the principles of symphonic performance. From 1871, in preparation for symphonic concerts by the Kharkiv branch of the Russian Musical Society, the theater and club orchestras were combined, each consisting of 20–30 musicians, ensuring that the symphonic orchestra met the required academic standards in terms of instrumental and numerical composition.

Future research prospects are associated with identifying the specifics of symphonic performance in the cultural centers of Ukraine from the second half of the XIX century to the early XX century.

Keywords: *music performance, Kharkiv Theater, theater orchestra, A. Pavlovich, K. Vilboa, performance practice, instrumental composition, repertoire.*

Чжан Лічуань. Театральний оркестр та формування симфонічного виконавства в Харкові

У статті розглядається специфіка функціонування оркестру Харківського театру до 1870-х рр.; простежуються особливості діяльності музичних керівників театального оркестру, зокрема А. Павловича та К. Вільбоа. Визначається роль оркестру Харківського театру як основного джерела симфонічного виконавства в місті, що зумовлено: стабільним функціонуванням, починаючи із середини XIX ст. як колективу, орієнтованого на інструментальний склад симфонічного оркестру; створенням на його основі оркестру Комерційного клубу; формування на основі поєднання театального та клубного інструментальних колективів повноцінного складу симфонічного оркестру, що набув поширення в симфонічних концертах ХВ РМТ з 1871 р.

Ключові слова: *музичне виконавство, Харківський театр, театральний оркестр, А. Павлович, К. Вільбоа, виконавська практика, інструментальний склад, репертуар.*

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Relevance of the research topic. Since the XVIII century, orchestral performance has played a significant role in the development of professional musical art in Ukraine. The spread of various instrumental ensembles is linked to the specifics of the formation of Ukraine's regions and, primarily, their cultural centers, among which Kharkiv holds a prominent place. This underscores the importance of understanding the specifics of orchestral performance in this city.

Problem statement. Instrumental music has played a crucial role in Kharkiv theatrical culture since its inception, being an integral part of the diverse stage repertoire. In reconstructing the history of Kharkiv theatre, researchers rely on a substantial body of primary sources, particularly XIX-century periodicals. However, the specifics of instrumental accompaniment in theatre from the late XVIII to the mid XIX century remain unclear, as numerous reviews of performances from that time "almost never mentioned music or its performance" (Myklashevskiy, 1967, p. 138). Moreover, by the 1870s, the theatrical orchestra was practically the only professional instrumental ensemble around which Kharkiv musical life revolved. In this context, analyzing the functioning of the Kharkiv Theatre orchestra during this period will contribute to optimizing scholarly knowledge about Ukraine's musical culture.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Researchers of Ukrainian culture have always emphasized the role of orchestral performance in Kharkiv musical life in previous centuries, noting, in particular, the functioning of instrumental ensembles in the theatrical sphere since the late XVIII century (Myklashevskiy, 1967; Bohdanov, 2000; Kononova, 2004; Shchepakina, 2016). The role of music in the Kharkiv Theatre was discussed in detail in Yu. Loshkov's monograph, which explored the specifics of conducting in Ukrainian musical-dramatic productions (Loshkov, 2007, pp. 153–167). However, the specifics of the theatrical orchestra's activities, as a unique instrumental ensemble, in the context of the formation of symphonic performance in Kharkiv have not been studied.

The purpose of the article is to determine the specifics of the functioning and role of the

theatrical orchestra in the formation of symphonic performance in Kharkiv.

Presentation of main material. The limited information that has survived to this day allows for speculation regarding musical accompaniment in the Kharkiv theatre before the second half of the XIX century. According to the recollections of Ukrainian artist H. Kvitka-Osnovyanenko, in the amateur theatre of Kharkiv during the 1780s–1790s, students from additional classes of the local state school performed (Kononova, 2004, p. 13), with M. P. Kontsevich serving as their teacher from 1774 to 1796 (Husarchuk, 2017, p. 702). Information about the training of 7–8 instrumentalists in these classes and Kontsevich's leadership of the musical part of theatre performances, playing the violin (Osnovyanenko, 1841), suggests that the instrumental ensemble of the Kharkiv theatre consisted of 8–9 performers.

In terms of size, Kontsevich's musical ensemble was comparable to the serf orchestras common at that time, particularly in Slobozhanshchyna, which usually included 4 string instruments (two violins, viola, cello), two flutes, two horns, and another wind instrument, such as a clarinet, basset horn, bassoon, etc. (Loshkov, 2007, p. 110). It is likely that Kontsevich's ensemble was oriented towards this type of instrumental composition, enabling the performance of contemporary comic operas and solo pieces (Osnovyanenko, 1841).

In the first half of the XIX century, the musical accompaniment of performances at the Kharkiv Theatre was provided, as in most provincial theatres of the time, by rented serf orchestras. Renting serf orchestras effectively addressed the issue of musical accompaniment in provincial theatrical ventures that practiced touring. A notable example is the theatrical venture of the German I. F. Shtein, who was active in Kharkiv: he joined the Kalinovsky troupe in 1814, established his own troupe in 1816, and held the last performance of his ensemble in Kharkiv in March 1836. During its existence, Shtein's troupe performed in many cities across Ukraine (Lysyuk, 1996), using local serf orchestras for musical accompaniment. For instance, during the troupe's performance in Kremenchuk in 1825, the orchestra of the landowner Kasinov was engaged (Carnelius, 1825).

Due to the lack of information, characterizing the instrumental composition of these ensembles is difficult. It is known that during Shtein's troupe's performance in Kharkiv in 1818, the theatrical orchestra consisted of 20 performers, accompanying not only comic operas and vaudevilles but also ballets and operas by K. Kavos, V. Martin-i-Soler, and L. Cherubini (Kharkov notes, 1818). Summarizing the significance of Shtein's venture, H. Kvitka-Osnovyanenko emphasized that his troupe, almost concurrently with the capital theatres, staged the best comedies and operas of the time, and awarded the theatrical orchestra first place among the instrumental ensembles of the surrounding provinces (Osnovyanenko, 1841, 30.08).

During L. Mlotkovsky's venture (1835–1844), the specifics of the troupe's operation did not change: operating permanently in Kharkiv, the performers toured nearby provincial cities, necessitating the engagement of serf orchestras for musical accompaniment. Renting such orchestras constituted a significant part of the theatre's overall budget. Likely aiming to reduce costs, Mlotkovsky attempted to form his own orchestra for performances in Lubny in the summer of 1840: he recruited boys and trained them to play musical instruments. Ukrainian writer E. Grebinka noted after a performance in Lubny: "It is hard to imagine a worse orchestra," referring to the presence of flutes and clarinos (high-pitched trumpets — C. L.), which "screached unbearably," and "a specially designed trumpet with valves" that produced a "thunderous din" (Grebinka, 1840).

The failed attempt led Mlotkovsky to revert to using serf orchestras at the beginning of the autumn-winter season in Kharkiv that year. By late 1840, to improve the performance level of the rented instrumental ensemble, the talented conductor Burmytsky was invited. A reviewer noted: "The main and most difficult aspect in the orchestra — synchronization of voices — has noticeably improved ... thanks to the persistent practice of each (orchestra member — C. L.) on their instrument" (Orchestra of the Kharkov theater troupe under the direction of Mr. Burmytsky, 1840). At that time, the orchestra consisted of 18 performers (Loshkov, 2007, p. 162).

In the summer of 1841, the musical accompaniment of performances by the Kharkiv troupe was provided by the orchestra of the Kursk landowner Denisiev (Chernyaev, 1881). The professionalism of this ensemble is evidenced by their performance of Beethoven's second symphony during the intermission of a performance, described by the reviewer as a "remarkable cultural event for Kharkiv" (Orchestra of Mr. Denisiev, 1841). The presence of Beethoven's symphony in Denisiev's repertoire indicates that this ensemble at least met the instrumental composition of a symphonic orchestra.

Significant expenses for operating the theatrical troupe, which were consistently unrecovered, on the one hand, and the desire of Kharkiv's elite to have a permanent theatre in the city, on the other hand, led to the transfer of managerial functions from the impresario L. Mlotkovsky to the theatre administration in 1844. This administration included representatives of the city's administration and wealthy citizens. Aiming for quality musical accompaniment of performances, the administration formed a permanent instrumental ensemble, which, besides performing at the theatre, served municipal artistic events and performed as the Commercial Club orchestra, established in the 1830s by Kharkiv merchants. Thus, by the mid XIX century, a professional instrumental ensemble — the "Kharkiv Theatre and Commercial Club Orchestra" — was functioning in the city (Shchelkov, 1881). In this situation, it was logical to invite authoritative, at least locally, professional musicians to the position of orchestra conductor.

In particular, in 1845, the conductor at the Kharkiv Theatre was violinist D. Lanzetti. It is likely that his conducting activities at the Kharkiv Theatre were associated with the introduction of professional touring musicians performing during performance intermissions. In the summer of that year, the theatrical orchestra accompanied performances by "members of many philharmonic societies," including violinist Hauser and vocalist Frisch (Kharkov old-timer, 1845).

From the late 1840s to the second half of the 1860s, the conductor of the Kharkiv Theatre Orchestra was A. Pavlovich, with the first mentions of him dating back to 1845 when he conducted the instrumental

group of K. Schmidhoff's touring troupe in Kharkiv, which performed operas by F. Boieldieu, F. Herold, and D. Ober (Shchelkov, 1881). Contemporary reports noted the "even, clear, and pleasant" sound and coordination between the singers and the musical accompaniment (Zakharchenko, 1846). During the troupe's tour in Kharkiv, the "deep connoisseur and passionate lover of classical music" K. Schmidhoff, "together with his troupe and many Kharkiv artists and singers," prepared and superbly performed Beethoven's monumental works — the oratorio "Christ on the Mount of Olives" and the Seventh Symphony (D. K., 1852), which indicates the professionalism of the opera orchestra in which A. Pavlovich gained his conducting experience. It is likely that this musician remained in Kharkiv after the departure of K. Schmidhoff's troupe in January 1846, or after the troupe's performances in the next city, Kyiv. At least by 1848, A. Pavlovich was already listed as the conductor of the Kharkiv Theatre Orchestra (Shchelkov, 1881).

At that time, A. Pavlovich was a young man, as he performed as a violinist and violist in the string quartets of the Kharkiv branch of the Russian Musical Society (later known as the KhB RMS) in the early 1870s (Shchepakina, 2016, pp. 471–474), and participated in a charity event in February 1883 (Stepanova, 1883). At the initial stage of his work with the Kharkiv orchestra, the lack of experience led to complaints about the quality of the musical ensemble's performance. For instance, after a concert in March 1849, when the theatre orchestra, conducted by D. Lanzetti, performed overtures from the operas "Robert le Diable" by G. Meyerbeer and "The Magic Flute" by W. A. Mozart, a reviewer wrote that under the Italian conductor, the musical ensemble performed much better (K., 1849). It is likely that both D. Lanzetti and A. Pavlovich were the two conductors of the Kharkiv Theatre Orchestra in 1850, which had 30 musicians, and which, according to a correspondent of the capital's journal, "performed poorly not only opera parts and overtures but even accompaniment for vaudeville numbers" (Modern Kharkov theater, an overview of its stage activities. Article two, 1850).

A. Pavlovich's conducting talent developed rapidly, contributing to his professional reputation. In 1851, a Kharkiv newspaper correspondent wrote

that A. Pavlovich was known as a skillful conductor, particularly in accompanying singers (Noble performance in Kharkov, 1851). In 1853, a second conductor, Skripitsin, was invited to assist the "gifted" A. Pavlovich, who led the orchestra during performances in intermissions, while A. Pavlovich handled the musical arrangement of theatrical performances (Weinberg, 1853).

A. Pavlovich led the Kharkiv orchestra for a long time, as evidenced by information in a local newspaper about the conductor's benefit performance on December 30, 1863. The performance began with an overture by the famous violinist and composer O. Lvov, and during the intermissions between three vaudevilles, works by M. Glinka such as "Nights in Madrid" and "Kamarinskaya" were performed (Theater note, 1863). At that time, the theatrical orchestra had 21 musicians, which did not match the specifications of a full symphonic orchestra for which M. Glinka's works were written (2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, strings); moreover, in the overture "Nights in Madrid," there was an increased number of horns (4) and a significantly expanded range of percussion instruments (besides timpani, triangle, castanets, cymbals, large and small drums). This situation necessitated the augmentation of A. Pavlovich's ensemble with musicians from M. Khorvat's wind orchestra (Theater note, 1863).

The optimization of the theatre orchestra's composition occurred, among other things, through collaboration with Italian opera troupes performing in Kharkiv in the mid XIX century. After the performances of the Odesa troupe of Sarmatei in the spring of 1864, which presented Kharkiv audiences with operas by G. Rossini, V. Bellini, G. Donizetti, and G. Verdi, a reviewer referred to the theatre orchestra as "far from complete" in terms of instrumental and numerical composition, noting the difficulty for the musicians to quickly and effectively learn unfamiliar repertoire and play under the direction of an Italian conductor, whose foreignness hindered necessary communication with the orchestra members, as one reason for the rapid decline in public interest in foreign artists (Lyubin, 1864).

Another factor in the "symphonization" of the theatre orchestra's composition was its participation in city concerts performing academic orchestral

music. For instance, the overture to Rossini's opera "Semiramide" was frequently performed at such events (K., 1849). In March 1851, the orchestra participated in three charitable sacred concerts (A brief report on the social pleasures of Kharkov residents during the Lenten season, 1851). The orchestra likely participated in performances of oratorios by J. Haydn, L. Spohr, and F. Mendelssohn, conducted in Kharkiv by composer, educator, pianist, and violinist F. I. Schulz from 1851 to 1863 (Shchepakin, 2016, p. 93).

Regarding the instrumental and numerical composition of musical ensembles, including the Kharkiv Theatre Orchestra, contemporary reviewers applied criteria such as "incomplete" or "complete" orchestra. Thus, the orchestra, when performing musical accompaniment for theatrical performances or playing dance music at balls and masquerades, appeared as a shortened "incomplete" ensemble; however, participation in concerts required adherence to the parameters of a symphonic orchestra. Since such events were initiated by authoritative professionals who aimed to demonstrate exemplary musical performance, the theatre orchestra was supplemented with local instrumentalists. For example, on January 19, 1849, under the direction of the "famous artist" F. Bertoldi, the oratorio "Paulus" by F. Mendelssohn, which involved more than 150 performers, and Bertoldi's overture were performed; among the orchestra members were musicians active in Kharkiv at that time — violinists E. Nesvadba, D. Lanzetti, Metzdorf, and others (Oratorio, 1849). On March 15, 1851, pianist and composer Heinrich Sakmeyer organized a concert during which the theatre orchestra, in collaboration with Kharkiv instrumentalists, played two symphonies — by W. A. Mozart and L. Beethoven — and the overture by Sakmeyer himself. A week later, the orchestra, along with "the best musical talents" of Kharkiv, took part in performing Rossini's oratorio "Stabat Mater," honoring the local music teacher Valier (A brief report on the social pleasures of Kharkov residents during the Lenten season, 1851).

From the mid-1860s, the Kharkiv theater saw significant improvements under the leadership of the talented impresario M. Diukov. During April-June 1868, the Kyiv opera troupe led by F. Berger

and conductor K. P. Vilboa performed in Kharkiv, enhancing the quality of the opera performances (Chernyaev, 1895). Diukov likely engaged the former serf orchestra of M. Khorvat, which had previously worked with Vilboa, to improve the orchestra's performance for the Italian opera troupe Sermatei (Peng Liu, 2024).

Vilboa's first appearance leading the theater's orchestra was noted in August 1869 during a concert by violinist G. Freeman. By September 1869, Vilboa had made significant improvements to the orchestra, although the existing instruments were still in poor condition (Advertising, 1869). Vilboa critiqued the orchestra's size and instrumentation, comparing it unfavorably with the symphonic orchestra of the Mariinsky Theater, emphasizing that a full orchestra was essential for performing symphonic music properly (Theater orchestra, 1870).

Wilboa expanded the repertoire significantly, including operas and operettas. By the end of 1869, he had staged several works, including M. Glinka's "A Life for the Tsar" and J. Offenbach's "Orpheus in the Underworld" (Ginzburg, 1869). The theater also hosted a German comic opera, demonstrating the orchestra's improved capabilities (Vilboa, 1870).

In November 1871, the Italian opera troupe Sermatei, led by Gaetano Gracia, began performing in Kharkiv. Gracia's orchestra, consisting of professional musicians, joined the Kharkiv theater after the troupe's departure in early 1872. This addition enriched the theater's repertoire with musical stage works (Shchepakin, 2016).

In March 1873, young violinist and former St. Petersburg Conservatory student Levenhof joined the orchestra. He began conducting in Kharkiv, and by December 1873, he was confidently leading performances, including the opera "Fra Diavolo" (Kovalev, 1873). By early 1874, Levenhof had become the sole musical director at the theater, overseeing numerous operas and operettas. The orchestra's high-performance level was praised by critics, who acknowledged the improvement over the previous three years (Local news, 1874).

At the beginning of 1872, the Kharkiv theater's orchestra underwent significant changes, reflecting K. Vilboa's efforts to establish a full-fledged concert ensemble. The orchestra, which had been under the local Commercial Club's aegis, became

entirely owned by the Club in 1871, likely due to dissatisfaction from the theater's owner, M. Diukov (Internal news, 1871). This transition was marked by the purchase of new instruments for the orchestra by the Kharkiv merchants (ibid.).

The opportunity for active performance outside the theater allowed Vilboa to focus on developing a serious symphonic repertoire. In May 1871, the Commercial Club's orchestra, under Vilboa's direction, performed works by M. Glinka, including overtures from "A Life for the Tsar" and "Ruslan and Ludmila" (Advertising, 1871).

In June 1871, a benefit event for the music classes of the Kharkiv Women's Music Institute featured the orchestra performing a variety of pieces, including F. Mendelssohn's "Ruy Blas" overture and works by Beethoven, Meyerbeer, and Strauss (Internal news, 1871).

By the end of 1871, Kharkiv had two functioning orchestras — the theater's and the Commercial Club's one. Their professionalism allowed for high-quality symphonic concerts, contributing to the reopening of the Kharkiv Women's Music Institute (KWMI.) in 1871. The combined efforts of both orchestras, including top local musicians, met the standard symphonic orchestra requirements, with a total of 65 musicians (Theater and music notes, 1871). The KWMI. concerts featured symphonies by Beethoven, Schubert, and other composers (Unofficial part, 1874).

A report from the KWMI for 1873–1874 highlighted a decline in symphonic performance

quality in 1874, attributed to the incomplete orchestra setup, as Diukov restricted the involvement of theater musicians to only two (Unofficial part, 1874).

Conclusions. The primary source of symphonic performance in Kharkiv was the Kharkiv Theater Orchestra. The specifics of its development in the mid XIX century were influenced by its status as a state theater, funded and managed by local authorities and merchants. This led to the formation of a permanent orchestra with an instrumental and numerical composition that met the standards of provincial musical practice of the time.

The conducting activities of K. Vilboa during the late 1860s and early 1870s were a driving force behind the emergence of two orchestral ensembles in the city: the theater orchestra and the club orchestra. The specifics of these ensembles were that, while their instrumental and qualitative composition adhered to symphonic performance principles, the number of musicians in each ensemble was significantly limited, ranging from 20 to 30. To prepare for symphonic concerts at the Kharkiv Women's Music Institute from 1871, the theater and club orchestras were combined to meet the academic standards for both instrumental and numerical composition of a symphonic orchestra.

Future research prospects involve exploring the specifics of symphonic performance in the cultural centers of Ukraine in the late XIX and early XX centuries.

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